



JURONG JUNIOR COLLEGE

JC 2 Preliminary Examination 2009

General Certificate of Education

GENERAL PAPER

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Paper 2

19 August 2009

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains passages for Paper 2.

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

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Passage 1: *Christina Hoff Sommers thinks that schools should teach moral values.*

- 1 When you have as many conversations as I do with young people, you come away both exhilarated and depressed. There is a great deal of simple good heartedness, instinctive fair-mindedness, and spontaneous generosity of spirit in our young people. Most of the young people I encounter strike me as being basically decent. This is a generation of kids that, with relatively little guidance and religious training, is doing some very concrete and effective things for other people. 5

- 2 But conceptually and culturally, today's young people live in a moral haze. Ask one of them if there even is such a thing as right and wrong and suddenly you are confronted with a confused, tongue-tied, nervous, and insecure individual. The same person who volunteers for a suicide prevention hotline or a domestic violence shelter might tell you, "Well, there really is no such thing as right or wrong. It's kind of like what works best for the individual. Each person has to work it out for himself." Ladies and gentlemen: that kind of answer, which is so common as to be typical, is no better than the moral philosophy of a sociopath. In effect, we are raising a generation of young people who are not being given the arguments to support the ideals by which most of them instinctively live. They are morally inarticulate. For it is today fashionable to cast doubt on what is objectively obvious and to denigrate the truths of morality by which decent people live and love. By the same token it has become unfashionable to defend those truths. 10 15

- 3 We need a Great Relearning in moral conservatism. We must encourage and honour those teachers who accept the responsibility of providing a classical moral education for their students. The last few decades of the twentieth century has seen a steady erosion of knowledge and steady increase in moral scepticism. It is partly due to the diffidence of many teachers confused by all the talk about pluralism. Such teachers actually believe that it is not right to 'indoctrinate' our children in their own culture and moral tradition. But of course all cultures pass on their moral teachings to their young. Why should contemporary America be the exception? 20 25

- 4 We cannot deny that there are pressing moral issues around which there is no consensus. As a modern pluralistic society we are arguing about gay rights, assisted suicide, and abortion. That is understandable. New moral dilemmas arise in every generation. But we have long ago achieved consensus on other basic moral questions. While it is true that our society must debate such controversial issues as capital punishment, assisted suicide, etc., we must not forget that there are also the core of uncontroversial ethical issues that were settled a long time ago. Read the Bible, read Aristotle's Ethics, read Shakespeare's King Lear, read the Koran, or the Analects of Confucius, read almost any great work and you encounter the uncontroversial moral basics: integrity, respect for human life, self-control, honesty and sacrifice. 30 35

- 5 We need to bring the great books and the great ideas back into the centre of the curriculum. We need to transmit the best of our political and cultural heritage. We need to hold back on the cynical attacks on our traditions and institutions. We need to teach our young people to understand, to respect and to protect the institutions that protect us and preserve our humane, free and democratic society. This we can do. This we must do. And when we engage in the great relearning that is so badly needed today, the lives of our children will be safer, saner, more dignified, more humane, for we shall then be truly 'educating to live and lead in a civil society.' 40

Passage 2: *Joel Turtel believes that schools in America are not teaching moral education correctly*

- 1 Is there anything wrong with lying, cheating, stealing, shop-lifting, taking drugs, premarital sex, insulting your parents, pornography, irresponsibility, or getting pregnant in junior high school? Not according to the values taught to children in many public schools in America today.
- 2 Today, many school authorities seem to have contempt for traditional moral values. They carry out moral education programmes that often pretend to teach children real values to pacify parents. Through these programmes, children are taught that all moral values are subjective and meaningless and the argument held by many teacher-facilitators, as some now prefer to call themselves, is that children do not need established values to make moral choices. They teach kids that whatever feels good at the moment or whatever the group considers acceptable is a 'good' value. The right value, they assert, depends on the situation and the individual — a value is good if it 'works' for a particular child at a particular time. 5 10
- 3 This is unfortunately contrary to what parents want. Most parents want schools to teach their children traditional values like honesty, hard work, integrity, justice, self-control, responsibility, respect for parents, and fidelity in marriage. They want their children to have a sound moral compass, to be able to judge for themselves what is right or wrong. It is in my opinion what schools should be doing. 15
- 4 Yet, to many teacher-facilitators, there is no purpose in teaching that cheating, lying, stealing, or having casual sex with other students are undesirable acts in themselves. To them, such actions are just unfortunate choices that students make, depending on circumstances and personality traits, out of many alternative moral choices. Moral education classes deliberately teach children to be non-judgmental about moral values. Moreover, is there even a point? Moral education debates often turn into 'bull' sessions where each student gives their opinion about a moral issue but conclusions are never reached. In these classes, the teacher-facilitator often acts like a talk-show host who gets the students to debate such topics as the merits or bad consequences of stealing, lying, pre-marital sex, or taking drugs. People do discuss and debate, but ultimately agree to disagree. In sex-education classes, sexual behaviour is often described in purely mechanical terms and sexual choices are presented as morally neutral options or simply personal preferences each student has to decide for himself. Even in many drug-education programmes the same non-judgmental attitude often prevails — students are encouraged to talk about the good and bad consequences of taking drugs without reaching a clear moral conclusion. 20 25 30
- 5 Many public schools teach children that only self gratification and their feelings of the moment matter, that there are no moral absolutes. Admittedly, some parents are to blame for not teaching their children good ethical values, but moral education programmes are an assault on the time-tested values most parents teach their children. Since moral education programmes teach children that all values are subjective, they destroy real values and corrupt children at the deepest level. If schools insist that all values are subjective, our children will no longer be able to differentiate between mercy and murder, honesty and theft, sexual consent and rape, loyalty and treachery, or fidelity and adultery. 35 40
- 6 In a world where anything goes, children are turned into amoral creatures who will do anything to satisfy their momentary desires. Yet these are the insidious moral anti-values that many public schools now promote with moral education classes.

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