

Problem/Solution/Evaluation Essay: Sample & Tasks

Tasks (Part 1)

Before you read the sample essay (below), answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think Earth is sometimes called ‘The Blue Planet’?

2. Where does the UAE get most of its water from?

3. Compare your lifestyle with that of your grandparents. Do you think that you use more water now than people did a hundred years ago? Why?

4. Why are logos like this used in many countries? Who produces them?



5. Try to work out the correct statistics below (use Google to do some online investigating!):

		Answers	Options
A	The percentage of Earth covered in water		600%
B	The percentage of Earth’s water that is fresh	2.5 %	Less than 1%
C	Fresh water that is accessible		70%
D	Increase in the world’s population since 1900		2.5 %
E	Increase of water use since 1900		70%
F	People in world who do not have clean water		100%
G	The percentage of water used in UAE that comes from desalination		10%

Sample Essay

Read the essay and:

- Underline the key words in the question.
- Check your answers above
- Identify the topic of each of the five paragraphs

Prompt: **Describe the problem of the global water shortage and evaluate two possible solutions.**

Throughout the globe and on every continent there are people who are currently suffering from water shortage. Although more than 70 per cent of Earth's surface is covered by water, only 2.5 percent is fresh water and of this small amount, only 1% is accessible (i.e., not locked up in the ice caps, for example) (National Geographic, 2016). The water that is lacking is fresh water - essential for drinking, growing food and keeping clean. It is essential yet a recent report stated that 1.2 billion people live in areas without enough water (United Nations, 2015). Governments and world organizations are concerned by the current effects of this problem and also because the demand for fresh water is increasing. The aim of this essay is to describe the problem of the global water shortage and to evaluate two possible solutions.

One of the main causes of the global water shortage **is^a** the increase in demand, while **the main effects include^b** inadequate living conditions, and fears of future inadequate food supplies worldwide. Demand for fresh water has grown because world population has doubled since 1900 and is now calculated to be 7.5 billion people and it is estimated to continue to rise to 9 billion by 2050 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015). However, it is not just the number of people that has increased. Research suggests that the changes in lifestyle, especially in developed countries, means that individuals now use six times more water than a hundred years ago (Every Little Drop, 2010). Changes in people's diet, for example eating more meat and less starch, demands much more water. In fact, producing one kilo of beef needs 15,000 litres of water, while one kilo of rice requires 3,500 litres (World Water Development Report, 2012). **The current effects of the** global water shortage **are^c** more obvious in some parts of the world than others. According to a report in 2015, one in ten people in the world do not have access to safe water (UNICEF, 2015). Other research calculates that currently, around the world, 900 children under 5 years of age die every day because of diseases connected with dirty water (WHO, 2014). Fears about the future effects of this problem include our ability to grow enough food to meet demand for a growing world population.

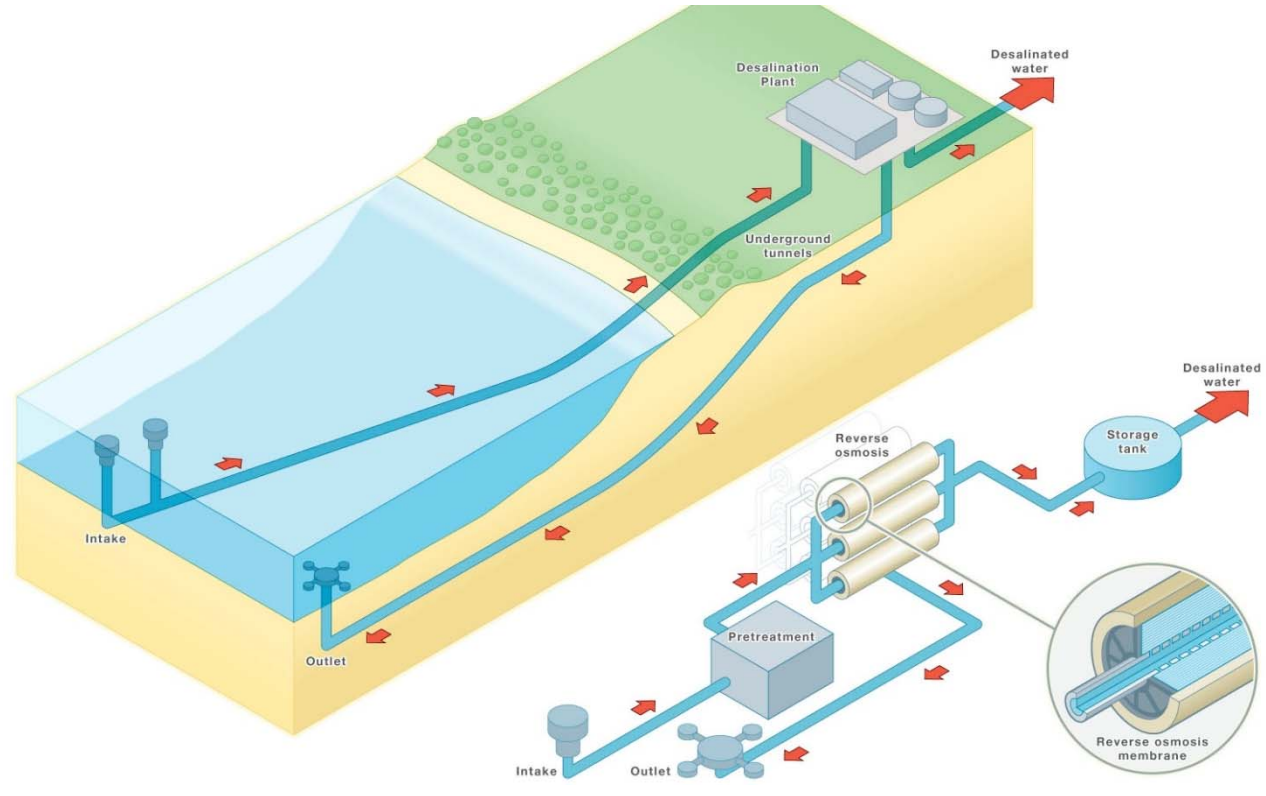
One possible solution to this problem that is currently being used **is^d** the creation of more fresh water from sea water via 'desalination'. This is the process of removing salt from seawater by heating it. According to the International Desalination Association (2016), there are 17,000 desalination plants in 150 countries. Seventy percent of these plants are in the Gulf (Barton, 2015). In the UAE, for example, between 60% and 70% per cent of the water supply is desalinated (UAE Pages General Guide, n.d.). **However,** desalination **has** two major drawbacks^e it is expensive and causes environmental damage to the sea and the atmosphere. It is an expensive process because it requires large amounts of fossil fuel. In addition, the fuel

