



TEMASEK JUNIOR COLLEGE
2025 JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION
Higher 1



GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2 Insert

27 August 2025

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

1 hour 30 minutes

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Passage 1. *An author warns us about the harmful effects of online shopping.*

- 1 In an age where we can shop in our pyjamas and order anything from exotic fruits to a new sofa without leaving our couches, there is something deeply disorienting about the lack of interaction and loss of human touch in the transaction. Now, the closest thing to a face-to-face encounter is an automated recommendation telling you, “Others who bought this also liked...”. We lose the ability to judge the quality of an item beyond a well-edited image or a handful of reviews. Many shoppers are increasingly disillusioned. Online shopping promises variety, but often delivers frustration in the form of misleading images, vague descriptions and unpredictable sizing. 5
- 2 Shopping online can become addictive. We constantly believe that if we have this or that product, our lives will be infinitely better. As online shopping grows, so too does the pressure to keep up with the latest trends, often leaving people feeling the need to buy more even after their latest purchase arrives. Many shoppers find themselves trapped in a loop of impulse buying, only to discover a growing problem of personal debt and that the satisfaction of owning more stuff is fleeting at best. And the process of returning the item is a cumbersome chore in itself, which seems ironic given the promise of convenience. 15
- 3 The shift to online retail has created a hyper-competitive environment where standing out requires more than just offering great products. It requires a constant churn of advertising, promotions and discounts. In this race to the bottom, businesses are often forced to undercut their profit margins just to keep up with competitors. Consider the ever-increasing number of discount days like Black Friday where businesses slash prices to the bone, all in the name of attracting online shoppers. The result? An unsustainable business model for many. These short-term wins can lead to long-term losses, as businesses find themselves in a never-ending cycle of sales events that make it difficult to turn a profit. Like a hamster wheel of discounting, it is fast, furious and ultimately exhausting. 20 25
- 4 Brick-and-mortar shops are becoming the endangered species of the retail world. Empty storefronts are now a common sight in city centres, as independent shops struggle to compete with global giants like Amazon. Small stores – those quirky little gems that give neighbourhoods character – are struggling to compete. As people increasingly opt for the ease of shopping from their couches, we witness the demise of that all-important ‘mom-and-pop’ store down the road. As these small businesses close, we lose more than just their products. We lose a sense of shared space and a connection to our community, as online shopping quietly siphons life out of the very communities we live in. 30
- 5 For every convenience of online shopping, there is a team of workers who make it possible. From warehouse employees packing orders at breakneck speed to delivery drivers navigating traffic to get your order to you on time, the labour force behind the virtual marketplace is often overworked, underpaid and at risk of injury. Convenience comes at the expense of these workers’ health and dignity. 35
- 6 The environmental impact of e-commerce is staggering. What was once a single item in a store now arrives in a shipping box that is bigger than the product itself, stuffed with padding that serves little purpose other than to increase waste. Behind the cardboard boxes and bubble wrap lies a massive logistical operation that requires fleets of delivery trucks burning through fossil fuels, creating pollution and adding to ever-growing carbon emissions. Millions of people order things that they do not need, buying items that will sit in drawers or closets unused for months or, let’s face it, years, before making their way to the overflowing landfills. The future may look bright for consumers, but the planet’s future is becoming dimmer with every parcel that arrives. 40 45
- 7 Just because we can buy something with a click does not mean we should. So, next time you are tempted by the siren call of online shopping, take a moment to consider: is it really worth the cost? 50

Passage 2. *An author argues that online shopping is greatly beneficial.*

- 1 Online stores have an almost limitless inventory, offering customers an unprecedented array of choices. Every product imaginable is just a search away. Platforms like eBay and Etsy have become hubs for niche markets, satisfying the quirkiest of tastes. Variety is king, and this includes the range of information that consumers are empowered with – an endless buffet of reviews, product comparisons and price tracking. Websites like CNET and Which? allow shoppers to explore the pros and cons of virtually every product under the sun. Reviews give a voice to consumers, allowing them to share their experiences, transforming them from passive buyers into active participants and enabling everyone to shop smarter, not harder. 5
- 2 Online shopping is the superhero of the modern age. Whether you are searching for a new pair of shoes, stocking up on groceries or booking a last-minute flight, it is all at your fingertips, available 24/7 and delivered to you within hours, or by the next day. The ability to shop anytime, from anywhere, means you can manage your life with less stress and more efficiency. People who struggle with mobility issues, lack of transportation or sensory sensitivities can shop from the comfort of their homes, finding products they need without facing physical obstacles. And with a wealth of niche products available online, people with specialised needs, be it gluten-free food or adaptive clothing, can find exactly what they are looking for. 10 15
- 3 Online shopping fuels an entire ecosystem of industries and jobs from warehouse staff to delivery drivers, web developers and digital marketers, and spurs innovations in logistics and technology. Artificial intelligence and machine learning in retail help companies anticipate consumer demand, personalise recommendations and streamline inventory management. Rent, utilities and staff can often make the dream of entrepreneurship a financial mountain too high to climb. But with platforms like Shopify and Etsy, anyone with a good idea and an internet connection can start a business. In short, e-commerce has become an engine of economic growth. 20 25
- 4 Online shopping can actually be better for the environment. Individual trips to physical stores are reduced, helping to cut down emissions. Many companies now embrace sustainable packaging and carbon-neutral delivery options. By leveraging digital tools, businesses can track consumer demand in real time, ensuring that goods are produced only when needed. 30

[Turn over

Passage 3. *An online shopping addict reflects on her efforts to break free.*

- 1 I used to love scrolling through pages of models who looked nothing like me, wearing

pieces I could never pull off. This sartorial fantasising was a way to escape. Tough day at work? Search for a blazer that would make me appear competent. Had a bad date? Buy a skirt for a good one. It gave me the nagging sense that I was one purchase away from becoming the person I was supposed to be. Surely, once I found the exact right sweater dress or pair of boots, everything would fall into place.

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- 2 Sometimes the clothes were great but often, they weren't quite right. Even if they didn't fit, or I hated them, I never returned them because the whole process felt too daunting. Printing a return label? Going all the way to the post office? I have but one wild and precious life to live!

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- 3 Then, a few years ago, I decided to stop. From now on, I would shop only in person and I would only buy clothes I really, truly loved on me – as they were, and as I was. Almost immediately, I found myself with a lot more free time and mental energy. Shopping for clothes in person took more effort, but it was a contained activity. I wasn't spending hours trying to imagine what I might wear if I were someone completely different. I wasn't constantly taking stock of what I lacked. Over time, I felt better about myself.

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- 4 I have not been perfect. Just the other week, I saw a criminally good online sale on cardigans, so I bought two, because it seemed financially irresponsible not to. When they arrived, they fitted weirdly, and I realised they must have been on sale for a reason. For the most part, though, I've kept to my word.

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