

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph ("Imagine the vast, open ocean..." through "...guise of education.")

Strengths:

- Your opening creates a powerful comparison between the ocean and tanks, which helps readers picture the problem straight away
- You clearly state your main argument at the end of the paragraph, so readers know exactly what your piece is about

Vague position statement → Whilst your thesis appears at the end of the first paragraph, the phrase "fundamentally unethical practice" is quite broad. Your piece would be stronger if you previewed the specific reasons you'll discuss (psychological harm, physical damage, and false education claims). This gives readers a clear map of your argument from the start.

Exemplar: *"Dolphin and whale shows are fundamentally unethical, inflicting severe psychological trauma and physical harm on intelligent beings whilst deceiving the public with false claims of education."*

#2: Third paragraph ("Furthermore, the claim that these performances..." through "...its imitation.")

Strengths:

- Your use of Jean-Michel Cousteau's quote adds expert opinion to support your point
- You clearly explain why the tricks aren't actually teaching people about real animal behaviour

Insufficient counterargument development → You mention that supporters claim these shows are educational, but you don't fully explain *why* people believe this or what specific educational claims the parks make. By explaining the opposing view more thoroughly before you argue against it, your rebuttal becomes much more convincing. Right now, phrases like "deceptive and hollow marketing ploy" appear without first showing readers what exactly is being marketed as educational.

Exemplar: *"Marine parks often claim their shows teach children about marine biology, animal behaviour, and ocean conservation through up-close animal encounters. However, this claim is deceptive because..."*

#3: Fourth paragraph ("Of course, supporters of marine parks..." through "...we claim to protect.")

Strengths:

- You acknowledge the opposing viewpoint respectfully before disagreeing with it, which shows fair thinking
- Your suggestion of better alternatives (documentaries and ethical whale-watching) gives readers positive actions they can take

Underdeveloped solution → Whilst you mention documentaries and whale-watching tours as alternatives, you don't explain *how* these options actually create better conservation outcomes or deeper learning. The phrase "genuine inspiration comes from watching documentaries" needs support. What specifically makes these alternatives more educational? How do they lead to real conservation action? Adding concrete examples or evidence here would strengthen your argument significantly.

Exemplar: *"Documentaries like Blue Planet II show animals hunting, communicating, and caring for their young in natural habitats, teaching viewers about real ecosystems and inspiring conservation efforts—for example, the series led to a 53% increase in people avoiding single-use plastics."*

■Your piece presents a passionate argument with clear structure and strong language that captures attention. The writing flows well from point to point, and you've organised your ideas into logical sections covering psychological harm, physical damage, educational value, and alternatives. However, the content could be deepened in several key areas to make your argument more convincing.

Firstly, your evidence needs more specific detail. When you write about orcas living "barely any past the age of 30" in captivity, adding the actual average age (perhaps 13 years) would make this fact hit harder. Similarly, the claim about swimming "up to 160 kilometres a day" would be stronger if you explained *why* this matters for their wellbeing—perhaps linking it to their need to hunt, explore, or maintain family bonds.

Additionally, your piece would benefit from exploring the complexity of the issue more thoroughly. The paragraph about park supporters provides a good start, but you could strengthen it by genuinely wrestling with difficult questions: What about injured animals that can't survive in the wild? How would closing these parks affect the animals currently living there? Addressing these harder questions shows readers you've thought deeply about all sides.

Also, your conclusion brings together your main points effectively, but the middle sections could connect more clearly to each other. For instance, you could link the physical suffering paragraph to the education paragraph by noting that sick, medicated animals can't possibly teach accurate lessons about healthy wild populations. These connections help readers see how all your points work together as one complete argument.

