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UPSC Mains 2024 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/2024/>

Q1 · 125 marks

Forests precede civilizations and deserts follow them.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with two photographs of one ridge. Stand:** spend the forest, inherit the sand.
- **Headings:** self, culture, economy, state, world, then one counter.

Earn **Gandhi** and Leopold (or **Tagore**) once each. Peg FRA or IPCC, not a data dump.

Close on trusteeship.

Note

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

Anecdote

- **A grandfather shows a boy a photograph of the same ridge:** teak then, later a mine, later a dust storm that entered the kitchen. The boy asks which picture is "progress". The old man says: the forest came first; the desert is what we left. The line is that album - not a poem about trees.

One stand

Civilisations grow in the shade of living systems. When we spend the forest as cash, the desert is not nature's revenge - it is the receipt. Write to keep the receipt in view.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Forests:** soil, water, climate, food, a commons - not only timber.
- **Civilisations:** cities, farms, temples, ports that assumed a surplus of green.
- **Deserts:** barrenness after over-cut, over-graze, over-mine, over-heat - also a desert of meaning.
- **The order is a warning:** take the canopy, inherit the sand.

Self

- We buy shade as furniture and call it taste. That is a small desert in the house.

- A civil servant's first posting that signs a diversion without walking the ridge is the photograph's middle frame.

Society and culture

- **Sacred groves, Chipko, a village tank:** culture that treated the forest as kin, not inventory.
- When festivals need plastic and diesel more than a grove, culture has already started the desert.

Economy

- GDP counts the log; it is slow to count the aquifer the log was holding.
- **Green accounting, CAMPA, "compensatory" plantation that is a monoculture:** a fake forest after a real one.

State

- **Forest Rights Act 2006:** people who lived with the canopy vs a file that only sees reserved forest.
- EIA, a delayed notification, a wildlife corridor cut by a highway - the desert begins as a clause.

World

- **Amazon, Sahel, Himalayan springs:** the same sequence at planetary scale.
- Climate is the desert arriving on a timetable.

The counter

- **Not every clearing is a crime:** a farm, a rail, a hospital also feed a people. The line forbids eating the seed. Development that leaves a working canopy is still civilisation. A slogan that freezes the poor beside a teak board is another kind of desert.

Last paragraph

- **End on a habit:** walk the ridge before the signature; count water with the timber. **Gandhi's** trusteeship and **Article 48A / 51A(g)** are that habit in ethic and law. In the hall, grow each heading into a paragraph with one Indian case - this page is only the map.

Open WRAP page —

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/forests-precede-civilizations-and-deserts-follow-them/>

Q2 · 125 marks

The empires of the future will be the empires of the mind.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a launch on a cracked phone. Stand:** the prize is mind; keep it public.
- **Headings:** self, science, education, digital, ethics, then one counter.

Earn Churchill once; **Tagore** or **Ambedkar** once. Peg ISRO or UPI, not a dump.

Close on a mind that serves a republic.

Note

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

Anecdote

A boy in a small town watches a satellite launch on a cracked phone. No border moved that afternoon. A capacity did. Churchill told Harvard that the empires of the future would be empires of the mind. The boy's phone is already a province of someone else's.

One stand

Territory still exists. The contest that will decide dignity is over who thinks, who teaches, who owns the model, and whose story a child believes. Write to keep the mind as a public good, not a colony.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Empire:** command over others' choices - once by fort, now by school, patent, platform, myth.
- **Mind:** science, art, faith, data, attention.
- **Churchill (1943):** after a war of steel, a warning about ideas. Do not turn it into a TED slogan.

Self

- Attention is the first colony. A day without a book is a day under someone else's empire.
- Doubt and craft beat a downloaded opinion.

Knowledge and science

- **Labs, patents, chips, vaccines:** mind as hard power.
- **Peg:** ISRO and public digital rails (Aadhaar-UPI stack) - capacity a republic built, still contested in design and privacy.

Culture and education

- A language that cannot do science or poetry is already a subject people.
- NEP's claim is a years-bet on the mind; coaching-as-destiny is a smaller empire of fear.

Digital and narrative

- **Who owns the model, the map, the newsfeed:** a new East India Company of attention.
- **Deepfakes:** an empire that occupies memory.

