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UPSC Mains 2023 Essay

Year-wise PYQ pack · WRAP model answers with canonical links

Official UPSC stems in exam order. Each live answer sits on one WRAP URL; this PDF is the year pack, not a second copy of the article. Open the link under a question for the full page.

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains/essay/2023/>

Q1 · 125 marks

Thinking is like a game, it does not begin unless there is an opposite team.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with an empty chess chair. Stand:** thought needs a worthy opposite.
- **Headings:** self, lab, democracy, world, then one counter.

Earn Mill or **Ambedkar** once. Peg Assembly debates, not a dump.

Close on argument as a public good.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

- **A chessboard in a railway waiting room:** a boy will not move until someone sits opposite. Alone he only rearranges the same pieces. "Thinking is like a game; it does not begin unless there is an opposite team" is that empty chair - the other mind that makes yours work.

One stand

Thought is not a diary. It starts when it is tested - by a rival claim, a datum, a dissenting colleague. Write to keep the opposite team in the room, and still refuse a mob.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Thinking:** checking, revising, inventing - not repeating a slogan.
- **Opposite team:** a counter-argument, a failed experiment, a minority judgment, a foreign brief.
- **Stake:** comfort is not thought. Conflict can be; a street fight is not.

Self

- We keep news that flatters. The opposite team is the article we skip.
- A journal that records only victories is not thinking; it is branding.

Knowledge

- **Science:** hypothesis vs nature. The lab is the opposite team.
- A classroom without questions is a waiting room with one player.

Democracy and law

- **Parliament, a second chamber, a dissent on the bench:** designed opposites.
- Media as a check - or as an echo. Name the difference.
- **Peg:** Constituent Assembly debates - **Ambedkar**'s sentences earned against other sentences.

World

- **Diplomacy:** the other capital is the opposite team; a communicate that never met a fact is not thought.

The counter

- **Some "opposites" are bad-faith:** a troll, a rumour mill, a paid doubt. You do not owe every chair a game. The line asks for a worthy opposite - evidence, not noise. Silence before a lynch-mob is not the empty board; it is duty.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** keep one honest rival on the desk - a number, a dissent, a walk in the other ward. Mill's marketplace and a civil servant's noting are that habit. Expand each heading; this page is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/thinking-is-like-a-game-it-does-not-begin-unless-there-is-an-opposite-team/>

Q2 · 125 marks

Visionary decision-making happens at the intersection of intuition and logic.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a dusk flood-walk plus a rainfall sheet. Stand:** gut plus proof.
- **Headings:** self, science, state, tech, then one counter.

Earn one line on fast/slow or **Gandhi's** trained voice. Peg 1991 or ISRO.

Close on a dated, daring file.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A district collector walks a flood bank at dusk and 'knows' the village will go under before the model says so. She still opens the rainfall sheet. The order that follows is neither a hunch nor a printout. The line names that crossing: intuition and logic.

One stand

Vision is not a slogan on a hoarding. It is a felt pattern that survives a check. Write to honour both the inner alarm and the second instrument.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Intuition:** trained pattern, not magic - a nurse's eye, a farmer's sky, **Gandhi's** inner voice after years of practice.
- **Logic:** models, law, cost, a chain of reasons that another person can walk.
- **Intersection:** where they correct each other.

Self

- First impression is often caste and class dressed as instinct. Logic is the bleach.
- Courage without a map is also not vision.

Science and design

- Hypothesis is intuition; trial is logic. ISRO's windows combine both.
- **Kahneman:** fast and slow - use once, then return to the flood bank.

State

- A reform that only 'feels right' can break a queue. A reform that only models GDP can miss a hunger week.
- **Peg:** 1991 - numbers met political nerve. A farm law without the street was logic without the room.

Markets and tech

- An algorithm is frozen intuition of its makers. Audit is the logic we owe the user.

