

## Sample response 2

**Context:** Encountering Conflict

**Text:** *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*

**Prompt:** 'Violent conflict is caused by ignorance and fear.'

**Result:** High

As humans, we are programmed to find comfort in what is familiar and comfortable to us. Therefore, when we lack knowledge or information about something – ignorance – it creates a strong sense of fear. The 'fight' or 'flight' response to fear means that often when we feel fear, we lash out in violence. This is evident in many war and conflict situations throughout the world, as well as sometimes in our personal lives, in extreme conflicts with friends, family or associates.

In a small-scale sense, we see such violence as domestic violence, soccer or football hooliganism and alcohol-fuelled street violence stemming from ignorance and/or fear. Underlying these types of violence is a lack of understanding between groups or individuals who are different in some way from each other. Where people are unable to respect each other's differences, but instead fear them – as the abusive husband fears his wife becoming independent and leaving him, or the aggressive football fan treats fans of the opposing team as foreign 'enemies', or drunken partiers look down on those they perceive as 'weak' – then violence occurs. If we were to step foot inside another person's shoes, like the wise Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird* suggests, we wouldn't be quick to harm them, because we would understand where they are coming from and why they behave as they do.

On a large-scale sense, conflicts such as the 'war on terror' are a direct consequence of fear for national and global security. This violent conflict stems from a strong sense of fear and lack of understanding of terrorist ideologies. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on the United States of America, US President Bush adopted the policy of strategic pre-emption which involves taking a military initiative against a perceived enemy before this threat has had an opportunity to attack. Thus, this was a launching pad for the 'war on terror' which has seen a massive change in the foreign policies of several states and includes several violent conflicts of today. Megan Stack writes evocatively and sadly about such conflicts in her book *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*. In this book, she discusses her experiences in various conflict zones in the Middle East, coming to the conclusion

that there is no rational cause for conflict, only much ignorance and misunderstanding between groups. The ignorance of the rest of the world about the conflict in these war zones also helps perpetuate the violence – many conflicts she describes go on for decades, with little help for the victims because powerful countries who could help are too ignorant about what is going on, and sometimes too afraid of upsetting certain people or states involved in the conflict. Stack begins her own journey quite ignorant but the more she learns and experiences, the greater her compassion becomes and her belief that violence is no answer to conflict and that the war on terror has no unifying impulse but comes out of only different fears and ignorances.

Often these conflicts she witnesses are a result of misunderstanding between races or religions, giving rise to fear for what is different. This sort of fear has had horrific results in history, leading to violence on the basis of racial and cultural difference. Although violence is an extreme response to conflict with devastating and problematic results, it is very commonly used as a means of conflict resolution and almost never has a positive impact, as Stack's book details. This is also evident in the historical racism shown towards Australia's Aboriginal community, as well as in racist societies around the world. The dominant group classifies the minority group as inferior or 'other' and so justifies being violent to them. The minority group then often retaliates with violence, leading to a vicious circle that is clearly linked to fear and ignorance of the unknown other.

Violent conflict, on both a personal and a global level, is a direct result of fear caused by ignorance. As individuals, groups, and states are uninformed about the cultural, ideological, religious or political needs of another party, existing fears turn into hostility and then too often into violent conflicts. The solution is to replace ignorance with understanding and then fear will be replaced with empathy and compassion.

### ASSESSOR COMMENTS

This is a strong piece of writing that demonstrates the student's control in the use of language, their ability to select a style and tone appropriate to their chosen form of an expository essay, and a sound understanding of key ideas related to the prompt.

The student draws in relevant ideas from the selected text *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*. They are able to link these to a wider context, demonstrating an engagement with key 'big ideas' in the Context. They exhibit a depth of thought in their discussion of the role of ignorance and fear in conflict, and they work towards a sound conclusion with the suggestion of a possible solution to the problems of ignorance and fear.

## Sample response 3

**Context:** Encountering Conflict

**Text:** *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*

**Prompt:** 'Violent conflict is caused by ignorance and fear.'

**Result:** Medium-High

### Fighting for Justice

She heard the shrill cry of the starving baby. Another morning. Another endless struggle to fill one's hungry belly. As Aarti struggled to quiet her brother's lifeless cries, she sadly remembered that it had been exactly seven months since she'd voted for the MLA party, full of hope that they'd change her country, Nepal, and her life. However, with each passing day her struggle to nurture a strong belief in change for the better was silently turning into frustration and anger.

"Aarti, don't forget to bring in water from the river! We will start the planting today so I might be late!" the frail, old figure of her father yelled as he hurried off to the farm. Like generations before him, Aarti's father worked for the landlord, slaving away in exchange for a little money that nine of them tried to live on. Times were hard, there was never enough and Aarti patiently dreamt of the day when she too could sleep in warmth and contentment like the few lucky families in her village.

Being part of the untouchable caste, Aarti hurried down to the river with her eyes lowered, head hung slightly lower than those around her. It hadn't taken her long to realise that she would always be a step behind everyone else because of the family into which she was born. But things were about to change. She'd heard about the Maoist rebellion in nearby villages. The guerrilla fighters spoke of equality and an end to corruption to create a society where no one would be ranked on top of each other, where her father would not be kicked and beaten when he couldn't finish the planting – an end to oppression.

As she approached the river, she saw a huge crowd of people yelling and shouting. There was a heightened sense of excitement and tension that silenced even the birds. Scanning a few familiar faces, Aarti called out "What's happening?" A furious young farmer whom she recognised as being Ramesh snarled, "We have to bring an end to the landlord's control and power today! My brother was beaten to death yesterday because he wasn't able to go to the farm. We have to attack their family and force them out of the village! That's the only way we might be able to survive!" She could feel the hatred reverberating out of him, which shook the very heart of his being. "Not only force them out but we have to kill them so other tyrants realise!" someone else shouted. What had happened? The hopeful look on the haggard faces had been replaced by an evil desire to kill to bring about change.

The mob of furious people was like a wave that transported Aarti to the doorsteps of the Thakur family. She could hear herself shouting for justice and equality, could feel the blood throbbing in her veins. They broke into the magnificent estate. Aarti had always believed that heaven would look like just like it. The majestic statues that had always towered over her... the beautiful paintings that told tales of worlds she would never reach... Suddenly, someone started pelting rocks, unleashing the violent fury trapped within each of them. Like a little hole that causes a whole dam to crumble, Aarti fervently destroyed everything she could lay her hands on, forgetting the values of respect her father had spent years instilling in her... screams... heart... tears... everything was spiralling out of control. As the years of pent up fury poured out, Aarti caught a look of herself on a piece of shattered glass. The rage had distorted her face into a reflection that she did not recognise. How had she funnelled down such a path of desperate violence? It was a vicious trap from which she would never be able to reach out. She realised she could not undo what she had done, could not go back from what she had become.

### ASSESSOR COMMENTS

An evocative and well written piece that takes an interesting and original perspective on the ideas in the Context. The student demonstrates strong knowledge of and empathy for Nepalese people such as Aarti. The piece could have been improved by a more explicit link to the focus of the prompt. The link to ideas from the set text is also not sufficiently explicit.