1. According to the author, what is the 'web's most magical proposition' (line 4)? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [3]
(Direct Literal)

Lifted	Paraphrased
	It is the suggestion that the Internet
its existence as a **space**	a) is where/a place/platform
in which **no one need ever suffer** the pang of loneliness	b) nobody has to endure solitude,
in which friendship, sex and love are **never more than a click away**	c) relationships *(Note: any form of social connection is accepted)* are easily available and
and **difference** is a source of **glamour**, not of **shame**	d) being unique/unconventional/out of the norm is attractive, not embarrassing.

1 = 1m, 2 = 2m, 3 - 4 = 3m

2. Explain what the author means when she says 'access to other people is not by itself enough to dispel the gloom of internal isolation' (lines 11-12). **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2] *(Extended Vocabulary)*

Lifted	Paraphrased
(Context) *But proximity, as city dwellers know, does not necessarily mean intimacy* *NOTE: BUT students can also discuss context of the Internet)*	The author means that
access to other people	a) having the means to meet/be/interact with other individuals
is not by itself enough	b) alone is insufficient/inadequate in
to dispel the gloom of internal **isolation**	c) eliminating/dissipating/chasing away/getting rid of the melancholy/sadness/dejection/misery/sorrow of loneliness that one feels within/curing loneliness. *(Note: as long as students capture idea of individuals no longer feeling lonely)*

1-2 = 1m, 3 = 2m

3. 'Loneliness can be most acute in a crowd' (line 13).

   Explain the irony in this phrase. [2]
   (Inferential)

Lifted/Inferred	Paraphrased
	Expectation from situation
	a) When individuals find themselves in the company of many other people, we expect that they feel less isolated/alienated.
Loneliness **can be most acute in a crowd**	Contradiction/deviation from the expected in reality
	b) However, in reality, individuals may feel the greatest (note: extent must be captured) sense of detachment/abandonment/disassociation when one is among many people whom we do not know/strangers/because we may be amongst people whom we know, but still feel alienated.

1 = 0m, 2 = 2m

4. In paragraph 2, the author describes the painting, Nighthawks, as a 'signature image of urban loneliness' (line 14). How does the painting reflect the similarity and difference between individuals' experience of loneliness in the past, and today? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2] *(Direct Literal)*

Lifted	Paraphrased
	The painting reflects how
Yet, its **anxieties** about **connection** have **lost none** of their **relevance**	a) <u>Concerns</u> regarding <u>loneliness/detachment/isolation/the lack of social interaction or engagement</u> from the past <u>are still very applicable</u> today
though **unease** about the **physical city** has been **superseded** by fears over our new **virtual public space,** the internet OR In the intervening years, we have **entered into a world of screens** that **extends far beyond** Hopper's **unsettled vision**	b) although such concerns <u>about interaction in the real world</u> have been <u>replaced</u> by worries about social interaction/engagement <u>in cyberspace/the digital realm</u>.

1 = 1m, 2 = 2m

5. According to the author in paragraph 3, what are the consequences of a 'hypervigilance for social threat' (line 24)? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]
    (Direct Literal)

Lifted	Paraphrased
	A hypervigilance for social threat results in
The result is a vicious **circle** of **withdrawal**	a) a <u>worsening/deteriorating cycle</u> of <u>disengagement</u>
in which the lonely person becomes **increasingly suspicious**	b) where the lonely individual becomes <u>progressively wary</u> of others,
intensifying their sense of **isolation**.	c) hence <u>heightening</u> his/her feelings of <u>detachment/loneliness</u>. *(Note: If students' explanation of (b) + (c) but incorporate clear elements of (a) in their answer, we can award these students 2 marks)*

1-2 = 1m, 3 = 2m

6. Summary Question

Using material from paragraphs 4-6, summarise what the author has to say about the appeal of online engagement and how it may worsen loneliness.

Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**, not counting the opening words which are printed below. **Use your own words as far as possible.** [8]

The appeal of online engagement lies in its …

S/N	Lifted	Paraphrased
1	**hidden** behind a computer screen (line 29) OR or they can **hide** (line 31) OR they can **lurk** (line 32)	ability to allow people to be **anonymous**
2	the lonely person has **control**. (line 30)	**empowering** those without companions/isolated individuals
3	They can **search for company** without the danger of being revealed (lines 30-31)	They can **attempt to forge relationships** without the threat of being exposed/identified
4	or **found wanting** (lines 30-31)	or **deemed to be not good enough**
5	They can **reach out** (line 31) OR can **show themselves** (line 31)	They can either **initiate contact/communication with others** OR **be identifiable**
6	safe from the **humiliation of face-to-face rejection** (lines 32-33)	avoid the **embarrassment of having one's affections being spurned in person**
7	The screen acts as a kind of **protective membrane, a scrim that allows** invisibility (line 33)	because the internet is akin to a **shield/film** which gives us the choice of **anonymity**
8	**transformation** (line 34)	and the **ability to make drastic/significant changes**
9	You can **filter your image, concealing unattractive elements** (line 34)	Only **allow flattering aspects of one to be revealed** while **hiding unappealing aspects**
10	and you can **emerge enhanced** (line 35)	**accentuate positive aspects/features**
11	an online avatar designed to **attract likes** (line 35) OR Curating a perfected self might **win followers or Facebook friends** (lines 36-37)	in order to **gain approval or acceptance** from others
12	But now a problem arises, for the **contact this produces** is **not the same thing as intimacy** (lines 35-36)	However, these **forms of interactions** may be **mistaken for genuine feelings of closeness/quality relationships**
13	but it will not necessarily **cure** loneliness (lines 37-38)	which may not be an **antidote to** loneliness
14	since the **cure** for loneliness is **not being looked at but being seen and accepted as a whole person** – ugly, unhappy and awkward, as well as radiant and selfie-ready (lines 38-40)	because we **cannot reveal who we truly are/our true self/physical appearances** or **other insecurities**
15	the sense of being **surveilled** (lines 41-42) OR In this environment of **enforced transparency** (line 46) OR This growing entanglement of the corporate and social, this creeping sense of being tracked by invisible eyes (line 50)	The feeling of being **watched/scrutinised** OR In a society in which we **have no control over our privacy**
16	**and judged** (line 42)	and having others **assess/form opinions/conclude**
17	almost everything we do, from shopping in a supermarket to posting a photograph on Facebook, is mapped, and the **gathered** data (lines 47-48)	businesses extensively **mine/collect** data about our online activities
18	used to predict, **monetise**, encourage or inhibit our future actions (lines 48-49)	in order to **profit** from such knowledge/information
19	The possibility of **virulent judgment** and **rejection induces** precisely the kind of **hypervigilance and withdrawal that increases** loneliness (lines 52-53)	The **fear of extreme/severe criticism** and being denied causes one to be **overly sensitive/paranoid and antisocial**, **heightening** feelings of isolation
20	With this has come the **slowly dawning realisation** (lines 53-54)	We **gradually appreciate** that what we do online
21	that our **digital traces will long outlive us** (line 54) OR	regardless of how inane/petty/insignificant – will **remain permanently online**

	Faced with the knowledge that nothing we say, no matter how trivial or silly, **will ever be completely erased** (lines 54-55)	
22	we find it **hard to take the risks** that **togetherness entails** (lines 55-56)	Hence, it becomes **challenging to embrace challenges/chances to grow closer to others**

Total: 22 points

Sample 13-point summary in 120 words (excluding given opening words):

The appeal of online engagement lies in its:

ability to allow people to take virtual cover, empowering isolated individuals to forge relationships without the threat of being exposed, or deemed to be not good enough. They can initiate contact with others, or be anonymous, avoiding the embarrassment of having one's affections being spurned in person. The internet is like a shield which gives us the choice of anonymity and the ability to make drastic changes by revealing and accentuating positive aspects and hiding unappealing aspects in order to gain acceptance. However, these forms of interactions may be mistaken for quality relationships. We gradually appreciate that our online actions remain permanently online. The feeling of being constantly scrutinised makes it challenging to embrace opportunities to grow closer to others.

