

2016 VJC Preliminary Exam Answer Scheme

1. (a) Explain clearly the difference between “predictions” and “promises” (line 1). [2]

From the Text	Explanation
	<p>‘Predictions’ are forecasts of what can/is likely/expected to happen in the future [1]</p> <p>‘Promises’ guarantee what will happen in the future [1]</p>

Examiners’ comments: *A few students did not understand ‘promises’ in the context of the passage, seeing ‘promises’ as agreements between people.*

- (b) What is the author referring to? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [1]

From the Text	Possible paraphrase
Working hours will be short and vacations long	He is referring to people having to labour less and will gain more time for leisure [1]

Examiners’ comments: *Few students did not paraphrase keywords like ‘work’.*

2. “Whatever people would do with all their free time?” (line 6). Explain what the social psychologists are concerned about. **Use your own words as far as possible.** [1]

From the Text	Possible inference and paraphrase
	They are concerned that people will have so much leisure time that they would be at a loss/have a problem as to how to spend it.

Examiners’ comments: *Most students read too much into the line and gave answers which stated that people would run out of leisure activities to do or engage in criminal / decadent activities.*

3. Why are the feelings more “profound among working parents” (line 10)? [1]

From the Text	Explanation
	These working parents feel very strapped for time because they face the dual demands of their jobs and having to raise children.

Examiners’ comments: *Many students gave general answers, referring to “family commitments”, instead of “child-raising duties” that are specific to parents.*

4. Why does the word “wizardry” (line 11) suggest about the perception of time-saving gizmos? [1]

From the Text	Possible Inference
	It suggests that they are perceived to be wondrous/ almost magical.

Examiners’ comments: *A lack of understanding of “wizardry” or misinterpretation of it as being associated with witchcraft led to irrelevant answers that suggest the evil and negative outcomes of technology.*

5. What does “actually” (line 15) suggest about time for people in rich countries? [1]

From the Text	Possible inference
	It suggests that people in rich countries have more leisure time in reality than they think they do.

Examiners’ comments: *Most students understood the question and drew a contrast between the amount of time that people in rich countries have in reality and how much they perceive they have.*

6. Explain the irony in the phrase “leisure time starts to seem more stressful” (lines 36-37). [2]

From the Text	Explanation
	It is ironic because leisure time is supposed to be relaxing and enjoyable, but now it has become a source of anxiety. This happens because people feel compelled to use their time to earn money. <i>Both points needed to get 2 marks. No marks for partial answer.</i>

Examiners’ comments: *Most students did not explain accurately and specifically the reason for the anxiety faced by people during their leisure time, if at all. Many simply referred to “using time wisely” or “using time to do something else”. Answers were written without any reference to the context beyond what was in the quoted phrase.*

7. Explain clearly what is meant by the phrase “few spared a moment to feel much sympathy” (lines 46-47) in response to the Gallup poll results and why. [2]

From the Text	Explanation
	The phrase means that not many people pity/feel sorry for the wealthy Americans who complained about not having time. [1]

	This is because most people think that these wealthy people do not really have a serious problem as they are already living more comfortably than the less wealthy/People are jealous/envious of the wealthy and think their lack of time is a trivial problem. [1]
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Examiners' comments: Many students did not understand who "few" refers to and saw them as the wealthy instead of those from the lower and middle income classes. Most also wrongly thought it was because of time-poverty that people did not have time to sympathise with others.

8. Explain clearly what the word "nagging" (line 54) suggests. [1]

From the Text	Explanation
	It suggests that the idea that one could be doing many other things is always playing at the back of people's minds/is persistently present.

Examiners' comments: Some students only gave the meaning of the word "nagging", without contextualising it – what is persistently present?

9. (a) Explain what the phrase "badge of honour" (line 63) means. [1]

From the Text	Explanation
	It refers to a symbol of one's achievement/sign/indicator of something that one is proud of.

