



RIVER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

JC2 Preliminary Examination

GENERAL PAPER

Paper 2
INSERT

8881/02

28 AUGUST 2024
1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

Passage 1: An author writes about the value of nostalgia

- 1 Depending on whom you ask, nostalgia has been described from being a ‘warm fuzzy feeling’ by one who is sentimental, to something that can be capitalised on as a ‘hipster heritage impulse’ by another with a sharp business acumen. A cynic tired of modern life would even muse that it is the sweet imagination of the past when the present is found wanting. These groups all romanticise nostalgia as an idyllic past that must be preserved, as evident in the mushrooming of folkish but fashionable cafes, bookstores and other entrepreneurial ventures. 5
- 2 Whatever one calls the wave of nostalgia that has swept across nations, the implications for policymakers are twofold: across the world, people clamour for buildings and areas to be preserved, resulting in petitions piling on the pressure for leaders to designate historical streets and buildings as cultural heritage assets, which can stand in the way of progressive and efficient use of space. Quaint but uneven cobblestone walkways run contrary to modern attempts to build infrastructure for the differently abled. Beyond this, there is the rise of socio-cultural clashes between newly arrived migrants and the local populace, with the latter resenting globally famous brands perceived as symbols of cultural imperialism, even as these brands offer wider variety at a lower cost compared to local traditional businesses. 10 15
- 3 Even if nostalgia does not always sit well with our modern-day practical sensibilities, its allure is indisputable; some go as far as to say that nostalgia is the gentle narcotic for a bruised soul. The flood of foreigners and the unrelenting urban development mean we are swimming in a stream of change, which can be discomforting and disorientating. That is why nostalgia can be canned and sold — there is an audience and market for it. Rather than consign traditional industries to the past, patriots and consumers alike welcome a return to a simpler, slower way of life, where humble possessions are skilfully handmade and sold, and where the traditional arts of craftsmen are also elevated, symbolising the allure of a stable and unchanging unique, local identity. 20 25
- 4 In addition, sociologists opine that nostalgia could strengthen national identity and bonds among people. Afterall, nostalgia is about collective identity, sense of belonging, and anticipation for the future. This can herald the renaissance of civil society, involving both looking back to a nation’s accomplishments of the past, and forward to a brighter, more inclusive and participatory future. It is in most political leaders’ playbook to unite a fragmented, discouraged or resentful populace by drumming up achievements, milestones and victories of the past, as a way to rally people towards a shared national identity, instilling in them a belief in a shared sense of possibility. In his presidential acceptance speech in 2008, Barack Obama, the first black president of the United States, popularised the political slogan ‘Yes we can!’ to unite a disenfranchised and divided country to embrace the possibilities of the future, by drawing on strength from battling slavery, to overcoming the Great Depression and emerging triumphant in World War Two. Yet nostalgia, while having the potency to unite the masses with a shared history, could equally fracture a nation – by uniting those who yearn for a return to a better imagined past while unfairly blaming parties today for destroying that same past. Said Donald Trump in his 2020 pre-Independence Day rally, ‘Our nation is witnessing a merciless 30 35 40

campaign by the Democrats to wipe out our history, defame our heroes, erase our values, and indoctrinate our children.'

- 5 Perhaps ultimately, nostalgia is a sentiment that is only too human. It offers the benefit of hindsight, even if it means embracing a bitter-sweet regard of the past that is more delectable than unsavoury. How else are we able to resist looking back and replaying memories that have come to define and contribute to who we are? 45

Passage 2: An author cautions against the false allure of nostalgia

- 1 When examined through the lens of its potential dangers to both individuals and societies, nostalgia can indeed be a double-edged sword. While nostalgia can draw us in with its sweet nectar, it can also ensnare us when it distorts the past into something idealised. People often selectively reminisce fondly about simpler times. But while they remember idyllic experiences, they overlook the austerity that came along with it. This idealisation distorts one's perception of reality and cultivate disaffection with the present. Individuals get trapped in a cycle of longing for a time gone by. It can also lead to a sense of stagnation, where individuals may resist innovation as they fear venturing beyond the familiar. This reluctance to adapt stifles personal development and prevent individuals from seizing new opportunities for fulfilment. 5 10
- 2 On a societal level, nostalgia is like a toxic cloud that poisons the unknowing masses. When embraced widely, nostalgia can fuel myths of cultural superiority. Nations may romanticise historical narratives while glossing over darker chapters of their history. This sows the seeds of discord by undermining efforts toward reconciliation with other countries. Furthermore, nationalist nostalgia also hinders cohesion by promoting a rigid adherence to traditions. Societies may resist inclusivity and cling on to outdated beliefs and practices while perpetuating injustices. 15
- 3 Nationalist nostalgia can be manipulated for political gain, serving as a tool to rally support around populist agendas. Politicians may exploit nostalgic sentiments to scapegoat marginalised groups. This exploitation can erode social cohesion, creating fertile ground for authoritarianism to flourish. Ultimately, while nostalgia can provide shade for the weary traveller, its fruits can also poison. 20

Passage 3: A shopkeeper in Japan shares what makes her business successful

- 1 My family has been running this sweet shop in Gion, Kyoto's most famous geisha district, for many generations. Our district's mystical charm evokes a sense of wonder for many visitors, drawing them in with the promise of being swept away to Japan's past. This emotional connection transforms casual shoppers into loyal customers, eager to relive the experience. 5
- 2 Even today in Japan, there is strong preference for expensive and exquisite limited local handmade folk crafts to the cheap homogeneity of factory-made goods. By incorporating handcrafted traditional decor and offering generations-old snacks that visitors can bring home to their loved ones, business owners have tapped into a powerful sentiment that resonates deeply with both locals and tourists. Traditional costume rentals and historic reenactments further amplify this effect, consistently attracting large crowds and fostering a sense of strong, albeit transient, community. 10
- 3 Additionally, the heritage district's nostalgic appeal has increased collaboration among my fellow local businesses. We've formed alliances to preserve the area's historical integrity while promoting each other's offerings. Sure, the heavier footfall might lead to some unsavoury behaviour from guests, but as they say, there is no rain without clouds. In essence, we would not be able to enjoy such prosperity without tapping into the spirit of the past. 15