



Raffles Institution
2024 Year 5 Promotion Examination
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

18 September 2024

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Passage 1. *Kenny Torella discusses the case against pet ownership.*

- 1 Some days, when the doomscrolling becomes too much, I switch up my social media consumption to something I call petscrolling. It is the act of swiping through an endless feed of Instagram reels featuring resilient three-legged rescue dogs hiking in the woods, feisty yet charming shop cats, and the occasional potbellied pet pig splashing around in a kiddie pool. The internet is awash in this feel-good content starring some of the 250 million animals—nearly one for every person—who populate American households. It all reinforces the inherent goodness of the ancient human-animal bond and lets us believe that where there are pets—whom most owners consider to be family members—there is joy, love, play, and hope. 5

- 2 Recently, though, I have begun to wonder if this is always the case. According to bioethicist Jessica Pierce, there are deep shadows beneath the sunny narrative of pet ownership, things like physical abuse, animal hoarding, puppy mills, and dog fighting. But beyond such extremes, Pierce's work aims to direct our gaze to where more subtle but far more common forms of neglect and cruelty lie. To Pierce, even well-meaning pet owners may have a lot to answer for: punitive training, extreme confinement, lack of autonomy, verbal abuse, unhealthy diets, lack of grooming, inadequate veterinary care, lack of exercise, boredom, and even abandonment. 10 15

- 3 All this is possible because, unlike children, pets are not really family members—they are property with few laws to safeguard their rights. And because abuse and neglect primarily occur in the privacy of the home, there is little accountability for it. Even the most responsible pet owners, which I would count myself among, are bound to fail to meet the needs of their animals due to other responsibilities and the inherent challenges of keeping a dog or cat in a world made for humans. We may see ourselves as the best of animal lovers, but we very well could be inflicting suffering on our pets every day. 20 25

- 4 We demand companionship with as little friction as possible, expecting our pets (especially dogs) to always be docile and agreeable, and to adapt quickly to the human world, with its countless rules and norms that mean nothing to them. And then when they inevitably fail to do so at first, we deem their natural habits misbehaviour in need of correction, or abandonment. It is telling that the world's most popular dog trainer, Cesar Millan, partly relies on dominance and control to bring his subjects to heel. 30

- 5 Just how uneven the relationship is between pets and their human owners was demonstrated during the pandemic when, lonely and stuck at home, one in five households easily adopted a new pet. As new pet owners returned to work, however, their newly lonely pets struggled with the sudden change, showing high rates of chewing, digging, barking, escaping, pacing, hiding, and indoor urination and defecation. 35

- 6 A number of animal welfare scholars, like Pierce, are challenging the rosy picture that the pet industry has painted around the domestic human-animal bond, and sometimes pose a radical question: should we end pet ownership? I am increasingly inclined to think the answer could be yes—or that at the very least, there should be far fewer pets, and those owners should be prepared to put in the time and effort to provide them with far better lives. However, abolishing pet ownership is a political and cultural nonstarter. What might be more realistic is to radically rethink how we acquire and treat them, and just what we owe them. 40 45

Passage 2. *Nancy Walecki examines the benefits of owning pets.*

- 1 Owning a pet can hold a surprising wealth of benefits for our overall health and well-being. One oft-cited benefit is the increase in physical activity. Dog owners, for example, are more likely to meet recommended exercise guidelines due to the daily walks and playtime needed for their canine companions. This regular physical activity translates to a multitude of health improvements, including a stronger heart, lower blood pressure, and improved cholesterol levels, for both the human and the dog. Pets also play a significant role in managing stress. Interacting with them, whether through petting, playing, or simply observing them, triggers the release of oxytocin, a hormone known to reduce stress levels. 5

- 2 Owning a pet often necessitates a structured routine, as they require regular feeding, walks, and playtime. This schedule can indirectly influence our own routines, encouraging a healthy lifestyle, especially for individuals who lack a sense of daily purpose. Additionally, pets that require frequent outdoor activities motivate us to spend more time in nature, which has well-documented benefits for overall well-being. 10
15

- 3 Research suggests that caring for pets can also indirectly encourage healthier eating habits. The routine involved in pet feeding may influence our own eating patterns, and we might find ourselves drawn to making healthier choices not just for our pets but for ourselves as well.

- 4 Beyond the physical, pets foster social connections. Walking a dog, for instance, often leads to friendly interactions with fellow pet owners, fostering a sense of community and combating feelings of loneliness and isolation, especially for individuals living alone or facing social anxiety. 20

- 5 The benefits of pet ownership extend beyond physical and mental well-being, with pets significantly contributing to mental health support. Therapy animals have been shown to be effective in helping individuals manage crippling anxiety, depression, and addiction. The structured interaction with these animals promotes mindfulness, trust, and emotional well-being. And for individuals facing difficulties like substance abuse or homelessness, pets can provide a powerful source of motivation and a deterrent from risky behaviours. The responsibility of caring for another living being offers a sense of optimism, even in challenging situations. 25
30

- 6 Perhaps the most significant benefit of pet ownership is the love and companionship they offer, which can bring joy and provide a sense of belonging, fostering a more fulfilling and happier life. By incorporating a furry friend into our lives, we can unlock a treasure trove of health benefits. 35

Passage 3. *Canine Companion Consulting examines off-leash dog issues.*

- 1 Discussions around off-leash dogs usually bring up strong feelings for us as pet owners. Often, we want our dogs to be able to run around and just be a dog. However, this is not easy in our increasingly urban environments.
- 2 There are very important considerations that we should always think about prior to ever letting our dogs off-leash. First, is it legal for me to have my dog off-leash in this area? In most places, that answer is no. If I happen to drop my dog's leash to let him run a little in a park or field, I am always concerned about impacting others' use of the space, so if I do drop his leash, even for a moment, we are always scanning the environment to ensure we are not deterring someone else from using the space.
- 3 The second factor I consider is the safety of my dog. Could there be a car, bicycle, snake, or any other animal nearby? I have seen pet owners who unleash their dogs to allow them to roam freely in areas where there are lots of fast-moving cars. This seems highly irresponsible behaviour as a pet owner.
- 4 And what of the off-leash dogs that liberally poop everywhere? Who's going to pick that up?