Ethics

- **An empire of the mind without dharma is propaganda.** **Ambedkar:** cultivate the mind and constitutional morality.

The counter

Food, fuel, and a border still decide whether a mind has a desk. Do not preach "soft power" to a hungry district. Steel and grain remain. The line ranks the future prize; it does not abolish the old ones.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** build schools and chips, and still ask whose story the child is living in. A republic's empire should be literacy and doubt, not a captive feed. Expand each heading in the hall - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/the-empires-of-the-future-will-be-the-empires-of-the-mind/>

Q3 · 125 marks

There is no path to happiness; Happiness is the path.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with clerk vs gardener. Stand:** live the hour; keep a floor for the poor.
- **Headings:** self, work, society, state, then one counter.

Earn **Buddha** or **Gandhi** once. Peg a public good, not a happiness index dump.

Close on means as ends.

Note

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

Anecdote

A clerk counts the years to a promotion as if joy were a station after the last transfer. A gardener on the same campus waters a neem every evening and is already somewhere. The line says the gardener has understood what the clerk has postponed.

One stand

Happiness is not a trophy at the end of GDP or rank. It is how the day is lived - if the road has water. Write to refuse both the rat-race and a sermon to the hungry.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Path to:** happiness as a destination (marks, house, "settled", Viksit date).
- **Is the path:** practice, attention, dharma of the next hour - Buddhist / Gandhian cousin.
- **Stake:** hold goals; stop postponing decency until the goal.

Self

- Comparison is a path that never arrives.
- **Habit, sleep, a walk:** cheap path-work. Addiction sells a destination.

Work and education

- Coaching as only-destination turns a young mind into a war.
- **Craft, teaching, nursing:** the work is the meaning if the wage is just.

Society and faith

- Festival as performance vs festival as shared time.
- Santosh is not dullness; it is not being owned by the next thing.

State

- **Welfare, parks, clean air, a bus that comes:** public goods that make a path livable.
- A growth target that excuses today's queue is the clerk's error at national scale.

The counter

Hunger, a waiting list for surgery, a delayed FIR - these are destinations that must arrive in a lifetime. Do not tell the landless that happiness is the path while the path has no water. The line rebukes obsession, not justice.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** name the shrine, and still pack water for today. **Gandhi's** means-as-ends is the civic translation. Expand each heading; this page is only the map.

Open WRAP page —

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/there-is-no-path-to-happiness-happiness-is-the-path/>

WRAP Exams

Q4 · 125 marks

The doubter is a true man of Science.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a PHC label. Stand:** doubt is method, not a sneer.
- **Headings:** self, lab, society, state, digital, then one counter.

Earn Feynman or Popper once. Peg a trial or CAG, not a dump.

Close on provisional action.

Note

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

Anecdote

A compounder in a PHC is told a syrup is "as good as the costly one". He keeps both bottles and reads the insert. The senior is annoyed. The patient lives. The doubter here is not an enemy of science. He is doing it with a torch and a label.

One stand

Science is not a priesthood of certainty. It is a habit of checking - including the file we wrote ourselves. Write to separate honest doubt from the sneer that nothing can be known.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Doubter:** one who asks for evidence, replication, a second instrument.
- **True man of Science:** method, not a white coat. Women of science included - do not freeze the wording into a boys' club; note it once.
- **Cousin:** Popper - a claim that cannot be risked is not science.

Self

- We doubt the other side's numbers and bless our own. That is colour, not science.
- A student who only memorizes a key is not a doubter; she is a passenger.

Lab and public reason

- **Clinical trial, monsoon model, a failed rocket:** error as data.
- **Peg:** vaccine science in COVID - doubt the rumour, not the method; still audit adverse events.

Society

- **Superstition and miracle-cures:** doubt as public health.
- **Also:** doubt the advertisement in the lab coat.

State

- **CAG, EIA public hearing, an independent statistician:** doubt built into offices.
- A government that calls every question "anti-national" has left science.

Digital

- A forwarded "study" without a journal is not doubt; it is mud.
- Fact-check is slow science in a fast pond.

