CANDIDATE NAME	CIVICS GROUP	INDEX NUMBER
	6C __ __	__ __ __ __

DUNMAN HIGH SCHOOL
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

YEAR 6 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

GENERAL PAPER

8807/02

Paper 2

28 August 2023

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

DUNMAN HIGH GP PAPER 2

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

CANDIDATE NAME	CIVICS GROUP 6C __ __	INDEX NUMBER __ __ __ __

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Passage 1. Kyle Chakya examines the case for minimalism.

1 Sonrisa Andersen's childhood home was a mess. Her parents split when she was eight years old and she moved in with her mother. Then she realised she was living with a hoarder. It might conceivably have been the lost marriage she was dealing with, or more evidently a habit that had spiralled out of control as her mother's dependence on drugs and alcohol intensified. As a child, Andersen kept her own space under control, but, beyond her bedroom door, the mess persisted. As an adult, the anxiety over her oppressive surroundings at home never left. Clutter was creeping back in, she realised, even though this time she thought she was fully in control.

2 She went online for a solution and struck gold. The search turned up blogs about "minimalism": a lifestyle of living with less and being happy with what you already own. The minimalist bloggers were men and women who, like her, had an epiphany that came from a personal crisis of consumerism. Buying more had failed to make them happier. In fact, it was entrapping them, and they needed to find a new relationship with their possessions — usually by throwing most of them out. After jettisoning as much as they possibly could, the bloggers showed off their emptied apartments and shared the strategies they had used to own no more than 100 objects.

3 In the 21st century, across the developed world, most of us do not need as much as we have. The average American household possesses more than 300,000 items, which are mostly tucked away in attics, basements or other forgotten recesses of the house. In the UK, one study found that children have on average 238 toys, but only play with 12 of them on a daily basis. The minimalist lifestyle seems like a conscientious way of approaching the world now that we have realised that materialism, accelerating since the Industrial Revolution, is literally destroying the planet.

4 Up through the 20th century, material accumulation and devotion made sense as forms of security. If you were in possession of your home and your land, no one could deprive you of your property. If you stuck with one company throughout your career, it was insurance against periods of future economic instability, when you hoped your employer would protect you. Little of this feels true today. Companies now hire people on short-term contracts and let them go once the work is done. Even if you buy a house today, you never know when rich conglomerates would acquire the land it sits on forcefully. To make matters even worse, the greatest wealth now comes from the accumulation of non-material properties, not physical stuff: homes in the Metaverse and Roblox, crypto currency, digital artworks.

5 The Great Recession of 2008 also seemed to usher in a larger minimalist moment. An appreciation for simplicity emerged as the economy came to a standstill. Shopping at thrift stores became cool. So did a certain style of rustic simplicity. Conspicuous consumption, the ostentation of the previous decades, was not just distasteful, it was losing its meaning. In an age defined by the sense that the surrounding civilisation is excessive, accumulating more stuff loses its appeal.

6 The longing for less is neither an illness nor a cure. Minimalism is just one way of thinking about what makes a good life. For some of its devotees, minimalism is therapy. The act of getting rid of everything is like an exorcism of yesteryear, clearing the way for a new future of pristine simplicity. It represents a decisive break. No longer will we depend on the accumulation of stuff to bring us happiness — we will instead be content with the things we have consciously decided to keep, the things that represent our ideal selves. By owning fewer things, we might be able to construct new identities through selective curation instead of succumbing to consumerism.

Passage 2. Rob Walker argues that clutter can be good for us.

1 Several years before she died, my mother began sending me things — ostensibly significant objects. For example, one afternoon I opened a package containing a carefully wrapped eight-inch-tall ceramic leprechaun that I did not recall ever having seen. (My family has no connection to Ireland.) Not long after, she announced that she wanted to send along her collection of bird figurines, in which I had never expressed any special interest. Clearly this was no longer about handing down heirlooms. It was about getting rid of objects — basically, a form of decluttering. I had to put a stop to it, because ultimately my mother's urge to purge struck me as illuminating something misguided about our general relationship to material culture. What we often dismiss as "clutter" — all those non-essential, often oddball objects that a third-party observer might write off as needless junk — can actually **2** be good for us.

The villainisation of clutter has perhaps been most insistently pushed by the "tidying up" gurus. There is a yearning to neaten up pandemic cocoons, crowded with stuff thanks to a couple of years of online shopping as a monotony-fighting tactic. There is also an increasing trend of seeing blank-space aesthetics as sophisticated. But the underlying vibe is a suspiciously familiar one. Yet again, minimalist chastisements insist that we should repent of **3** our materialist ways: things, they are forever lecturing, just aren't that important.

There is, it turns out, a counter to the decluttering imperative — inevitably given the unattractive label "cluttercore" — that frankly celebrates the human relationship to stuff. Search YouTube and you will find video tours of (mostly young) people's extensive and colourful collections of stuffed toys, figurines, gewgaws and knickknacks. TikTok clips tagged #cluttercore, sharing what the home-design site Apartment Therapy described as **4** "organised, nostalgic chaos," have a whopping 80 million views.

As one cluttercore advocate argues to *Architectural Digest*, cluttercore is a backlash against the trend towards neutral and bland aesthetics. Cluttercore wholly depends on idiosyncratic personality and rarefied interests, and thus "celebrates radical aesthetics." In an era where **5** copying is everywhere, the advocate asserted, so-called clutter represents something that "can't be copied."

Admittedly, some iterations of cluttercore verge on a candy-coloured version of straight-up hoarding, and obviously I am not defending mindless accumulation any more than a craft cocktail aficionado would defend binge drinking. But the point about individuality not only rings true; it suggests that the reasons to appreciate clutter are correct, natural and frequently underrated. In a time where more people are embracing a less structured lifestyle, **6** cluttercore is significantly growing. It is one of the many paradigm shifts that are a result of the pandemic; as people do not know what tomorrow will bring, they need emotions and memories that come from clutter, to give themselves reassurance.

I am sure you can think of a personal example: an object that's gone missing from your life that you would love to have back, or at least see again. But I wonder — would you have **7**

known, when this thing went AWOL[1], that you would miss it? If my mother had shipped her bird figurine collection off to me, would she have glanced wistfully at the empty spots on the shelves where the birds were displayed?

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I can only speculate. But the lesson I have taken is: be careful with what you purge. Today's decluttering victim is tomorrow's lost object, and lost objects are forever. That's why I am keeping my embarrassing ceramic leprechaun. I am learning to appreciate it. It holds a connection for me — to my mother and to all her best intentions and instincts — that I never want to lose.

[1] AWOL means absent from where one should be; missing.

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Acknowledgements:
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