

2024 SAJC JC2 Preliminary Examinations P2 – Suggested Answers

Q1: What does the author mean by ‘the shoe has dropped’ (line 1)? [1]

From the passage	Suggested Answers
<p>The shoe has dropped. The big one. China, the most populous country on the planet for centuries, this month reported its first population decline in six decades, a trend that is almost certainly irreversible. By the end of the century, China may have only around half of the 1.41 billion people it has now, according to U.N. projections, and may already have been overtaken by India.</p>	<p>A: The author means that a significant / major/ main event has finally/inevitably occurred with regards to <u>declining population (context)</u>.</p> <p>Note: the idea of finally / inevitably must be captured for the mark to be awarded.</p> <p>BOD - if the idea of “significant” is captured.</p>

Q2: Explain the author’s use of the phrase, ‘the glass is at least half full.’ (lines 6–7) [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answers
<p>But the alarmist warnings are often simplistic and premature. The glass is at least half full. Shrinking populations are usually part of a natural, inevitable process, and rather than focus excessively on concerns like labour shortages and pension support, we need to look at the brighter spots for our world.</p>	<p>A : <u>Despite</u> the concerns/panic/ negativity behind the issues of population decline</p> <p>B : <u>There is still</u> reason for optimism/ a silver-lining/there is hope to solve it.</p> <p>Award 1m per point</p> <p><i>BOD if context is unclear.</i></p>

Q3: What are **three** reasons the author argues that lower birthrates might not be completely negative in paragraph 3? [3]

From the passage	Suggested Answers
<p>China, South Korea and Japan are now all in population decline; this is due in part to rapid increases in income, employment and education. The number of South Korean women who went on to postsecondary education rose from 6 percent in 1980 to more than 90 percent by 2020; China and Japan also have seen big gains. Lower birthrates reflects greater personal and reproductive freedom, such as the choice to stay unmarried;</p> <p>higher pay; and</p> <p>more professional opportunities for women in these nations.</p>	<p>A (women's autonomy): Women now have greater autonomy and choices on when to give birth/whether to have children.</p> <p>B (women in the workplace): women are receiving more wages at work.</p> <p>C (more professional opportunities): women have greater career progression / more likely to be employed.</p>

Q4: According to the author, how does the increase in life expectancy “reshape lives and open up opportunities” (line 19)? [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answers
<p>Increases of that magnitude reshape lives and open up opportunities unimaginable when life spans were shorter,</p> <p>such as workers remaining productive later in life and</p> <p>growing markets for older consumers in areas like tourism, nutritional supplements and medical devices, among others.</p>	<p>A: Increases in life expectancy means individuals can continue to work and contribute much longer than before.</p> <p>B: These increases have spurred /developed a wider range of products and services / lucrative opportunities catered to the elderly.</p>

Q5: From paragraph 5, what is the author suggesting about the impact of having more people on the planet? [2]

From the passage	Suggested Answers
Fewer people on the planet, of course, may reduce humanity's ecological footprint and competition for finite resources. There could even be greater peace as governments are forced to choose between spending on military equipment or on pensions.	<p>A. The author is suggesting that having more people would place greater strain on the environment and</p> <p>B. more struggle over/ fighting for / depletion of limited resources</p> <p>C. Higher likelihood of war or conflict</p> <p>Any 2 for 2 marks</p> <p><i>Ecosystem - Lifted (0m)</i></p>

Q6: What is the author implying about policies to raise fertility by using the phrase 'birth machines' (lines 31–32)?

From the passage	Suggested Answers
And just as earlier panic led to harmful policies in China and elsewhere, efforts to raise fertility — which may prove futile — risk viewing women once again as birth machines .	<p>A) The author is implying that these policies do not see women as anything more than tools / dehumanises / objectifies women.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>B) The author is implying that women do not have a choice in reproduction as that's their purpose.</p>

Q7: Summarise the drivers of the great fertility slump. Write your summary in no more than 120 words. [8]

Line	Point	Lift	Paraphrase	Main idea
9	1.	"societies progress up the hierarchy of needs from physical survival to emotional self-actualisation "	As societies evolve, they shift focus from bodily needs to psychological needs .	Moving Up Hierarchy of Needs
10-11	2.	"rearing children gets short shrift because people pursue other, more individualist aims "	People focus more on their personal goals , rather than raising children	Personal goals > Raising children
12-13 14 - 15	3.	"fertility drops as female education and employment rise" "a rising proportion of women have entered higher education and the skilled labour force "	More women in developed regions are gaining access to/empowered by higher education and skilled jobs.	Women's Economic Empowerment
15 – 16	4.	"Improved education has also given women greater autonomy within relationships"	Education enhances women's choice/say/voice within relationships...	Autonomy
16 – 17	5.	"...a better understanding of contraception , and greater input into family planning."	and their control over whether to have children.	Family Planning

