H1 General Paper
(Paper 2 – Comprehension)

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Description	Marks	Weighting	Duration
This paper comprises 3 different passages that allow for comparative analysis. The length of the passages will be approximately 1200 words in total. There will be a total of 8 or 9 questions in this paper. Questions cover: ● literal comprehension, inference, analysis, evaluation and synthesis of ideas based on Passage 1 (9–11 marks) ● summary based on Passage 2 (8 marks) ● connections of ideas across two passages: Passages 1 and 3, and Passages 2 and 3 (4–6 marks) ● application based on a theme related to the reading passages (12 marks)	Content: 35 Language: 15 *(based on responses to the summary application questions)* Total mark: 50	50%	1 hour 30 minutes

Time allocation

Short Answer Questions:	**35** mins
Summary:	**20** mins
Application Question:	**30** mins

Skills

Passage reading

| | **Reading for structure**
● What is the thesis/<u>stand</u>?
● What are the <u>main points/arguments</u> (topic sentences contain main idea of paragraph)?
● Which paragraphs build up to which arguments?
● Is this particular paragraph the author's argument, or is it a counter-argument by others?

Active evaluation
● What <u>assumptions</u> is the author making?
● How would it play out differently in <u>Singapore</u>? List out local examples related to the topic. Consider how different stakeholders would view the issue. | |

Paraphrasing

Fundamental principles
1. **Precise**: exact and appropriate, retains original meaning
2. **Concise**: eliminates wordiness and redundancy as far as possible

Paraphrasing techniques

1. **Word-for-word**	● Safe, easy, effective ● Captures meaning of every single word ● **Remember to take into account the context of the passage!
2. **Sense-for-sense**	● Use when no appropriate word for substitution / paraphrase is awkward / paraphrase complicates the original text unnecessary ● Go for the meaning and not the original words of the author

Regardless of technique, do take into account
1. Contextual meaning
2. Quantifiers and qualifiers
3. Literary devices: similes, metaphors
4. Connotation and denotation
5. Degree and intensity

To make sure if a paraphrase is a suitable answer, check if it
- captures the full meaning of original text
- is not awkward
- is not unnecessarily complicated

Short Answer Questions

Paraphrase

Approach:
1) Identify points that answer the question
2) Paraphrase

Use the mark allocation as an indication for how many points you need to identify and paraphrase.
3 mark questions are typically paraphrase questions
If a colon is used, details that come after it could be SRQ answers, or summary points

2. Comparison

Approach:
1) Identify Point of Comparison (PoC)
2) Signposting, explain how the subject matter has changed over time / are similar/opposite, with respect to that PoC [present answer in pairs!]

If the question asks to 'compare' → need both similarities and differences
If the question asks to 'contrast' → only need differences

From the passage	Answer
Sir Isaac Newton, blessed by an apple when formulating his laws of gravity, enjoys a reputation as one of mankind's greatest minds but was one of the most difficult to work with. In the same vein, Greek polymath Archimedes figured out his principle of buoyancy in a 'Eureka!' moment. Indeed, the list of serendipitous discoveries in science is long, but modern scientists and researchers used to precise methods and collaborating, look at serendipity with jaundiced eyes. In their experience, those who spot an abnormality under controlled conditions are the ones who make meaningful revelations. **What distinction does the writer make between modern researchers and scientists like Newton and Archimedes?**	<u>Unlike</u> modern researchers who made discoveries in a systematic manner, the discoveries made were done in an unstructured manner. Modern researchers prefer to work in partnership / together <u>but</u> scientists like Newton and Archimedes were not team players. The discoveries that modern researchers make are done through design/are intentional <u>whereas</u> the discoveries of Newton and Archimedes were a result of serendipity/were unplanned.

3. Hybrid – Proof

> *How / In what ways* does the example of … *illustrate the author's assertion* that …?

Approach:
Infer which content details illustrate/justify/substantiate the given point
1) Explain content in example
2) Link to author's point (paraphrase passage if author has provided linking, otherwise infer)

4. Hybrid – Process

> *How / In what ways* …?

