



NANYANG JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2023

GENERAL PAPER

8807/2

PAPER 2:

Monday 28 August 2023

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THIS INSTRUCTION FIRST

This insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

This insert consists of 4 printed pages including the cover page.

Passage 1: Eva Wiseman writes about the benefits of kindness.

- 1 One cold morning in Bristol, a man named Gavyn Emery tied a scarf to a lamppost, and on a cardboard tag wrote: "I am not lost." It was 2016, and rough sleeping in Bristol had risen by more than 800% in seven years. As temperatures plummeted, more people were inspired to do the same, wrapping trees in coats, sticking hats on bollards – essentially providing warmth for anybody who needed it. Scarves started appearing across the UK through that very long winter. It was possible to see a blossoming kindness, visible in wool. 5
- 2 Kindness is not new. Aristotle said, "It is the characteristic of the magnanimous man to ask no favour but to be ready to do kindness to others." Kindness is also seen as mankind's greatest delight. And yet, for a long time it has been seen as sort of... suspicious. As religion's hold on our culture has weakened, and with it the insistence upon loving thy neighbour, a certain selfishness has come to be expected. To be kind is also to be weak. Unfocused on achievement. Unsuccessful. Kindness is seen as a nostalgic throwback to simpler times at best, and a con at worst. A man who throws his coat over the puddle is a man whom onlookers suspect must be protecting something valuable in the mud. To go out of one's way to be kind suggests an ulterior motive – who has time to look up from their phone, let alone expose themselves to the discomfort of empathising with a stranger? 10 15
- 3 Yet, today, kindness is not only fashionable, appearing in a flood of news stories about everyday heroism, but also profitable. Online, hashtags highlight small acts of kindness witnessed in public, and GoFundMe campaigns raise thousands for people in need. The publishing industry is calling the trend for kindness 'up lit' – as in, illuminated from below, to expose one's best angles. After a period of dark thrillers, today they are investing in feel-good stories of empathy and care. Heroic storytelling extends to the news media with a curated selection of good news, including regular stories about average people doing good work for others. People are yearning for good news because in the age of push notifications, the crush of stories about tragic things happening in the world can seem overwhelming. People want a reminder that, despite the swamp of death and poverty they scroll through, all is not lost. This 'yearning' means there is a market for more good news and to seek them out. And stories of kindness lead to clicks. 20 25
- 4 The move towards kindness mirrors the rise of happiness pursuits earlier this decade when a political interest in the value of happiness coincided with academic studies. Simultaneously, there is a burgeoning self-help movement focused on embracing joy and constantly acknowledging one's blessings. In his book *The Happiness Industry*, William Davies reported that an unprecedented number of corporations were employing chief happiness officers, while Google had its own 'jolly good fellow'. 30
- 5 However, happiness and kindness are undoubtedly linked. At Springwell, for instance, a special school in Barnsley, where many students have suffered abuse, neglect or poverty, teachers have vowed to 'batter the children with kindness' and it seems to be working. Of course, kindness is difficult to quantify – we have no way of knowing whether people are becoming kinder, no apps to mine for data, few scarves to photograph. Still, in the face of increasing challenges, be kind we must. 35

Passage 2: Roisin Lanigan questions the value of kindness.

- 1 The entire internet wants to be TikTok. TikTok, it seems, has the power to transform ordinary, garden-variety people into sex symbols, number one musicians, TV presenters, visual essayists and wholesome influencers, just by virtue of having a selfie stick. But the way to get internet famous the quickest (at least, as TikTok would have us believe) is to be kind.
- 2 Last week, Harrison Pawluk, an Australian content creator with over 3 million TikTok followers, became a brief main character of the internet for a video in which he gave an elderly woman a bunch of flowers, secretly recording her reaction as he walked away. It has 12 million likes. The video is part of a flourishing genre of content on TikTok, which is a sort of 'kindness prank'. Rather than accosting a stranger in public to make fun of them, you do it to make their day better. Whether they are still embarrassed by this is on them, not you. You, the content creator, are just trying to be good, to make someone's day, and if you also make some money from the Creator's Fund in the process, that is just a karmic gift from the universe. 5 10
- 3 Shortly after Pawluk's TikTok views went viral, the elderly woman was tracked down by a radio station. She called the entire thing "patronising" and "dehumanising". She said, "He interrupted my quiet time, filmed and uploaded a video without my consent, turning it into something it wasn't ... I feel he is making quite a lot of money through it." She added that she could not be bothered carrying the flowers home on the tram. "I feel like clickbait." 15
- 4 Pawluk may have become the temporary face of this particular brand of online kindness terrorism but he is not alone in the genre. Digital creators like Lawrence Choto and Hunter Prosper have harvested cumulatively millions of likes and views for posting videos, where they give handwritten and heartfelt notes to passers-by and then record their reaction. The fact that the fortune cookie style notes are often generic enough to be applied to any stranger's situation and struggles only lends to the popularity of the videos because the recipients seem genuinely moved to receive them. They are not, of course, immediately aware that their reactions are being filmed and posted. 20 25
- 5 The inherent cynicism towards these videos has only become more obvious as they have become more popular. It is hard to ignore the fact that random acts of kindness are fundamentally not random: they are created for the algorithm. What is the point in being good or nice if the internet cannot see and reward people for it in likes and engagement and attention on a monetisable platform? These videos are the evil equivalent of filming a Karen* having a meltdown. If we are conditioned to record maybe shockingly bad behaviour, then it makes sense that we are becoming more and more used to filming good behaviour too, even if the recipients of our kindness are unaware of their participation or unwilling to be involved in our content. 30
- 6 However, spontaneous kindness videos with people can invite unintended consequences. Last year, 'couch guy' became an internet hate figure for weeks on end when he was the subject of a TikTok in which his long-distance girlfriend surprised him at college. The internet did not believe his stunned reaction was romantic enough for a gesture so kind, and subsequently speculated endlessly about whether or not he was cheating on her. Thousands of videos recreated the moment, turning what was supposed to be a sweet surprise into a meme. 35 40

Whether the creator had invited this backlash, by posting what was essentially a private moment online in the first place, did not make the netizens' reaction seem any less
 7 disproportionately cruel.

Our overdue cynicism over these videos is inevitable because now, the internet is constructed almost entirely around the growingly meaningless tenets of 'being kind'. We are painfully aware of the very real effect online abuse can have on our mental health. Insulting people online now has to take place via toxic pseudonymous message board forums and anonymous Question and Answer apps for the sake of our own reputations. Reality shows are forced to remind us on Twitter not to bully contestants (whilst simultaneously editing those contestants to be villains crafted specifically for the timeline). It makes sense that we have retreated into wholesomeness. It is just a shame that now, wholesomeness has become little more than a performance too. 45

****Karen - is a pejorative term used as slang for a white woman perceived as entitled or demanding beyond the scope of what is normal.***