Overall Score: 45/50

Section 2

#1 Imagine the vast, open ocean: a world of complex currents, intricate social bonds, and boundless freedom. Now, picture a concrete tank, chemically treated and scarcely larger than a puddle for the magnificent creatures condemned to inhabit it. This is the stark reality for the dolphins and whales held captive in marine parks around the globe. While proponents champion these spectacles as educational and vital for conservation, this is a dangerous illusion that we, as a compassionate society, must reject. Dolphin and whale shows are a fundamentally unethical practice, sacrificing the well-being of highly intelligent beings for the sake of profit, all under the thin and crumbling guise of education.

#2 The core of the argument against these shows lies in the profound psychological cruelty of confinement, a truth acknowledged by the consensus of animal welfare experts. Can we truly comprehend what it means to take an animal that evolved to swim up to 160 kilometres a day and imprison it in a tank that is, for an orca, less than one-millionth the size of its natural range? This is not a habitat; it is a barren cell where the lonely echo of their own sonar bounces back at them from concrete walls. Marine biologists have extensively documented that cetaceans possess a level of self-awareness and social complexity rivalled only by great apes and humans. They communicate in sophisticated dialects, form lifelong family bonds, and exhibit culture. To strip them from their pod—their family—and their ocean home is an act of immense psychological violence. The repetitive,

circling motions and the gnawing on concrete gates are not quirks of personality; they are the ~~heart-breaking~~ [heartbreaking] symptoms of zoochosis, a psychological anguish born from the unending stress of their artificial world.

This mental torment is matched only by the devastating physical toll captivity inflicts. The biological evidence is irrefutable: these animals are not built for a life in a shallow pool. A wild female orca can live for over 80 years, a natural lifespan mirroring our own; in captivity, barely any live past the age of 30. Their powerful bodies, designed for the pressures of the deep ocean, begin to break down. The iconic collapsed dorsal fin seen in every single captive adult male orca is not a harmless genetic trait; it is a visible banner of an unnatural life, a deformity virtually unseen in the wild. Their teeth are often drilled, broken, and worn down to the pulp from chewing on gates out of sheer boredom and frustration, leading to a life sentence of chronic pain and recurring infections. We are asking the audience to look past this suffering, to ignore the chlorine burns on their skin and the constant medication required to keep them alive and performing, and for what? A fleeting spectacle.

#3 Furthermore, the claim that these performances are educational is a deceptive and hollow marketing ploy that insults both the animals and the audience. What, precisely, does a child learn from watching a dolphin propel its trainer into the air or an orca wave a flipper on command? As the renowned oceanographer Jean-Michel Cousteau has asserted, these are not natural behaviours; they are circus tricks, taught through the relentless practice of food deprivation. An animal performing for its next meal is not an ambassador for its species; it is a victim. This spectacle teaches a distorted and dangerous lesson: that the world's most majestic creatures are not sentient beings deserving of our respect, but commodities to be controlled and exploited for our entertainment. True education fosters empathy and respect for the wild, not amusement at its imitation.

Of course, supporters of marine parks will argue that these facilities provide a unique opportunity for people to connect with animals they would otherwise never see, igniting a passion for conservation. One might even concede that these parks were founded in a different time, perhaps with genuine, if misguided, intentions of bringing the ocean's wonders to the public. But our modern scientific and ethical understanding has rendered this historical view untenable. The connection formed today with a performing animal is artificial, based on a master-servant dynamic rather than genuine appreciation. If we, as a society, truly wish to inspire the next generation of conservationists, we must choose a more ethical path. Genuine inspiration comes from watching documentaries where animals are observed behaving naturally in their own complex ecosystems, or from supporting ethical whale-watching tours that view these animals with the respect they deserve, in their own home. Funding for conservation should never be reliant upon the suffering of the very creatures we claim to protect.

In the end, the debate comes down to a simple moral question. Does our desire for a few hours of entertainment justify a lifetime of confinement for another intelligent being? The chlorinated water of the tank can never replace the salt of the sea. The applause of a crowd is a poor substitute for the intricate calls of a pod navigating the ocean's depths. It is time for us to evolve our understanding of entertainment and education. We must reject the cruelty masquerading as a family day out and instead champion a new era of conservation built on respect, not subjugation. Let us vote with our wallets and our conscience, demanding that the only stage for a whale or a dolphin is the boundless, blue ocean itself. The splash we should be witnessing is not one in a stadium pool, but the powerful, wild, and free breach of a creature in its rightful home.

