



**VICTORIA JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2026
HIGHER 1**

**GENERAL PAPER
Paper 2**

8881/02

INSERT

1 hour 30mins

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

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

[Turn over

Passage 1. *The author discusses the shifts and decline in third places.*

- 1 Where do you go when you are neither at school, at work nor at home? For some, the answer lies in a "third place": perhaps a library, neighbourhood café or community centre. For many others, however, no such destination readily comes to mind. Coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, the term *third place* refers to informal public spaces where people gather, unwind and cultivate relationships beyond the confines of domestic and professional life. Yet escalating living costs, together with the ubiquity of digitally mediated interaction, have progressively hollowed out these once-vibrant communal spaces. The gradual disappearance of third places has eroded opportunities for meaningful social encounters, contributing to a growing sense of loneliness, particularly among younger generations. 5 10
- 2 Traditionally, third places were often where people could linger without the pressure to spend much money. Today, corporations have hijacked the idea of the third place, repackaging what was once an organic social institution into a mere marketing tool. Starbucks, perhaps the most recognisable example, explicitly branded itself as a "third place" in the 1990s, creating environments where customers could gather, work, or relax while enjoying a coffee. While these corporate third places often provide a consistent and "welcoming" experience – comfortable seating, free Wi-Fi, ambient music – they are inherently transactional. 15
- 3 The corporatisation of third places has introduced financial barriers that fundamentally undermine their inclusivity. Rather than functioning as genuinely egalitarian spaces, third places now feel exclusive, due to the pricing that often caters to a more affluent clientele. This is the consequence of a culture obsessed with wealth and status. As corporate third places flourish, many grassroots third places struggle to survive. The latter often lack the financial resources to compete with large chains able to exploit economies of scale and brand recognition. Escalating rents and shifting consumer habits have also played a role in making it difficult for these smaller spaces to stay afloat. 20 25
- 4 At the same time, modern society presents us with the curious paradox of the Internet as a supposed third place. On the one hand, online forums, gaming communities and social media provide highly accessible places for interaction and belonging. The internet, mobile phones and video games have opened a multiverse of new connections and opportunities. Nonetheless, digital interactions have proved incapable of replicating the emotional richness of face-to-face encounters, spawning a loneliness epidemic. 30 35
- 5 Finally, in most major cities, there is extreme segregation between wealthy communities and poor communities. Wealthy people live in places where they can have big, gated houses, their own swimming pool and private park. In contrast, lower-income and even middle-class families find themselves living in places where there are not enough public spaces. 40
- 6 While physical third places are not quite extinct, they are endangered. The erosion of such places may have lasting consequences on society and culture as their loss may lead us to become increasingly isolated and polarised. There needs to be more effort on the part of civil society, businesses and governments to preserve third places and enable them to organically thrive. Given humanity's enduring need for belonging and meaningful social connection, physical third places are an essential, irreplaceable aspect of healthy modern life. 45

Passage 2. *The author discusses the importance of third places.*

- 1 In a world where many aspects of our lives are becoming increasingly individualised, third places offer something that is often overlooked: a sense of community. This is particularly important in an era where we are experiencing a crisis of connection.
- 2 By giving us opportunities to interact with a wider range of people, third places help reduce feelings of loneliness. Being in such communities can even increase our self-esteem, when other members validate us. 5
- 3 As supportive environments for people from all walks of life, third places bring together those whose paths might otherwise not converge. Furthermore, because everybody tends to be level in third places, they can be great places to increase social capital and help us progress in the world. Third places give us a release from the stressors of modern life when it can be difficult to establish a healthy work-life balance, providing spaces where we can enjoy ourselves. 10
- 4 Many of us can work remotely at least some of the time, and working from a third place like a library or a coffee shop can be a happy medium between going into the office and working at home in isolation. They give us the chance to change our environments, something that increases our productivity. However, this does mean that some of our third places can be filled with people who, while physically present, are not interacting with one another. 15
- 5 Third places can transform a neighbourhood into a welcoming home, but only if we take ownership of them. City officials, architects, designers, and others who build and maintain them have a responsibility to ensure that they are safe, accessible, and useful. Individuals can engage with these places by participating in events and being open to conversations. Third places can also help themselves by promoting active rather than passive interaction. They are where people are welcome to drop in, linger, and make conversation with others, whether they know them well or not. 20 25
- 6 We need to utilise the third places in our communities as much as we can. With work, caring responsibilities, and just the chores of day-to-day life, finding the time to visit third places can be difficult and unrealistic. Even then, just short amounts of time when we are able to can go a long way.

