Geylang Methodist School (Secondary)
Preliminary Examination 2019

HUMANITIES (SOCIAL STUDIES, GEOGRAPHY)   **2272/01**
HUMANITIES (SOCIAL STUDIES, HISTORY)   **2273/01**
HUMANITIES (SOCIAL STUDIES, LITERATURE IN ENGLISH)   **2274/01**

Paper 1 Social Studies   **4 Express**
    5 N(A)

Additional materials: Writing Paper   **1 hour 45 minutes**

    28 Aug 2019

Setter: Mr Cheong Kim Gin

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your name, index number and class on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Section A
Answer **all parts** of Question 1.

Section B
Answer **both parts** of Question 2.

Write all answers on the writing paper provided.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.
Begin your answer to Section B (parts (a) and (b)) on a new and separate sheet of paper.

This document consists of **7** printed pages and **1** blank page.

Section A (Source-Based Case Study)

Question 1 is **compulsory** for all candidates.

1 LIVING IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer **all** the questions.

You may use any of the sources to help you answer the questions, in addition to those sources you are told to use. In answering the questions you should use your knowledge of the topic to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

(a) Study Source A.

What does the source tell you about social mobility in Singapore? Explain your answer. [5]

(b) Study Sources B and C.

Do you think both politicians in Source B would agree with the cartoonist in Source C? Explain your answer. [7]

(c) Study Source D.

Are you surprised by what the Minister said? Explain your answer. [6]

(d) Study Sources E and F.

Both sources are from the United States. Does this mean that they are useless in understanding meritocracy in Singapore? Explain your answer. [7]

(e) 'Some are born great, some achieve greatness.'

Using the sources in this case study, explain how far you would agree with this statement. [10]

Is meritocracy an effective mean to manage socio-economic diversity in Singapore?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Read this carefully. It may help you to answer some of the questions.

Meritocracy is an important governing principle in Singapore. The nation tries to equalise opportunities and allocate rewards based on an individual's merit or abilities. Everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Social mobility was largely brought about by meritocracy in the past. Today, Singapore is a developed nation and competition at the top is fiercer than before. A large middle class is the result and upward social mobility is harder, though equality of opportunities has been largely unchanged. Some people agree that the principle continues to serve the country well. Yet some argue that meritocracy has failed and that the system of governance needs to evolve beyond meritocracy to address the growth of inequality in Singapore.

Study the following sources to explore whether meritocracy can continue to close the social gaps in Singapore.

Source A: *From a report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), October 2018.*

Singapore ranks among the top in the world when it comes to upward mobility in education, with nearly six in 10 adults attaining higher qualifications than their parents. Across all age groups, those with more qualified parents are likely to end up better educated than their peers. The social gap in Singapore has shrunk considerably over the years.
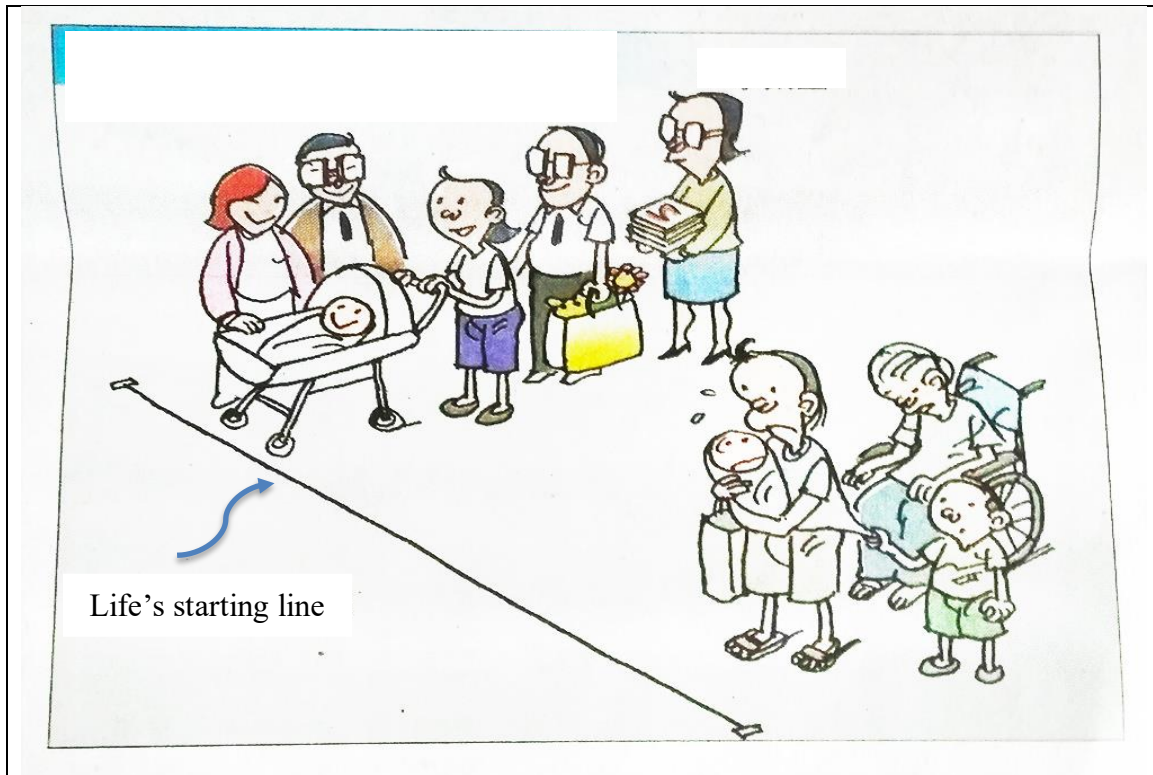
In the 1950s, someone born to parents with only upper secondary education stood a less than 20 per cent chance of completing tertiary education. Now, such a person has about a 60 per cent chance of making the grade. For those born to at least one parent with tertiary education, the figure has grown from over 70 per cent to more than 90 per cent.