Section 1

#1: Opening Paragraph ("We call it a celebration...can a tradition remain valid when its joy is predicated on the terror of others?")

Strengths:

- Your opening immediately grabs attention by contrasting two different views of fireworks—how humans see them versus how animals experience them
- You use strong descriptive phrases like "acoustic trespass" and "manufactured awe" that help readers visualise and understand your argument from the start

Vague Thesis Statement → Whilst your opening paragraph builds tension effectively and introduces the harm to animals, your main argument becomes unclear. You ask "can a tradition remain valid when its joy is predicated on the terror of others?" but this question format makes readers uncertain about your actual position. Are you arguing for complete bans, restrictions, or simply awareness? The paragraph introduces powerful imagery but doesn't clearly tell readers what change you want them to support.

Exemplar: *By the end of this paragraph, you should state directly: "Fireworks should be replaced with quieter alternatives like drone shows and laser displays, which provide the same communal wonder without harming animals."*

#2: Third Paragraph ("The impact is not just on individual creatures...proving our celebrations have consequences that long outlast their momentary flash.")

Strengths:

- You provide specific evidence with the Beebe, Arkansas incident, which makes your argument more believable
- Your explanation connects short-term panic (birds fleeing) with long-term damage (chemical pollution), showing different types of harm

Insufficient Development of Key Evidence → You mention the Arkansas incident where 5,000 birds died, which is shocking, but you don't explain enough about what actually happened to them or why the fireworks caused death rather than just panic. You list chemicals like "strontium, barium, and thyroid-disrupting perchlorates" but don't explain in simple terms what these chemicals do to animals or how they enter the food chain. Your readers need to understand the connection between fireworks going off and these chemicals ending up in soil and water.

Exemplar: *"When fireworks explode, they release chemicals like strontium and barium as dust that falls to the ground. Animals eat plants or drink water containing this dust, and the chemicals build up in their bodies over time, making them sick."*

#3: Fifth Paragraph ("It is, of course, fair to acknowledge...but between a static tradition and an evolving one—one that expands its definition of 'community' to include all who share our world.")

Strengths:

- You fairly acknowledge the opposing view about cultural importance and jobs, which makes your argument more balanced
- Your comparison to old industries like whaling helps readers understand that harmful traditions can and should change

Weak Counterargument Rebuttal → You mention that people depend on fireworks for jobs and cultural identity, but your response doesn't fully address these concerns. Simply saying that harmful industries have been "phased out" doesn't tell readers what happened to those workers or how communities adapted. Your readers might worry: "What about the families who earn money from

fireworks? What will they do instead?" Without addressing these practical concerns more thoroughly, your counterargument seems dismissive rather than convincing.

Exemplar: *"Whilst the fireworks industry employs many people, the growing market for drone light shows and laser displays creates new jobs in technology and design. Cities that have switched to these alternatives, like Banff, still celebrate with the same excitement whilst supporting new businesses."*

■ Your piece tackles an important topic with passion and presents strong examples of animal harm. Your writing flows well from paragraph to paragraph, and you've clearly thought about different angles of the fireworks debate. However, your main weakness is that you don't develop your ideas deeply enough in crucial places. When you introduce powerful evidence like the bird deaths or chemical pollution, you need to explain more clearly how and why these things happen—your readers need to follow the chain of cause and effect. Additionally, your piece would benefit from addressing practical concerns more thoroughly. When you mention people's jobs or cultural traditions, spend more time explaining realistic solutions rather than quickly moving past these worries. Also, consider adding more specific examples of successful alternatives—instead of just mentioning that cities use drone shows, describe what these shows actually look like and how communities responded to them. Your strongest paragraphs are those where you provide concrete details, so apply that same approach throughout your entire piece. Finally, strengthen your conclusion by connecting back to specific solutions you've discussed, reminding readers exactly what action you want them to support.

