

Critical Thinking Task – example text and preparation questions 2

EXAMPLE TEXT	EXAMPLE PREPARATION QUESTIONS
<p>The greatest wave of social change that has most affected the entire Western world over the past three decades is without a doubt what sociologist Patrick Sharkey has called 'the great crime decline'. The term refers to the disappearance from big cities of street crime. But what is difficult to understand is that no one seems to praise it or even to accept it as a reality! This is odd indeed as, in most big cities, it is easy to see that safe spaces such as parks, pedestrian walks or pathways and street food market halls have been created to be enjoyed by all, and to support a peaceful public life. The quality of life has improved dramatically, particularly for the most vulnerable and for the elderly.</p> <p>But we take the great street crime decline for granted! Some politicians even pretend it isn't happening at all and keep campaigning against crime where in fact it almost doesn't exist! Consequently, the 'fear factor' has in fact increased: according to a recent survey, many people believe that about a quarter of the population will become victims of street crime in the next year, whereas street crime statistics show that it is only about one per cent. In other words, although we think we will be victims of attacks, we are in fact more likely to die of heart disease, cancer, or non-infectious airways disease. Furthermore, those with the greatest fear of street crime, namely the elderly, are the least likely to be affected, since most victims are young men. Of course, some degree of worry may be good to help people be more cautious and vigilant, especially when travelling in different neighbourhoods or different cities. But, for the most part, this fear will be counter productive as it will damage their wellbeing and bring about feelings of personal risk and anxiety.</p> <p>This general lack of understanding must be the fault of the media: on main national channels, it is estimated that crime accounts for one quarter of the news coverage. The media seem to have no interest in reporting on peaceful streets and happy neighbours because they believe no one really cares about good news. Increasing numbers of television programmes even show re-enactments of crimes and add to people's fears about street crime by making it seem more common than it is. In addition, so-called 'historical' shows are increasingly made and always focus on violence, wars, and crimes in general. It is time that we simply stopped making such programmes.</p>	<p>Before you start thinking about these questions, make sure you have read through the text carefully and understood it well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Explain in your own words what are the results of the survey about violent crime mentioned in the text.<input type="checkbox"/> Suggest a reason not given in the passage that explains the gap between actual crime and fear of crime.<input type="checkbox"/> Without using the passage, describe three factors that may have helped lower the street crime rate in Western countries.<input type="checkbox"/> The author suggests there are some positive aspects in fearing street crime. Do you agree?<input type="checkbox"/> Do you think that making the media responsible for people's misunderstandings is fair? Do the media have a lot of influence in your country? Why or why not?<input type="checkbox"/> Without using the passage, suggest a reason why (1) old people are most afraid of attack; and (2) young men are most likely to be attacked.<input type="checkbox"/> What reasons could politicians have to warn people against crime when it is in fact declining?<input type="checkbox"/> The author suggests that we prefer watching reports on crime and violence rather than 'good news'. Do you agree?