

**RIVER VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL**  
**YEAR 6 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION II 2016**

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**GENERAL PAPER**

**8807/02**

**August 2016**

**Paper 2**

**1 hour 30 minutes**

**INSERT**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

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This document consists of **4** printed pages including the cover page.



River Valley High School  
EL/GP Department

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*Kangetge Nao challenges the institution of marriage.*

- 1 Our society expects us all to get married, and barring occasional exceptions, we all do just that. Getting married is a rather complicated business. It involves mastering the intricate dance of courtship, celebrating the often arcane rituals of marriage, and finally navigating the spat and squabble of domestic life. It is an enormously elaborate flurry of activity, much more so than finding a job, and yet while many resolutely remain unemployed, few remain unmarried. 5
- 2 All this would not be particularly remarkable if there were no question about the advantages, the joys, and the rewards of married life, but most people, even young millennials, know or have heard that marriage can be a hazardous affair. Of course, there is still marital success, unions made by people mature or fortunate enough to find the kind of mates they want, or who artfully blend giving and receiving. It is not these marriages that concern us here. We are concerned with the increasing number of others who, with naïveté, haplessness, and bumbling effort, grope or fling themselves into marital disaster. Parents, teachers, and concerned adults all counsel against premature marriage. But they rarely speak the truth – that contemporary marriage is a wretched institution. It spells the end of voluntary affection, of love freely given and joyously received. Beautiful romances are transmuted into dull legal unions, and eventually the relationship becomes constricting, corrosive, grinding, and destructive; the beautiful love affair becomes a bitter contract. 10 15
- 3 The basic reason for this sad devolution is that marriage was not designed to bear the burdens now being asked of it by modern society. It is an institution that met specific functional needs of a pre-industrial society and was not designed as a mechanism for providing friendship, erotic experience, romantic love, personal fulfilment, continuous lay psychotherapy, or recreation. Romantic love was thus considered tragic, or merely irrelevant; it was simply not designed to carry a lifelong load of highly emotional freight. Given such a legacy, the very idea of an irrevocable contract obliging the parties concerned to a lifetime of romantic effort is now utterly absurd. 20 25
- 4 Modern pressures have further burdened marriage with expectations it cannot fulfil. In industrialised, urbanised societies, our ties are as superficial as they are numerous. We search for community, and yet we know that the search is futile. Cut off from the support and satisfaction that flow from community, confused and searching singles can do little but place all of their bets on creating a community in microcosm: their own marriage. Out there all is phony! But between the romantic pair there is to be complete candour. No dishonest games! No hypocrisy! No misunderstanding! Yet paradoxically, what starts out as a tender coming together to share one's whole person is transmuted by too much togetherness into attack and counterattack, doubt, disillusionment, and ambivalence. Something precious and fragile is shattered, and soon another brave marriage will end. Little wonder then that marriage today is too often a prelude to domestic tragedy, or perhaps more frequently, to domestic pathos that is no less tragic for being mundane. 30 35
- 5 Even when we fall in love and willingly marry, we cannot deny that modern marriage is far from ideal. Soaring real estate prices in China are breaking up marriages, but not in the way you might expect. China has raised the down payment for second mortgages, limited apartment purchases, and banned commercial banks from offering loans to third-home buyers. To get around these restrictions, Chinese couples are flocking to companies which sell divorce papers for a mere 300 40

yuan<sup>1</sup>. Getting divorced allows couples to register properties under separate names. When marriage is so crudely commoditised, surely we should awaken from the spell of romance.

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- 6 So, how do we hold on to the magic of marriage? We must release our death grip on outmoded structures, acknowledge the contradiction between the old and the new, and redefine love and marriage. Many accept the right of consenting adults to engage in whatever sexual and romantic relationships they choose, but oppose the legal recognition of those relationships. Such people miss the crucial point: marriage is not just a formal codification of relationships – it is also a defensive system designed to protect the interests of people whose economic and emotional security depends on the marriage in question. If we still want to find hope in love, eradicating the stigmas and taboos around marriage must be nothing less than this generation's moral obligation. 50
- 7 Already, this is happening. On 26 June, 2015, the White House lit up in rainbow colours to commemorate the Supreme Court's ruling that states cannot ban same-sex marriage, handing gay rights advocates their biggest victory yet. Marriage is no longer the sole province of heterosexual couples, and the legal protections of a committed companionship are now extended to a community that has too long been living in the margins. 55
- 8 Having cleft society's formidable deference to tradition, the most natural progression for marriage is to chip away at the monolithic myth of monogamy. There is no valid reason to hold off legalising polygamy because the case against it is animated almost wholly by irrational fear and cultural prejudice. (Sorry, romantics!) Polygamy was the norm for many of our hunter-gatherer ancestors. Monogamy only started flourishing when our ancestors began to settle down. It made it easier for fathers to divide and share valuable commodities with their children. Critics point out that group marriage has mostly worked out poorly for women. However, social science tells us that the very labels of illegality and taboo are precisely what appeal to people who currently tend towards marginalised lifestyles. Remove the labels, and you remove the abuse. Pedants proffer logistical problems – tax benefits, health insurance, intestacy laws – that plural marriage presents, which require altering core features and benefits that currently make up civil marriage. We must insist that rights to plural marriage not simply be dismissed out of short-term interests of logistics or political pragmatics. 60 65 70
- 9 Further redefining marriage is the idea that companionship rather than passion is a perfectly acceptable basis for marriage, as perfectly exemplified in asexual pairings. Some asexual people are in romantic relationships, others aren't. Some are sexually active for the sake of their partners or social pressure; some have never so much as kissed. Some think sex is disgusting, some are indifferent, and some think it is great for other people but have no wish to themselves. But what all asexual people have in common is that, while they may have a desire to connect with others, it is not sexually. If we stop defining our significant relationships as those that are romantic or sexual, being single – or married – will take on new meaning. After all, marriage should adapt to society's needs; the tail should not be wagging the dog. 75 80

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<sup>1</sup> About 60 Singapore dollars.

- 10 And if the institution is so flawed – why get married at all? Cohabitation has become so common that it is almost antiquated not to ‘test drive’ a relationship before marriage. In the United States, cohabitation increased by nearly 900 percent over the last 50 years. In 2012, 7.8 million couples lived together without walking down the aisle, compared to 2.9 million in 1996. There are also economic benefits to cohabitation – those living together can split the costs of a household, and that means more money left over. 85
- 11 Society may shove us altar-ward, but it appears that we are willing lambs to the slaughter. A Pew Research study in 2011 found that more than 60 percent of Americans who had ever cohabited before marriage saw their living situation as a precursor, not an alternative, to wedded bliss. The fruit, it seems, remains tantalisingly sweet and unblemished. 90