Overall Score: 44/50

Section 2

Acoustic Trespass: Redefining Celebration in a Shared World

#1 We call it a celebration: a symphony of combustion designed to command the night sky. We see the cascading crimson and blossoming gold, and we hear the concussive booms as the sound of our own joy. But beneath this canopy of manufactured awe, a brutal counter-narrative unfolds on the ground. For the countless non-human inhabitants of our world, our festival becomes an act of acoustic trespass—an invasion of their sensory territory so violent it mimics war. It is the tremour in the bones

of a fox in its den; the frantic, disoriented flight of a nocturnal bird blinded by chemical suns. This annual ritual of disruption confronts us with a profound question: can a tradition remain valid when its joy is predicated on the terror of others?

The violence of these ceremonial explosives is not a matter of opinion; it is written in the language of biology and trauma. The sudden blasts, often exceeding 150 decibels, are a neurological assault on animals whose survival is intricately linked to their hearing. This isn't an abstract risk. For too many families, it becomes the splintered frame of a screen door, a beloved collar found days later by the side of a road. Veterinarians and animal rescue organisations see this reality in stark data, noting a predictable and dramatic spike in calls for lost and injured animals after any major pyrotechnic event. It points to a deep contradiction in our values: we legislate against individual acts of cruelty, yet collectively sanction this widespread, annual terror. This percussive wave radiates outward from our backyards, becoming a form of temporary, yet recurring, ecological warfare.

#2 The impact is not just on individual creatures, but on the delicate systems that sustain them. Wildlife biologists have used weather radar to document the shocking reality of "mass-flight events," where entire bird colonies erupt from their roosts in sheer panic. The tragic incident in Beebe, Arkansas—where over 5,000 birds fell dead from the sky on New Year's Eve following fireworks—is a chilling testament to this phenomenon. The aftermath is a silent poison. Chemical residues, including strontium, barium, and thyroid-disrupting perchlorates, contaminate the soil and water, infiltrating the food web. This fallout is a quiet, insidious legacy, proving our celebrations have consequences that long outlast their momentary flash.

Acknowledging this harm doesn't demand a future of silent, sterile celebrations. In fact, the argument for restriction is also an argument for creative evolution. A truly advanced society measures its progress by its capacity for innovation and empathy, and modern alternatives embody both. Picture the choreographed ballets of drone light shows painting stories across the night, or the sublime beauty of architectural laser displays. Cities from Banff, Canada, to municipalities across Europe have already embraced these solutions, proving that communal wonder can be achieved without sonic aggression. These alternatives aren't a lesser substitute; they are a more intelligent and compassionate choice, championed by a consensus of experts who ask us to align our festivities with our growing knowledge.

#3 It is, of course, fair to acknowledge that for its defenders, fireworks are more than just noise. They are a multi-sensory link to history, a form of communal bonding that reinforces national identity, with entire livelihoods entwined in the tradition. To dismiss this as mere frivolity is to ignore its deep cultural and economic roots. A culture's maturity, however, is measured not by its adherence to the past, but by its willingness to re-examine traditions in the light of new knowledge. ~~While~~ [Whilst]

economic reliance is a valid concern, it has never been a sufficient moral justification for perpetuating harm; history is replete with industries, from whaling to asbestos mining, that were rightly phased out as our ethical circle expanded. Ultimately, the choice is not between tradition and animal welfare, but between a static tradition and an evolving one—one that expands its definition of 'community' to include all who share our world.

Ultimately, the sky is a shared space, and our celebrations should reflect that fundamental truth. The fleeting beauty of a firework is profoundly diminished by the invisible suffering it creates on the ground. When we choose to move beyond this outdated form of celebration, we are not sacrificing a tradition; we are creating a better one. We are choosing to innovate, to show compassion, and to ~~recognize~~ [recognise] that the measure of a truly joyful celebration is not how loudly it bursts upon the sky, but how quietly it respects the world below.

