

**DHS GP 2023 PRELIM PAPER 2**  
**(Topic: Minimalism vs Cluttercore)**  
**Suggested Answer Key and Mark Scheme**

**From Passage 1**

1. [a] In paragraph 1, what are **two** reasons given to explain why Sonrisa Andersen's mother was a hoarder? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

From the text	Suggested paraphrase
It <b>might conceivably</b> have been the <b>lost marriage</b> she was dealing with, or <b>more evidently</b> a <b>habit</b> that had <b>spiralled out of control</b> as her mother's <b>dependence on drugs and alcohol intensified.</b> (l.2-4)	A. The two reasons are (i) the <b>divorce</b> (that caused Andersen's mother to be sad) and (ii) her increasing <b>addiction</b> to controlled substances and spirits (drugs and alcohol)  [Part (i) and (ii) each for 1m, total 2m]

1. [b] Which reason does the author see as the bigger contributor to her (the mother's) hoarding, and how do you know this? [1]

From the text	Suggested paraphrase
Textual clues: The two reasons are marked by "might conceivably", "or more evidently". The stronger reason is marked by "more evidently" and "spiralled out of control".	B(i) The author sees Andersen's mother's <b>addiction/ use of controlled substances and spirits</b> as the bigger contributor. (Accept "drugs and alcohol"/Accept if students say the addiction was the bigger contributor.)  AND  B(ii) This is because her hoarding behaviour / pattern became <b>more obvious/ unmanageable/ worse</b> as her addiction <b>worsened</b> .  Or  The author <b>used terms like "more evidently"</b> (to suggest his certainty that drugs led to her behaviour).  [Both b(i) and b(ii) for 1m]

2. Explain the author's use of the phrase 'struck gold' (line 9) to describe what Sonrisa Andersen found online. **Use your own words as far as possible.** [1]

From the text	Suggested paraphrase
She went online for a solution and <b>struck gold</b> . The <b>search turned up blogs about "minimalism"</b> : a lifestyle of living with less and being happy with what you already own. The minimalist bloggers were men and women who, like her, had <b>an epiphany that came from a personal crisis of consumerism. Buying more had failed to make them happier.</b> (l.8-11)  <u>Textual clues:</u>	Paraphrasing 'struck gold' A (i) The phrase 'struck gold' tells us that Sonrisa Andersen was <b>successful</b> in her search for an answer.  OR (ii) found something very <b>valuable / useful</b> .



<p>(Devotion) If you <b>stuck</b> with one company throughout your <b>career</b>, it was <b>insurance</b> against periods of future <u>economic instability</u>, when you <u>hoped</u> your <u>employer</u> would <b>protect</b> you. (l.23-24)</p>	<p>(Devotion) Companies now hire people on short-term <b>contracts</b> and <b>let them go once the work is done</b>. (l.25)</p>	<p>[A(i) and A(ii) for 1m]</p> <p>(Devotion) B. (i) <u>In the past</u>, people kept to the <b>same job</b> as a <b>safeguard</b> against economic <b>uncertainty</b>. B.(ii) <u>Today</u>, employment is <b>not permanent/temporary</b>. OR Employees are <b>terminated</b> / <b>dismissed</b> as soon as their work is done. (Accept 'fired') <b>DNA: short time ("short-term" isn't necessarily a short duration)</b> [B(i) and B(ii) for 1m] Note: Students must do a fair comparison for past vs present for each basis/factor (accumulation and devotion). Do not accept if they present that "in the past was (a)(i), (b)(i) but now is (a)(ii) and (b)(ii)", unless they signpost explicitly with 'respectively'.</p>
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5 Explain the author's use of the word 'distasteful' and suggest one reason why conspicuous consumption was 'losing its meaning' (line 36). [2]

From the text	Suggested answer
<p>The Great Recession of 2008 also seemed to usher in a larger minimalist moment. An appreciation for simplicity emerged as the <u>economy came to a standstill</u>. Shopping at thrift stores became cool. So did a certain style of rustic simplicity. <b>Conspicuous consumption, the ostentation</b> of the previous decades, was not just distasteful, it was losing its meaning. In an age defined by the sense that the <b>surrounding civilisation is excessive</b>, accumulating more stuff loses its appeal. (l.33-36)</p> <p><u>Textual clues:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "shopping at thrift stores became cool" (l.31)</li> <li>• "certain style of rustic simplicity" (l.32)</li> <li>• "civilisation (society) is excessive" (l.34)</li> </ul>	<p>A. The author uses the word "distasteful" to show that it was</p> <p>(i) (morally) <b>inappropriate/repulsive</b> to be consuming excessively OR because he <b>disapproved</b> of such frivolous spending</p> <p>(ii) when the <u>economy is doing poorly / people are losing their jobs/during the Great Recession</u>.</p> <p>[A(i) and A(ii) for 1m]</p> <p>B. Conspicuous consumption is losing its meaning because <b>ORA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (woke/awareness) people are <b>more aware now about consuming responsibly</b></li> <li>• (changing values/beliefs) <b>showing off is no longer what people want to do</b></li> <li>• (context) everyone is / people are facing <b>economic hardship</b></li> <li>• (context) lifestyle choice</li> </ul> <p>[1m]</p>