Examiners' comments: A few students wrongly referred to the "badge of honour" as "prosperity" or "wealth".

- (b) In what way has this "badge of honour" (line 63) changed? Use your own words as far as possible. [1]

From the Text	Explanation
...leisureliness was once a badge of honour...then busyness – and even the stressful feelings of time scarcity – has become that badge of honour now	Previously, the sign of one's status was the ability to have time to relax/enjoy oneself/ not have to work. Today, it has changed such that being constantly occupied with tasks to do is the indicator of success/social standing.

Examiners' comments: Most students answered the question well by referring to the past and present context to illustrate clearly the change.

(c) What assumption is made about those in modern times who have little to do? [1]

From the Text	Inference
	It assumes that these are unimportant/insignificant people OR It assumes that these people are poor as they are not using their time to earn more money.

Examiners' comments: Most students identified the assumptions correctly, though some thought those who have little to do are unemployed.

10. Why is time especially "cruel" (line 70) to people as they get older? [1]

From the Text	Explanation
	Time is especially cruel to older people as it seems to pass very quickly, precisely because these people have little time left/are approaching the end of their lives.

Examiners' comments: Most students merely rephrased lines 70-72, without showing understanding of why time is especially cruel to old people.

11. What does the phrase "bleed together" (line 72) suggest about the way the past appears to people as they age? [1]

From the Text	Possible Inference
	It suggests that the memories of past events become foggy and they appear to merge/become less distinguishable from each other. <i>The focus of the answer lies in the memories becoming difficult to differentiate. Recognising that the memories become hazy is a bonus.</i>

Examiners' comments: Many students took "blood" literally and associated memories with pain, failing to see the context in which "bleed" is used.

12. Summarise the reasons why time has become scarcer.

[8]

a.	The problem is less how much time people have than how they see it (lines 15-16)	The issue is not the amount of time we have but how we perceive it / our perspective
b.	Once hours are financially quantified (line 18),	When money becomes a measure of time,
c.	people worry more about wasting, saving or using them profitably . (lines 18-19)	we worry more about squandering, keeping or utilising time gainfully/lucratively.
d.	When economies grow and incomes rise , everyone's time become more valuable (lines 19-20)	When economies expand and incomes increase, everyone's time becomes more precious
e.	When people see their time in terms of money, they often grow stingy with the former to maximise the latter (lines 20-21)	When people perceive their time as cash, they become miserly with their time in order to increase their wealth/earn more.
f.	After all, the more valuable something becomes, the scarcer it seems (line 23)	The more precious something becomes, the rarer it appears
g.	Individualistic cultures , which emphasise achievement over affiliation ,	Societies which focus on the self, stressing attainment/success over relationships/bonds
h.	help cultivate this time-is-money mindset (lines 24-25)	help nurture this time-is-money attitude.
i.	This creates an urgency to make every moment count (line 25)	This generates a pressing need to use every second gainfully/properly
j.	Larger, wealthy cities , with their higher wage rates and soaring costs of living,	Bigger urban centres, with their greater salaries and rising overheads,
k.	raise the value of people's time further still (lines 26-27)	push up the cost of people's time even more
l.	The tempo of life in rich countries is faster than that of poor countries . (lines 29-30)	The speed of life in wealthier nations is greater than that of less well-off ones
m.	A fast pace leaves most people feeling rushed (lines 29-30)	A greater speed of life makes majority/many people feeling harried
n.	Though economic progress and higher wages had raised everyone's standard of living (lines 31-32),	Economic achievements and greater salaries had bettered everyone's material well-being,
o.	the hours of "free" time people had been promised had come to nought (lines 32-33)	but the large amounts of leisure time that we had been assured of have disappeared.
p.	If anything, time was used more carefully during that era than a century ago (lines 33-34)	(inferred) People began to use time more cautiously than in the past
q.	When people are paid more to work, they tend to work longer hours (lines 34-35),	When people are given higher remuneration/increased pay to work, they work for greater durations

