

Name		GP Class	
Reg No.			

NATIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE
Senior High 2 Preliminary Examination
Higher 1

General Paper

Paper 2
INSERT

8881/02

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1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

Passage 1. *An author writes about the decline of shopping malls.*

- 1 Much has been written on the phenomenon of the collapse of the American mall and the reasons for it. The most obvious – the rise of online retail – is undeniably a significant factor, but it also masks a rot that had been spreading before Amazon gutted brick-and-mortar shops. It is hard to think of any comparable social institution that cost so much and covered so much physical space and then imploded so quickly. As always, the story is far more complex than any tidy summary can encompass. 5
- 2 The first contemporary, enclosed suburban shopping mall in America – Southdale Shopping Centre in Edina, Minnesota – was built in 1956, and the idea was incredibly successful. The exodus from urban centres to suburbs created an enormous opportunity to fill a vacuum for goods and services in smaller communities. A mall patron could get their hair styled, buy groceries, visit the bank, and enjoy an art installation all in one building. As the concept gained steam, the mall seemed a well of endless novelty – a preeminent showcase of modern architecture and innovative products. As malls flourished, in many communities they decimated urban shopping districts, which by then had come to be viewed by some as outdated and unsafe. 10 15
- 3 By their heyday in the late 1970s and 1980s, malls seemed like a never-ending source of income. Not only had they established themselves as dominant retail hubs, for developers especially, new malls were built to compete with old ones: bigger, more upscale, or just different. Even though the popularity of malls would continue well through the 1990s, this competition was the key factor that led to the cascade of closures that followed. There were too many malls that cannibalised each other’s customers. Novelty meant that when one mall became dated, there was another one to go to instead. 20
- 4 The overabundance of suburban malls heralded a subtle but important perceptual shift – by the 2000s, dated and poorly maintained malls were commonplace, and the view of them as sparkling palaces of wonder and delight was fading. It had become trendy to hate them. Department stores were losing the battle for cost-conscious consumers to big box retailers like Walmart, which spread like wildfire through the 1990s. Poor management, obsolete marketing strategies, and unsustainable expansion left retailers like JCPenney and Macy’s at a tremendous strategic disadvantage against bargain stores like TJ Maxx and fashionable (and often freestanding) chains like Target. 25 30
- 5 The failure of larger anchor stores presented another catastrophic problem. The very size of malls became a liability: dead ends, darkened storefronts, and vacant corridors created eerie, lifeless pockets – and a death spiral. Fewer tenants, fewer shoppers, decreased income, more unkempt areas. Malls became static islands surrounded by seas of asphalt. When online shopping grew, it stabbed a victim that was already bleeding out. The pandemic and inflation did not improve the situation either. In the 1980s, there were roughly 2,500 malls in the United States. Today, there are approximately 700, a number most analysts expect to continue to decline. 35
- 6 As millennials and Gen Zers mature and their purchasing power increases, the concept of traditional malls is being replaced. These younger consumers prefer to spend their money on experiences rather than on material things. Some malls are attempting to weather the storm by offering amenities, experiences, and entertainment to enhance the shopping experience. But there are no sure bets, and the champions of today’s marketplace may be buried in dust and shadows tomorrow. 40

Passage 2. *An author writes about the continued relevance of shopping malls.*

- 1 Shopping is the most contemporary social activity that happens today, predominantly in shopping malls. Shopping malls are social spaces designed within the walls in a cleaner and safer environment. One must not neglect, however, that malls are centrally capitalist structures. They embody a country's economic growth, and exist to meet consumer demand from a population keen to express its affluence and purchasing power. 5
- 2 Unofficially, shopping malls are the heart and soul of communities, the foundation of retail economies, and a social sanctuary for teenagers everywhere. Various global trends are coming together at the same time to cause malls to change the role they play in people's lives. No longer are they primarily about shopping. Now, when consumers visit malls, they are looking for experiences that go well beyond traditional shopping. The trends helping to create this change include changing demographics, such as an ageing population and increased urbanisation, which means more people living in smaller spaces and a greater need for public spaces in which to socialise and congregate. In this environment, malls offer a much-welcomed watering hole, especially in cities where other public spaces are not safe. Sustainability concerns are causing some consumers to prefer mixed use developments where they can live, shop and work all within walking distance – instead of having to get into a car and drive to a crowded suburban mall. 10 15
- 3 Today's shoppers are akin to modern-day flâneurs who navigate curated spaces that blend commerce with leisure and spectacle, and observe people and society. Much like their 19th-century counterparts who strolled through Parisian arcades, they wander through corridors lined with boutique shops and upscale global brands, seeking not just products but experiences that enhance their well-being. Shoppers benefit from the new emphasis on a curated mix of smaller stores that add a sense of novelty to the mall offering. Additionally, some malls are making greater use of temporary, flexible spaces that can accommodate different uses over time. Malls are also focusing on specific consumer segments that allow consumers to find an area that caters to them. These experiences offer a special kind of freedom – the freedom to explore, indulge, and forge connections. 20 25
- 4 The e-commerce revolution and the rise of digital technologies are fundamentally reshaping consumer expectations and shifting the function of stores towards useful and entertaining customer experiences. What began as a cathedral of retail consumerism is becoming a place where people can connect and enjoy individual and collective experiences that are unavailable online. 30

Passage 3. *The author believes that malls should not be repurposed.*

- 1 For most of my life, the shopping mall was the symbol of the capitalist experiment. Everything about it celebrated consumerism and the illusion of abundance. My generation came of age when movies both celebrated and mocked the mall's cultural primacy: it was the theatre of adolescent angst and makeovers. Malls were sort of for losers, a little bit, but you went anyway. They were a stable signifier of vaguely embarrassing American excess, a place where you could purchase what you were missing: a bit of edge maybe, or glamour. 5
- 2 But as the mall's popularity plummeted, its shiny hysterical promises started to seem shabby and worryingly fallible. A mall stripped of its spell – its meandering people on doomed but pleasing quests, buying nothing but having a good time – is at best sad, and at worst embarrassing. Today's teenagers have now abandoned the mall. 10
- 3 Developers, entrepreneurs, and even governments are desperately trying to find new uses for malls. Malls are becoming home to community colleges, libraries and offices. These efforts, while noble and good, are essentially futile. Malls were made to be malls. Being temples to consumerism, malls were tailor-made to be exactly what they were. Trying to force the issue by repurposing the former makeup counters and dressing rooms into art exhibits or hipster cafes makes the result seem impoverished and weird. 15