

Part 3: Exam practice

Questions 1–9

Match each item 1–9 with the correct group A–D. You can use any letter more than once.

- 1 people feel safe here
- 2 these exist in different forms
- 3 people support each other
- 4 it is difficult to say exactly what they are
- 5 they have a lot to offer their members
- 6 people can do things on a bigger scale
- 7 the members meet up in person
- 8 people are prepared to take on other people's responsibilities
- 9 people are strangers

This is true for:

- A all communities
- B traditional communities
- C none of the mentioned communities

The importance of community

'Community' is not a concept that is easy to define. In this essay, I will examine what transforms individuals into a community, and discuss some different types. I will also look at what all communities have in common, the benefits they offer and draw conclusions about their increasing importance.

The word 'community' may trigger images of traditional communities in the developing world, where large families live together. Elderly parents live with their children and grandchildren in one house. Parents have relative freedom: if they leave the house there is always someone left behind to look after their children. If it is their own parents who need to support, their older children can take care of this. We may also imagine the neighbours as people who are happy to help out whenever it is needed. The stereotypical view is that of a village, where people have little but can feel very rich because everyone takes responsibility for the welfare of the others.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are other types of communities: ultra-modern ones, where the community members are unlikely to have actually met each other. These are online communities, where people blog or chat about particular issues that are important to them. They come across others on websites and may

develop a relationship there with like-minded people, discussing the same topics. The view is often that these are artificial bonds between people who are, in effect, still isolated strangers.

In reality, of course, this is not true, as the connections are real. Moreover, there are many types of communities in between these extremes: people who join sports and leisure clubs, who sign up with voluntary, political, religious or other organizations, who attend events such as coffee mornings (e.g. fundraising circles, mother and baby groups), or who take part in group discussions in their local area. They may be campaigning about issues or simply getting together for companionship and support.

Human beings are social by nature, so it should not be a surprise that we organize ourselves in groups. However, there is more going on: these groups provide something that we cannot achieve on our own. The main benefit of being part of a larger group is strength in numbers. For example, we can access and share more information, we can take part in team sports, we can complain and campaign more effectively and even if we are just having a chat, online or in person, we can feel supported in whatever we do.

The stereotypical views of the happy village and the isolated computer users may not be completely true, but what we do know is that whatever forms communities take, what defines them is the sense of identity and security that they provide for their members: the knowledge that there are people who we have something in common with and who can be relied on to be there when we need each other.

Progress check

How many boxes can you tick? You should work towards being able to tick them all.

Did you ...

identify the key words in the statements?

look for paraphrases in the text?

scan the text to find the right section?