r.	because working becomes a more profitable use of time (line 35)	because work becomes a more financially gainful use of time.
s.	So the rising value of work puts pressure on all time (line 36)	The increased worth of work puts strain/tension on all time.
t.	Leisure time starts to seem more stressful , as people feel compelled to use it wisely or not at all (lines 36-37)	Our play seems more anxiety-ridden, as people feel coerced to use playtime meaningfully/prudently or refrain from playing.
u.	But there is a distinct correlation between privilege and pressure ... Those with bigger pay packets still feel more anxiety about their time (lines 39-45)	(Inferred) The more you earn or the higher your status, the less time you seem to have.
v.	this is the conundrum of wealth: though people may earn more money to spend it, they are not simultaneously earning more time to spend it in (lines 40 -42)	This is the complex problem of being rich, people earn more money but they do not concurrently earn more time which allows them to spend the money
w.	This makes time – that frustratingly finite / unrenewable resource – feel more precious (lines 42-43)	This makes time, an exasperating, limited resource that cannot be replenished, feel more valuable

Examiners' comments: Many students combined multiple points, which resulted in losing the respective points as key details were lost or omitted consequently. Some paraphrased unimportant details or examples, while others did not pay attention to the context of the points and ended up with repetitive points (e.g. time is valuable / time is scarce).

A total of 23 possible points (students only need to paraphrase 15 or more to get full marks)

Number of points	Marks allocated
1-2	1
3-4	2
5-6	3
7-8	4
9-10	5
11-12	6
13-14	7
15 & above	8

13. The Application Question

In this article, the author examines the problem of time poverty. How far do you agree with his observations with reference to you and your society?

[10]

Mark Range	Descriptor
Band 1 8-10	<p><u>Notes for the marker:</u></p> <p>REQUIREMENTS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students must make systematic reference to the requirements of the question, with evidence of a balanced treatment. 2. Students must also refer to the passage's ideas. 3. Students must make a stand by evaluating the validity of the author's claims about the characteristics, causes and outcomes of time poverty, and provide justification in the form of relevant substantive evidence drawn from personal observations and their society. <p>EXPLANATION Shows <u>a good or very good understanding</u> of the terms and issues in both passages.</p> <p>EVALUATION Students should make very convincing evaluations by making judgements and decisions and by developing arguments to logical conclusions. They should also include elaboration and support through personal insight and apt illustrations.</p> <p>COHERENCE Student demonstrates a very clear shape and paragraph organisation and cogent argument.</p>
Mark Range	Descriptor
Band 2 4-7	<p>REQUIREMENT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students cover requirements of the question adequately but not necessarily a balanced treatment. 2. They identify ideas from the passage, possibly with minor misrepresentation of the points. 3. They raise issues, but discussion is limited or superficial. <p>EVALUATION Student attempts to evaluate the extent to which the ideas are an accurate reflection of the situation in Singapore, but the evaluation is not always convincing, and tends to be superficial with limited development of ideas, and is not as thorough in support.</p> <p>EXPLANATION</p>

