



**TANJONG KATONG SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
**Preliminary Examination 2023**  
**Secondary 4**

CANDIDATE  
NAME

CLASS

INDEX NUMBER

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**1184/02**

Paper 2 Comprehension

**11 August 2023**

INSERT

**1 hour 50 minutes**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**


This Insert contains Text 1, Text 2, Text 3 and Text 4.

## Section A

## Text 1

Study the online advertisement (**Text 1**) and the social media post (**Text 2**) and answer Questions 1 – 4 in the Question Paper.

**Text 1** is taken from an online advertisement for fair and progressive employment practices.



**TAFEP**  
Tripartite Alliance for  
Fair & Progressive Employment Practices

**“TREATED LIKE I WAS SENILE”**  
—Liz DiMarco Weinmann

**IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOUR PARENTS OR GRANDPARENTS TOO.**

**“PASSED OVER FOR ‘BEING NEAR RETIREMENT’”**  
— Joseph Bednarik

This could happen to anyone.

Assuming that one’s age will affect work performance and desire for career advancement is a bias that prevents people with the right skills and commitment from contributing at work.

It’s time we put a stop to workplace discrimination by knowing and acting on them fast. Together, let’s do our part to create a fair and inclusive workplace for all.

**Text 2** is taken from a social media post.

Today, I become a victim of the greatest injustice in my life. After dedicating decades of my life to the company I loved, I find myself pushed aside like a discarded relic! Age should be celebrated, not used against us. This fight isn't just for myself; it's for all the elderly workers out there who face the same prejudice and indignities. We have a right to be respected, and to be valued. Such injustice could happen to anyone. Let's not back down until change happens! To the company that let me go: you might think you've gotten rid of an 'old' problem, but you've ignited a fire within me and many others! #victim #stopworkplacediscrimination #oldbutstilluseful

## Section B

## Text 3

The text below describes a visit by Stephen and his three-year-old daughter to the supermarket where she went missing. Read the text carefully and answer Questions 5 - 13 in the Question Booklet.

- 1 In the hall Kate came towards him, holding up the scuffed toy donkey. He bent to loop the red scarf twice around her neck before they stepped outdoors onto the street, as though into a storm. The main road was an arterial route south; its traffic rushed with ferocity. It was a two-minute walk to the supermarket, over the four-lane road by a zebra crossing. They made their way across at last, in front of a pack of cars which snarled and roared forward the moment they reached the other side. Stephen held Kate's hand tightly as they weaved among the flux of shoppers towards the entrance. Amid voices, shouts, and the electro-mechanical rattle at the checkout counters, they found a trolley. Chattering excitedly, Kate made herself comfortable in her seat. 5
- 2 The people who frequented the supermarket divided into groups as distinct as tribes. There were young childless couples who thought nothing of splurging on fanciful desserts. Then there were the retirees poring over food labels. Another group consisted of young mothers pushing prams. There were also domestic helpers, shopping lists in hand, purposeful in their strides. Fathers like Stephen, child in tow, were an anomaly. Moving between the aisles, his eyes darted rapidly, trying to locate the items he needed - toothpaste, detergent, a leg of lamb, eggs and potatoes. Kate tugged at his sleeve, trying to get his attention as he navigated the labyrinth of aisles and milling shoppers. He glanced down at her and winked. She copied him, but clumsily, wrinkling her nose and closing both eyes. 10 15
- 3 Fifteen minutes later they were at the checkout and he joined a queue nearest the entrance. There were three people ahead of him when he stopped the trolley and there was no one behind him when he turned to lift Kate from it. She relished being on her 'throne' and loathed being disturbed. She whined and clung stubbornly on to her seat, causing him to lift her high to get her out. By the time this little tug-of-war was over, there was only one person ahead of them. He came round to the front of the trolley to unload his items onto the conveyor belt. Kate remained at the other end of the trolley, her little hands stretching longingly to touch the trolley seat. There was no one behind her. Now the man immediately ahead of Stephen was about to pay for several tins of dog food. Stephen lifted the first item onto the belt and as he straightened, he might have been conscious of a figure in a dark coat behind Kate. But it was hardly an awareness at all. The coat could have been a dress or a shopping bag or his own invention. He was intent on ordinary tasks, keen to finish them, and all about him shapes without definition drifted and dissolved, blending into the surroundings. 20 25
- 4 The man with the dog food was leaving. The cashier was already at work, her fingers flickering over the keypad as she checked out Stephen's items. Setting his last item on the belt, Stephen asked the girl for a carrier bag. She reached under a shelf and pulled one out. He took it and turned. Kate was gone. No one was behind the trolley. Unhurriedly and calmly, he pushed the trolley clear, thinking she had ducked down behind the end of the counter. Then he took a few paces and glanced down the only aisle she would have had time to reach. He stepped back and looked expectantly to his left and right. On one side there were lines of shoppers, on the other a clear space, then the automatic doors on to the pavement. There may have been a figure in a coat hurrying away from him, but at that time Stephen was only looking for a three-year-old child, and his immediate worry was the traffic. 30 35
- 5 This was a theoretical, precautionary anxiety. As he shouldered past shoppers and emerged on to the broad pavement he knew he would not see her there. Kate was not adventurous in this way. She was also not a strayer, preferring to be in the company of people she was familiar with. Convinced that she had to be in the shop, and could come to no real harm there, he turned back. He expected to see her emerging from behind the lines of shoppers at the checkouts. It was easy enough to overlook a child in the first flash of concern, to look too hard, too quickly. Still, a sickness and a tightening at the base of the throat, an unpleasant lightness in the feet, were with him as he went back. He walked past all the checkouts, ignoring the girl at his who was irritably trying to attract his attention. 40 45
- 6 He went down all the aisles, past mountains of oranges, toilet rolls, soup. It was not until he was back at his starting point that he abandoned all propriety. He was taking long strides, bawling her name as he pounded the length of an aisle, pushing shoppers out of his way. Faces were turning towards him.