6. Explain what the author means by 'exorcism of yesteryear' (line 41) when referring to decluttering. [2]

From the text	Suggested answer
For some of its devotees, minimalism is therapy. The act of getting rid of everything is like an <u>exorcism of yesteryear</u> , <b>clearing the way for a new future of pristine simplicity.</b> (lines 36-37)	<p>The author means that there is a</p> <p>A. <b>thorough purging of/ cleansing of / purifying process / catharsis</b>  DNA: "removal" as intensity not shown; 'get rid' also does not show intensity  [1m]</p> <p>B. <b>former /old belongings</b> (possessions / pre-loved things) or idea of <b>past</b>  [1m]</p> <p>to make room for a new start / something better.  DNA: The author means purging the past.</p>

#### From Passage 2

7. What does the author learn from his mother's 'urge to purge' (line 7)? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

From the text	Suggested paraphrase
<p>Because ultimately my mother's <u>urge to purge</u> struck me as illuminating something <b>misguided</b> about our general relationship to material culture. (l.7-8)</p> <p>What we often dismiss as "clutter" — all those <b>nonessential</b>, often <b>oddball</b> objects that a third-party observer might write off as <b>needless junk</b> — can <u>actually</u> be <b>good</b> for us. (l.8-10)</p> <p><u>Textual clue:</u>  "illuminating" — suggests that the point is about correcting a wrong behaviour or misconception, or providing enlightenment</p>	<p>A. The author learns that throwing things away is <b>mistaken / ill-advised / wrong...</b>  [1m]</p> <p>B. ...since what we</p> <p>(i) reject/ condemn/dispose of because they are <b>unimportant/eccentric/weird/ unnecessary /useless /unwanted</b></p> <p>(ii) are <u>in reality / really</u> <b>beneficial</b> to us.  [B(i) and B(ii) for 1m]</p>

8. From lines 15-16, explain how the author uses language to create a powerful impact on the reader. **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

From the text	Suggested paraphrase
Yet again, minimalist <b>chastisements</b> <b>insist</b> that <b>we</b> should <b>repent</b> of our materialist ways: Things, <b>they</b> are <b>forever lecturing</b> , just aren't that important.	<p>The author uses expressions such as</p> <p>*If the students repeat their unpacking/explanation for these words, only give credit for 1. If they can make distinction between these ideas/words, give credit.</p>

(l.15-16)	<p>A. <b>insist - adamant</b> that cluttering is wrong</p> <p>B. <b>repent - religious overtone/</b> suggests a <b>sin/morally wrong/</b> have to <b>change our ways</b> and right our cluttering habits</p> <p>C. <b>chastisements</b> - severely harsh/highly disapproving/Sin/ moral judgment on people who clutter</p> <p>D. Words like “forever lecturing” suggest that the minimalists are <b>unrelenting / unyielding / relentless</b> in making their point</p> <p>E. The author uses the pronouns “we”, “our” and “they” to emphasise the <b>gulf/gap</b> OR <b>tension/conflict</b> between the <u>minimalists and the reader</u>.</p>
Any 2 points for 2 marks.	

9. From paragraph 7, how do you know the author has learnt the lesson ‘be careful what you purge’ (line 41)? [1]

From the text	Suggested answer
I can only speculate. But the <u>lesson</u> I’ve taken is: <u>Be careful</u> what you purge. Today’s decluttering victim is tomorrow’s lost object, and <u>lost objects are forever. That’s why I’m keeping my embarrassing ceramic leprechaun. I’m learning to appreciate it.</u> It holds a <u>connection</u> for me — to my mother and to all her best intentions and instincts — that I <u>never want to lose</u> . (l.41-45)	<p>(Identify the action)</p> <p>A. The author <b>keeps the ceramic leprechaun</b>.</p> <p>BOD: The author keeps <b>the items the mother has sent</b> (If the student is vague about items, then the idea that the mother was the one who gave him the items must be seen clearly)</p> <p>DNA: The author writes the line “the lesson I’ve taken is...”</p> <p>[1m]</p>

10. Using material from paragraphs 3-6 (lines 17 to 40) only, summarise what the author has to say about why cluttercore is appealing. Write your summary in no more than 120 words, not counting the opening words which are printed below. Use your own words as far as possible.

