



Raffles Institution
2023 Year 6 Preliminary Examination
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

GENERAL PAPER

8807/02

Paper 2

28 August 2023

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

Passage 1. *Francis Hezel discusses how culture can thrive in a globalising world.*

- 1 Culture change is upon us, many fear, like a tsunami advancing rapidly to the shore threatening to engulf whole populations, erasing them and all memory of what they once held dear. The watchword, then, is cultural preservation: keeping a close lookout for whatever might imperil the culture, eradicating anything that threatens to suffocate those cultural forms we know as customs, employing the same measures we have learned to take to preserve our wildlife. Indeed, there is no indication that the storm will abate in this present era of globalisation. We can expect much more of the same in the years ahead. Under these conditions, it would appear that our cultures are doomed. 5
- 2 Yet, consider the ludicrous notion that Italy will look and smell and sound just like Germany after a given number of years of shared membership in the European Union. The widely shared fear, often mongered by uninformed experts, that globalisation will extract the exotic taste from all cultures so that people will be blended into the same bland batch of cultural dough is groundless. 10
- 3 On the contrary, cultures manage to survive for hundreds of years despite the many mutations they have undergone. A striking example of this is Japanese culture. What does life in urban Tokyo today, with men and women in Western business dress commuting to work by subway or bullet train, have in common with the days of the sworded samurai and graceful geishas? Not much, on the surface of it all. Yet they are all distinctively Japanese. Is it in the formal courtesy that Japanese pay to those with whom they deal? Is it related to the sparseness in Japanese décor, or focusing on a single detail and somehow finding all of life embodied in one leaf or one blossom? None of these really comes close to summing up what it means to be a Japanese, of course. Yet it does suggest that it is a combination of features that goes into the making of a culture: indefinable, intrinsic qualities that are passed down from one generation to the next—not through the DNA, but through the social environment with its hundreds of personal interactions. 15 20
- 4 Many perceive culture to be the sum total of the products of a people, and hence we may have been focusing too exclusively on preservation of customs and the external features of that culture in our efforts to ensure cultural survival. Yet, culture is not about exotic artefacts—feathered headdresses, shell belts, and paintings—found in a museum, relics of the past. It should be the pattern of life, the design for community living, that is found in a real people as they exist today. 25 30
- 5 This rhetoric has led to suggestions that perhaps our emphasis on cultural survival is misplaced. Instead of guarding the ramparts against breaches of culture, we should be encouraging adaptation as a means of survival. The key to cultural survival, then, is not purely conservatism—hanging on tightly to all that we have received in the past—but a genuine sense of dynamism and a readiness to adapt to a changing world. Therefore, some of what we have understood in the past as either-or dichotomies ought to be re-examined in the light of this new model of culture. Some changes are necessary, even inevitable. We should not be afraid to adopt and adapt. 35
- 6 Over the years, cultural uniqueness will inevitably burst out in many ways, even in countries that complain of being saturated with Westernisation. TV soap operas may be an American invention, but Latin American or Korean dramas are clearly stamped with their own unique style. McDonald's serves up burgers in many countries around the world, but the menu reflects the subtle difference in taste from one place to the next. In Micronesia, the nose flute has given way to the guitar and lately to the keyboard, but the music today still reflects a distinctive island sound. The cultural genius of a people will not be denied. 40 45

Passage 2. *Taryam Al Subaihi discusses the negative impact globalisation has on culture.*

- 1 Over the past decade, geneticists have proved that all people alive today are descendants of a relatively small number of individuals who walked out of Africa some 60,000 years ago and carried the human spirit and imagination to every corner of the habitable world. Our shared heritage implies that all cultures share essentially the same potential, drawing on similar reserves of raw genius. Whether they exercise this intellectual capacity to produce stunning works of technological innovation or to maintain an incredibly elaborate network of kin relationships (a primary concern, for example, of the Aborigines of Australia) is simply a matter of choice and orientation, adaptive benefits and cultural priorities. Each of the planet's cultures is a unique answer to the question of what it means to be human. 5
- 2 Unfortunately, globalisation has taken its toll on the world. It continues to blend cultures together at an extraordinary rate, integrating or erasing customs, values and traditions. In many parts of the world, this process has had a profoundly positive effect and eradicated some of the worst practices of racism, xenophobia and other injustices that have plagued the human race throughout history. But with it, globalisation has also ushered in an era filled with lost culture and identity. 10 15
- 3 This last point is particularly true in rapidly developing countries. The move towards becoming a "modern" country, by benchmarking their progress against other nations, has led to the formation of a rapidly changing culture. Consequently, the by-product of that shift is that many citizens struggle to hold on to the values passed on to them by their parents, families and community. They undertake this struggle, while sometimes contradictory foreign values are being adopted from the media, expatriate colleagues, friends and society as a whole. 20
- 4 For those of us who have spent time abroad, the process is that little bit more difficult. Living on the fence, understanding the logic and benefits of both sides, the struggle is ongoing to identify ways to combine inherited and adopted values and put them into one identity. So much so that many eventually end up lost or isolated. Familiar with both worlds yet belonging to neither. 25
- 5 This is not to say that cultures should be forced to remain static, that they cannot maintain their identity while changing some of their ways. Our goal should not be to freeze people in time. Instead, a balance must be struck between the old and the new—striving to keep an open mind to change and development, yet also ensuring that our culture remains uniquely ours.

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