

**RAFFLES INSTITUTION (JUNIOR COLLEGE)
2009 JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION**

Level: JC2

**General Paper 2
8806/02**

Time: 1 hr 30 min

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

Manners

Passage. *Roger Scruton writes about the importance of having manners.*

- 1 "Manners makyth man" — the old adage reminds us of an important truth: that people are made, not born, and that they are made by their relation to others. Of course, a human being might exist in a state of nature, savage, speechless, solitary. But he would not have our distinctive form of life; in an important sense, he would not be a person. Manners are the instruments whereby we negotiate our passage through the world, earn the respect and support of others, and form communities. 5
- 2 But in a world where people hasten from goal to goal, these truths are increasingly obscured. In the scramble for profit, the polite person is at a seeming disadvantage. He does not jump queues; he does not shout, push or fight his way to the goods; he sits down to meals with family and friends, instead of scarfing a sandwich on the hoof; he allows relationships to develop slowly and in an atmosphere of mutual respect. He is, in short, a loser, or so many people seem to think, viewing politeness as an obstacle to personal success. In a world of cutthroat competition, the rude person will be first at the winning post. So why be polite? 10
- 3 This reasoning looks especially persuasive since we can obtain so much without the cooperation of others. Once, we depended on one another for entertainment, transport, shopping, a thousand daily needs. Today, this dependency is dwindling. Television has removed the need for cooperative forms of entertainment; fast food and take-out have made cooking obsolete; many offices are places of solitude, in which the only object of study is a computer screen. 15
- 4 The fact that we can survive without manners, however, does not mean that human nature doesn't need them in some deeper way. After all, we can survive without love, peace, comfort or friendship. But all those things are human needs, since we need them for our happiness. Without them, we are unfulfilled. And the same is true of manners. 20
- 5 It is children who most vividly remind us of this truth. Because there is a deep-seated need to love them, there is a deep-seated need to make them lovable. In teaching them manners, we are putting the finishing touches on potential members of society, adding the polish that makes them agreeable. The unruly, bullying, or smart-aleck child is at a great disadvantage in the world, cut off from the lasting sources of human fulfillment. His mother may love him, but others will fear or dislike him. 25
- 6 The teaching of manners to children goes beyond just controlling their behavior. It also involves a kind of shaping, which lifts the human form above the level of animal life, so as to become fully human, sociable and self-aware. Eating is a prime arena of this transformation. Through eating, we nourish not only our bodies but also our social relations and therefore our souls. Table manners enable us to combine conversation and consumption. That is why table manners are so important. "Please", "thank you" and "may I have" — when uttered by Mother — resound ever after in the consciousness of a child. Without table manners, eating degenerates into feeding and conversation into snorts and grunts. 30 35
- 7 Different cultures have developed their own methods to prevent this from happening. There are few domestic sights more beautiful than a Chinese family sitting around a steaming sea bass, each adding to the common fund of hilarity while discreetly helping himself to the common dish. The chopsticks, which deal in small portions and do no violence to the mouth, help to guarantee both restraint and conversation. But the gentle reciprocity of such a family meal does not require artificial mediators between hand and mouth. The African custom of eating with the fingers is just as effective at inducing good manners, when the bowl sits at the center of the family circle, and everyone must reach forward ceremonially to partake of it, while looking and smiling at his neighbor. All such customs point toward the same end: the maintenance of human kindness. 40 45
- 8 When manners are forgotten, the meal as a social occasion disappears, as is already happening. People now eat distractedly before a TV screen, replenish their bodies in the street, or walk

around the workplace with a sandwich in their hands. Eating has shrunk into a function, and it is not surprising if a generation of children brought up in this way should find it difficult or alien to settle down in any relationship other than a provisional and temporary one.

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- 9 Where a lack of manners most dismayingly shows itself is in sexual relations. In these days of hasty seductions and brief affairs, sexual partners are constantly being pushed toward merely animal relations, not fully human ones. The person whose sexual strategies involve coarse jokes and explicit gestures, who stampedes toward his goal without taking "no" or "not yet" for an answer, is looking for sex of the wrong kind — sex in which the other is a means to excitement, rather than an object of concern. Entered into in this frame of mind, sex is not an accepting but a discarding of the other, a way of maintaining an iron solitude in the midst of union. That is why it is so deeply offensive and why women, especially, feel violated when men treat them in this way. 55
- 10 Codes of sexual conduct are an obvious example of the way in which we try to raise our conduct to a higher level — the level where the animal sinks away and the human replaces it. What distinguishes the human is concern and respect for others. This is what Immanuel Kant had in mind in his second formulation of the Categorical Imperative*: act so as to treat humanity, whether in yourself or in another, always as an end in itself, and never as a means only. Morals and manners forge a society of mutually respectful individuals out of the raw material of self-seeking animals. 60
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- 11 But, says the cynic, we *are* self-seeking animals, and all these attempts to disguise the fact are just hypocrisy. Manners are mere ornaments, designed to distract our attention from the ugly truth. And much of the boorishness of modern Britain and America can be seen as a legacy of this way of thinking.
- 12 Manners only seem like hypocrisy when they are not second nature to you. You move in them awkwardly, as in a set of borrowed clothes. And then arises the peculiar thought that somehow, somewhere, trapped inside all this constricting artifice, is the real 'me', crying to be let out and show itself. "Let it all hang out," said the Californian prophets, and hang out it did. The result was not just the loss of manners; it was the loss of morals too. 70
- 13 I am not saying that we should learn to be insincere — but that we should learn something else, so that sincerity is worth it. The something else, which I call 'manners', resides in the minute ability to live and act for others, and to influence and be influenced by their judgment. It is a discipline at once of the soul and of the body. And if you do not acquire it at an early age, there is a danger that you will never acquire it at all, or never feel at home with it. 75
- 14 Without this discipline, sincerity becomes only rudeness. Who is more sincere, less a hypocrite, than the person who farts and burps as his body suggests; who swears and curses at the smallest irritation; who makes a grab for whatever he immediately desires, be it food, drink or sex; and is as explicit in his needs as a dog or a horse? If that is what sincerity amounts to, then let's have more hypocrisy. 80
- 15 In a world organized and disciplined by manners, therefore, strangers could have confidence in one another. They do not feel threatened in the street or in public gatherings; they negotiate their passage with the respect that others give them. Is this vision achievable? The fashion among young people for swing dancing, and the popularity of the recent Jane Austen films, re-creating the ceremonious world where manners are a mirror of the soul, show that the young are susceptible to, even hungry for, the enchantment that comes from formality and restraint. By precept and example, therefore, parents and teachers could still do for young people what parents and teachers traditionally have done — namely, show them the slow track to an intimacy that the fast track can never reach. 85
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Adapted from "Real Men Have Manners" by Roger Scruton, City Journal (Winter 2000)

* According to Kant, a *categorical imperative* is an absolute command derived by means of human reason that permits no exceptions.

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