Approach:
Infer which content details lead the reader to the given conclusion
1) Look for <u>methods</u> mentioned in the passage
2) Link to the final goal

5. Hybrid – Language

> *How / In what ways* does the author use language …?

Approach:
Infer which linguistic choices create the given linguistic effect
1) Device (quote a specific phrase)
2) Context (link to author's intension, given in question)

From the passage	Answer
There are no formal estimates of the rate at which society undergoes moral revolutions. Indeed, the term "revolution" can be slightly misleading. **Explain two ways in which the author indicates that there is uncertainty surrounding moral revolutions.**	"no formal estimates" (**device**) suggests that there is no proof/evidence about how quickly or slowly moral revolutions occur (**context**). "misleading" (**device**) suggests that even the concept of the revolution as it is used in the phrase "moral revolutions" may be wrong/inaccurate (**context**).
For far <u>too long</u>, we have <u>consecrated</u> our leaders, letting them <u>eavesdrop</u> on us with impunity. Now, we <u>even</u> treat our computers and smartphones are our <u>altars</u>, offering up our privacy as sacrifices for businesses to manipulate. Their <u>intrusion</u> into our lives is an <u>affront to human dignity</u> but we remain <u>chained</u> to their command and our fealty to them <u>has to stop</u>.	"too long" (**device**) suggests that the behaviour has continued for an excessive amount of time (**context**). "consecrated" / "altars" (**device**) suggests that we have excessive/inappropriate faith in leaders/businesses (**context**). "intrusion" / "eavesdrop" (**device**) suggests inappropriate crossing of boundaries (**context**). "affront [to human dignity]" (**device**) suggests unethicality/insult (**context**).

Explain two ways in which the author uses language to convey his concern about the lax behaviour of humans in safeguarding their own privacy.	"chained" (**device**) suggests that we lack freedom (**context**). "has to stop" (**device**) suggests that it is urgent/important that we stop this behaviour (**context**). "even" (**device**) suggests that we have gone too far (**context**).

Inference, in general
- Answer cannot be found in the passage. Inference questions typically require you to tap on prior knowledge from outside of the text (of vocabulary, idioms, punctuation marks, linguistic/rhetorical devices)
- Answers always require two parts: 1) function (definition of a word or phrase, meaning of an idiom or expression, effect of a punctuation mark, purpose of a rhetorical or linguistic device (first or second person pronouns etc.) 2) context.

6. Inference – Language Use

What is the author's <u>purpose</u> in using the word/phrase <u>"xxx"</u>?

Approach:
1) Unpack all words in the phrase
2) Function + context

For figurative language, explain
1) literal meaning ('dictionary' meaning)
2) figurative meaning (in the context of the passage)

Tool	Function
Metaphor	Metaphor creates an image in the reader's mind Directly compares one thing to another without making explicit comparison 1) Identify the image & subject 2) Note and match characteristics of image & subject 3) First state literal meaning, then provide figurative meaning *Just as … (image – literal meaning), so does … (subject – figurative meaning)*
Simile	Simile creates an image in the reader's mind Uses "as" / "like" to make explicit comparison 1) Identify the image & subject 2) Note and match characteristics of image & subject 3) First state literal meaning, then provide figurative meaning *Just as … (image – literal meaning), so does … (subject – figurative meaning)*
Intensifier	Show some sort of extremity e.g. extremely severe / insignificant *The author uses "even" / "tremendously" to emphasise that (context) is so … to the extent that it is ….* *The author uses "mere" to emphasise the absurdity of … / to ridicule how small or insignificant …*

Qualifier / hedging	Express reservations about something by hedging / qualifying it
	The author uses "somewhat" / "maybe" / "perhaps" to express his reservations about …
Concede	***The author uses "may" to admit / concede that …, while asserting that …***