Passage 3. *This passage describes the author’s experience with third places.*

- 1 Much of my teenage years was spent on TV shows, and for one reason perhaps – I was a lonely teenager left to my own devices and watching them helped me live vicariously through them. What they had in common was a sense of camaraderie and friendship so palpable I could feel it through the screen. It was only years later I understood why. They all had places to hang out, a “headquarters” of sorts where people could touch base and cultivate the type of friendships I longed to have; Gilmore Girls had Luke’s Diner, Friends had Central Perk, while Dr. Who had the TARDIS. 5
- 2 Now, my friends and I don’t really have a permanent headquarters. Instead, we drift between different places depending on what we’re in the mood for. On some weekends, I run with the same group of people before grabbing breakfast together. Other times, I find myself at a silent reading club, where everyone spends almost an hour reading quietly before conversations begin to flow organically. Over time, I’ve realised that we’re not searching for one giant circle of friends; we’re building little communities instead. 10 15
- 3 That doesn’t mean these spaces are perfect. Some of them revolve around expensive hobbies or trendy cafés that not everyone can afford. Others become so wrapped up in networking, fitness or even dating that it’s easy to forget why people gathered there in the first place. Being surrounded by people doesn’t always mean you feel like you belong. 20
- 4 Still, I think my generation is quietly reinventing third places. We may no longer have one familiar café where everyone knows our name, but we’re finding new ways – and new places – to keep showing up for one another. Perhaps that’s what a third place has always been about.



VICTORIA JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2026
HIGHER 1

CANDIDATE
NAME

C.T.
GROUP

GENERAL PAPER
Paper 2

8881/02
1 hour 30mins

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.

Additional Materials: Insert

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your C.T. group, index number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.

Note that up to **15** marks out of **50** will be awarded for your use of language.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

For Examiners' Use	
Content	/35
Language	/15
Total	/50

Answer **all** questions

*For
Examiner's
Use*

Your answers should be:

- written **in your own words as far as possible**. Where you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it.
- written in **continuous prose**.

From Passage 1

- 1 Explain the author's use of a question in the opening line of the passage (line 1).

[1]

- 2 In paragraph 2, how does the author's use of language show disapproval of third places today?

[3]

- 3 In paragraph 3, identify **two** ways in which the 'corporatisation of third places' (line 20) could have a negative impact on society.

[2]

*For
Examiner's
Use*

- 4 In paragraph 4, why is the internet being a third place described as a 'curious paradox' (line 29)?

[3]

- 5 In paragraph 6, why does the author think that 'there needs to be more effort on the part of civil society, businesses and governments to preserve third places and enable them to organically thrive' (lines 43 to 45)?

[2]

*For
Examiner's
Use*

Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**.

[illegible]

(words)

From all the passages

- 7 Passage 1 argues that 'the gradual disappearance of third places has eroded opportunities for meaningful social encounters' (lines 8 - 9).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer.

[2]

- 8 Passage 2 argues that 'some of our third places can be filled with people who, while physically present, are not interacting with one another' (lines 16 - 18).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer.

[2]

Support your answer with reference to:

- [illegible]

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**VJC 2026 General Paper JC2 Prelim Examination
P2 Answer Scheme**

From Passage 1

1. Explain the author's use of a question in the opening line of the passage (line 1). [1]

From the Passage	Suggested Answer
Where do you go when you are neither at school, at work nor at home? For some, the answer lies in a "third place": perhaps a library, neighbourhood café or community centre. For many others, however, no such destination readily comes to mind.	<i>[Technique]</i> The question encourages personal reflection <i>[Context]</i> to make the topic of the third place relevant to the reader. [1] OR <i>[Technique]</i> The question is to capture the reader's attention / create curiosity <i>[Context]</i> by introducing the concept / traits of a third place. [1]

2. In paragraph 2, how does the author's use of language show disapproval of third places today? [3]

From the Passage	Suggested Answer
Today, corporations have hijacked the idea of the third place, repackaging what was once an organic social institution into a mere marketing tool . (lines 13 - 15)	(a) <i>[Identify]</i> The use of the word 'hijacked' <i>[Unpack]</i> suggests that corporations have forcefully taken over third places for <u>their own commercial interests</u>.
While these corporate third places often provide a consistent and "welcoming" experience – comfortable seating, free Wi-Fi, ambient music – they are inherently transactional . (lines 17 - 19)	Note: students need to demonstrate understanding that 'hijacked' carries a negative connotation. (b) <i>[Identify]</i> The use of the phrase 'mere marketing tool' <i>[Unpack]</i> suggests that the value of third places has been reduced into nothing more than a <u>means for companies to make profits</u>.
	(c) <i>[Identify]</i> The use of inverted commas around the word 'welcoming' <i>[Unpack]</i> casts doubt on <u>whether third places are genuinely inviting</u> / implies that third places <u>only appear to be inviting</u>.
	(d) <i>[Identify]</i> The use of the word 'transactional' <i>[Unpack]</i> suggests that third places are fundamentally concerned with profits / impersonal spaces run for profit.
	<i>1m for each identified / quoted use of a specific language device, accompanied by sound unpacking</i>

	<i>of how language use conveys contextual meaning. Total of 3m.</i>
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3. In paragraph 3, identify **two** ways in which the ‘corporatisation of third places’ (line 20) could have a negative impact on society. [2]