The counter

Endless doubt can be a tactic to delay a carbon rule or a vaccine. Industry manufactures uncertainty. The scientific doubter settles provisionally and acts. The cynic never leaves the armchair.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** keep the second bottle and the second instrument. Feynman's "first, do not fool yourself" is the ethic. Expand each heading - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page —

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/the-doubter-is-a-true-man-of-science/>

Q5 · 125 marks

Social media is triggering 'Fear of Missing Out' amongst the youth, precipitating depression and loneliness.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a 1 a.m. hostel corridor. Stand:** FOMO is designed; youth pay in mood.
- **Headings:** self, market, society, state, then one counter.

Earn one thinker once. Peg DPDP or a health line, not fake decimals.

Close on attention as a commons.

Note

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

Anecdote

- **A hostel corridor at 1 a.m.:** four screens, four lives that look fuller than the room. No one has gone out. Everyone has missed something. The topic names the product - Fear of Missing Out - and the bill: depression and loneliness among the young.

One stand

- **FOMO is not a character flaw. It is an engine:** infinite scroll, metrics, a market that sells belonging. Write to blame the design as well as the habit, and still keep a door open for real friendship.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **FOMO:** anxiety that others are living a better reel.
- **Youth:** students, first jobs, migrants in cities - identity still forming.
- **Depression and loneliness:** not slang; health outcomes. Do not diagnose the examiner. Show mechanism.

Self

- Comparison is older than the phone; the phone made it 24-hour and ranked.
- **Sleep, body image, exam panic:** the personal desert.

Market and design

- **Notifications, streaks, "others are online":** engineered restlessness.
- **Influencer economy:** luxury as artificial poverty (cousin of the **Socrates** line).

Society

- The feed is a crowd that does not return a favour. **Durkheim**'s anomie in a new dress.
- Family WhatsApp can be care or surveillance; name both.

State and school

- **Digital Personal Data Protection, IT Rules, school phone policies:** clumsy, necessary experiments.

- **Public parks, libraries, sport:** offline commons so missing out is not the only fear.

The counter

The same tools organise a protest, a study group, a job, a queer youth's first safe room. Ban-as-solution is a desert. The essay fails if it only scolds. Demand design that does not harvest panic, and skills to leave the corridor.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** treat attention like water - public, limited, easy to poison. Raise a floor of offline life; regulate the engine; do not preach sainthood to a nineteen-year-old. Expand in the hall; this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/social-media-is-triggering-fear-of-missing-out-amongst-the-youth-precipitating-depression-and-loneliness/>

Q6 · 125 marks

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but to test the character, give him power.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a new chair and a stamp pad. Stand:** power is the real exam.
- **Headings:** self, society, office, politics, then one counter.

Earn Lincoln and Acton or Ambedkar. Peg Arts. 14/32, not a dump.

Close on limits plus needed power.

Note

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

Anecdote

- **A new chair in a block office:** yesterday the same man waited in the same queue. Today the peon stands. Adversity he had already passed - a failed year, a sick parent. The test that has just begun is the stamp pad in his drawer.

One stand

Most of us can survive a blow. Character is what we do when we can blow others. Write to keep power under law, and still admit that some power is needed to protect.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Adversity:** exam, poverty, defeat - a test of endurance.
- **Power:** office, money, following, a gun, a majority.
- **Lincoln (as traditionally given):** the second test is the real one. Acton's cousin: power tends to corrupt.

Self

- A promotion that thins listening is the desert after the forest of struggle.
- Privilege that never met adversity can also fail the test - softness is not virtue if it never had a choice.

Society

- **Caste and gender:** who has always had a small empire at home. The line is not only about CM chairs.

State and office

- **Discretion in a file, a transfer, a tender:** character as procedure - noting, reason, appeal.
- **Peg:** Articles 14, 32, CAG, a free press - the republic's way of not trusting the saint in the chair.

Politics

- A movement born in jail can become a patronage machine. Adversity was the brand; power is the audit.

The counter

Power is not original sin. A collector who uses it to open a fair-price shop is passing the test. Ambedkar wanted the depressed classes to have power, then to bind it with constitutional morality. The quote tests character; it does not preach helplessness.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** keep the queue in the mind when you hold the stamp. Limits, audit, and a habit of stepping down are character in public. Expand each heading - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/nearly-all-men-can-stand-adversity-but-to-test-the-character-give-him-power/>

Q7 · 125 marks

All ideas having large consequences are always simple.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with wash-hands on a blackboard. Stand:** simple core, unsimple labour.
- **Headings:** science, constitution, economy, culture, then one counter.