Points	Marks
13	8
11 - 12	7
9 - 10	6
7 - 8	5
5 - 6	4
3 - 4	3
2	2
1	1

7. What does the phrase 'a lifeline, an antidote to loneliness' (lines 61-62) tell you about society's initial attitude towards the telephone? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [1]
    (Inferential - Vocabulary)

Inferred	Paraphrased
a lifeline, an antidote to loneliness *(Context)* **At first**, *the phone swiftly came to be regarded as a lifeline, an antidote to loneliness, particularly for rural women who were stuck in farmhouses miles from family and friends.* **But gradually,** *fears about anonymity clung to the device.*	The phrase suggests that society's initial attitude towards the telephone was <u>very welcoming/optimistic</u>. Accept (with explanation to students in class that this is actually not accurate, both points should be included): The phrase suggests that society initially saw the telephone as the <u>perfect solution</u> to problems of <u>social disengagement</u>.

Any 1 = 1m

8. **Using your own words as far as possible,** identify the worries that people in the past had regarding the telephone (lines 65-70), and explain if each of these worries was founded. [2] *(Direct Literal)*

Lifted	Paraphrased
	People in the past were worried that
People worried that germs **might be transmitted** down the lines, carried on human breath + The germs were a **fantasy**	a) telephones and phone lines were <u>unhygienic</u> and <u>caused the spread of diseases</u>, b) but this worry was merely a <u>misconception/an imagined threat or prospect</u>.
	They were also worried that
They also worried about **who might be lurking**, **invisibly eavesdropping** on private conversations + but the listeners were **real enough**, be they operators	c) <u>strangers</u> could <u>listen in on</u> their telephone <u>calls/infringe</u> on their <u>personal</u> conversations, d) and this was a <u>valid concern</u> as telephone lines were

or neighbours on **shared** telephone lines	<u>communal</u>/people used the <u>same</u> telephone lines.

Any 1 pair (a+b OR c+d) = 1m, 2 pairs = 2m

9. 'We are not as solid and tangible as we once thought.' (line 77)

What does the sentence suggest about individual identity today?   [2] (Inferential - Vocabulary)

Inferred	Paraphrased
We are not as **solid** and **tangible as we once thought** We are embodied but we are also networks, living inside machines and in other people's heads; memories and data streams.	It suggests that individual identity today a) is no longer about <u>conventional/former notions</u> of using <u>fixed physical attributes/characteristics</u> to define ourselves b) but <u>also how others perceive us/interact with us online</u>. (Note: For teaching purposes, students should ideally have both parts to show the comparison between the past and the present)

Any 1 = 1m, 2 = 2m

10. Which sentence in the final paragraph suggests that the author is still hopeful that we can overcome loneliness? [1] *(Inferential)*

Lifted	Paraphrased
But as long as we are still capable of feeling and expressing vulnerability, intimacy stands a chance	The sentence is 'But as long as we are still capable of feeling and expressing vulnerability, intimacy stands a chance.' (Note: It MUST be a complete SENTENCE, without missing words/phrases/clauses. If students paraphrase sentence, it MUST be accurate enough an interpretation, but they SHOULD not be paraphrasing.) OR The last sentence.

11. Olivia Laing makes some observations about the relationship between technology and loneliness. How far do you agree with her observations, relating your arguments to your own experience and that of your society?