17	6.	"Many have opted to delay becoming mothers to pursue their careers"	Many women choose to put off having children to focus on their careers.	Economic Development
20 – 21	7.	"the industrial revolution reduced the importance of children as a source of unskilled labour "	Economic development decreases the need for children to help with manual tasks.	Reduced need for children to be manual labour
21 – 22	8.	"families invest more in their children, providing them with better education"	Economic growth leads families to spending more on each child's education.	Higher Spending on Children
29	9.	"the stress and busyness of modern life"	The hectic pace of life today impacts fertility decisions.	Hectic Pace of life
23 – 24	10.	"While some countries have introduced pro-natalist policies ... the effectiveness of these measures has been mixed at best."	While countries have taken steps to boost fertility rates , they have not solved the problem.	Ineffectiveness of Pro-Natalist Policies
28	11.	"grim global outlook owing to overcrowded cities and..."	Some couples are unwilling to have children due to overpopulated cities	Overpopulation
28	12.	"...already strained ecosystem. "	...an ailing planet/limited resources/earth's limited capacity.	Strained planet

30	13.	"the supply of online entertainment that may compete with sexual activity"	People are having less sex due to digital distractions .	Impact of Technology on Human Sexual Behaviour
30-31	14.	" elevated rates of depression and anxiety among young adults"	The higher incidence of mental health issues among youth can deter family planning.	Mental Health Issues
31-32	15.	"the detrimental effect of smartphones on real-world human interactions"	Smartphones and similar technologies might reduce face-to-face interactions.	Impact of Technology on Human Interaction
32	16.	"and the lack of appeal to women of 'hooking up'."	Women today are less interested in casual relationships .	Changing Relationship Norms

2024 Preliminary Examination Mark Distribution:

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No of points identified	0	1	2	3-4	5-6	7	8-9	10-11	12+

From All Passages

8. Passage 1 states that 'but the alarmist warnings are often simplistic and premature' (line 6). Identify one specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to **undermine** this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

Suggested Answer	
<p>Specific idea(s):</p> <p>(1) "...it's impossible not to see the gathering storm clouds over humanity's future due to declining birth rates. (line 1)"</p> <p>(2) "The aging population crisis cannot be overstated. With fewer young people to support an increasingly elderly population, the strain on healthcare and pension systems will be unprecedented."</p> <p>(3) "A global decline could lead to a stagnation in innovation, impacting economic growth and, by extension, global stability."</p> <p>(4) "The looming population decline is not merely demographic shift but a harbinger of profound changes to the fabric of society."</p>	<p>Paraphrase (A)</p> <p>(1) The unmistakable signs of a looming crisis for human civilization are evident, marked by steadily falling birth rates.</p> <p>(2) The crisis stemming from an aging population is profound. The dwindling number of young individuals available to support a growing number of seniors will place unparalleled pressure on healthcare and pension systems.</p> <p>(3) A worldwide decrease in population could halt progress in innovation, thereby affecting economic expansion and, consequently, undermining global stability.</p> <p>(4) The impending fall in population growth is not just a change in demography but a herald of deep and tectonic shifts to the foundation of society."</p>

Justification

B: This undermines the point because

(1)

B: declining birth rates **provide tangible evidence** of the societal risks ahead.

(2)

B: the concrete demographic challenge of an aging society **reflects an impending socioeconomic strain.**

(3)

B: population decline indicates that the warnings are **grounded in complex, consequential trends.**

(4)

B: Impacts of population decline are **far-reaching** and even have the potential to shake the very foundation of society, hence it is concerning and has **severe implications.**

*Markers' comments - it may be useful to rephrase the given quote (that the cautionary alerts are **frequently reductive and hasty**) before offering justifications. (B)*

Accept other wording as long as the justification is valid in relation to the correctly identified specific point.

From All Passages

9. Passage 2 states that 'rearing children gets short shrift because people pursue other, more individualist aims.' (lines 10-11).

