



**ST JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION
PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2026
(YEAR 4)**

CANDIDATE
NAME

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CLASS

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INDEX
NUMBER

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1184/02

Paper 2 Comprehension

14 August 2026

INSERT

**1 hour 50 minutes
(11:00 – 12:50)**

Additional Materials: Question Booklet

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains Text 1, Text 2, Text 3 and Text 4.

This document consists of **7** printed pages and **1** blank page.

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Section A

Study the poster (**Text 1**) and the social media post (**Text 2**) and answer Questions 1 - 4 in the Question Paper.

Text 1 is taken from a poster about BeatLab Drum Studio.



You can be a drummer too

1. Who is BeatLab for?

2. _____?

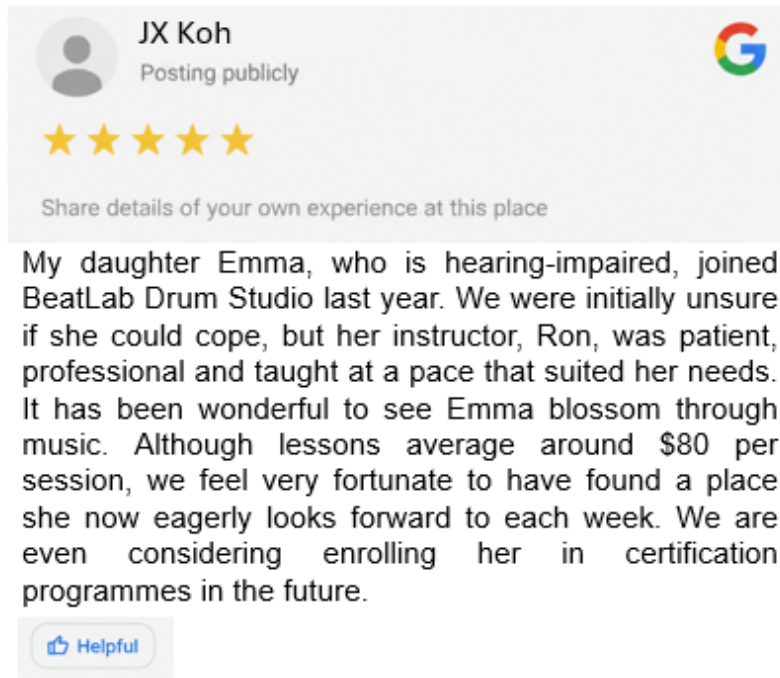
At **BeatLab Drum Studio**, we believe rhythm exists naturally within everyone. Whether you are trying out a new hobby or pursuing musical growth, learners of all ages, backgrounds and experience levels are welcome. Through music-making experiences, students are also encouraged to grow in confidence.

- ✓ Highly qualified instructors
- ✓ Customised lessons
- ✓ State-of-the-art equipment
- ✓ Certification pathways available
- Find out more at:
<http://beatlab.com.sg>



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Text 2 is taken from an online review of the school.



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Section B

Text 3

In the text below, the writer describes Nora's expedition in one of the harshest mountains in Central Asia.

Read the text carefully and answer Questions 5 - 14 in the Question Paper.

- 1 For three days, Nora's team moved steadily upward, establishing a chain of small camps along the mountain's north-eastern ridge. The work was slow and repetitive — carrying loads, fixing rope on the steeper sections, acclimatising to air that grew thinner with every hundred metres of height gained. By the fourth day, they had reached six thousand metres, and the weather, which had held fair with almost suspicious generosity, finally broke. 5
- 2 It began as a haze on the horizon and became, within two hours, a full-scale storm. The wind did not simply blow: it screamed across the exposed ridge, flinging ice crystals that stung any patch of unprotected skin. Nora's world dissolved into a blinding, textureless white in which going up and down seemed to lose its meaning. 10
- 3 "Rope up! Stay close!" she shouted into the wind, though she doubted anyone could hear her over its roar. Behind her, Tom, Priya, and their remaining teammate, a Kazakh climber named Yerlan, moved like indistinct shapes in the mist, each one a lifeline away from the others. Peering down, Nora watched as the rope attaching each one of them together swayed violently in the wind. 15
- 4 Nora checked her handheld GPS for direction, but the satellite signal flickered erratically, defeated by the storm. There was nothing for it but instinct, memory of the route they had taken and the compass bearing of 045 degrees she had fixed towards the ridge's north-eastern shoulder, taken at their last camp before the whiteout swallowed every landmark. She had navigated by less, once, on a smaller mountain — but never with three other lives depending on the accuracy of her judgement. 20 25
- 5 It was Yerlan who first noticed the change in the snow's texture beneath his boots. Something was wrong. There was a hint of hollowness where solid ground should have been. He had felt this before, once, on another mountain. *Don't move. Warn them.* He called out, and the surface gave way entirely beneath Nora's lead foot with a sound like a muffled drumbeat. Instantly, Nora dropped downwards. 30
- 6 "Hold!" she yelled, throwing herself forward and driving the pick of her ice axe deep into the crust. A crevasse*, an ancient fracture in the glacier, concealed beneath a bridge of wind-packed snow, had opened directly beneath her. Her right leg swung freely over a drop she could not see the 35