Reference from passage	Applicability
Paragraph 1 Laing writes about how modern communications technology offers great convenience and easy access to others, but that this is only a very superficial connection, not enough to "dispel the gloom of internal isolation."	**Intro Paragraph** **Generally Disagree (Line-of-Argument)** • While her arguments must be acknowledged, I argue that her pessimism towards technology is unfounded. • While it is true that information communication technology (ICT) could be a hindrance to genuine human connection, most Singaporeans seem to have become adept at using it to supplement and enhance their social lives, which is the opposite of the author's claim throughout the passage.
Paragraph 2 Laing highlights how "loneliness can be most acute in a crowd," and how this is a phenomenon that has plagued us for a long time, now made worse by the internet.	**Generally Disagree** • Singapore has a population of approximately 5.6 million people, densely packed into a small area of only 719 km². • Despite this, our competitive meritocratic system rewards individual merit, which could be argued to cause loneliness and isolation, as Singaporeans strive to compete against each other in order to find success, whether in education or in their careers. • However, such emphasis on isolated individualism should not be over-exaggerated. Singapore also places a high emphasis on a collective sense of cohesion, which has been vital in maintaining harmony in a multi-racial and multi-religious society. • Such an emphasis on social cohesion and unity has been the case for 52 years since our country's independence in 1965 and the establishment of our founding principles of a multicultural, cosmopolitan city-state. • This is especially the case since Singapore annually celebrates the festivals of all ethnic and religious groups. On a cultural level at least, it would be an oversimplification to argue that Singaporeans are lonely when our diverse cultures serves as the connective tissue that bonds us as a society. • Competition has not prevented Singaporeans from socialising, connecting and learning about their fellow countrymen of different races, cultures and traditions. The invention of the internet has also made this process easier as Singaporeans of all walks of life can communicate and socialise over common interests, such as our common love of our diverse cuisine, where "Foodies" can blog or vlog, and share their dining experiences with other Singaporeans. E.g.s LadyIronChef and "ieatishootipost."
Paragraph 3 Laing highlights how isolation can cause an individual to be "intensely wary of exposure," which causes "hypervigilance for social threat" that leads them to "perceive social interactions as tinged with hostility or scorn." Paragraph 4 She further links this to how technology can serve as a solution where "the lonely person has control" to "filter [their] image, concealing unattractive elements" so that one can craft "an online avatar designed to attract likes." She expressed her doubts about this as she opines that "loneliness is not being looked at, but being seen and accepted as a whole person" which includes both their merits and flaws.	**Generally Disagree** • Her arguments do sound plausible. • It is certainly true that social media can allow a lonely person to hide behind an online persona, further worsening their sense of isolation and suspiciousness about society. • Many parents and teachers are growing increasingly concerned that their children could become victims of cyberbullying or may fall prey to cyber stalkers and are very concerned about the safety of their children and their online activities. • However she fails to substantiate her claims with any real evidence, which makes her arguments unconvincing. • Technology can serve as the initial platform that helps people to form that initial connection that helps socially isolated individuals take that first step towards genuine social connection. • Defence of the Ancients 2 (DOTA2) and League of Legends (LOL) are two cooperative Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) games which are very popular among the youth in Singapore. • In game, players play various heroes (serving at their online avatars) and have to communicate and strategize with other players to achieve their objective while preventing an opposing team from achieving theirs, • Off line and in the real world, young gamers can socialise with others who share their interest to discuss better ways to play their favourite hero characters and devise new strategies to improve their competitiveness in the game. • In has to be acknowledged that these two games are infamous for their toxic communities, as the extremely competitive and stressful nature of the game causes many players to exhibit anti-social behaviours, such as hurling obscenities and engaging in bigoted racist, sexist or even homophobic slurs to opposing players and even their own team mates. • This can certainly frighten players, leading them to perceive such online interactions with great suspicion and fear, leading to even greater alienation. • However, it cannot be denied that the game also encourages Singapore youths to communicate and collaborate with a sense of common purpose, which can foster a sense of genuine friendship as they connect over their shared passion for their favourite game.