used is usually oil and this produces carbon dioxide, adding to pollution and global warming. Furthermore, the salt removed from the water is then put back into the sea, increasing the salinity of the coastal waters, which has a damaging effect on the sea life and the eco-system.

Another possible solution to the water shortage problem is to ^f conserve the fresh water which already exists. In order to do this, governments could encourage the public to reduce their domestic use of water by means of public awareness campaigns, for example by using posters and announcements via mass and social media. **Measures such as** these **have been successful** ^g, for example, in reducing the numbers of people smoking around the world. In addition, new laws could be introduced to encourage people to use less water. The government in the UAE, for example, has started charging people for their domestic use of water. It is hoped that this will reduce the amount of water that households use. **However, one criticism of this policy is that it** ^h may not be very effective if, as experts fear, the charge is too small (Solomon, 2014).

To sum up, this essay has described the problem of the global water shortage and has evaluated two solutions. In summary, it has shown that the problem is mainly caused by increased demand for fresh water (from increased population and changes in lifestyle) and the effects include disease and a lack of food security for future generations. In addition, it has described two possible solutions: desalination and conservation. However, it was pointed out that desalination can be both expensive and damaging to the environment. A second solution of conservation via public awareness campaigns and charges for domestic use was described. However, it was shown that these may not be equally effective. In my opinion, measures are urgently needed that will make the public more aware of their personal use of water and of the effects of this problem. Further research into solar energy for desalination would potentially help make the process less environmentally damaging.

Figure 1. The desalination process



Tasks (Part 2)

Now that you have read the sample essay (above), answer the following questions.

1. What is the main **cause** for the global water shortage problem?

2. What two things are increasing the demand for fresh water?

3. Is this a current problem, a future problem, or both? Why?

4. What do you think is the worst effect of the problem?

5. What two **drawbacks** of desalination are described in paragraph 3?

6. Does the writer of the essay **evaluate** the use of **public awareness campaigns** positively or negatively?

In the sentence with the following: *“desalination has two major drawbacks ...”* which of the following are synonyms of ‘drawback’?

- Shortcomings
- Evaluations
- Criticisms
- Disadvantages
- Limitations
- Issues

Citations are used for

- (i) Giving statistics / data,
- (ii) Describing research / studies and
- (iii) Giving the opinion of experts.

Find the citations in paragraph 3 and 4 and decide why each is used

- 1. Citation: _____ For: _____
- 2. Citation: _____ For: _____
- 3. Citation: _____ For: _____
- 4. Citation: _____ For: _____
- 5. Citation: _____ For: _____
- 6. Citation: _____ For: _____

Re-read the essay and focus on its organisation. Then, complete the table below.

Paragraph	Functions	Options
1	To introduce the essay	To evaluate solution 1
2		To describe solution 1
		To introduce the essay
		To conclude the essay
3		To describe the effects of the problem
		To evaluate solution 2
4		To describe solution 2
5	To conclude the essay	

Some phrases in the essay above are highlighted in **bold blue** and lettered **a-h**. Put the letter in an appropriate column:

Functions	Cause	Effect	Solution	Evaluation
Phrases:	a			

Tasks (Part 3)

Academic writing is very formal. One aspect of this formality is called ‘hedging’. The writer needs to express him or herself very carefully when making statements and assertions. For example, paragraph 4 begins:

“Another possible solution to.....” (NOT “Another solution to the”)

The first is more polite, more *hedged*.

Here are some phrases similar to the ones in the paragraph but they are written in a very **direct** voice.

- (i) Find the similar phrase in the paragraph and write it in the ‘hedged’ column.
- (ii) Highlight the words that make it hedged.

Paragraph	Academic English - <i>hedged</i>	Non-academic English - <i>direct</i>
	Another possible solution is...	Another solution is...
		governments ..., should encourage the public to reduce...
		new laws should be introduced...
		this will reduce
		it will not be very effective if