Earn **Gandhi** or **Ambedkar** once. Peg UPI or salt, not a dump.

Close on seed plus forest.

Note

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

Anecdote

- **A teacher writes on a village blackboard:** wash hands. Cholera does not care for a white paper. A century of germ theory sat inside five letters. The line says the ideas that move history are usually that plain - and then we spend decades making them real.

One stand

- **What changes a people is often a short claim:** one person one vote; need not greed; the earth is not a warehouse. Write the simple core, then show the unsimple labour of institutions.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Simple:** few moving parts, sayable, memorable.
- **Large consequences:** law, market, war, a new common sense.
- **Not:** every slogan is deep. A simple lie also travels.

Science and daily life

- **Germs, vaccines, boiling water:** simple ideas, vast death averted.
- **Occam:** do not multiply entities - cousin, not a lecture.

Politics and constitution

- "One person, one vote, one value" - **Ambedkar**'s fight was to keep the sentence from being hollow.
- **Salt:** **Gandhi**'s idea was walkable. The empire was not simple; the idea was.

Economy

- **UPI:** pay like a message. Simple for the user; years of public rail behind it.
- "Markets allocate" is simple; 2008 showed the footnote was not optional.

Culture

- **Ahimsa as a public idea:** simple to say, costly to practise.

The counter

Some truths are complex (climate models, a tax code, a language). Do not beat experts with "keep it simple" as anti-intellectualism. And simple hatred (a rumour about a community) also has large consequences. The essay must refuse that simplicity.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** find the sentence a child could repeat, then build the office that makes it true. Simple is the seed; the forest is still work. Expand in the hall - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/all-ideas-having-large-consequences-are-always-simple/>

WRAP Exams

Q8 · 125 marks

The cost of being wrong is less than the cost of doing nothing.

Essay · 2024 · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Revision summary

Not a full essay - a map.

- **Open with a delayed drain and a June flood. Stand:** freeze can cost more than a correctable error.
- **Headings:** self, science, state, climate, then one counter.

Earn one line on action; peg Stern or a disaster drill.

Close on move-measure-correct.

Note

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

Anecdote

A junior engineer delays a drain because the drawing might be wrong. June arrives. The lane floods. The drawing had a mistake; the delay had a body count. The line says the cheaper bill is often the wrong step you can still correct - not the pose of never moving.

One stand

Doing nothing is also a decision. Write to prefer reversible, checked action over vanity of purity - and still refuse reckless harm. The cost of a wrong is real; the cost of a freeze can be larger.

Heading map

What the line is asking

- **Cost of being wrong:** apology, a patch, a lost year, a bad tender.
- **Cost of doing nothing:** a flood, a missed vaccine window, a child out of school, a heating planet.
- **Stake:** bias to action with a brake, not bravado.

Self

- **A letter unsent, an apology delayed:** small freezes that become character.
- **UPSC panic:** not starting a paper is a perfect score of zero.

Science and enterprise

- A failed rocket is data; a programme never funded is a desert.
- **Start-ups and labs:** error as method (cousin of the doubter essay).

State

- 1991: the cost of waiting on the licence raj. Also: a badly written farm law - wrong can be expensive. Distinguish haste from action.
- Disaster drills vs a file pending till the cyclone.

Planet

- **Climate:** every year of "more study" is emissions in the bank. Stern: the cost of inaction.

The counter

Some nothing is wisdom (the muddy-water wait; a judge's reserved order). Some wrongs are irreversible (a demolished home, a sterilisation camp, a shot fired). The line is for reversible arenas and known duties. It is not a licence to gamble with the poor.

Last paragraph

- **Close:** move, measure, correct. Keep a brake for the irreversible. A civil servant's courage is a dated file with reasons, not a frozen tray. Expand each heading - this is only the map.

Open WRAP page — <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/essay/2024/the-cost-of-being-wrong-is-less-than-the-cost-of-doing-nothing/>

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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