

# Get an A in TOK Essay May 2026 Title #5 Guide

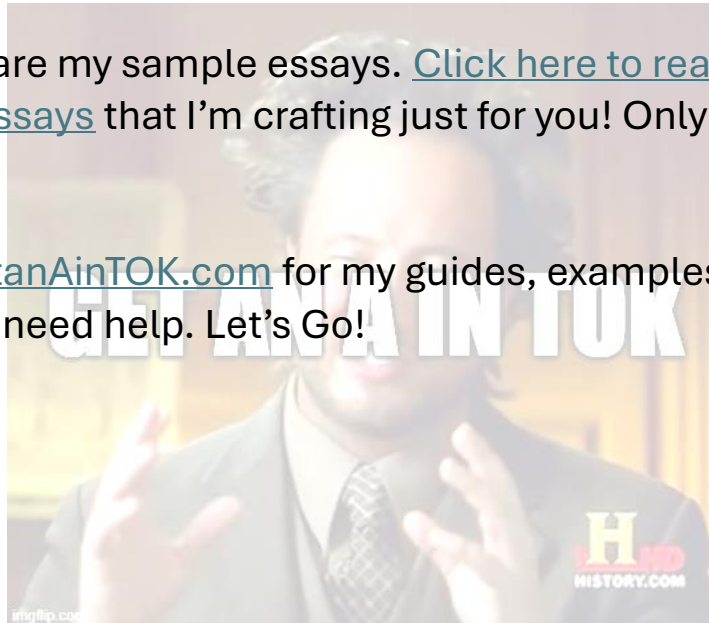
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**5. The Weird One:** To what extent do you agree with the claim that "all things are numbers" (Pythagoras)? Answer with reference to the arts and the human sciences.

Choose this if:

- You want to get weird and abstract
- You enjoy thinking in different directions
- You are good at contrasting with yourself

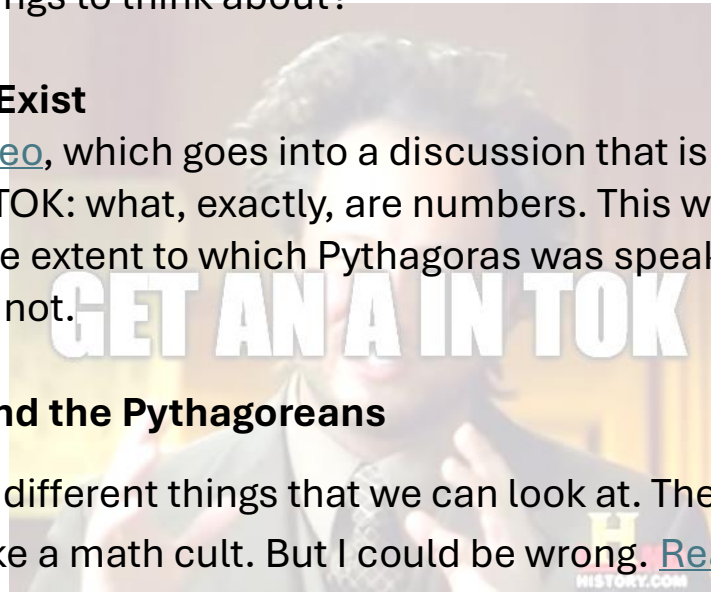
A couple of things to think about?

### **Do Numbers Exist**

Watch this [video](#), which goes into a discussion that is really important for TOK: what, exactly, are numbers. This will help you understand the extent to which Pythagoras was speaking in hyperbole...or not.

### **Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans**

These are two different things that we can look at. The Pythagoreans seem to me like a math cult. But I could be wrong. [Read this encyclopedia article](#) to explore how much these people thought numbers were in all things.



# The Arts

## A Direct Disagreement with Pythagoras and Title #5

This resource is pretty much required viewing. This article, called [Pythagoras Was Wrong...](#) directly addresses claims by the mathematician and demonstrates why music cannot be made up by numbers (which contrasts a lot of claims below). Culture and musical genres across the world demonstrate that music and our reactions to it may be less universal than what was once thought. Here's a [YouTube](#) video and the [actual freaking research article!!!](#)

## Can We Measure the Arts?

[This is a classic scene](#) from Dead Poet's Society that came to mind, though it may not be a perfect example to have as the main evidence for a paragraph. But there are many ways that we might try to *quantify* arts and artistic impression. What rules do we use to measure and quantify the Arts, and who gets to make these rules? Why?

## Where Numbers Appear in the Arts

This is going to be a classic example, mostly because many people will be able to mention this without researching it. [The Golden Ratio appears throughout artwork](#), as does the [rule of thirds](#). Why do we find these to be so pleasing, and why are they able to cross genres, works, and last seemingly forever? [This article explains](#) the difference between the Golden Ratio and the Fibonacci Sequence, which will make you sound smarter.

## How Numbers Appear in Music

[This is a really cool online tool](#) that lets you explore chord progressions in music and see how often they appear. Why are certain numerical patterns and progressions so popular? Why are they used to convey a certain feeling?