Section 1

#1: Opening Paragraph

- **Strengths:** Your opening grabs attention with clear examples (coffee cup, cigarette butt) that readers can picture easily. You explain why littering matters by giving three clear reasons: it harms the environment, costs money, and shows people don't care about their community.
- **Underdeveloped Thesis Statement** → Your main argument appears at the end of the paragraph, but it tries to say too many things at once. The phrase "integrate robust enforcement with proactive education and improved public infrastructure to foster a genuine and permanent cultural shift" contains four separate ideas bundled together. This makes it hard for readers to remember your main point as they read through your piece. A stronger thesis would prioritise which solution matters most or explain how these parts connect to each other.

Exemplar: *"Whilst stricter penalties send an important message about consequences, they will only create lasting change when combined with education programmes that teach people why littering harms everyone and better bins that make it easy to do the right thing."*

#2: Third Paragraph (Beginning with "Beyond these philosophical quandaries...")

- **Strengths:** You provide three specific problems with only using punishments (enforcement is hard, fines affect rich and poor people differently, and fear doesn't create real change). Your point about surveillance is thought-provoking—you help readers understand that true cleanliness comes from people caring, not just avoiding fines.
- **Unclear Supporting Logic** → Your three problems don't build on each other in a clear way. You jump from talking about enforcement difficulties to fairness concerns to motivation without showing how these connect. The phrase "fear of punishment cultivates extrinsic motivation" introduces a new concept (extrinsic vs intrinsic motivation) without explaining what these terms mean. Younger readers or those unfamiliar with these ideas might get lost here. Your paragraph would be stronger if you explained each problem more fully before moving to the next one.

Exemplar: *"Without enough officers patrolling streets, even harsh fines become meaningless threats. Additionally, when we do catch litterers, a \$500 fine punishes a struggling family far more severely than it punishes a wealthy businessperson, creating an unfair system."*

#3: Fourth Paragraph (Beginning with "Ultimately, lasting change necessitates...")

- **Strengths:** You support your solution with real proof—the NSW "Return and Earn" scheme that reduced drink container litter by over 50%. This specific evidence makes your argument much more convincing than just sharing opinions.
- **Insufficient Connection Between Ideas** → You list three solutions (education, better bins, and reward schemes) but don't explain how they work together or why you need all three. The sentence "By inculcating a generational ethic of stewardship through school curricula and compelling public awareness campaigns, we can address the issue at its source" sits separately from your point about bins, and then the Return and Earn example appears without showing how it relates to the education you just mentioned. Your readers might wonder: Should we do all three at once? In what order? Which one matters most?

Exemplar: *"Education creates the foundation by teaching children why clean spaces matter, whilst accessible bins remove the excuse that 'there was nowhere to throw it'. Additionally, reward schemes like Return and Earn give people a positive reason to participate, turning the right choice into an easy and beneficial one."*

■ Your piece tackles an important topic and shows you can build a persuasive argument with multiple viewpoints. You've included the opposing side (the "nanny state" concern) which makes your writing more balanced and fair. Your use of real evidence, particularly the NSW scheme, strengthens your credibility significantly. However, your writing would benefit from clearer connections between your ideas. Right now, each paragraph presents good points, but they feel somewhat separate from each other. Try using more linking sentences that show how one idea leads to the next. For example, after discussing why punishments alone don't work, you could write: "Because fines have these limitations, we must look beyond punishment to find lasting solutions." Additionally, your conclusion could be stronger by briefly restating your three main solutions in order of importance. This would help readers remember your key message. Consider simplifying some of your longer sentences—your ideas are strong, so they don't need complicated wording to impress readers. Focus on making each point crystal clear before moving to the next one.

