

TOK Assessments: TOK RLS / journal entries

Description of task:

- Students should write journal extracts, each numbering **300-400 words**.
- These should describe concisely and clearly a **real life situation (RLS)** that has interested them, and why they think it is significant (important, has implications, will affect lots of people)
- They should mention questions that the RLS leads them on to ask
- They should try to use the **language of TOK** as much as possible, identifying ways of knowing and/or areas of knowledge that are related to their RLSs
- They should also explain how by viewing the RLS through a **perspective** other than their own (in terms of culture, religion, historical perspective, gender, etc., etc.), we might gain a different understanding and interpretation of the event or situation.
- Students should choose two different entries from the following types of RLSs: a **cultural experience** (music, film, book, etc.), a **news event** (as topical as possible), a **personal experience** (outside school), or a **learning experience** (inside school).

How should you write your journal entries?

Choose a 'real life situation' (RLS) that interests you (see the 4 categories)

Briefly describe it

Explain how it relates to any of the ways of knowing and/or areas of knowledge

Mention the questions it prompts you to ask (don't explore these in much detail)

Explain how these questions might be viewed in a different way, according to your perspective

Mention why the RLS is significant (ie, important, interesting, worthy of consideration)

Include your own opinions and ideas

	Level 5 Excellent	Level 4 Good	Level 3 Satisfactory	Level 2 Basic	Level 1 Elementary	Level 0 Irrelevant
TOK grade	9-10	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2	0
School grade	19-20	17-18	13-16	9-12	1-8	0
	<p>1. Both RLSs are compelling and highly original</p> <p>2. Both RLSs are described clearly and concisely.</p> <p>3. Both RLSs are linked to more than one AOKs/WOKs</p> <p>4. The significance of both the RLSs are explained</p> <p>5. Explained how both the RLSs could be viewed via different perspectives.</p>	<p>1. At least one RLS is interesting and original</p> <p>2. At least one of the RLSs is described clearly.</p> <p>3. One of the RLSs is linked to more than one AOKs/WOKs</p> <p>4. The significance of both the RLSs is mentioned</p> <p>5. Mentioned how one of the RLSs could be viewed via different perspectives.</p>	<p>1. Both RLSs are obvious and common</p> <p>2. Both RLSs are described briefly or unclearly</p> <p>3. Both RLSs are linked to one AOK or WOK</p> <p>4. The significance of one of the RLSs is mentioned</p> <p>5. No consideration of perspectives is included.</p>	<p>1. The RLSs are ineffective, and do not lead onto any questions</p> <p>2. It is hard to explain the RLS, as the description is unclear.</p> <p>3. One RLS is linked to one AOK or WOK; the other is not linked</p> <p>4. The significance of the RLSs is not mentioned</p> <p>5. No consideration of perspectives is included.</p>	<p>1. The RLSs are hypothetical or made-up</p> <p>2. Neither RLS is linked to a specific AOK or WOK</p> <p>3. The significance of the RLSs is not mentioned</p> <p>4. No consideration of perspectives is included.</p>	Failed to reach level 1
	<p><i>Their assessment is:</i></p> <p>Individual Compelling Insightful Sophisticated Lucid</p>	<p><i>Their assessment is:</i></p> <p>Credible Analytical Organised Pertinent Coherent</p>	<p><i>Their assessment is:</i></p> <p>Relevant Adequate Acceptable Predictable</p>	<p><i>Their assessment is:</i></p> <p>Underdeveloped Basic Superficial Derivative</p>	<p><i>Their assessment is:</i></p> <p>Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent Formless</p>	

Exemplar real life situation: Diagnosing Trump

My real life situation was reported in Vox magazine (see [this link](#)), and is about the way in which psychologists are currently debating the mental state of Donald Trump. Several psychologists - the article mentions John Gartner, a clinical psychologist and former Johns Hopkins professor - have made guesses about whether he suffers from certain dangerous personality traits (such as narcissism). Others - such as Allen Frances, a professor emeritus at Duke University - have argued that you can't diagnose patients 'from a distance', and that to properly apply methods of psychology, you need to interview the person, and analyse them in a one-on-one environment. Frances also believes that mental illnesses are overdiagnosed.

This real life situation prompts me to ask various questions related to the human sciences (psychology is a 'human science'), such as the extent to which we draw on speculation (or 'educated guesses') to gain knowledge, what the ethical boundaries should be for psychologists. It seems that psychiatrists have strict rules about this sort of thing (known as the 'Goldwater' rule), so why don't psychologists? Does this prove that they are not as rigorous about their profession? If people in the same profession disagree so radically about both their conclusions, and how they arrive at a conclusion, does this undermine how much we can trust knowledge within that profession?

This article is also very interesting about the way our political perspectives affect the way we seek scientific knowledge. It seems that people who are very anti-Trump, which is a very common position in the scientific world, are keen to draw on these psychological evaluations to attack him. In other words, our political beliefs can affect the questions we ask in the human sciences, and how we go about answering those questions. This is very important, as it shows how biased knowledge can lead us astray when we try to understand the world.

Although I understand why Trump causes such strong feelings, I believe that we must be careful when we apply scientific methods to understanding him (or other people), and remain objective and free from bias. No matter what we want to believe, we should only base our judgements - particularly ones that are related to science - on strong evidence that we can prove conclusively.