	<p>Shows adequate level of understanding of terms and issues raised in the passage (which may include minor distortion).</p> <p>COHERENCE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paragraphing is sometimes helpful. 2. There is a recognizable overall shape to the answer. 3. Arguments are generally cogent.
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Main Arguments & Explanations	Evidence / examples
<p><u>Paragraph 2</u></p> <p>Everybody, everywhere seems to be busy... and the matter has grown more acute in recent years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executives • Working parents • Users of bits of wizardry 	<p>Agree to a large extent:</p> <p>Singapore is known as a place where a hectic lifestyle is a norm. According to an OECD study two years ago, 15 year olds in Singapore devote 9.4 hours of homework a week, above the global average of 5 hours. Young adults in Singapore also work an average of 48 hours a week, compared to 45 in the USA and 41 hours in the UK. In a survey done in 2016 by “Families for Life”, about 50 percent of the 700 interviewees indicated that long working hours prevent them from spending more time with their families. Apart from our work-centric lifestyle, the survey also attributed a lack of quality time to the intrusion of the latest technology and gadgets, and the ubiquitous reach of social media. In times of economic downturn, the pressure to keep up at work is even more acute.</p> <p>Disagree to a large extent:</p> <p>Work-life balance has been a recent buzzword, especially amongst millennials who do not strive for career success alone, but who believe in the importance of personal growth and building social relationships too. As their numbers grow in the workforce, industry experts who monitor trends relating to the future of work point out that the conventional picture of an executive putting in long hours at work is set to change. The demands of millennials for more flexibility in their working hours and location of work are already giving rise to the trend of freelancer arrangements in Singapore. If the idea that “tracking work hours is not as important as achieving measurable results” takes hold, the number of hours that a Singaporean worker puts in at work may actually decrease in the near future.</p> <p>The civil service in Singapore has implemented a five-day work week arrangement for more than a decade, and introduced flexible work arrangements as well. Such</p>

<p><u>Paragraphs 3 and 4</u></p> <p>Feelings of “time poverty” is attributed to a perception problem – people see their time in terms of money, and they grow stingy with time to maximise money.</p> <p>Individualistic cultures, which emphasise achievement over affiliation, cultivate this time-is-money mindset.</p> <p>People tend to work longer hours when they are paid more to work.</p> <p><u>Paragraph 5</u></p> <p>Conundrum of wealth: People may earn more money to spend it, but they are not</p>	<p>measures, which are also being adopted by an increasing number of private sector firms, not only help workers cut down on the time spent commuting when they are working from home, but also result in workers spending less time at the office.</p> <p>Agree to a large extent: Singaporeans are known to live by the mantra “time is money”, and in an already hectic environment, saving time is a priority. An example to illustrate this is in the rate of car ownership in Singapore. Despite the fact that the cost of car ownership is one of the highest in the world, many Singaporeans still aspire to own one. This is because in comparison to cities such as London, Paris or New York, driving in Singapore is still attractive as it is much faster and more convenient as compared to public transport. The perception that owning a car cuts down on commuting time is very real, and if saving time is a priority, Singaporeans would rather pay more to reach their destinations faster than if they had to wait for a taxi or the MRT to arrive. This could explain the impatience of drivers on Singapore roads as well.</p> <p>In addition, car ownership is viewed as a status symbol as well, and many adults, both young and old, use this as a way to signal that they have accomplished material success. A cultural mindset that promotes strong work ethics and a motivation to achieve career success and earn more money also contributes to this need to stay connected to work.</p> <p>Agree to a large extent: According to the Ministry of Manpower’s Occupational Wage table, Singapore’s highest earners work as commodity brokers, medical doctors and lawyers. These jobs are also known to demand relatively long working hours with heavy responsibilities.</p> <p>Disagree to a large extent: The long working hours are not influenced by higher pay, as much as the work culture in Singapore. Staying late in the office is seen as a sign of working hard, and going off before the boss does is frowned upon, especially in companies that are more traditionally run. Coupled with the current uncertain economic environment, many workers are willing to work even harder than ever to ensure better pay and career progression, regardless of their pay scale.</p>
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simultaneously earning more time to spend it in.

Paragraph 6

Explosion of available goods has only made time feel more crunched...struggle to make decisions in the midst of so many choices afforded by the internet raises the opportunity cost of leisure, and contributes to the feeling of stress.

Paragraph 7

The ability to satisfy desires instantly breeds impatience. New technologies such as email and smartphones exacerbate this impatience and anxiety.

Agree to a large extent:

Singaporeans are more compelled to keep up with work in a globalised environment. Working odd hours are the norm as well, due to technology. The average Singaporean has come a long way in terms of standard of living, and many workers today earn much more than their parents would have gotten for the same type of job. However, Singaporeans today appear to be more time-starved and stressed out as compared to their parent's generation. While the earlier generations of Singaporeans who lived and worked in the 1970s and 1980s appear to be less well-off, they seemed to have a lot more time to tend to family and personal matters, as compared to the present generation.