Overall Score: 45/50

Section 2

#1 The Stick and the Carrot: A Calculated Approach to Civic Responsibility

The casual toss of a coffee cup or the thoughtless flick of a cigarette butt—these seemingly minor acts coalesce into an insidious blight on our society. Litter is not merely an aesthetic inconvenience; it is an environmental scourge, an egregious fiscal burden, and a palpable symptom of civic apathy. The question of whether to make penalties for this behaviour more stringent is, therefore, not a simple matter of punitive justice, but a deeper inquiry into how we cultivate a conscientious citizenry. While stricter penalties are an indispensable component of an effective strategy, they are a blunt instrument if wielded in isolation. A truly successful approach must integrate robust enforcement with proactive education and improved public infrastructure to foster a genuine and permanent cultural shift.

The foundational principle for increasing penalties rests on the potent concept of deterrence. For a penalty to be effective, it must outweigh the perceived impunity of the transgression. Currently, fines in many jurisdictions are perfunctory, representing a token reprimand that fails to ~~commensurate~~ [be commensurate] with the gravity of the problem. The cost of cleansing our public spaces is immense, a burden borne by all taxpayers. By instituting substantially higher fines or mandatory community service, the state promulgates an unequivocal message: littering is an anti-social act with serious consequences. This approach, famously effective in highly regulated environments like Singapore, transforms a thoughtless habit into a calculated risk, fundamentally altering the calculus of the potential offender.

~~Conversely, a significant counterargument posits that a punitive-centric escalation represents an incipient slide into an overbearing 'nanny state' and may prove economically untenable.~~ [However, a significant counterargument posits that a punitive-centric escalation represents an incipient slide into an overbearing 'nanny state' and may prove economically untenable.] Proponents of this view argue that while littering is undesirable, applying draconian financial sanctions is a disproportionate response that infringes upon personal liberties. This perspective suggests the state's role is to facilitate, not to coerce compliance through intimidation. Furthermore, from a pragmatic standpoint, this approach faces the law of diminishing returns. The immense cost required for a considerable deployment of enforcement officers could far outweigh the fiscal benefits accrued from fines. In this light, a strategy focused solely on punishment is not only philosophically dubious but also fiscally imprudent.

#2 Beyond these philosophical quandaries, a myopic focus on punitive measures is fraught with pragmatic impediments that fail to address the underlying issue. Firstly, the efficacy of any penalty is rendered nugatory if enforcement is perceived as improbable. Without a substantial increase in resources, even the severest fines become an empty threat. Secondly, a system predicated on fines can be profoundly inequitable; a significant financial blow to one individual may be a triviality to another. Most importantly, fear of punishment cultivates extrinsic motivation—the avoidance of a fine—rather than the intrinsic motivation born of environmental stewardship. A society that remains clean only under surveillance is not truly clean; it is merely well-policed.

#3 Ultimately, lasting change necessitates a multifaceted, synergistic strategy that embeds stricter penalties within a holistic framework. Education is the veritable cornerstone of prevention. By inculcating a generational ethic of stewardship through school curricula and compelling public awareness campaigns, we can address the issue at its source. Concurrently, we must remove barriers to responsible disposal. It is unreasonable to expect compliance in areas bereft of accessible, well-maintained public receptacles. The success of positive reinforcement mechanisms like NSW's "Return and Earn" scheme—which has demonstrably contributed to a reduction of over 50% in eligible drink container litter—provides a powerful, evidence-based model for incentivising virtuous behaviour rather than solely penalising vice.

In the end, the debate over littering penalties should not be reduced to a facile binary between the status quo and a draconian punitive regime. To simply increase fines without addressing the genesis of the behaviour is to apply a bandage to a wound requiring a more holistic remedy. Stricter penalties are a necessary tool to establish accountability. However, they must function as one part of a tripartite strategy. This comprehensive approach—combining the 'stick' of stringent enforcement with the 'carrot' of education and the clear path of infrastructure—is our most promising route. Only then can we hope to transform our public spaces, not through a culture of fear, but through a shared ethos of collective ownership and civic pride. ~~Tools 2.5 Pro~~ *[remove this text]*