



HWA CHONG INSTITUTION
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION
Higher 1

Candidate
Name

CT Group

Index
Number

--	--	--	--

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

This 2-page Insert contains the reading passages for comprehension. Please detach it and fill in your particulars in the boxes above. Please retain this Insert at the end of the examination.

Passage 1. An author explains what food and commensality have to offer.

- 1 A miracle occurs thrice in France every day. At breakfast, lunch and supper, millions of people gather round a table to share a meal. Like their French cousins, the other Europeans are creatures of habit who favour fixed mealtimes and relish sharing food and good company. Once the related labour – shopping, cooking and washing – is taken into consideration, the centrality of commensality in Europe becomes even clearer. Social practice varies across communities and for the Americans, eating is about satisfying bodily needs and they eat when they want to. No one can be judged for insisting on healthy food or liking food that requires no preparation. 5
- 2 Choice may be desirable but anyone who undervalues commensality is denied its benefits. After my mother passed away and my brother left for university, my father and I started eating separately. We ate sandwiches and pizzas in front of our computers or dined with friends. We rarely spoke. A few weeks before I was to return to university, my father suggested, “We should have dinner together again. Your mother would’ve wanted that.” We did and, somehow, the same food tasted better. We missed Mum and Brother and it was therapeutic to know we still have each other. Our chats about the trivial – of sports and Netflix – led to discussions of the serious – of economics and politics, of memories and the future. Dinner together meant a little less time for distractions, but it was invariably a very fulfilling part of my day. 10 15
- 3 The significance of food as a catalyst for conversation and connection is evident in many other settings. Each June, millions in the United Kingdom chat over sandwiches, cake and tea at street parties under the auspices of *The Big Lunch*, a project to spread good cheer in the belief that neighbourly communities look after their members. This is a welcome outcome for any society. In competitive cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, workers fatigued by their daily grind crowd late-night eateries and are revived by a shared supper and gossip. The desire for shared experiences is so deeply rooted that, marooned at home during the pandemic, many signed up for virtual cooking classes and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. 20
- 4 For migrants and refugees displaced by force of circumstance, the taste of the familiar eases homesickness and makes life bearable. It also leads them to fellow diaspora who share their hopes and fears. The potential of food to be a conduit for achievement is even more impressive. For enterprising new citizens, food powers their trajectory to a better life – think of the Indians who have written themselves into British food history and the ubiquitous presence of Italian food in America today. That food paves the way to recognition is also illustrated by the Japanese and Koreans conquering the world with their cuisines. We could even contend that without their reputation as culinary capitals, the shine of many cosmopolitan cities will be dimmed. 25 30
- 5 No matter who or where we are, food is more than nourishment for the body; what we eat tells the story of our identity and reveals our state of mind. Not only is commensality social dynamics in action, it is humanity on display. 35

Adapted from ‘The importance of eating together’ by Cody C. Delistraty (*The Atlantic*), and
‘France remains faithful to food as meals continue to be a collective affair’ by Anne Chemin (*The Guardian*).

Passage 2. An author laments the decline of heritage food.

- 1 Despite the popularity of cooking shows and food blogs, many classic dishes rarely make it to dining tables today. This infrequent reproduction of time-honoured recipes may be contributing to a lamentable global trend: the appreciation of heritage food, be it the British Sunday roast, Eurasian devil's curry or Chinese rice dumplings, is on the wane.
- 2 Despite their association with less healthful diets, frenzied routines have made ready-to-eat meals a feature of modern living. Little wonder that laboriously prepared heritage food no longer appeals. Wherever there are sources of refuelling on every street, few traditional dinners are being created from scratch and eating becomes about satisfying hunger. When delivery services can bring cheap food to one's doorstep, many will not spend more just to honour their heritage.
- 3 The well-to-do may attribute their altered palates to their vacations too. While they might have tried the Scottish haggis¹ on a dare, it is the desire for *the* selfie to make their friends envious that determines their dinner plan. This desire motivates them to seek new food adventures even after returning home. Keen to be in the know, they queue outside restaurants lauded by Michelin inspectors. "Boring" heritage food does not stand a chance with them.
- 4 For the young and restless, being part of viral challenges matters more than cultural pride. They enthused over the Girl Dinner, a low-effort, high-satisfaction assemblage of nutritionally impoverished snacks. They made the Feel Better Soup because it can cure any illness. They hopped onto the Tinned Fish bandwagon, marinating every fish imaginable in olive oil and serving them with pickles and crackers. When the world is heaping praise on such experiments, anyone who likes heritage food falls off the radar.
- 5 Food has always ebbed and flowed in popularity, but it is a loss of valuable personal reflections and shared narratives when culture is sacrificed in the process.

Passage 3. An author examines changes in our eating habits.

- 1 The way we eat and what we eat are changing. For instance, more people are eating healthily. These calorie counters scrutinise advice from social media experts and follow their instructions to the letter. To avoid temptation, they refuse to share a meal with friends who do not watch their diet. The social cost is, to them, an acceptable price to pay for enhanced well-being and beauty.
- 2 Aside from the healthy eating movement, the solo dining phenomenon is gaining pace too. One reason for this is a reluctance to discuss contentious topics such as food sustainability with opinionated friends. Rather than to endure uncomfortable interrogations, many choose to enjoy quiet solitude at the dining table.
- 3 A desire for control is spurring more people, especially the young, to cook at home. These aspiring chefs imagine themselves perfecting heritage food from around the world but end up making the same dishes every day; the climb up the corporate ladder heightens the appeal of a simple dinner. Why slave in the kitchen after a day of toil in the office? When leafy greens and chicken breast doused with dressing is tasty enough to assuage hunger pangs, all that chopping and grating to create an elaborate dinner is not worthwhile.

¹ Traditionally, haggis is a pudding consisting of the liver, heart, and lungs of a sheep mixed with suet and oatmeal and seasoned with spices. The mixture is packed into a sheep's stomach and boiled.