



EUNOIA JUNIOR COLLEGE  
JC1 Mid-Year Examination 2023  
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level  
Higher 1

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## **GENERAL PAPER**

**8881/02**

Paper 2

**25 May 2023**

INSERT

**1 hour 30 minutes**

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### **READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

**Passage 1.** *Noreena Hertz writes about the negative impact of social media on society.*

- 1 Two hundred twenty-one; that is the number of times we check our phones on average, daily. This adds up to three hours and fifteen minutes of average daily use, almost 1,200 hours a year. While we know that this is not good for us, the trouble is, resisting the urge to pick up our phones takes a level of commitment and willpower that many of us struggle to find. This is because of the extent to which we are addicted to our phones and social media platforms are to blame. 5
- 2 Like slot machines, social media platforms have been consciously designed to keep us constantly scrolling, watching, liking, and refreshing in the hope of finding affirmation, confidence boosts and even love. Every serif, every screen layout, every barely perceptible animation, and every pixel has been actively configured to keep us hooked. 10
- 3 Beyond tethering us to our devices, social media is also making the world more hostile, less empathetic, and less kind – all of which is taking a significant toll on our collective well-being. While social media platforms do enable us to share moments of happiness, their design has also made them conducive to some of the worst elements of human nature: abuse, bullying and racism. All these behaviours are on the rise. In 2018, over half of adult internet users in the UK reported having seen hateful content online, a 6 percent increase from the year before. 15
- 4 Of course, hatred and abuse are not new phenomena. The difference lies in the unprecedented scale at which social media is pumping such toxicity into our lives. It also rewards users for doing so. Each retweet we get provides us with a dopamine hit, the same neurotransmitter associated with heroin. And what kinds of posts typically generates the most retweets? The most outlandish, extreme, and hateful ones. 20
- 5 While it is unlikely that stimulating such toxic behaviour is the intention of the platform creators, it is something they tolerate for the simple fact that outrage and anger (however dangerous and polarising) are better for business. They keep traffic high, increasing the likely number of ad clicks, which translates to revenue. This is the amorality of the unregulated market in action. 25
- 6 It is not only adults who are affected by a design ethic that both incentivises us to produce divisive messages and enables us to so easily find community in hate. For children, social media has also become home to bullying on a distressing scale. In the past, this psychological abuse was confined to the playground and park. Today, it follows them around, streamed into their homes and bedrooms. Moreover, while the victims' shame used to be witnessed directly in real-time, today it is there for all to see, permanently etched into their digital footprint. 30  
35
- 7 Social media is making society meaner and crueller. It brings out the worst in people. The more toxicity we witness, the less faith we have in society at large. Decisive government intervention is key. Without the constant threat of regulation hanging over social media companies, it is hard to imagine a kinder, more compassionate society. 40

**Passage 2.** *An author writes about the positive impact of social media on society.*

- 1 Social media brings people together. Previously, people were unable to interact with others due to distance. Now, this is no longer an obstacle. Social media platforms facilitate global connectivity, which means that people can share their ideas, opinions, and experiences with others from different parts of the world. This allows people to learn about different customs and expand their horizons beyond their immediate surroundings. 5
- 2 Moreover, social media engenders a more inclusive society. It does this by giving people the opportunity to interact with those who they would otherwise be unable to reach. This includes those who are marginalised such as people with disabilities. Using technology, especially social media, these groups are empowered to convey their ideas and connect with others. 10
- 3 Social media also plays a vital role in creating a just society. An example of this is the #MeToo movement. Social media gave the victims the platform to share their experiences with a wider audience, and many found that they were not alone in their experiences. For others, social media enabled them to stand in solidarity with the victims. This is not unique to the #MeToo movement. Social media is essential in raising awareness of injustices in society and when effectively mobilised, it can also hold those responsible (including people in power) accountable for their actions. 15
- 4 Admittedly, it can be argued that social media could bring negativity to a person's mental health and the society's collective well-being. Harassment is a concern as bullies can hide and remain anonymous online. While this cannot be denied, measures have been taken to ensure internet safety. This includes the blocking and reporting of errant users. Most people use social media platforms appropriately, with good intentions to connect with family and friends, as well as using it to spread positivity by celebrating events that occur in other people's lives. 20  
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- 5 As social animals, we need interaction to thrive, and social media provides us with the avenue to do so. A commonly maligned tool, social media in and of itself is not the problem. The onus is on us to wield it for the greater good.

**Passage 3.** *A travel photographer writes about his experience using social media.*

- 1 I admit, as a travel photographer, I have been spending a lot of time on Instagram lately. Social media has become an essential part of my work. Aside from enabling me to build my personal brand, it can be a beautiful community where encouragement is the norm, where exchanges of ideas and compliments among fellow practitioners flow freely. It fulfils our innate need to engage with others and in doing so, we become better at our craft. 5
- 2 With social interaction being positively correlated with fulfilment, you would think human beings would be the happiest we have ever been. Yet, when used negatively, social media brings out our hurt inner self – the part of us that feels disconnected from others. While we cannot stop others from abusing the platform to spread anger and hatred, we can choose how we react to such content and respond to its creators. It is heartening to see how social media users rally to call them out on their abhorrent behaviour seen online. 10
- 3 Ultimately, the future of social media is in our hands. We determine the impact that it has on society. We can use it to better the world. Let us use it to explore what it means to be human among almost eight billion people, each with a unique story to tell. 15

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Reading Passages © Noreena Hertz; *The Lonely Century: How to Restore Human Connection in a World that's Pulling Apart*; Penguin Press; 2021

© Times Herald; *Commentary: Technology and social media: How technology strengthens connections*; 9 January 2019; <https://www.timesherald.com/2019/01/09/commentary-technology-and-social-media-how-technology-strengthens-connections/amp/>

© Vincent Van Patten; *Social Media and the Journey Towards Our Own Humanity*; 10 November 2021; <https://medium.com/mind-cafe/social-media-and-the-journey-towards-our-own-humanity-ddbca2b4cc2d>