

*Singaporean youths are apathetic and materialistic. Discuss.*

**Ng Yu Chian**  
**GCE 'O' Level 2004**

According to the Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, to be apathetic, is to be uninterested or unenthusiastic about anything. Going by this definition, it can be said that no one on Earth can be completely apathetic. Everyone has some things that interest or attract them, such as their hobbies, or sports they enjoy. The same goes for Singaporean youths.

However, if "apathy" is to be more narrowly defined, it can be said that most Singaporean youths are apathetic to happenings that do not directly concern them. This may be because they do not see the importance of keeping themselves informed when they do not have any influence over the handling of matters. This can clearly be seen in their display of political apathy.

The president of the political association at the National University of Singapore, Yong Yih Ming, lamented that at regular campus political events, the same 20 to 50 people turn up to participate. Similarly, youths across the island have the same level of enthusiasm for politics as these university students, and schools, which organize forums with local politicians, or current affairs quizzes often have to make these events mandatory.

These seemingly apathetic youths are hence unrecognizable when they transform into throngs of screaming fans when meeting their idols at the Changi International Airport, or when they are gyrating to the music of their favourite band. It seems like all their vigour and enthusiastic applause have been reserved for long-awaited events like this. Hence, it can be said that Singaporean youths are selectively apathetic, as they only willingly engage themselves in activities that directly affect them, such as their studies, or in activities they are personally interested in.

What about materialism? Does this apply to Singaporean youths of today?

In my opinion, our youths definitely do not believe that money and possessions are the prime concern of life. Many scrimp and save every cent they have; some even take up holiday jobs to help their family tide over the economic crisis. Many give branded goods a miss, as they sensibly choose to use more economical and equally reliable goods. Even though some do hope that they might, one day, earn enough money to pamper themselves with nice clothes and shoes. Meanwhile, they can live without them.

However, there are always people who go against the norm, and in this case, would do anything just to earn some more money to support their expenditure. It is important to note that such behavior is only seen in the minority, and the majority of Singaporean youths do not value money and possessions as much or even more than their lives. This can be attributed to their Asian upbringing.

Hence, I conclude that Singaporean youths do hold their Asian values dear. Although they may be apathetic in some areas, the majority are not materialistic. They will definitely be a great asset

to Singapore, especially if they learn to be more concerned about their surroundings, even if it does not directly involve them.