RIVER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL
Year 6 Preliminary Exam

GENERAL PAPER **8807/02**

Paper 2 **04 September 2013**

INSERT **1 hour 30 minutes**

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

Passage 1 Paul Graham argues the case against addictive behaviour.

1 What hard liquor, cigarettes, heroin, and cocaine have in common is that they are all concentrated forms of less addictive predecessors. That is true of most, if not all of the things we describe as addictive. The ominous thing is that the process that created them is accelerating. It's the same process that cures diseases: technological progress. It means making things do more of what we want. When the thing we want is something we want to want, we consider technological progress good; when progress creates something we don't want to want – like when it transforms opium into heroin - it seems bad. We may quibble over its merits, but the irrefutable hastening of technological progress means that increasingly, things we like will be transformed into things we like too much.

2 As far as I know there's no word for something we like too much. The closest is the colloquial sense of 'addictive'. This usage has become increasingly common, and it's clear why. There's an increasing number of things we need it for. Food has been transformed by innovative processing and creatively marketed as something almost physically seductive; Monopoly has been replaced by World of Warcraft while television programmes tempt, tantalise and titillate to no avail – we regard them as quaint YouTube analogues.

3 Having more things we like will mean more things we have to be careful about. Should we worry? After all, societies develop antibodies to addictive new things. As knowledge spread about the dangers of smoking, social norms changed. In only 20 years, smoking transformed from something glamorous movie stars did in publicity shots to something huddling addicts do outside buildings. A lot of the change was due to legislation, of course, but it couldn't have happened if social habits and attitudes hadn't already changed. But unless the rate at which social antibodies evolve can increase to match the accelerating rate at which technological progress throws out new addictions, we'll be increasingly unable to rely on our social customs to protect us.

4 Novelists have long assayed our addictive behaviours and revealed their dysfunctional core: characters fixate on an object or behaviour to displace or to eliminate their anxieties. George Eliot's 17th-century "Middlemarch" portrays a workaholic who finds the toil of writing in libraries more compelling than even the charms of his young wife. Jane Austen's 19th-century heroines were conditioned to need husbands in the way some of us need mobile phones: in order to feel assured of their own existence. In Francis Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby", Jay Gatsby's desire to win his long-time love leads to lavish, extravagant displays, and she, Daisy, sobs to see such compulsion, overwhelmed to learn that she is a goddess to him.

5 The brave new world of marketing heralds yet greater paranoia, pandering to consumers with eerie reassurances of automation and effortlessness. This isn't a response to need - it's a drip-drip sedation of angst. How have *we* allowed *them* to feel both appointed and anointed? If I'm right about the acceleration of addictiveness, we'll need to constantly - even obsessively - examine ourselves. I've avoided most addictions, but the Internet got me because it became addictive while I was using it. That's why I don't have an iPhone; the last thing I want is for the Internet to follow me out into the world. I used to think running was a good form of exercise. Now the slowness of hiking is advantageous, giving me more time to think without interruption.

6 Increasingly, we will be defined by what we say no to. Unless we want to be canaries in the coal mine of each new addiction, we'll have to figure out for ourselves what to avoid and how. It may actually become reasonable to be suspicious not just of everything new but also of existing things. Our addictions may have an impact on evolution, because we are slouching our way to the survival of the weakest.

Passage 2 Damian Thompson examines modern addictive behaviour.

1 The 21st century cupcake: a modest base of sponge groaning under an indulgently thick layer of frosted sugar or buttercream. The retro charm of pastel-coloured icing implies that one bite will take you back to your childhood. This can't possibly be junk food, can it? And the other ubiquitous presence in modern life, the iPhone, does everything, so you really don't need the upgraded model that Apple has just released. Or do you? These innocent, even mundane, objects can get us into trouble. They are objects of desire that can reinforce addictive behaviour – the sort that creeps up on you when your defences are down. And that's the core reason for compulsive behaviour today: a social environment in which more and more of us are being pulled towards some form of addiction.