From the passage	Answer
What does the author's use of the world 'blah' suggest about Canadian cities?	They are <u>mediocre / less attractive / dull / insipid / uninteresting</u>.
What does the phrase "<u>plush</u> <u>ivory tower</u>" suggest about the royalty?	They live in <u>comfortable conditions</u>, <u>far removed from the average person</u>.
<u>Falsehood flies</u>, and <u>truth comes limping after it</u>. **Explain what the author means by the statement above.**	Lies/fake news spreads at great speed, while facts are disseminated at a much slower speed and fail to catch on.
Content as some may feel in their ready-made acoustic cocoons, the more people accustom themselves to life without unwanted sounds from others. **Explain the author's use of the word 'cocoons'.**	**Literal meaning** Just as a caterpillar uses a cocoon to protect itself while it morphs into a butterfly, **Figurative meaning** these products help to protect / shield us from noise from our surroundings.
Competitiveness to be the best has also become the DNA of all schools. **Explain what the author means in the statement above.**	**Literal meaning** Just as one's DNA determines their characteristics / qualities / traits, **Figurative meaning** the desire to outdo others is now the <u>core / defining / key / intrinsic feature</u> underpinning the entire schooling experience.
The online hunt for truth is similar to the proverbial search for a needle in a haystack. **Why does the author liken the online hunt for truth to "the proverbial search for a needle in a haystack"?**	**Literal meaning** To search for a needle in a haystack refers to the arduous and almost impossible task of locating something miniscule among a huge quantity of items. **Figurative meaning** The writer compares the online search for truth to the search for a needle in the haystack <u>to emphasise</u> the near impossibility/futility of the task due to the vast amounts of information in cyberspace.

7. Inference – Authorial Technique

Approach:
1) Device (if not given)
2) Function
3) Context

Some intentions of author: (**function**)
- To emphasise / highlight (the severity of) a problem / issue
- To evoke or rouse readers' emotions (usually sympathy) so that they would agree with a position / be convinced to champion for a cause
- To criticise
- To warn / advise
- To express shock / disgust / disbelief

Literary devices

Tool	Function
Irony	Irony questions typically employ the logic of <u>expectation</u> vs. <u>reality</u> ***One would expect X. However, in reality Y.*** X and Y are typically opposite. So you can first identify the reality described in the passage (Y), think of the opposite (X), and present your answer as above
Paradox	Statement that seems self-contradictory but in reality expresses some truth and makes sense 1. State what appears to be contradictory 2. State what the truth is
Rhetorical question	To provoke reader's thinking of / draw reader's attention to … in order to emphasise …
Repetition	To emphasise
Contrast	To reinforce / reaffirm author's thesis/argument
Analogy	To help reader <u>better understand</u> the author's point by drawing on something familiar to reader

From the passage	Answer
The disillusioned even declare their hairdressers and the man-in-the-street to be twice as trustworthy as any government official or business leader. **Explain the irony in the above statement.**	**Expectation** One would expect most people to put their trust in government and societal leaders as they are deemed better equipped to deal with global and domestic issues than the layman. **Reality** However, in reality, some people believe what the layman says to be true as they lack faith in governmental and societal leaders.

With this technology, it became possible to keep someone's body alive after their brain had ceased to function. This led to a new definition of what it meant to die and required the resolution of a new set of moral questions. Is it permissible to switch off the ventilation machine after brain death? Would this be equivalent to killing someone? Can we keep people artificially alive to harvest organs for the purposes of donation? **Suggest two reasons for the author's use of the series of questions in paragraph 4.**	The author intends to make the reader think more deeply about / contemplate (**function**) how technology has raised difficult moral questions (**context**). The author intends to emphasise (**function**) difficult moral questions raised as a result of new technology (**context**). These moral questions show the range (**function**) of moral dilemmas that can arise because of new technologies that give us power to decide on life and death issues (**context**).