Identify one specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

Suggested Answer

Specific idea(s):	Paraphrase (A)
<p>(1) “For instance, in urban centers where career-oriented lifestyles predominate, many opt to delay or forego having children.</p> <p>(2) “Furthermore, as hobbies and community involvement gain importance, these become significant sources of personal satisfaction and identity, offering rich, fulfilling experiences that might have traditionally been found in raising a family.”</p>	<p>(1) In city areas where work-focused living is common, many choose to postpone or skip parenthood, seeing it to emphasise on individual development and economic security.</p> <p>(2) Additionally, as recreational activities and community engagement become more valued, they emerge as major contributors to personal contentment and self-identity, providing rewarding experiences that were once primarily associated with family life.</p>
<p>Justification</p> <p>B: This supports the point because</p> <p>All these changes show that as society places less importance on childbearing, individuals feel supported in prioritizing their personal goals over family responsibilities.</p> <p><i>Markers’ comments - it may be useful to rephrase the given quote (it’s frequently sidelined as individuals emphasise more on personal and self-directed ambitions.) before offering justifications. (B)</i></p> <p><i>Accept other wording as long as the justification is valid in relation to the correctly identified specific point.</i></p>	

Q10: The reading passages cover a range of views about population decline.

How far do you agree that we need not worry about population decline? [12]

Support your answer with reference to:

- The ideas and opinions from at least one of the reading passages
- Examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

AQ Suggested Answer Guide

How to use this guide

- [Students] Complement the issues fleshed out in these suggested answers with (i) the T&L materials (e.g. sample AQs) that will help you deepen and model evaluation and (ii) the lectures where evaluation tools will be covered.
- [Teachers] This is an assessment guide that provides guidance on the issues surfaced, and possible ways to evaluate. Complement this with the top 2 AQ samples and the evaluation tools in the lectures.

REQUIREMENTS. Candidates should:

- Explain the extent to which empathy is beneficial or harmful for their society
- Support their views with reasoned argument
- Show understanding of the ideas and attitudes in the passages
- Explain the extent of their agreement with them

EXPLANATION. Candidates should show understanding of some of the following issues:

Key Issues (Concepts)	Guiding questions
<p>Concerns are overblown and primarily focused on economics and industry.</p> <p>[Passage 1]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you agree that the economic concerns are overblown in your society? Given the context of your society, do you agree that concerns about the future of the workforce are overblown?
<p>Population decline signals more progressive values being upheld in society</p> <p>[Both Passage 1 & 2]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the values or principle shifts in your society (if any) that have led to population decline? On the balance of things, does a shift towards more progressive values provide sufficient grounds to be less concerned of the practical implications of population decline in your society?
<p>Population decline results in less strain on our environment</p> <p>[Passage 1, 2 and 3]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is population density a source of environmental concern for your society? How might population decline (or growth) affect the harmony between your society and the environment?
<p>Giving birth to fewer children allows more targeted and focused development of each child.</p> <p>[Passage 2]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some examples in your society that demonstrates investment in the development of children? How might having fewer children aid or not aid these investments in your society? What are some societal safeguards / campaigns / programmes that might be relevant?
<p>Strain on essential services in society</p> <p>[Passage 3]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well or underprepared is your society for dealing with an ageing (and declining) population? Is the strain on essential services as severe in your society as suggested by the author?
<p>Stagnation and lack of innovation in society</p> <p>[Passage 3]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some policies, practices or campaigns in your society to encourage innovation or progress? What are some of the drivers of innovation and progress in your society? How far is it true that population decline is likely to lead to stagnation in the society?

General advice

- The passages are largely exploring **indirect causes and impacts** of population decline which can be sources of concern or comfort. In the analysis it would be prudent to be **clear about this** and not paint everything as if they were the same thing. (For example, the “strain on resources” in Passage 3 is focused on population decline as a result of fertility rate dropping alongside increased life expectancies.)
- While the issue being discussed is one that has been weighed on a lot in Singapore, there is a need to explore – in writing – the reasoning behind the national narrative if the analysis calls for it. **Avoid** oversimplifying the analysis by just referring to the existence of national programmes and movements as sufficient reason to suggest that it is a cause for concern.

Candidates may also link to other relevant discussions and contexts such as:

- Population decline has quite a fair bit of implications on other aspects of Singapore. Economic, industry and environmental impacts were discussed at some level in the passages. There was also some brief mention on the social implications of families being able to focus on one child. However, there may also be room for examining other aspects such as: National Security and Social Compact (how society works together).

EVALUATION. Candidates should:

- Question/show reasons for approving of some of these views
- Give examples from their own and their society’s experience in support of their view.
- May put forward original ideas on the reasons for concern – or otherwise – for population decline.