The counter

Some clocks cannot wait for a perfect model (a missing child). Some hunches must never move a file (a communal rumour). The intersection is a discipline, not a 50-50 slogan.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** feel the bank, open the sheet, sign with reasons. Expand in the hall - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/visionary-decision-making-happens-at-the-intersection-of-intuition-and-logic/>

WRAP Exams

Q3 · 125 marks

Not all who wander are lost.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a coaching-town exit that becomes wells. Stand:** search vs exile.
- **Headings:** self, knowledge, migration, state, then one counter.

Earn Tolkien once; **Gandhi** or **Tagore** once. Peg **Art. 21** or FRA.

Close on a compass.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A boy leaves a coaching town without a rank. Relatives say he is lost. A year later he is mapping wells for a panchayat. He had wandered. He had not vanished. The line is a defence of search - and a warning not to call every displacement a pilgrimage.

One stand

Wandering can be curiosity, dissent, migration, research. Lost is when there is no north - no value, no return, no care. Write to keep a compass in the rucksack.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Wander:** leave the script - career, syllabus, majority, a map drawn in Delhi.
- **Lost:** without purpose, without a way home, without rights.
- **Tolkien's rangers:** apparent aimlessness that still serves a realm.

Self

- A gap year that reads is wander. A gap year that only scrolls may be lost.
- **Gandhi's experiments:** wandering as method.

Knowledge

- **Fieldwork, a failed hypothesis, an optional subject changed:** science wanders on purpose.
- **Tagore's** path vs the factory school.

Society

- Pastoral routes, seasonal labour, a student from a small town in a metro - wander that the census barely sees.
- Do not paint the migrant's wait at a station as 'finding herself'.

State

- **Exploration, northeast connectivity, a living constitution:** the republic also wanders into new meanings (**Art. 21**).
- A displaced Adivasi after a dam is not a ranger. Rehabilitation is the compass the state owes.

The counter

Hunger, trafficking, a child out of school - wandering without a net is lostness. The quote rebukes rigid scripts, not the need for a roof.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** pack a compass and still leave the courtyard. Expand each heading - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/not-all-who-wander-are-lost/>

WRAP Exams

Q4 · 125 marks

Inspiration for creativity springs from the effort to look for the magical in the mundane.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a mid-day meal cook and a later play. Stand:** attention is the spring.
- **Headings:** art, science, state, repair, then one counter.

Earn **Tagore** once. Peg UPI or a PHC.

Close on looking twice.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A mid-day meal cook adjusts the grain by eye because the weigh-scale is broken. A visitor calls it 'jugaad'. A child later writes a play about the cook. The magic was not a lightning bolt. It was looking at the mundane until it spoke.

One stand

Creativity is a way of seeing the given world - a formula, a folk tune, a bus route - until a new use appears. Write against the cult of the isolated genius, and still admit that looking needs time the exhausted may not have.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Mundane:** kitchen, file, monsoon, a village path, a spreadsheet.
- **Magical:** pattern, metaphor, a cheaper fix, a kinder rule.
- **Effort:** attention is labour.

Self and art

- **Tagore:** the world is not a machine; the ordinary is already thick.
- A phone photograph of a drain can be art or noise - the effort decides.

Science

- Penicillin's mould; Ramanujan's notebooks; a PHC compounder reading a label (cousin of the doubter).
- **Peg:** ISRO's ordinary clean-rooms producing an extraordinary window.

State

- **UPI:** payments as ordinary as a message - magic that sat in mundane small transfers.
- A collector who walks the ration shop sees what the dashboard dyes.

Economy

- **Repair, craft, a circular stall:** value hiding in what we call waste.

The counter

Do not tell the overworked that their exhaustion is a failure to 'see magic'. Some mundane is injustice (an open sewer). Creativity here is a tap, not a poem. The line is about attention, not about blessing the broken.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** look twice at the queue. That is how a republic invents. Expand - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/inspiration-for-creativity-springs-from-the-effort-to-look-for-the-magical-in-the-mundane/>

WRAP Exams

Q5 · 125 marks

Girls are weighed down by restrictions, boys with demands - two equally harmful disciplines.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with two clocks in one house. Stand:** two disciplines, one structure.
- **Headings:** family, school, work, law, then one counter.

Earn **Ambedkar** once. Peg NFHS or 73rd seats.

