

ANGLO-CHINESE JUNIOR COLLEGE
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GENERAL PAPER

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Paper 2

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INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

This document consists of **4** printed pages.



Passage 1. *An author presents the benefits of obeying authority.*

- 1 In a world where independence and rebellion seem sacrosanct, the idea of respecting authority feels unfashionable — an antiquated virtue marooned in the collective rush for autonomy. But beneath its traditional exterior lies an essential principle. Respecting authority is not about passive submission or blind obedience; it is about recognising the structures that preserve order, enable progress and foster mutual trust. Just as architecture depends on foundations to stand, societies and institutions rely on respected hierarchies to function. The global response to COVID-19 highlighted this clearly: in countries where public health officials were heeded — like New Zealand and South Korea — outcomes were markedly better. Where such authority was ignored, or flagrantly disregarded, systems buckled under the weight of disarray and mistrust. 5 10
- 2 Authority acts as a pillar of learning. A teacher's presence in a classroom is not only instructional but also stabilising. When students respect the authority of their educators, they create space for discipline, focus and academic achievement. Conversely, where such respect has been casually undermined or intentionally eroded, chaos creeps in. Teachers find themselves managing not only unruly student behaviour, but also the variegated demands of know-it-all parents. Consequently, instead of learning and maximising their potential, students are left navigating uncertainty. More broadly, engendering respect for authority extends outside the classroom, to acknowledging and respecting scientific and academic authority, building a society founded upon the established knowledge of trusted experts, rather than the capricious whims of ignorant laymen. 15 20
- 3 In the workplace, respect for authority exists not to dictate but to direct, ensuring that teams align around common goals. Today's *zeitgeist* of collaboration and empowering individual employees has much merit to it, but when taken too far, it can lead to dysfunctional teams where multiple hands vie for control over a single steering wheel. A healthy dose of authority offers a steady hand to guide a drifting ship. Even those with good ideas must, from time to time, defer to authority for the sake of unity. Furthermore, a healthy culture of authority not only empowers the leader to direct — it also allows its followers to flourish. The binding shackles of authority, paradoxically, allow people to confidently take ownership of the work they have been assigned. 25
- 4 Lest someone thinks that respect for authority necessitates swearing blind fealty to an individual, true respect for authority recognises broader civic norms which underpin social stability. Democracy, legal systems, governments and civil institutions can only function if people agree, on some level, to their legitimacy. When such legitimacy exists, it enables peaceful transitions of power, equal application of the law, and public trust in the unencumbered work of public officials. The United States' longstanding tradition of peaceful transitions of political power bears testament to the power of respecting authority — even when the results are contested. Unfortunately, the breakdown of authority in the January 6 Capitol Riot, where Donald Trump incited an unruly mob to descend upon the Capitol in defiance of an election that was allegedly 'stolen', demonstrates what occurs when democratic norms fall under siege. 30 35 40
- 5 We must dismantle the militant dogmatism that respecting authority necessarily means surrendering independence. Respecting authority means recognising that for freedom to thrive, order must prevail. In the rhythm of daily life, respect for authority is the steady beat that keeps everything in time.

Passage 2. *An author describes the dangers of following authority blindly.*

- 1 Blind obedience may appear harmless on the surface, but it has the power to turn ordinary people into agents of extraordinary harm. An insidious consequence of excessive obedience is the erosion of individual moral responsibility. When individuals blindly follow orders, they often abdicate their personal moral compass, effectively outsourcing their ethical decision-making to authority figures. The diffusion of responsibility, where individuals justify their actions by claiming they were ‘just following orders’, allows them to distance themselves from the consequences of their behaviour. History is replete with examples of atrocities committed in the name of obedience, from the Holocaust to more recent instances of state-sanctioned violence. 5
- 2 From Galileo's defiance of the Church to the civil rights movement's challenge to racial segregation, progress has often been driven by those who dared to question authority. Progress, by its very nature, requires challenging the status quo and questioning established norms. Rigid compliance can stifle innovation and progress — the relentless pursuit of conformity creates a culture where novel ideas are dismissed. In contemporary society, the pressure to conform can manifest in bureaucratic inertia, where adherence to outdated procedures hinders efficiency and creativity. For example, in some government agencies, employees must still file paperwork by hand despite the availability of faster digital systems, simply because ‘that’s how it’s always been done’. 10 15
- 3 In the realm of politics and social control, compliance can be a potent tool for maintaining oppressive power structures. Authoritarian regimes often rely on propaganda, manipulation and fear to induce compliance, effectively eroding civil liberties and suppressing dissent. The manipulation of information can create a climate of fear and conformity, where individuals are afraid to express their true opinions or challenge the prevailing narrative. Opposing voices are suppressed, alternative perspectives are marginalised, and critical thinking is stifled, creating an echo chamber. The rise of social media has further amplified these dynamics, with online echo chambers and algorithmic manipulation reinforcing existing biases and promoting conformity. 20 25

Passage 3. *This passage describes the personal experiences of two people and their views about leadership and authority.*

- 1 Mr Chen, a high school literature teacher, still remembers how a decision he made undercut both focus and achievement in his classroom. He required that all books discussed in class be approved by himself – justified, he believed, in the name of consistency and academic rigour. To the students, it felt more like control.
- 2 One day, a student brought in a novel that connected directly to the themes they were studying: identity, isolation and resilience. The class was unusually focused. Participation spiked and the students were the most engaged they had been all year. Sensing momentum, the student requested Mr Chen’s approval to explore the book further. Mr Chen considered it but ultimately denied the request. The book was not on the approved list, and the students were instructed to return to the standard material. The shift was immediate. Attention dropped, and disruption crept back in. ‘That’s when I realised,’ Mr Chen said, ‘sometimes rigid authority doesn’t just stifle creativity. It breaks momentum. And when students lose their rhythm, they fall behind.’
- 3 In contrast, while planning a campaign to boost vaccination rates in a rural area where scepticism was high, Rajiv initially leaned toward a conventional strategy involving posters, pamphlets and public forums. However, during early discussions, his team, particularly a younger coordinator, suggested a different tactic: working with trusted community figures such as pastors, teachers and barbers. Although Rajiv was initially hesitant, concerned the approach might lack structure or predictability, he eventually recognised the value in his team’s enthusiasm and insights.
- 4 ‘We shifted our strategy,’ Rajiv continued, ‘and the results were better than I could’ve hoped. Not only did vaccination rates rise, but our relationships with the community deepened.’ The experience taught Rajiv that adaptability is not a sign of weakness but a key leadership strength.

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