Agree to a large extent:

With more than 80% of Singaporeans connected to the Internet, the majority of the population has access to many activities that they can do in their free time, such as watch drama series on Netflix, catch up on current affairs on online news portals, connect with friends on social media platforms, play games, shop online, etc. The more plentiful the options, the greater the opportunity costs, since many activities are foregone by the users, who might therefore feel at a loss of what to do when faced with so many ways of spending their free time.

Disagree to a large extent:

Singaporeans are able to multi-task, and even maximise the utility of time by engaging in various activities simultaneously, opening multiple tabs and applications on their computers and smartphones respectively. According to a Today article, 3 in 5 Singaporeans engage in online activities while watching television. This efficient usage of leisure time is made possible through the rising influence of digital devices in people's lifestyles, which affords to them constant connectivity, so that Singaporeans do not need to stress about being unable to utilise their leisure time effectively.

Agree to a large extent:

Singaporeans, accustomed to relatively fast speeds of connectivity, are almost never satisfied and continue to opt for faster network speeds once they are available, as seen from increasing numbers of consumers switching their subscriptions to fibre optic networks from broadband. Local telecom Singtel is clearly aware of consumers' rising need for speed, marketing their service as "Ultra Fast Fibre Broadband Plan".

	have yet to fulfil. The experiences that they gain are, therefore, new to them.
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Markers' comments for AQ

Meeting requirements of the question

- Students did not always pick pertinent main arguments from the passage. For example, many students who chose to address the author's observation that working parents are stretched for time end up with shallow evaluation, limited to descriptions of their busy lives.
- Most students understood the need to address "your society". However, some students' attempts to give personal examples to address "you" were not always well-done. For example, their experiences as students do not lend themselves well to arguments looking at the stresses of working parents / adults who possess the time-is-money mindset.

Quality of explanations

- Many students did not show complete understanding of the author's arguments, especially the context in which they are made. For example, most students focused only on "impatience" in Paragraph 7, without realising that this impatience stems from "the ability to satisfy desires instantly", which is associated with "new technologies".

Quality of evaluation/examples

- Students also did not draw appropriate links between their examples and the key parts of the author's arguments. For example, while choosing to address the argument that the "explosion of available goods has only made time more crunched", students focused only on describing the array of goods available in SG, without considering how it leads to time poverty.
- Poor choice of examples. For example, to illustrate impatience, students often cited Singaporeans' displeasure / complaints about MRT breakdowns.

General Comments on written English

The following weaknesses are common:

- **Subject-Verb agreement.** It was common to find students writing "It suggest ...", "The author claim..."
- Use of **tenses**. This was problematic especially with the wrong use of the present tense when referring to the past, e.g. "In the past, having free time is the badge of honour..."
- It is unidiomatic to write "the author's views are agreeable to me". It should be "I agree with the author's views". It is also wrong to write "I agree to the author's views".

- The use of “lesser time” when it should be “less time”. “Lesser” suggests something is inferior by comparison!
- “Little” should be used when referring to small amounts of an uncountable noun or something very small in size. “Little people” (midgets?) should be written as “few people”.
- Some verbs like “highlight” and “criticise” cannot be followed by “that” but the object of the verb should follow. So, instead of writing “He highlights/criticises that...”, write “He highlights the problem of...” or “He criticises the mindset ...”
- Long, rambling sentences become clumsy and ungrammatical. The problem is usually comma splicing, where commas are used to join sentences that run on (and on). On the other hand, there are also sentence fragments passing off as complete sentences.
- Handwriting may not come under ‘Use of English’, but poor penmanship can make words look misspelt and illegible writing often results incoherence and affects the overall quality of the writing.