Punctuation

Tool	Function
Inverted commas	● To mean the <u>opposite</u> of the words, often with an element of *sarcasm* ***The author does not actually mean that (literal meaning); instead, the author means that (intended meaning)*** OR To show <u>disapproval</u> / disagree / cast doubt on [the term] ***To communicate / convey his doubt / scepticism toward (context).*** ● The word is not used in its <u>conventional sense</u> ● The term does not actually exist and is <u>coined</u> by the author ● To <u>quote</u> someone else, typically to distant himself/herself from the view of the person being quoted ● To use a pun or a <u>wordplay</u> e.g. 'Brexit' (a portmanteau)
Ellipses	● To show a <u>continuing list</u> of items – the list is not exhaustive / the list goes on / the possibilities are endless ● To show a repetitive <u>cycle</u> ● To emphasise the extreme extent of … (repetition of an idea) ● To build suspense / tension
Brackets	To provide <u>additional information</u> / interjection (that is not directly relevant to author's main idea)
Italics / capitalised / bolded	To <u>emphasise</u> a phrase
Double dashes	To <u>emphasise</u> a phrase by singling it out
Exclamation mark	To show shock
Question mark	[infer tone]
Colon	To signal that the material that follows after it <u>explains</u> the part preceding it
Full stop / comma / dash	To pause
Semicolon / dash	To link

From the passage	Answer
2003 **Why does the author put quotation marks around 'suffer', 'enjoy' and 'desire'?**	These words do not really apply to animals; they are emotional states which only humans experience.
2003 **Why is 'exploit' in quotation marks?**	The author was being <u>sarcastic</u> at the supporters' expense. OR This is a word animal rights' supporters use, which the author is showing to be inappropriate because it applies to people not animals, or it is too extreme a word.
2004 **What does the author intend for you to understand by the three dots (…) at the end of the first paragraph?**	The author suggests that the cycle will be repeated / suggests repetition.

8. Inferential – Attitude/tone

<u>Attitude</u> is the way the author feels or thinks about something
Approach:
1) Identify author's attitude
2) Explain why the author holds such an attitude

<u>Tone</u> is the way the author expresses their attitude through his/her <u>choice of words</u>
Approach:
1) Identify author's tone
2) Explain how the author's choice of words illustrates his tone

	Attitude	Tone
Positive	supportive / approving / optimistic / empathetic / sympathetic / conciliatory	supportive / approving/ optimistic
Negative	condescending / disapproving / critical / patronising / mocking / scornful / derisive / contemptuous cynical / doubtful / sceptical / dismissive	sarcastic / critical / disapproving / mocking / accusatory / aggressive / demeaning / derogatory / defiant / defensive
Neutral	ambivalent / indifferent / apathetic	

From the passage	Answer
"Welcome to the twenty-first century – a world where strands of truth and deceit are ridiculously spun to cloak inadequacies, camouflage intentions and shield their weavers from responsibilities and repercussions!	**Tone** Caustic / sarcastic / scathing / derisive / sardonic / scornful / highly critical / mocking / sardonic **Choice of words**

What is the author's tone in the above statement? Identify two words from the statement to explain his tone.	The author uses 'welcome' to what is otherwise a world filled with deceit, 'ridiculously' spun to indicate the absurdity / ludicrousness of the extent of lying in the world today.

9. Introduction and Conclusion

Approach:
1) Device
2) Function + context

	Tool	Function
I	Scientific fact / statistics	To emphasise significance / importance / severity of the issue
I	Define / unpack concepts or ideas	To introduce the issue to the reader
I	Give an immersive / relatable / specific scenario	To rouse the interest of the reader
I	Convey increasing tension / suspense	To rouse the interest of the reader
C	Reiterate central idea / topic of passage Revisit analogy / answer question raised in introduction	To link back to introduction, which gives a sense of closure
I/C	Inclusive pronoun "we"	To establish a sense of camaraderie / commonality with the reader
I/C	"you"	To address the reader directly / invoke the reader / make the reader the main character

10. Connection between passages (NIT)

Approach:
1) Identify + paraphrase related idea from Passage 3 (capture the idea in its entirety)
2) Logical justification (do not simply repeat your paraphrase)

In line xxx of Passage 3, the author states that …
This supports/ undermines the statement because …

Summary

1. **Look for points, crosscheck each one to see if it matches the question requirement**

   If the point and word(s) do not match, do NOT include it in your summary!
   Pro tip: points usually begin with action verbs

2. **Number the points you have found**

   10 points are required for content marks.