Close on two unlocked doors.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A house with two clocks. The daughter must be home before dark. The son must not cry, must take the shop, must 'become'. Both children learn a smaller life. The topic names the pair: restrictions and demands - two equally harmful disciplines.

One stand

Do not run a men's-rights detour or a girls-only sermon. Show how the same structure cuts both, then show who still pays more in body and unpaid hours. Write for freedom with care, not for a new uniform.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Restrictions:** mobility, voice, property, the body - typically stacked on girls.
- **Demands:** breadwinner, violence-as-honour, no tenderness - stacked on boys.
- **Equally harmful** is a moral claim about discipline, not a claim that harm is identical in hospital wards.

Family

- Dowry and 'family name' on one side; the boy as ATM on the other.
- Unpaid care is still mostly a woman's day. Name it.

School and media

- STEM gatekeeping; 'boys don't read literature'. Both are smaller minds.
- Reels that sell a gym-and-gun masculinity and a shrinking girl.

Work and state

- **Peg:** NFHS / labour force - women's work often missing from the count; male suicide and farm distress as the demand's bill.
- **Maternity, paternity, creche:** if only women 'get' care, the demand on men never moves and the restriction on women stays.

Law

- **Art. 14-15, POCSO, workplace harassment law:** the republic against the house-clock.
- 73rd Amendment's seats: a crack in the restriction; the demand on the sarpanch's husband is the leftover cage.

The counter

'Equally' must not erase femicide, anaemia, or a missing girl at birth. Boys' cages are real; they are not a reason to stall a woman's file. Justice is two unlocked doors, not a lecture that 'everyone suffers' and therefore nothing is due.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** shorten the daughter's curfew and the son's armour together. Ambedkar's social democracy is that double key. Expand; this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/girls-are-weighed-down-by-restrictions-boys-with-demands-two-equally-harmful-disciplines/>

Q6 · 125 marks

Mathematics is the music of reason.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with tabla and tax on one bus. Stand:** honest pattern vs dashboard tyranny.
- **Headings:** self, science, census/GDP, democracy, then one counter.

Earn Ramanujan or Sen once. Peg census or a trial.

Close on measure plus meaning.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

A tabla player and an accountant share a bus. One counts beats; the other counts tax. Both are listening for a pattern that must not cheat. "Mathematics is the music of reason" is that shared ear - not a threat to the poet.

One stand

Maths is the craft of not lying with quantity. Write to honour proof, census, a bridge load - and to refuse a world where only what is numbered is real.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Music:** structure, interval, surprise within a rule.
- **Reason:** claims that another can replay.
- **Cousin:** Pythagoras / Leibniz (often so linked) - one honest mention, not a lecture.

Self

- A budget of the month; a lie we tell with averages. Numeracy as character.

Science and tech

- Models of monsoon, a vaccine trial, encryption.
- **Peg:** Ramanujan; ISRO orbital maths - beauty that must still dock.

Economy and state

- GDP is a tune; jobs, air, unpaid care are the missing instruments.
- **Census, SECC, a GST invoice:** the state's sheet music. A delayed census is a silenced bar.

Democracy

- **Delimitation, a seat reserved, a poll percentage:** numbers that can serve or steal.
- **Algorithms scoring credit:** music of someone else's reason.

The counter

Not all that matters sings in numbers - grief, a language, a sacred grove. **Amartya Sen:** capabilities, not only income. And bad maths (a communal 'count') is noise, not music. The line

praises honest reason, not the tyranny of a dashboard.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** keep the ear for proof, and still hear the uncounted. Expand - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page —

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/mathematics-is-the-music-of-reason/>

WRAP Exams

Q7 · 125 marks

A society that has more justice is a society that needs less charity.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a flood packet and a question about the drain. Stand:** design over favour.
- **Headings:** self, welfare, caste, markets, world, then one counter.

Earn **Ambedkar** once. Peg NFSA or MGNREGA.

Close on a floor plus a blanket.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

- **A flood camp:** packets arrive with a banner. A woman asks why her house was allowed on the drain line, why the warning came late. The packets are kindness. Her question is justice. A society that had more of the second would need fewer of the first.