	• Many Singaporean social media influencers and celebrities would likely not agree with Laing as well.
	• Indeed it could be argued that individuals like XiaXue, Naomi Neo, JianHao Tan and groups like Wah!Banana and TreePotatoes, produce content that might be perceived as superficial and an artificial representation of who they are as individuals.
	• XiaXue and Naomi Neo have at various times also courted controversy as Singaporean netizens criticise their content or their behaviour.
	• However, it cannot be denied that these individuals and groups have found success in using social media technology to attract tens of thousands of followers, which have allowed them to monetise their social media presence to find business success.
	• Corporations of all types have approached XiaXue and Naomi Neo to use their online influence as a means to advertise their products to a greater audience.
	• While we can question just how genuine these social media influencers are in their online interactions with their fans, it would be very unlikely that they would consider themselves as "isolated" or "lonely," given their massive social media following.
Paragraph 5 Laing argues that technology is breaking down the "barrier between the public and private," contributing to "the sense of being surveilled" where "almost everything we do…is mapped" to "predict, monetize, encourage or inhibit our future actions." Paragraph 6 She then argues that this leads to even greater "hypervigilance and withdrawal that increases loneliness" due to the knowledge that "our digital traces will long outlive us."	**Agree but not completely** • Online technology does track our actions and preferences in Singapore society. • Singaporeans have become avid online shoppers due to its convenience and confidence about the security of online transactions. • However, online shopping websites like Amazon and even social media sites like Facebook keep track of our purchases as well as the articles and videos we watch. • These sites often have programmes and algorithms that analyse our online behaviour and then display advertising that the programme predicts might interest us to promote even more spending or usage. • This is disconcerting as social media technology can possibly be abused to build up a profile of our identities, which can be exploited for profit, to infringe on our privacy, or for stealing our identity. • However Laing's conclusions are not entirely correct. Instead of causing us further withdrawal and loneliness, the power of internet technology can just as easily promote even more visible, dramatic or reckless online behaviour. • Many cyberbullies use the anonymity of the internet and social networks to abuse and emotionally damage their victims. ○ Cyber wellness firm Kingmaker Consultancy conducted a survey in 2015 and discovered an increase of 7% in cyber bullying cases in Singapore. • For the victim of such bullying, the technology is a bane that alienates them, leading to the social alienation and hypervigilance that Laing predicts. • But for the bully, it is a tool for them to administer abuse. They certainly do not seem to care much that they are leaving behind the digital evidence of their actions. • Even when the individual's identity is known to the world, the temptation to share one's thoughts on social media sometimes promotes reckless and insensitive behaviour rather than "hypervigilance" and loneliness. • In 2013, Amy Cheong posted a racist rant against Malay Weddings at her void deck on her Facebook feed. Her comments were widely condemned. The Police issued her with a warning and she was fired from her job. • In 2015, Amos Yee released an expletive laden video celebrating the death of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, while also insulting the Christian faith. In 2016 he would release another video that insulted Islam. He would be arrested and charged by the Singapore authorities for wounding religious feelings and hate speech against race and religion. • These examples illustrate that rather than causing withdrawal and isolation, ICT can just as easily seduce individuals into abusing their freedom of speech in reckless and insensitive ways.
Paragraph 7 and 8 Laing illustrates how throughout history, new innovations in technology, including modern internet, have resulted in unease about how they might be abused, or how they discourage or hinder communication, partly due to the fear of our privacy being invaded.	**Agree but not completely** • Most Singaporeans are criticised for being too dependent on their smart devices, such that it is normal for people to be using their smartphones, even in a social setting when they should be interacting and engaging others in their vicinity. E.g. A stereotypical Singaporean family that seems more interested in their devices than talking to each other over the dinner table. • In contrast to those who recklessly use social media (mentioned above), some Singaporeans also sometimes lament that they have to be careful of what they post, as they do not want to share certain aspects of their lives with family members, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances that they have in their network. • This is particularly important for Singaporean civil servants and government officials, who are often reminded not to share content or post opinions that are too political in nature, as they have to maintain their professionalism and impartiality to the scrutiny of the public. • However, for those people who already have a genuine and close relationship, ICT and social media can be a great enabler to keep that relationship and connection alive.

| | | E.g. Social media apps like Skype (video calls) and WhatsApp allow family members and close friends to keep in touch with great convenience, even though they may be in different countries. |
| | | This is especially important since Singaporeans are becoming increasingly geographically mobile as they travel the world either for work, business or education. |

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Table of Specifications:

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No.	Question Types	Question Number	Mark Allocation
1	Direct Literal	1, 4, 5, 8	9
2	Inferential	3, 7, 9, 10	6
3	Extended Vocabulary	2	2
4	Summary	6	8
4	AQ	11	10
		Subtotal	35
		Language	15
		Total	50