



JURONG JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC 2 Preliminary Examination 2013

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Paper 2

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INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

Karen Donley-Hayes and Christine Lennon write about the changing notions of beauty.

- 1 Advances in technology, communication, and science have changed the face of commerce and economies, and how the world conducts business. These advances have also enabled changes to the faces of the world population – literally and figuratively. Anthony Elliott, a professor of sociology at Flinders University in South Australia, and author of the book *Making the Cut: How Cosmetic Surgical Culture Is Transforming Our Lives*, asserts that globalisation fundamentally impacts cultural and social issues. He contends that the new information technologies as well as scientific and medical advances bear directly on people's expectations – not only pertaining to business and trade, but at personal levels too. He also claims that this is nowhere better dramatised than in makeover culture, which is dominated by prevailing notions of beauty. This is because in the same way that corporations can restructure their operations from one country to another overnight, people are more and more drawn into thinking that their identities and bodies are similarly plastic, flexible, liquid. 5 10
- 2 The convenience and temporality that are promoted by the new economy have enabled the reinvention of the individual in a way that has never been easier. Consumerism or what can be called 'self-commodification', is occurring – the financing of enhanced body parts is now creeping into monthly credit card statements. 15
- 3 Today, bodies are pumped, pummelled, plucked, suctioned, stitched, shrunk and surgically augmented at an astonishing rate. At the core of this is a new economy that judges people less on their achievements, less on their records of success, and more and more on their appearance. What is new in the surge of today's Botox converts and liposuction addicts is the social composition of those undergoing the surgeon's knife. More and more middle-class professionals are turning to plastic surgery in an effort to retain, or sometimes acquire, youthful good looks. The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, for example, reports that professionals have replaced celebrities as the dominant group choosing to reinvent themselves through cosmetic surgery. 20 25
- 4 Not all that long ago, anyone who wanted cosmetic surgery would have been advised to seek therapy in the first instance. Today, by contrast, there is a widespread acceptance that cosmetic surgical culture is beneficial and even desirable. Especially for tough-minded, highly motivated professionals, to be surgically 'freshened up' provides an edge in the marketplace. Plastic surgery has become so universally available – with financing options to make it accessible to the less well off – that to reinvent oneself has become as much an expectation as a luxury for some people. 30 35
- 5 However, the backlash against cosmetic surgery and the pursuit of conventional beauty has begun. As cosmetic surgery and ready financing make it possible for people to purchase 'perfect' features or the 'perfect' body, the mystique of what was once unattainable has diminished. "The conventional pretty face used to be rare," says Teresa Riordan, author of *Inventing Beauty*. "Now, you can shop for a new face and body like people used to shop for makeup. It makes the traditional ideal of beauty less exciting. People start searching for something new." 40

- 6 Notions of beauty are becoming more diverse in the media. This is apparent in how viewers are turned off by reality shows that depict cosmetic operations and Newsweek's multiracial pick for the 'perfect' face, reflecting broadening ideals of who is pretty. This seems to be the trend cosmetic surgeons are seeing. According to Dr Paul Lorenc, a New York plastic surgeon, teenagers seeking cosmetic surgery today are requesting not to have 'perfect' features like the one all their friends just bought. Different is sexy. The message is: different is good. 45
- 7 In addition, reality television factors into the turning of the tide. Watching women with low self-esteem submit to painful procedures on shows like *The Swan* makes some consumers think twice about going under the knife. According to Frank Galasso, a stylist and owner of L.A.'s frank.studio, people in Los Angeles are hyper-aware of the 'plastic-surgery look' – and that is not what people want to see anymore. Even surgeons say TV's depiction of cosmetic operations can be a turnoff for clients. In a survey of 4,000 doctors by Castle Connolly Medical Ltd., an independent healthcare research company, nearly 40 percent said that *The Swan* had a negative impact on the public's ideas of the cosmetic-surgery industry and only five percent approved of the message behind MTV's *I Want a Famous Face*, in which participants underwent surgery to look like celebrities. Ratings for such reality TV shows continue to slide. It seems that nobody likes perfection anymore, and perceptions of beauty are becoming more diverse. 50
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- 8 The changing notions of beauty beg the question: is the wish to reinvent oneself a new need or desire that modern, globally reaching communication and technology may have encouraged? As with anything that evolves, the changing perception of beauty made possible by cosmetic surgery is not static and it remains to be seen how the trend develops. Plastic is the new cosmetic. While 'drastic plastic' is not yet the norm, it is worrying how beauty is now central to the new economy – that of the finance, service, and media sectors – socially, economically, aesthetically. 65

Adapted from Cosmetic Surgery, The Social Pressure to Have Cosmetic Surgery Has Increased, 2011, and The Culture of Beauty, The Standards of Beauty Are Changing, 2010.

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