One stand

Charity soothes; it can also freeze a hierarchy (the giver, the given). Justice rewrites the file so the packet is less often needed. Write both, and do not sneer at the volunteer while the file is still cruel.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Justice:** rights, fair procedure, a floor, a remedy.
- **Charity:** voluntary giving, langar, CSR, a relief camp.
- **Stake:** more justice, less need for charity - not a war on kindness.

Self

- Tipping a waiter vs a living wage. Private virtue vs public design.

Welfare and law

- **Peg:** MGNREGA, NFSA, RTE - entitlements that try to make hunger less of a favour.
- **Article 21, DPSPs:** the republic's intended design. Gaps remain; name them.

Caste and dignity

- **Ambedkar:** a right is not a gift from the upper house of the heart.
- Temple food as charity can coexist with a barred well - justice is the well.

Markets

- CSR photographs vs tax, unions, a safe factory. Philanthropy after extraction is a thin music.

World

- Aid vs fair trade, climate loss-and-damage vs a cheque with a flag.

The counter

After a quake, charity is duty this week. A cold 'wait for the scheme' is cruelty. Justice is slow furniture; charity is a blanket. Keep the blanket; build the house. Also: a state that abolishes kindness in the name of 'rights only' can become a machine.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** raise the floor so fewer must queue for a packet with a logo. Expand - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/a-society-that-has-more-justice-is-a-society-that-needs-less-charity/>

WRAP Exams

Q8 · 125 marks

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school.

Essay · 2023 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a forgotten theorem and a remaining doubt. Stand:** residue is judgment.
- **Headings:** self, NEP/school, home, digital, republic, then one counter.

Earn Einstein once; Tagore once. Peg 21A.

Close on scaffold plus remainder.

Note

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

Anecdote

Twenty years after the board exam, a woman cannot recall a theorem. She can still smell a bad contract, wait her turn, teach a child to doubt a forwarded 'study'. That remainder is the topic - not a sneer at the school that gave her the first tools.

One stand

- **School is a scaffold. Education is what still stands when the scaffold is gone:** how we treat a queue, a fact, a stranger. Write to honour teachers and still refuse marks-as-destiny.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Learned in school:** content, drill, a syllabus.
- **Remains:** character, method, a love of the true, a language.
- **Einstein (as commonly given):** residue, not contempt for classrooms.

Self

- Coaching can rent a rank and return you empty. Residue is how you lose.

School and NEP

- Rote vs understanding. NEP's claim is residue-talk; coaching markets sell the opposite.
- **Tagore's path:** more sky than factory.

Home and street

- **The hidden curriculum:** caste in a joke, a girl's curfew, a boy's armour (cousin of 2023-05).
- If the home teaches fear, the school's remainder is thin.

Digital

- A feed that never forgets trivia and never keeps a doubt. Residue now includes the skill to leave.

Republic

- **Peg:** Art. 21A, scientific temper 51A(h) - the citizen as a remaining mind.

- Literacy numbers vs the ability to read a ballot and a loan.

The counter

Forgetting is not a virtue if the nurse forgets a dose. Some school-learning must not fade (a vaccine schedule, a right). The line targets inert cram, not memory itself. And a child without a school is not a romantic remainder; she is owed the scaffold first.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** build scaffolds that leave a mind, not a trophy. Expand - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2023/education-is-what-remains-after-one-has-forgotten-what-one-has-learned-in-school/>

WRAP Exams

Compiled answer key

Last pages of this pack. Each question links to the WRAP model answer on wrapexams.com.

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Q1 125 marks	Q2 125 marks	Q3 125 marks	Q4 125 marks
Q5 125 marks	Q6 125 marks	Q7 125 marks	Q8 125 marks

Question-wise key

Q1 · 125 marks Solution

Q2 · 125 marks Solution

Q3 · 125 marks Solution

Q4 · 125 marks Solution

Q5 · 125 marks Solution

Q6 · 125 marks Solution

Q7 · 125 marks Solution

Q8 · 125 marks Solution

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