*Cluttercore is appealing because...*

A	There is, it turns out, a counter to the decluttering imperative — inevitably given the unattractive label “cluttercore” — that frankly <b>celebrates</b> the human <b>relationship to stuff</b> .	...it is <b>an affirmation of / honours / supports</b> our <b>connection</b> to our <b>possessions</b> .
B	Search <u>YouTube</u> and you will find <u>video tours</u> of (mostly young) people’s <b>extensive and colorful</b> collections of <u>stuffed toys, figurines, gewgaws and knickknacks</u> .	Cluttercore videos are filled with <b>varied/interesting examples</b> (inferred)
C	TikTok clips tagged #cluttercore, sharing what the home-design site Apartment Therapy described as “ <b>organised, nostalgic chaos</b> ,”	<p>which depict <b>sensible / well-arranged / systematic</b>, AND <b>sentimental messiness / disarray</b> (Note: to review during benchmarking)</p> <p><u>Adjective + chaos/disarray</u> Memorable + mess</p> <p>OR Well-arranged + mess</p>

D	have a <b>whopping 80 million views</b> .	... (such sharings) are hugely <b>popular</b> . (inferred)
E	As one cluttercore advocate argues to Architectural Digest, that cluttercore is a <b>backlash against the trend towards the neutral and bland</b> aesthetics.	(Flip) Cluttercore is <b>exciting /not ordinary</b> OR (Paraphrase) <b>Protest against the boring/plain</b> designs/style
F	Cluttercore wholly depends on <b>idiosyncratic personality</b>	for it is about <b>unique/distinctive/different/strange/odd/eccentric + character / quirks</b>
G	and <b>rarefied interests</b> ,	<b>uncommon + hobbies / pursuits</b>
H	and thus “celebrates <b>radical aesthetics</b> .”	and <b>unconventional / unorthodox + ideas/beliefs</b>  (Note on F,G & H: adjective (might overlap) + distinct noun/concept to get 1 point)
I	In an era when <b>copying</b> is <b>everywhere</b> , the advocate asserted,	(context) Given that <b>duplication / imitation</b> is now <b>prevalent</b>
J	so-called clutter represents something that “ <b>can’t be copied</b> .”	cluttercore exhibits more <b>originality</b> / is <b>unusual / unique</b>
	...But the point about individuality not only rings true;	(Repeat F)
K	it suggests that the reasons to appreciate clutter are <b>correct, natural</b>	...is the <b>right</b> practice to follow OR ...is <b>intuitive/normal</b>
L	and frequently <b>underrated</b> .	and/even though it is often <b>overlooked/undervalued/deserving of more attention/understated</b>  (Accept the prefix of ‘over’ or ‘under’ but DNA the idea of ‘rated’) <b>DNA: Overrated</b>
M	In a time where more people are embracing a <b>less structured lifestyle</b> , cluttercore is significantly growing (appealing)	People being more accepting of a <b>disorganised/less rigid</b> lifestyle makes cluttercore appealing
	It is one of the many paradigm shifts that are a result of the pandemic;	<i>Not a point</i>
N	as people do not <b>know</b> what <b>tomorrow</b> will bring,	as people are <b>uncertain</b> about the future.
O	they need emotions and memories that come from clutter, to give themselves <b>reassurance</b>	People are able to derive feelings/ nostalgia from clutter (repeated point C) which gives them great <b>comfort / removes their fears</b>
P	I’m sure <b>you can think of a personal example</b> :	(Inferred) After all, <b>everyone has gone through the experience</b> (of losing something)  OR this <b>experience</b> (of losing something) is <b>relatable / common / applies to all</b>

Q	an object that's <b>gone missing</b> from your life	(inferred) Cluttercore helps us to <b>avoid</b> (this problem of) <b>losing</b> a <b>belonging/item</b> <u>to decluttering/throwing something away inadvertently</u>
R	that you'd <b>love to have back</b> , or at least see again. But I wonder — would you have known, when this thing went AWOL, <b>that you'd miss it</b> ? If my mother had shipped her bird figurine collection off to me, would she have <b>glanced wistfully at the empty spots</b> on the shelves where they were displayed?	(and) <b>regretting it later / wishing we had not done so</b>

Points	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9	10-11	12-13	14>
Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

### From both Passages

12. Kyle Chakya supports minimalism while Ron Walker argues why clutter should be embraced.

How far do you agree or disagree with their observations? Relate your arguments to your own experience and that of your society.