3. **Organise your points**

   Start your paragraph with a simple topic sentence to signal to the reader what your paragraph is going to be about. Topic sentences can be as simple as:

   The consequences are … / Some solutions are …

4. **Paraphrase the main ideas in the points**

   HOW TO PARAPHRASE?
   ● Exclude anything that is descriptive or explanatory! Instead, identify the main idea in these descriptions/explanations and paraphrase them.
   ● Replace fancy descriptions with single-word adjectives.
   ● Do NOT do word-for-word substitution! Many students are guilty of this and end up writing unnatural-sounding and way-too-long sentences.

Application Question

Band descriptors

Descriptor 1 [D1] **Relevance**	● Points/arguments selected from the passage need to be explicitly relevant to the topic. ● Relevance needs to also be sustained throughout the paragraph for the highest marks. This can be done by ensuring each part you add to the paragraph engages with the selected argument. ○ Select argument; Explain/clarify the argument; Exemplify the argument; Analyse the applicability of the argument to Singapore; Evaluate how representative the argument is of Singapore/Singaporeans as a whole.
Descriptor 2 [D2] **Understanding**	● Understanding can be indicated by a clear explanation of the selected argument, at the very least expressing it in your own words. To demonstrate a higher degree of understanding, go beyond paraphrasing and add your personal views and insights into the selected argument. ● Understanding can also be demonstrated by explaining relevant key ideas.
Descriptor 3 [D3] **Analysis and Evaluation**	● To show depth of analysis, determining whether the selected argument is applicable/inapplicable should be based on SG traits/values/attitudes/beliefs rather than on more superficial, transient observations. ● Evaluation can be shown by considering how representative the argument is of Singaporeans, as a whole. Who are the exceptions? What do they value?

Structure

1. **Point**	***In Passage xx Paragraph xx, the author agrees/disagrees that … because … (reason found in one of the passages).*** Pick one specific point made by the author (read the preamble to determine author's stance) **Selecting AQ Points** 1) Do I have enough scope to bring in <u>balance</u>? (Point chosen allow me to show arguments FOR and AGAINST?) → Do not select a fact or example 2) Do I have enough scope to <u>unpack</u> the key terms and ideas? → Make sure you completely understand the argument! Do not settle for arguments that you do not understand fully. 3) Do I have enough examples that are for / against the point which are grounded in <u>SG context</u>? (Can I bring in SG examples FOR and AGAINST the argument in the point above?)
2. **Explanation**	Explain author's argument fully & clearly, in own words Bring in personal insights if possible
3. **ATQ**	***Although I have some reservations, I find that such an observation is still largely relevant in Singapore, hence I <u>agree</u> with (the author's view).***

4. **Context**		***From the perspective of (most SGreans), it is true that …***
		1) Identify <u>SG trait</u>
		Attitude of SGreans
		Behaviour of SGreans
		Characteristics of SG society
		2) <u>Explain why it is relevant</u> to the subject matter
		Always analyse the general trend and extent of application to your society before citing examples. Your examples should never explain your trend but only exemplify it! (Your argument should not be example-driven)
		3) Substantiate using <u>examples</u>
		Your examples can be personal experiences / observations – but you should extend them such that they are representative of SGreans at large
		You can derive SG traits from examples:
		Start with a relevant example → identify and explain a relevant SG trait → find a relevant point from passage
5. **Evaluation**		***From the perspective of (another group of SGreans), it is untrue that …***
6. **Resolution**		***I agree with the author in the short term, but in the long term I do not …***
		Evaluation:
		- **Short term VS long term**
		- **Majority VS minority**: Young VS Old, Rich VS Poor
		- **Liberal VS Conservative**
		- **Mitigation: regulation VS awareness**
		- **Pragmatic VS Idealistic**

(Point) In Passage 1 Paragraph 2, the author argues that the consequences of work invariably outweigh its benefits when work is seen as a means to service an increasing amount of obligations.