Source B: *From TODAY, a local newspaper, dated 11 July 2018.*

Meritocracy remains the right approach for Singapore and its education system, though there is a danger that it is becoming a "dirty word" because it may have given rise to unfairness in the system, said the Education Minister in Parliament. Still, banning tuition or redistributing resources from popular to less popular schools — as suggested by some sections of the public — is not the way to go, he stressed.

Offering several examples on how children from low-income families were at a disadvantage, a Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) said their performance in school could be affected by personal circumstances that do not allow them to study at home – such as cramped living conditions or having to care for younger siblings – despite assistance.

Source C: *A cartoon from Zaobao, a Singapore Chinese newspaper, dated 23 July 2016. The cartoon depicts two babies born into two different families.*

Life's starting line

Source D: *From a Minister's speech to the Singapore Government scholarship recipients in a ceremony on 21 July 2018.*

Our promise to each and every generation of Singaporeans is this, that so long as you are capable and committed, our country will provide you with the best opportunities possible for you to fulfill your potential. I believe such a system will continue to attract the best to serve the nation.

Some of our scholarship recipients come from challenging family and personal circumstances. That they have done so well shows their resilience and determination - qualities that are as vital as high intellect and academic excellence.

Source E: *From The New York Times. The author reports regularly on the issue of equality in Washington DC (USA), dated 13 June 2019.*

The debate over meritocracy has been intensifying. Is it a good thing? A bad thing? Do we want it or don't we?

From a positive vantage point, meritocracy is a political system in which economic goods and/or political power are vested in individual people based on talent, effort and achievement.

Viewed negatively, such a system discriminates against the less highly educated and those who perform less well on ability tests. At the same time, meritocracy privileges arrogant and complacent elites with the money, the resources and the connections to jump to the head of the line.

Source F: *From The Washington Post "How Singapore is fixing its meritocracy" by Kenneth Paul Tan who is an associate professor of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, dated 16 April 2016.*

Today, the Singaporean idea of meritocracy is criticised for its narrow idea of merit and success; and for an increasingly self-regarding elite that seems too interested in staying in power and perceived by citizens as arrogant and unresponsive to their needs.

There have, however, been some attempts to re-balance meritocracy by a redistribution of resources, partly no doubt in reaction to strong signals of popular displeasure in the general elections of 2011. A "compassionate," "inclusive" and "lifelong" meritocracy has found its way onto the government's agenda, including changes to its "pressure-cooker educational system," criticised for streaming students into pathways that determine their life prospects at a very early age.

SECTION B (Structured-Response Question)

Question 2 is **compulsory** for all candidates.

2   LIVING IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

Study the extracts carefully, and then answer the questions.

Extract 1

Hashtag, Vlog, Snapchat. 15 years ago, these terms would have sounded like nonsense but now, they are part of our daily language. Technology has changed the way we see the world and the way we interact with space, time and one another. Its influence is seen everywhere in the lives of the younger generation in terms of their interpersonal relationships, the choices they make in their day-to-day lives, and how they study and view work.

Extract 2

Cyber security threats are nothing new for governments. They have taken measures to fight cybercrime, by increasing cyber security spending annually over the past decades and putting legislations in place to enhance their abilities against cyber-attacks.

Extract 3

The individual citizen is on the front line of digital defence, and we each have a critical role to play by being secure, alert and responsible online.

(a) Extract 1 describes how technology has the potential to change the lives of young people.

In your own opinion, suggest what can be done to prevent the negative impacts of such technological advancements. Explain your answer using **two** ways. [7]

(b) Extracts 2 and 3 reflect the roles of governments and individuals in managing cyber security challenges.

Do you think that the government has a more important role in managing cyber security challenges than individuals? Explain your answer. [8]

End of Paper

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