

ENGLISH - HIGHER LEVEL - PAPER I

WEDNESDAY, 5 JUNE - MORNING 9.45 - 12.15

Total Marks: 160

BOTH SECTIONS of this paper (Composition and Unprescribed Prose) must be attempted.

I. COMPOSITION - (100 marks)

Write a prose composition on one of the following subjects:

- (a) A farewell to adolescence.
- (b) Playing with dynamite.
- (c) Status symbols.
- (d) "There's a divinity that shapes our ends."
- (e) The delights of fiction.
- (f) War: a grim reminder of our wickedness!
- (g) Write a speech for or against the motion: "Knowledge is the principal source of power".
- (h) Idleness is the refuge of weak minds.

II. UNPRESCRIBED PROSE - (60 marks)

Read this passage carefully, and then answer the questions which follow it.

The single greatest shift in the history of mass-communication technology occurred in the fifteenth century and was well described by Victor Hugo in a famous chapter of "Notre Dame de Paris". The prevailing technology was the size of a city block. It was a cathedral. On all parts of the giant building, statuary and stone representations of every kind, combined with huge windows of stained glass, told the stories of the Bible and the saints, displayed the intricacies of Christian theology, adverted to the existence of highly unpleasant demonic winged creatures, referred diplomatically to the majesties of political power, and, in addition, by means of bells in bell towers, told time for the benefit of all Paris and much of France. It was an awesome engine of communication.

Then came the transition to something still more awesome. The new technology of mass-communication was portable, could sit on your table and was easily reproduced, and yet, paradoxically, considering its compact size, contained more information, more systematically presented, than even the largest of cathedrals. It was the printed book. And, though Gutenberg's book had certain limitations compared with a cathedral - provided no bells, could not tell the time - the overall superiority of the new invention was unmistakable. In the next several centuries, civilisation produced more books and fewer cathedrals, and the technological shift was complete.

When you think about the triumph of the book over the cathedral, it's easy to imagine that progress for civilisation was not necessarily progress for every individual person. The cathedral corresponds to a certain kind of human personality, the book to another kind. Cathedrals are for bell lovers, statue admirers, partisans of colour and shape as narrative forms, people who gasp at spectacles of height and depth. Books are for people who find silence absorbing, who make pictures in their heads, who find nothing daunting about parallel lines of black type. To go from cathedrals to books was fine for civilisation; but it must have been sheer misery for the cathedral personalities.

In the last ten or twenty years, we have been undergoing a more or less equivalent shift - this time to a new life as a computer-using population. The gain in portability, capability, ease, orderliness, accuracy, reliability, and information storage, over anything achievable by pen-scribbling, typewriting, and cabinet-filing is recognised by all. (Computers even tell time and have bells, like Notre Dame.) The progress for civilisation is undeniable and, plainly irreversible. Yet, just as the book's triumph over the cathedral divided people into two groups, the computer's triumph over pen-scribbling, typewriting, and cabinet-filing has divided the human race.

You have only to bring a new computer into a room to see that some people begin at once to buzz with curiosity, excitement and a desire to experiment. But how different it is - how grim and frightful - for the other people, the defeated class, whose temperament does not naturally respond to computers.

Nothing about a computer is a joy to them. The machine whirrs and glows before them, and their faces twitch. It is not necessarily a matter of faulty education. Their instincts are all wrong, and no amount of manual-studying and mouse-clicking will make them right. Their education, as measured by book-reading, may be splendid. But computers require a sharply different set of aptitudes, and, if the aptitudes are missing, little can be done, and misery is guaranteed. So, millions upon millions of such people have been miserable for ten or twenty years now, ever since the wretched (for them) computer revolution began.

1. "It was an awesome engine of communication."

How does the writer establish the validity of this assertion?

2. What is the main point that the author makes in this passage?
Your answer should not exceed 50 words.

3. From your reading of this passage do you think the author is in favour of the changes he describes?

Justify your answer by accurate reference to the passage.

4. Answer EITHER (a) OR (b).

- (a) Was this passage written for a general readership or was it written for a specialist readership?

In your answer you should refer to both language and content.

OR

- (b) Write a brief note on any two features of the author's style in the passage.

In your note explain how each feature contributes to the overall impact of the writing.