

# Tok essay can we trust our emotions in the pursuit of knowledge?

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Grade awarded: B Criterion A6 Criterion B7 Criterion C6 Criterion D7 Total26

This is a good essay. Despite some localized difficulties (for example, lines 10–11, confusion with the truth tests, line 76, error with “a priori”) there is some sense of personal engagement and the essay does consistently identify relevant knowledge issues. Criterion A: Understanding knowledge issues Mark awarded: 6 The essay is consistently relevant to the title and there is evidence of real ambition and some attempt to use profound ideas (specifically Godel’s ideas (lines 20–26) and the evolutionary ideas of lines 96–97).

However, the ideas are not always used effectively; there is clearly some understanding but it falls short of a “good” understanding. In particular, there is awareness that the idea of “truth” is problematic (for example, the introduction and lines 18–19) and its meaning is explored in different areas of knowledge (mathematics, art, history, ethics, religion) and everyday events (the Iraq war, the table), but the handling of the issue is uneven and at times inconsistent. Criterion B: Knower’s perspective Mark awarded: 7

The essay has a clear student voice, starting with an engaging introduction which understands—but is not prepared to countenance—total skepticism; despite the clumsy formulation (lines 4–5) one senses an awareness of alternative perspectives and a personal stand. The examples are appropriate, varied and reasonably effective (for example, lines 31–33, the gamelan; lines 20–26, a brave, if not entirely successful, attempt to concisely explain Godel’s ideas; lines 51–55, Texan law; lines 56–75, Iraq; lines 39–41, Hiroshima and Nagasaki).

The quality and quantity show that the student can independently link the ideas to personal, academic and real-life situations, and are a strong feature of this essay. Criterion C: Quality of analysis of knowledge issues Mark awarded: 6 The analysis of issues is weaker than their identification, and the precise links between “context” and “truth” are not specified (for example, the examples of the gamelan and Dawkins are both potentially rich but undeveloped).

While there is a sense of exploring the idea of truth in different contexts, the inquiry lacks depth and detail, and some conclusions are not adequately supported (for example, line 18, the conclusion “However... contexts” is supported by examples from non-mathematical contexts; line 13, “make four because...” is an apparently unaware argument from authority; lines 20–26, Godel’s ideas are not used adequately; lines 28–30, “Perceptions... view and place” is asserted rather than argued for).

It might be argued that the extensive treatment of the Iraq war, while certainly showcasing the student’s perspective on the issue, might be somewhat polemical rather than carefully argued. Claims of “emotive language, colourful... fallacies” (lines 67–68) are not elaborated upon and, in the overall picture of the essay, this example seems to contradict the overall conclusion that “Margaret Atwood was right when she said that context is all” (line 101). Criterion D: Organization of ideas