Possible opinions from students:

1. That we do not aspire to cluttercore, although we accidentally clutter/hoard and discussions about how Singaporeans might manage the clutter
- 2.

Sample ideas

Candidates can argue for minimalism or explain contexts to show why minimalism is popular/Cluttercore is not popular/not embraced	Candidates can explore why there might be a tendency to clutter or appear disorganized.
<p><b>Evaluation of SG Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Singapore is a densely populated city-state with limited land area. As a result, living spaces tend to be smaller compared to other places. Minimalism helps people make the most of their limited space by reducing clutter and unnecessary possessions, creating a sense of openness and functionality.</li> <li>● The fast-paced lifestyle in Singapore encourages people to streamline their routines and surroundings for efficiency. Minimalism emphasizes organization and decluttering, which <i>might possibly</i> contribute to a more structured and manageable life.</li> <li>● The cost of living in Singapore can be high, and minimalism aligns with the idea of spending money mindfully. By focusing on quality over quantity and avoiding unnecessary purchases, individuals can save money and invest in items or experiences that truly matter to them.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Evaluation of SG context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In some cultures, keeping items and heirlooms for generations is seen as a way to honour family history and heritage. People might be inclined to hold onto items for sentimental or cultural reasons, even if it leads to a cluttered living space.</li> <li>● Many Singaporeans live in public housing flats, which often have limited storage space. Lack of proper storage solutions can make it challenging to keep possessions organised and out of sight, contributing to a cluttered environment.</li> <li>● Singapore has a thriving retail and shopping scene, and consumerism is prevalent. This habit is exacerbated by cheap goods that come from China as shipping costs are relatively low. Frequent shopping and acquiring new items without discarding old ones can contribute to</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a growing proportion of Singaporeans being more woke and aware of the growing concerns about the environment and sustainability, more people in Singapore (and around the world) are adopting minimalistic practices as a way to reduce their ecological footprint.</li> <li>• In Singapore, homeowners have caught on to the minimalist trend. However, this does not mean that conspicuous consumption has lost its appeal. Instead, having a minimalist home has become a new way to show off (one's taste in fine-living or the ability to afford stylish minimalist furniture). This can tie in with the idea of Singaporeans splurging on expensive, but still deceptively simple decoration. For many Singaporeans, their home is their most expensive asset. Many new owners would spend a huge sum of money (splurge) on home renovation, drawing inspiration from interior design ideas that are trending overseas, such as the minimalist home 'movement'.</li> <li>• In addition, there is practice amongst some segments of society who believe in fengshui....TBC</li> <li>• For a number of ethnic cultural groups in SG, for major cultural festivities, there is a common practice to do a massive spring cleaning, albeit at different times of the year.</li> <li>• While we might be consumerist at heart, SG do not really end up being hoarders. Disposal companies/Buy and throw culture</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Evidence/Examples:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The minimalist home has become coveted, having been featured in high society magazines like <i>Tatler Asia</i>, where modern minimalist homes in Singapore were featured in May and June 2023.</li> <li>• Even mass market furniture giant Ikea has a gallery and catalogue for the minimalist home.</li> <li>• Muji, a Japanese retail brand that "embodies an exquisite and minimalist living room style" is also popular.</li> </ul>	<p>clutter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singapore families and individuals generally have sufficient disposable incomes to spend on collections of items. Many also travel overseas frequently and bring back items from their shopping trips (leading to the accumulation of items). Singapore is often associated with affluence and material success. Some people might feel societal pressure to display their achievements through possessions, which can lead to an accumulation of items and clutter.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Evidence (interesting facts)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While Singapore is not yet a nation of hoarders, the problem of hoarding is serious enough to warrant a national study by the Institute of Mental health in 2016 and a parliamentary question in September 2022.</li> <li>• While Singaporeans live mainly in apartments, where space is limited, it has become an established practice for people to rent storage spaces to keep their collections and the belongings which cannot fit into their homes.</li> <li>• Singapore hosts many major collectors' events, such as Singapore Comic Con, and is a major shopping hub in Southeast Asia. Many local collectors would show off their toys, clothes and handbags collections on social media.</li> <li>• Channel NewsAsia has reported a boom in demand for self-storage space in 2021 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Market researcher, GII Research, projects an annual growth rate of close to 10% in the demand for such storage spaces from 2021 to 2026.</li> </ul>
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