(Explanation) When viewed this way, work traps us in a vicious cycle that fuels our material desires without actually delivering them.

(ATQ + Evaluation + Resolution) While there are certainly affluent Singaporeans who have jobs that allow them to buy the things they want, the author's argument is nevertheless applicable to most Singaporeans who must work just to get by in the city-state.

(Context) This is exacerbated by the **rising cost of living**, in a place already widely acknowledged as **one of the most expensive places to live**.
While a mandatory savings scheme under the Central Provident Fund Board allows many Singaporeans to afford necessities such as housing, those who buy a house using CPF typically have to work between 25-35 years to pay off their mortgage. Even after paying off their loans, older Singaporeans find themselves having to continue working as the **higher life expectancy** means their retirement funds have to last them for longer than initially anticipated. Because of this, the Singapore government has deemed it necessary to progressively raise the retirement and re-employment ages to 65 and 70 by 2030.

Thus in the case of Singapore, the author's pronouncement of work as a process of chasing ever elusive and increasingly distant goals is certainly relevant and applicable to most Singaporeans.

(Point) Looks endorses the view that the "fast-moving, hyper-competitive nature of our society is seriously damaging children's mental and emotional well-being".

(Explanation) This means a reason childhood is in crisis is the pace of modern life and the pressure it places on children's mental and emotional health today.

(ATQ) I <u>agree</u> with this observation in the context of my society.

(Context) Singapore has a meritocratic education system, which means students' academic achievements – as measured through rigorous, standardised tests – determine their station in life. This stresses students out, forcing them to compete constantly with one another. Singaporean students rank third worldwide in time spent on homework, and a majority are not getting sufficient sleep. That youth mental health is a problem can be seen in how suicide is the leading cause of death in that age range, accounting for a third of all mortalities.

Similarly, the Institute of Mental Health's Child Guidance Clinics reports that anxiety and depressive disorders have become common conditions among children aged 6 to 18, averaging 2400 new cases every year from 2012 to 2017.

In the 2021 National Youth Council report, young people rated their own happiness levels an average of 4.79 on a seven-point scale – a fall from when the same survey was conducted in 2010 (where the average was 5.45). It is not a pretty number, but it is only to be expected considering that the joys of childhood have been replaced by chores such as CCA training, homework, tuition, and learning ten musical instruments.

(Evaluation) However, the fact that children are unhappy has not been lost on authorities. Education reforms, from the dilution of PSLE rankings to the dissolution of the streaming system, were rolled out in the 2010s to alleviate the cutthroat climate and allay some of the stress suffered by schoolchildren.

(Resolution: Present vs Future) Change, especially systemic reform, can only take hold after some time. Thus, in the present, we should conclude that the decline in children's holistic well-being applies to Singapore's context but concede that this may change for the better in the future. Hence I agree with Looks' argument.

General characteristics of SG

- Highly globalised and connected city, heavy focus on technological developments
- Highly educated
- High cost of living
- Pragmatic, concerns usually surround economic issues and survivals
- Low birth rate, ageing population
- Highly affluent- high levels of disposable income
- Migrant society with identity in constant flux
- Long working hours (one of the highest in the world) rat-race pace of life
- Multicultural, religious/ racial harmony
- Socially apathetic
- Capital and knowledge-intensive economy
- High levels of censorship by the government
- Conservative and risk-averse
- Collectivist
- Competitive
- Proactive governance
- Small, land scarce, human capital as only resource
- Perception-conscious ("face")
- Meritocratic

For more, refer to *Characteristics of Singapore Society* in Paper 1 notes.