2 It's not obvious to us now, but the most far-reaching social development of the early 21st century is our increasingly insistent habit of rewarding ourselves whenever we feel the need to lift our moods. When we play just one more game of Candy Crush before school, or when we conduct a surreptitious internet search for updates of pirated entertainment sources, we're behaving like addicts. That streak is there because our brains have evolved to seek out immediate, short-term rewards. Our ancestors needed to stuff themselves with energy-rich berries and to respond quickly to sexual stimulation. Our problem is that we've built an environment that bombards us with rewards that our bodies don't need and that do nothing to ensure our survival as a species.

3 There is a continuum of addictive behaviour on which everyone can be located. Worryingly, many of us are being pulled toward the dangerous end of the spectrum, thanks to technological and social changes that stimulate the most fundamental of all our instincts – desire. Never before have we had access to so many desirable things and experiences that we hope will change our moods. With each passing week, technology unveils a new object, process or relationship we can obsess over. Facebook and Twitter enable us to install and delete people as if they were apps, offering us a quick and dirty method of changing our feelings (though, needless to say, we are furious when someone deletes us). It's a consumer experience.

4 Addictive behaviour is partly explained by the overstimulation of the brain's fearsomely complex reward circuitry. More primitive sections of the brain tell us to consume as much as possible to increase our chances of survival. They say: Go. More highly developed parts of the brain, capable of reasoning, hold up a Stop sign when we're consuming too much of something for our own good. But as technologies develop and converge, the speed of delivery increases and so does the speed of our expectations. It's as if everything that tumbles off a production line is stamped Go.

5 This avalanche of technological change means we need to revise our concept of addiction. Our cultural history provides us with images of stereotypical addicts - alcoholics, drug junkies, the morbidly obese – all of whose visible addictions seem so grotesquely out of control that we avert our eyes. If we pay too much mind to these potent images, we might end up with a dangerous sense of immunity. The most puzzling addictions are those that don't involve the consumption of any substance. It's now clear that the things you don't eat, drink, smoke or inject can nevertheless disturb your brain in much the same way as drugs. And, in an age when so much digital entertainment is designed to be as addictive as possible, their potential to do this is exponentially expanding. The global marketplace offers a bewildering selection of consumer experiences, simultaneously delightful and dangerous. It constantly modifies

products and experiences that were never previously considered to be addictive, or invents them. Corporations have learned how to supercharge well-established intoxicants by popularising new patterns of consumption. The prospect of whole populations learning new ways of tampering with the flow of pleasure-giving chemicals in their brains is one that should make us feel very uneasy. With that in mind, let's revisit the cake and the phone.

6 In 2000, an episode of the hit TV drama "Sex and the City" ignited America's cupcake craze. 'It doesn't surprise me that cupcakes are favourites with bulimics,' says food writer Xanthe Clay. 'They're the ultimate eye-candy, primped and styled like a pop star, the edible incarnation of many girls' fantasies.' For those who crave control, these too-perfect creations may be particularly satisfying. Better yet, the smooth, aerated, oily texture is especially suitable for consumption and subsequent regurgitation. Perhaps the ultimate emptiness of cupcakes is a metaphor for the hopelessness of the bulimic.

7 And the iPhone? In a survey of 200 Stanford students in 2010, 88 respondents said they were either very or completely addicted to their smartphones. Perhaps it has something to do with how these devices are engineered. They practically force you to internalise repetitive rituals of the sort associated with obsessive-compulsive behaviour: from the initial activation of the iPhone to the weekly 'syncing' and nightly charging, your relationship to the phone is structured for you.

8 It's easy for urban sophisticates to mock American 'rednecks' or British 'chavs' who stuff themselves with fast food, and easy to assume (with an oh-so-amiable snigger at their waistlines) that they are in the grip of addiction. But the person who downs a muffin with her morning coffee really ought to ask: Why am I eating cake for breakfast? It's become increasingly clear that the ability of manufacturers to stimulate compulsive behaviour is racing far ahead of our ability to cope with the psychological and social consequences. Where previously advertising and marketing were creative but risky lifelines, this generation of manufacturers doesn't need to guess what will keep us coming back. It already knows.