



YISHUN INNOVA JUNIOR COLLEGE  
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**Higher 1**

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**GENERAL PAPER**

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Paper 2

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**1 hour 30 minutes**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

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**Passage 1.** *Errol Morris writes about why it is understandable and even acceptable to lie.*

- 1 Do you remember when you first learned about the concept of the white lie? It might have been when you were a child and an adult fudged the truth to keep you from being upset or sad, or someone might have promised you a reward for a particular behaviour, but the 'reward' really did not exist. If you are a parent yourself, you might use white lies to keep your child from knowing that a beloved toy was lost or a favourite piece of clothing was no longer wearable. It might be to distract your son or daughter from something that was beyond your means. "No one really has fun at Disney, it's just too crowded! Let's have our own fun down at the neighbourhood park!" (Relax, most people consider it socially acceptable and culturally congruent for parents to use white lies with their children). 5
- 2 While children are often taught that lying is wrong, it is understandable why it can be instinctive to lie. When we lie about having stolen something from a friend or a store or about our grades or our behaviour, we use white lies to protect ourselves from punishment. We might tell a boss that we have the influenza and are taking a sick day when we really just need a mental health day to hang out at home and watch Netflix. The purpose of the lie or its intent could primarily be for self-preservation. While this is self-serving, it is a survival instinct that kicks in as a third option, in addition to fight or flight, when one's back is against the wall. 15
- 3 Lying can also be necessary and praised when it is for altruistic reasons. Lies meant to protect others or ease their burdens are lies that are generally considered to be acceptable under specific circumstances. Reassuring a child that "grandma does not feel well right now" might be considered a kinder choice than informing a young child that death is near. If you are lying to spare others harm or pain, that is considered prosocial lying and is often a sign that you have a well-developed sense of empathy. It may not even be as extreme as protecting one from the truth of terminal illness. Softening feedback can make it easier to provide and accept constructive criticism. It also protects the long-term relationship between the giver and the receiver. It is even more acceptable to lie when it is an acquaintance because it takes a certain level of closeness to deliver and accept the truth. Also, telling a quick white lie in a situation where the person has no time to react such as praising someone's outfit even though it is not flattering right before a person goes on stage for a performance is acceptable because there is nothing the person can do to improve or change the moment. Lying to boost the receiver's self-esteem is a tactful and logical way to approach the situation. Just remember that lies are most beneficial when they are not selfish. 20 25 30
- 4 It is an oft-repeated phrase that lying will be punished. Perhaps. But not as often as truth-telling. Lying effectively in many situations is generally superior to telling the truth, because we often have to search our minds for the truth, whereas a good lie can be easier to produce (though of course caution is indicated if the lie can be easily unmasked). Invariably, a skilful liar makes a calculation about his chances of being exposed and avoids situations where a lie can be revealed. Lying is punished only if it is detected. A more reasonable assessment would be that ineffective lying is severely punished. No one is held in greater contempt than an unskilled liar. 35
- 5 At the end of the day, some lying is invariably necessary. Kant<sup>1</sup>, who was searching for some universal moral principle, believed that if everybody lied the world would fall into shambles. Nobody would ever trust another person. However, everybody does lie, and sometimes, honesty is not necessarily the best policy. 40

<sup>1</sup>Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher (1724-1804) who was one of the central Enlightenment thinkers who came up with the doctrine of transcendental idealism, which emphasises a distinction between what we can experience (the natural, observable world) and what we cannot ('supersensible' objects such as God and the soul).

**Passage 2.** *Laurel Hamers warns about the dangers of lying.*

- 1 There must be a reason why children are taught not to lie even though lying occurs naturally in young children who love to make up stories but generally tell their first purposeful lies at about the age of four or five. Aesop's fables are filled with cautionary stories of the consequences of fibbing. This is not to say that almost all children who lie have the propensity to become con artists but if left unchecked, the art of lying can be wielded as a masterful tool for deception and manipulation in increasingly insidious ways. Not nipping the habit in the bud can send a message to little children that lying is acceptable and it can be used for their own benefit such as to get out of trouble or to get something that they covet. Habitual lying can develop into a deep character flaw that compromises one's moral values. If there are no consequences to it, principles will cease to matter and that could be the death of morality, if we want to be dramatic and apocalyptic about it. 5 10
- 2 On a more relatable note, you might text your friend a white lie to get out of going to dinner, exaggerate your height on a dating profile to appear more attractive or invent an excuse to your boss over email to save face. Social psychologists and communication scholars have long wondered not just who lies the most, but where people tend to lie the most – that is, in person or through some other communication medium. Since 2004, it has been discovered that there is a strong correlation between technology and deception. In this digitally connected world, we are surrounded by webs of lies that we are also guilty of spinning and this is worrying indeed. This is not to be confused with exaggerating marketing tactics rampant today. This is about intentional and direct dishonesty. Being catfished on an online dating application is embarrassing and while it can cause some emotional heartbreak and slight embarrassment, when amplified, online lies can escalate to malicious scams and other cybercrimes. Technology fuels the frequency and intensity of lies as it gives those with ill intentions and dangerously skilled in deceit the tools to bait innocent, trusting victims. 15 20
- 3 If we need further proof of the harms of lying, it should be known that corrupt societies encourage lying and that itself is a vicious cycle. When do we decide that it is acceptable to lie? Perhaps when we see people in positions of power doing the same. Research has shown that individuals are more likely to lie if they live in a country with high levels of institutional corruption and fraud – suggesting that poorly run institutions hurt society in more ways than previously suspected. When the problem of lying permeates society at such a deep level, it is hard to argue that lying can be acceptable. People are more likely to break rules if those around them are also doing so, just like how people surrounded by graffiti and litter are more likely to vandalise and drop trash themselves. Similarly, researchers pulled data on government corruption, tax evasion, and election fraud (all extreme and sadly common instances of dishonesty) from the World Bank and Freedom House for 159 countries and found that people in countries with higher levels of rule-breaking were more likely to cheat on tasks. Dishonesty, particularly by people with power, is a toxic evil that not only harms countries but also an infectious poison that taints the morality of those they have power over. 25 30 35
- 4 Of course, these are extreme cases of dishonesty that do not negate the necessity of well-intentioned white lies or harmless lies spewed for convenience. However, some corrupt dictators are also driven by what they think are good intentions and some could truly believe in their lies. Would the latter still be considered lying? With so much at stake when dishonesty escalates, it would be much safer to do away with the ambiguity and denounce lying for the greater good of mankind. 40

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