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- bottom of; below the thin crust, the ice glowed an impossible, luminous blue. For a moment, the only sound in Nora's world was her own heartbeat, absurdly loud against the wind. She did not allow herself to imagine the fall. Instead, with a controlled effort that drew on every hour of the strength training she had undergone, she hauled herself back onto the solid shelf of the ridge. 40
- 7 Once the immediate danger had passed, a sense of purpose replaced her fear. She hammered a snow picket into the hard-packed ice and clipped the team's rope to it, creating a secure anchor. She checked the small thermometer on her wrist: minus thirty-two degrees Celsius, and falling. 45
"We can't go up in this, and we can't stay exposed," she told Tom, raising her voice against the wind. "We dig in."
- 8 For the next hour, the team hacked a shallow cave into the leeward face of the ridge, working in shifts as the cold numbed their hands within minutes. That night, packed into insulated tents inside their makeshift shelter, their teeth chattered involuntarily. They listened to the storm hurl itself against the mountain, their breath crystallising into fine white patterns on the fabric above their faces. No one spoke much. There was little to say that the wind was not already saying, more eloquently, outside. 50
- 9 The storm broke, as storms often do, without warning — one moment a wall of noise, the next an almost unnatural stillness. Nora woke at four in the morning to silence and crawled out of the snow cave into a sky of impossible clarity. Below the ridge, a sea of cloud had settled over the lower valleys, isolating the summit pyramid in a strange, floating solitude above the world. 55
60
- 10 Ahead of them lay the final obstacle: a narrow, corniced ridge of blue ice leading directly to the summit, dropping away on either side into shadowed void. There would be no margin for error here, and no possibility of retreat once committed. "Last push," Nora said quietly, more to herself than to the others. 65

Adapted from

The Guardian. (2026, April 15). Moment that changed me: Desperate to get off mountain.

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2026/apr/15/moment-that-changed-me-desperate-get-off-mountain>

Section C

Text 4

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In the text below, the writer explains how attention works and examines how it affects our ability to concentrate and multitask.

Read the text carefully and answer Questions 15—21 in the Question Paper.

- 1 In his 1890 seminal book, “The Principles of Psychology”, psychologist and philosopher William James wrote that attention is “the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what may seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought.” Considering how important attention is, there has been such a great deal of interest and research. Attention is a basic component of our biology, present even at birth. One of the earliest ways in which attention operates is through our orienting reflexes, which help us focus on important events in our environment, aiding our survival. Newborns attend to environmental stimuli such as loud noises. A touch against the cheek triggers the rooting reflex, causing the infant to turn their head towards the source to nurse and receive nourishment. 5 10
- 2 Attention can be categorised into two main types. Attention that is automatic happens when we react involuntarily to a loud noise or a jarringly bright light, for instance, while focalised attention, by contrast, is the ability to intentionally concentrate on a specific task. The latter is what scientists measure when researching attention spans. Since entering the digital age in the early 2000s, the research method has changed. There was a seamless transition from in-person office observations of participants’ task-switching behaviour to software-based monitoring of their computer activity. The general finding is that sustained attention spans have declined over time to a staggering 40 seconds 15 20
- 3 Since most tasks take longer than 40 seconds to complete, rapid attention switching often means people move on before finishing what they set out to do. Think of leaving a science assignment mid-way through to check your email and then going back to the homework. That back-and-forth may feel harmless, but it imposes an additional cognitive processing burden on the brain. Each time we set out to do something, whether writing an email or checking train times, our minds bring up a schema to sort through the information needed for that task. When attention shifts to something else, our mind abandons that schema and quickly comes up with a new one, thereby consuming and depleting our already limited supply of cognitive resources in the process. In a laboratory study conducted in 2024, switching between different tasks was found to reliably reduce the overall speed of performance. Even under tightly controlled conditions designed to isolate attention mechanisms, it was found to lead to an increase in the number of errors made during task performance. 25 30 35
- 4 Frequent switching also leaves behind what is known as “attention residues”. “Think of it like a whiteboard,” Mark Collins, a psychologist, says. “Sometimes we erase something on it but some of the ink remains.” Those mental remnants linger in the background, competing with the 40

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demands of the next task, the cognitive equivalent of having too many tabs open.

- 5 That evidence of lingering distraction directly challenges the idea that we can multitask effectively. There is an assumption that rapidly switching between tasks enables multitasking but cognitively, the brain cannot process everything it encounters. In many studies, multitaskers often used a longer time to complete the assigned tasks compared with those doing the same tasks separately. What people often describe as multitasking is, in fact, merely rapid task-switching where each task receives only superficial processing, reducing overall productivity. However, when a task is fully automatic, such as walking, pairing it with another cognitively laden task, utilises different neural pathways, allowing the brain's associative thinking to flow freely which increases productivity. 45 50
- 6 Juggling multiple responsibilities and working against a backdrop of constant notifications has become a non-negotiable part of life for most people, yet attention can be managed. One place to start is to note daily ebbs and flows of alertness to create a personal attention map that can subsequently be used to schedule important tasks around peak focus. Just as vital are breaks that are consciously and deliberately built into one's daily routines at intervals throughout the day, particularly those involving physical activity in nature. Many find that 25 minutes of focused work followed by a five-minute break, the Pomodoro technique, optimises attentional resources. Hydration plays an understated role as research indicates that even mild dehydration impairs concentration, making it important to avoid allowing one's water intake to become inconsistent over the course of the day. Jha, who works with elite athletes and military personnel, found that spending at least 12 minutes, four times a week, deliberately training the mind to stay focused on the present moment instead of wandering to distractions can improve attention, memory and resilience to stress. Beyond that, making the disciplined practice of working on only one task at a time an established feature of one's daily life, even during routine actions like eating or commuting gradually retrains the brain's threshold for distraction, building attentional stamina over time. 55 60 65 70

Adapted from:

1. Verywell Mind. (2026, April 27). What is attention? <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-attention-2795009>
2. National Geographic. (2026, January 20). Attention spans are shrinking—here's how to regain yours. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/health/article/attention-spans-shrinking-how-to-regain>

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