



**ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY GCE
CRITICAL THINKING**

Unit 2: Assessing and Developing Argument

**F502/01/RB
F502/02/RB**

RESOURCE BOOKLET

To be opened on the day of the examination

**Monday 12 January 2009
Afternoon**

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Use the Resource Booklet to answer all the questions in Section B and Section C.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- This document consists of **2** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Britain's Prison Crisis

Britain's prison system is in crisis. The Government has recently announced the early release of nearly 2,000 non-dangerous offenders and the Treasury is making £240 million available to provide another 1,500 prison places. It is becoming clear that prison sentencing is not the best response to low-level crime. The Government should reduce the amount of imprisonment for petty crime by increasing the use of Community Service Orders.

The financial burden for tax payers for the current number of prisoners is not sustainable. The average prison place costs £40,000 per year. Since 1990 the prison population in England and Wales has more than doubled to a record-breaking 87,000. Most prisoners are petty criminals so the explanation for this increase is the longer sentences being given to these offenders.

The justice system should aim to rehabilitate* rather than punish. But consider a recent study in Birmingham, which monitored offenders for five years after they were convicted. A worryingly large 67% of those given prison sentences reoffended, but the figure for those given Community Service Orders was only 47%. This shows that Community Service is better than prison at encouraging criminals to change their behaviour.

Prisons are renowned for being 'colleges of crime', where criminals spend large amounts of time in each other's company. They inevitably discuss what they have done, and what methods they used. This means that many that are sent to prison learn more about crime and can leave prison with more criminal knowledge and intent. It would be better to send fewer petty criminals to prison. The only way to break the vicious cycle is to use Community Service Orders.

Reader's Response

This is rubbish! The real problem is that Britain's prisons are too soft. Prisoners get three hot meals a day, satellite TV, the internet and computer games. Not only that, but they have state-of-the-art gyms, running tracks and sun-filled yards where they can laze away their afternoons. This is how Her Majesty's Government punishes the people that steal from us, assault us and make our streets unsafe at night.

When prisons are comfortable, prisoners enjoy their time there. After they get out, their standard of living drops and they miss the luxury of prison life. If prisons are not hard enough, past offenders will commit crimes in order to be sent back inside.

* rehabilitate – this means to help people who have committed a crime to live in society in a normal, law-abiding fashion.