## The Circle of Fifths is Black Magic

If you can understand something a bit complex in music theory, the [circle of fifths](#) is pretty wild. This is the best example of how one could argue that the arts, in this case the discipline of music, demonstrates that numbers are in all things (or that music *is* numbers). [Here's a cool video](#) that demonstrates it more.

## Paradigm-Shifting Artworks Demonstrate Art isn't Numbers

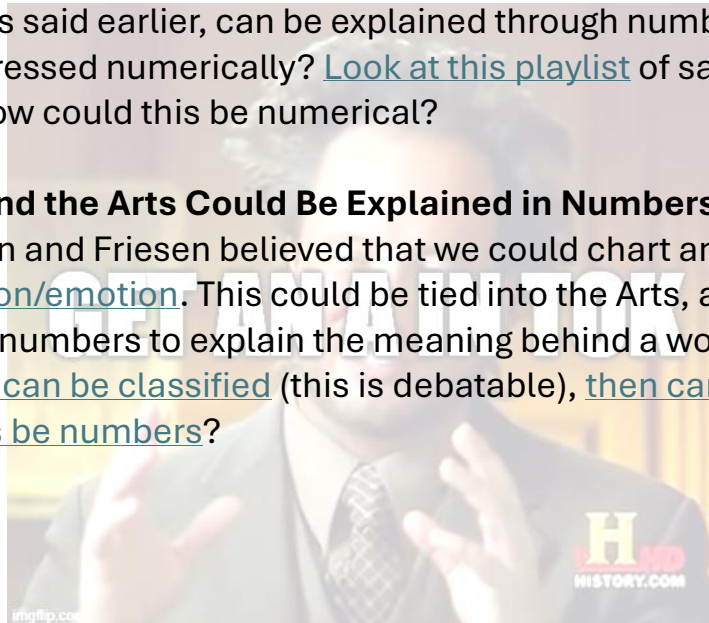
While it's important to not throw common answers into your paragraph with no research, ground-breaking works of art that invented new genres really can't be quantified or explained with numbers. Duchamp's Fountain, Picasso's Guernica, and Banksy's Girl with the Balloon will all be overused examples of creating new genres of art that didn't exist previously. Notice that I didn't link to these. But what about the [first motion picture](#)? The [first photograph](#), actually? [Rap](#) and [Rock & Roll](#) were both genres invented through other genres, but how could this be numerical?

## Songs that Defy Explanation

Though songs, as said earlier, can be explained through numbers, can their *meaning* be expressed numerically? [Look at this playlist](#) of sad songs that sound happy. How could this be numerical?

## How Emotion and the Arts Could Be Explained in Numbers

Scientists Ekman and Friesen believed that we could chart and [classify all human expression/emotion](#). This could be tied into the Arts, as a way to argue that we *can* use numbers to explain the meaning behind a work of art. [If all human emotion can be classified](#) (this is debatable), [then can even the intangible things be numbers?](#)



# Human Sciences

## Amazon Tries to Find Numbers in Resumes, Fails

Amazon famously tried to use [AI to scan resumes in the hiring process](#), which resulted in massive amounts of sexism in the hiring process. This has now been [scrapped](#)...but not really. It's still [happening today](#), and I experienced it!

## The Power of Qualitative Data

The Human Sciences focuses on Qualitative Data, which demonstrates and reports things that cannot be explained/expressed with numbers, and show that numbers can't be in *all* things. [False Memories are an example](#) of a study that goes beyond numbers – it shows how humans are complex and often irrational. This is not numerical, as numbers couldn't [explain why people are so confident when they are wrong](#).

## Quantizing Could be the Third Kind of Data in Human Sciences

[This article and study](#) uses ChatGPT to turn qualitative data into something a bit more numerical. This could disagree with everything else that you study. While they are able to succeed in some things, the authors do identify that human nuance and interpretation are still required.

## Propaganda and Persuasion Cannot be Numbers

Similar to the previous example, when governments use propaganda to spread and promote disinformation, this demonstrates the need for qualitative, not quantitative, study. [Here is one example](#) that I found in Russia, one in [China](#), and one [globally](#). Note how these reports still use numbers in their report. Could this demonstrate both sides?

## Can ChatGPT Perform Its Own Experiments?

[A study at Cornell](#) recently tried to use ChatGPT to replicate famous studies. If this is successful, it could demonstrate that models and numbers can encapsulate human behavior.

## How Big Data Can Quantify Human Behavior

[This example demonstrates](#) a way that human scientists are trying to use many different kinds of data to collaborate and explain and predict human

behavior. But, again, the authors don't say that this is a magic bullet. So, numbers are in many things, but not all things.

### **How to Properly Treat Qualitative Data**

[This article directly addresses](#) trying to find numbers in all things, and can collaborate with many of the examples here that promote the use of qualitative data in the human sciences. As we get more strength from AI, which is number-based, is it best to use that to try and find numbers in humanity?

