

**TEMASEK JUNIOR COLLEGE  
JC 2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2010**

**GENERAL PAPER**

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PAPER 2

INSERT

**13 Sep 2010**

**1 hour 30 minutes**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

This insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

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This insert consists of **4** printed pages

**[Turn over]**

## Passage A

- 1 Rubbishing cities is a popular sport. Not simply because of the garbage, graffiti, pollution, congestion and crowds people complain about – there is something about the very essence of cities and their inhabitants that offends too. Surveys have shown that, while around three-quarters of Britain's town- and country-dwellers are satisfied with their quality of life, only about 10% of urbanites are happy. According to writer Julie Burchill, that is why you see so many of them on the Brighton seafront every weekend – "thousands of Londoners set free for the day, blinking and smiling with surprise at all this light and space, poor mole-people above ground at last." 5
- 2 At the very least, life in cities should offer more variety and be more fulfilling than a life spent scratching a bare living direct from the soil. It might even be more fun, but as cities have severed the ties that once bound people firmly to the land, so the links between urban and rural environments have become more important than ever. The inhabitants of today's cities are more utterly dependent on the services of nature than at any previous time in history. We tend to forget that, while London, Paris, Venice, New York and numerous other cities sustain and entertain millions of us, cities are monstrous parasites, consuming the resources of regions vastly larger than themselves and giving very little back. In fact, though cities today occupy only 2% of Earth's land surface, they consume more than 75% of its resources. The implications of that are powerfully illustrated by a concept environmental scientists developed during the 1990s: the ecological footprint. 10 15 20
- 3 The ecological footprints of many cities have been assessed and the results are uniformly alarming. Vancouver, for instance, though rated highly in terms of the quality of life its half a million residents enjoy, has an ecological footprint more than 200 times the size of the city. The 29 largest cities of the Baltic Sea drainage system appropriate the resources of an area 565 times larger than the land they occupy. 25
- 4 Given the success of the evolutionary trajectory humanity pursued for the first few million years – no other species has achieved such total dominance of the global environment – cities are a complete contradiction. It is biology that drives evolution and, from a biological point of view, cities are a seriously bad idea. The dangers of disease multiply when people are crowded together, and our aversion to squalor and unpleasant odours is a measure of the depth at which an innate acknowledgement of those dangers is set in our evolutionary history. We are social animals, true enough, but there are limits, and our hunting and gathering ancestors probably had the numbers about right. They were nomadic, moving around in groups of up to 40 or so, and never staying long enough in one place for pathogens to build up to potentially deadly levels. In contrast, cities have been – quite literally – the breeding grounds of disease. 30 35 40
- 5 Bacterial and viral diseases are the price humanity has paid to live in large and densely populated cities. Virtually all the familiar infectious diseases have evolved only since the advent of agriculture, permanent settlement and the growth of cities. Most were transferred to humans from animals – especially domestic

animals. Measles, for instance, is akin to rinderpest in cattle; influenza came from pigs; smallpox is related to cowpox. Humans share 296 diseases with domestic animals. Thus, until comparatively recent times, cities had a well-earned reputation for being unhealthy places. No wonder demographers and historians write of the "urban graveyard effect". 45

- 6 However, the brutal fact is that, while one-third or more of city-dwellers in the developing world live on or below the poverty line, only about one-third of the rural population lives above it. A typical study of urbanisation in the developing world concludes that despite appalling housing conditions, lack of fresh water and services, minimal health care and few chances of finding a job, the urban poor are on average "better off than their rural cousins, on almost every indicator of social and economic well-being". 50 55
- 7 Better off? Well-being? Don't ask how the lives of these impoverished city-dwellers compare with those of the 90% of British urbanites who are dissatisfied with their quality of life. Only note that, for many millions of people, cities are the solution, not the problem. 60

Adapted from "No City Limits" by John Reader,  
The Guardian, 11 September 2004

## Passage B

- 1 Those who say the city has had its day point to economic and technical changes that seem to remove one of the most basic reasons for getting together in an urban huddle. No longer do people have to gather round the *agora*<sup>1</sup> to do their business. Information technology allows them to work wherever they want. Given that they can also get a religious, sporting or cultural fix by turning on the television, and do their shopping as well as their work on the Internet, why live in a city? As Jefferson said, cities are "pestilential to the morals, the health, and the liberties of man." They are the sort of places where you get mugged. 5
- 2 Not so fast. Other changes suggest that the city is not doomed. Land is finite, population is still expanding and the motor car's dominance may not last much longer. With global warming and no economic alternative to scarce petrol, it may not be feasible to go on living 20km away from everything – school, work, babysitter, Starbucks. 10
- 3 In any event, other trends suggest that for every Timmy Willie, there is a Johnny Town-Mouse. Many people like urban life and want to go on living in a city, particularly the centre. Among them are the elderly, a growing share of the population, who want easy access to transport, doctors, hospitals, cinemas and, above all, family and friends. And the young are urban creatures, too. They like the buzz of a city, the concentration of restaurants, clubs and other forms of entertainment. And the better educated (and so the richer) are likely to find work in the universities, hospitals and research centres that tend to cluster in cities. 15 20
- The suburbs may be pleasant enough when parents are absorbed with work and

<sup>1</sup> A place of assembly; a political and commercial space

children, but for the childless and the empty-nesters, the city has many merits.

- 4** Several academics take this view. Some, such as Richard Florida, of George Mason University, see cities as natural homes for the “creative class”, whose members are artists, designers, academics and so on. Others, such as Terry Nichols Clark, of the University of Chicago, stress the pleasures of the city as a reason to live there: entertainment, they say, can replace manufacturing in the post-industrial city, providing both jobs and fun.

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- 5** Others find further reasons for optimism. Bruce Katz, of the Brookings Institution in Washington, argues that there is much more inventiveness at municipal and state levels in America than at federal level. A city like Denver is exploiting its power to tax to introduce a light-rail system. Private-sector investment is being combined with government money for urban purposes much more widely and effectively. Cities such as Chicago are now seen as central to environmental improvements. All this means that public policy is becoming more city-centred.

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- 6** At the same time, cities are becoming sexier in the popular imagination – literally, in the case of “Sex and the City”, but more metaphorically through other television shows like “Seinfeld” and “Friends”. The trendiness is not confined to New York. For anyone on the way up, the city is the place to be. Some 60% of the jobs in American cities fall into the “new economy” category, compared with about 40% in the Sprawl-Mart suburbs. And once they have gotten to the top, the successful do not always opt for wide-open spaces: the most densely populated borough in Britain is London's smart Kensington and Chelsea.

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- 7** But talk to many an inhabitant of today's big cities and you soon detect a rural background, and often a slight wistfulness with it. Where do Chinese city-dwellers go for their holidays? Back to where they, or their family, once came from. Where do urban Africans get buried? In their villages. Even in highly urbanised Japan, the farmer and his rice field maintain a special place in the mind of the Tokyo *sarariman*. Cities may be the epitome of modernity, but they are inhabited by a creature designed for a pre-agricultural existence. The supermarket is no substitute for the steppes, plains and savannahs of the hunter-gatherer. The office chair is no place for the descendants of *Homo erectus*. No wonder there is a tension between habitat and inhabitant. But there is no going back to the countryside now.

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Adapted from “Et in Suburbia Ego”,  
The Economist, 3 May 2007