There was no mistaking him for one of the drunks who blundered in to buy alcohol. His fear was overwhelming; it was too evident, too raw, too forceful; and it filled the impersonal, fluorescent space with unignorable human warmth. Within moments all shopping around him had ceased. Baskets and trolleys were set aside, people were converging and saying Kate's name and somehow, in no time at all, it was generally known that she was three, that she was last seen at the checkout, that she wore green dungarees and carried a toy donkey. 50

*Adapted from The Child in Time by Ian McEwan*

## Section C

## Text 4

The text below is about a deadly fungus infection. Read the text carefully and answer Questions 14 – 19 in the Question Booklet.

- 1 'The Last of Us', a sci-fi/horror television series based on the video game of the same name, takes place in a world ravaged by a fungus that kills anyone it infects, but not before turning them into mindless, zombie-like monsters driven to attack anyone who remains uninfected. 20 years after the outbreak, the only remnants of civilisation are brutally oppressive 'Quarantine Zones' and scattered survivor settlements. 5
- 2 What is the fungus and what are its effects? Where did the outbreak start? How did it spread so fast that the world was overwhelmed? Is there a cure? The fungus, referred to in the show only as 'cordyceps', is a fictional, mutated form of the real-life *Ophiocordyceps Unilateralis*, a fungal infection found in tropical locations. It also has the unfortunately apt nickname 'zombie ant fungus'. Researchers think the fungus infects a foraging ant through spores that attach to and penetrate the exoskeleton, as if inserting a syringe and injecting its contents. Thereafter, rather like how a human becomes a zombified creature against his will in the show, the fungus slowly takes over its host's behaviour. At this point, the ant may not even know that it is infected. As the infection advances, the enthralled ant is forced to leave its nest for a more humid microclimate that is favourable to the fungus's growth. The ant is compelled to descend to a vantage point about 10 inches off the ground, sink its jaws into a leaf vein on the north side of a plant, and wait for death. In essence, the ant is primed to be the fungus's instrument of propagation when it is ready. 10 15
- 3 As the ant is dying, the fungus feeds on its victim's innards until it is time for the final stage. Shockingly, scientists have found that the fungus never actually infects the ant's brain. It seems like a fate worse than death to be infected with something that robs one of any control over one's body while being completely aware of every agonising moment. Several days after the ant has died, the fungus sends a fruiting body out through the base of the ant's head. In a matter of hours, its shrivelled corpse becomes a launchpad from which it can jettison its spores – like a cannon – and infect new ants. As in zombie lore, there is an incubation period where infected ants appear perfectly normal and go about their business undetected by the rest of the colony. Social insects like ants usually have something called social immunity – sick members get kicked out of the group to prevent the rest from getting sick too. However, in this case, there is no way for the other ants to react to the threat until it is too late to do anything. This is what makes the behaviour of the fungus so insidious. 20 25
- 4 In actual fact, unlike on 'The Last of Us', the infected ant does not suddenly start attacking other ants either. The goal is not to convert all the ants into the walking dead. For ecosystems to stay balanced, fungi must keep host populations in check. In fact, only a few ants in a colony are infected at any given time, which helps to keep the fungus spreading unnoticed, with a ready pool of unsuspecting hosts being none the wiser. However, it must be noted that the infection is 100 percent lethal. 30
- 5 Moreover, the 'zombie ant fungus' featured in the television series only infects insects in real life. How do the fungi manage to infect human beings in the show? The prologue of the first episode of 'The Last of Us' has the answer. It opens with the broadcast of a late 1960s chat show, where learned guests are discussing potential risks to the survival of humanity. One of the guests, a scientist, dismisses the suggestion that viruses or bacteria are the bigger threat, arguing instead that we should be worried about fungi. Ominously, he points out that fungi may seem harmless, but actually seek to control and not to kill, as fungi can alter our very minds. He also warns that fungi can be more resistant to antibiotics than viruses and bacteria. 35 40
- 6 Scientific research in the real world has shown that human bodies are too warm for such fungi to survive. In order for the show's nightmarish – and far-fetched – scenario to really happen, the world's temperature must rise to the point that fungi have to evolve to withstand the hotter climate, leading to gene mutation. Should that happen, it will enable one strain to become capable of burrowing into human brains and taking control of millions of people. Only then will there be countless puppets with poisoned minds permanently fixed on one unifying goal – to spread the infection to every last human alive, by any means necessary. 45

- 7 In short, it will take extreme global warming to create the necessary conditions for the fungus to mutate into a form that can infect humans. 50

*Adapted from 'The Last of Us':  
Everything to Know About the Fungus That Transforms People Into Zombies  
www.thewrap.com  
and  
How a parasitic fungus turns ants into 'zombies'  
www.nationalgeographic.com*

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