From the Passage	Suggested Answer
The corporatisation of third places has introduced financial barriers that fundamentally undermine their inclusivity. (lines 20 - 21) OR Rather than functioning as genuinely egalitarian spaces, third places now feel exclusive, due to the pricing that often caters to a more affluent clientele. (lines 21 - 23)	(a) [Limited accessibility] The ‘corporatisation of third places’ has imposed monetary restrictions that basically / severely compromise their accessibility. [1] OR ... third places now feel less accessible, as the cost to access them targets higher income / wealthier patrons. [1]
As corporate third places flourish, many grassroots third places struggle to survive. (lines 24 - 25) OR The latter lack the financial resources to compete with large chains able to exploit economies of scale and brand recognition. (lines 25 - 26)	(b) [Sustainability of businesses] As corporate third places flourish, many community-based / smaller scale / independently-run third places find it challenging to sustain their business. [1] OR Community-based / smaller scale / independently-run third places suffer from insufficient funding to rival / hold their own against large chains. [1] Not accepted - ‘traditional’, ‘local’ as a paraphrase for ‘grassroots’

4. In paragraph 4, why is the internet being a third place described as a 'curious paradox' (line 28)? [3]

From the Passage	Suggested Answer
... <u>curious paradox</u> of the Internet as a supposed third place. On the one hand, online forums, gaming communities and social media provide highly accessible places for interaction and belonging . (lines 31 - 32)	(a) It is a 'curious paradox' because the internet facilitates easily reachable connections [1]
The internet, mobile phones and video games have opened a multiverse of varied connections . (lines 32 - 33)	(b) across different / diverse digital platforms [1] OR a range of networking opportunities [1].
Nonetheless, digital interactions have proved incapable of replicating the emotional richness of face-to-face encounters , spawning a loneliness epidemic. (lines 33 - 35)	(c) Yet, it simultaneously fails to mirror the depth / profound intimacy of real-life human contact [1], ultimately fuelling widespread feelings of isolation.

5. In paragraph 6, why does the author think that 'there needs to be more effort on the part of civil society, businesses and governments to preserve third places and enable them to organically thrive' (lines 43 to 45)? [2]

From the Passage	Suggested Answer
The erosion of such places may have lasting consequences on society and culture as their loss may lead us to become <u>increasingly isolated and polarised</u> . (lines 41 - 43)	(a) The erosion of such places may have long-term implications on society and culture as their disappearance risks <u>escalating social alienation / loneliness and fragmentation</u> . [1] Note: do not accept 'radicalised' for 'polarised'.
Given humanity's enduring need for belonging and meaningful social connection , physical third places are an essential, irreplaceable aspect of healthy modern life. (lines 45 - 47)	(b) Third places are crucial / necessary venues where we can satisfy our deep-seated desire for significant / fulfilling / authentic / interpersonal relationships . [1]

From Passage 2

6. Summarise the benefits of third places. Write your summary in no more than 120 words. [8]

No	From the Passage	Suggested Answer
1	third places offer something that is often overlooked: a sense of community . (line 2)	<u>A sense of community</u> Third places provide users with fellowship / a place to belong to / be part of a group
2	... which is particularly important in an era where we are <u>experiencing</u> a crisis of connection . (line 3)	<u>Experiencing a crisis of connection</u> (This is especially significant because) interpersonal bonds / links are breaking down / being threatened today
3	By giving us opportunities to interact with a wider range of people (line 4) OR As supportive environments for people from all walks of life, third places bring together those whose paths might otherwise not converge . (lines 7 - 8)	<u>Get to interact with wider range of people</u> let / allow us to mix with a larger variety of people <u>Bring diverse people together</u> We get to meet people we might not have other opportunities to meet .
4	...third places help <u>reduce</u> feelings of loneliness . (line 5)	<u>Reduce loneliness</u> feel <u>less</u> isolated / alienated Do not accept 'alone' (same root word)
5	Being in such communities can even <u>increase</u> our self-esteem , when other members validate us. (lines 5 - 6)	<u>Validation increase self-esteem</u> When other people acknowledge / affirm us, our self-confidence / self-worth <u>rises</u>
6	...everybody tends to be level in third places. (line 9)	<u>Everyone tends to be level</u> Everyone is equal OR There is no hierarchy
7	they can be great places to <u>increase</u> social capital (line 9)	<u>Increase social capital / beneficial networking</u> Provide <u>more</u> networking opportunities / allow us to build <u>more</u> valuable relationships / connections Note: students are required to highlight that the relationships built are valuable / beneficial
8	and help us progress in the world. (line 10)	<u>Helps us progress</u> Allow us to advance / move up in life / climb up the social ladder <i>Not accepted: global growth</i>
9	Third places give us a release from the stressors of modern life when it can be	<u>Provides stress relief</u>

	difficult to establish a healthy work-life balance (lines 10 - 11)	Provide relaxation / relief from life's pressures
10	providing spaces where we can enjoy ourselves. (line 12)	<u>Spaces to enjoy ourselves</u> A place to have fun / be entertained / for recreation
11	Many of us can <u>work</u> remotely at least some of the time, and working from a third place like a library or a coffee shop can be a happy medium . (lines 13 - 14)	<u>[For remote workers] Alternative to working from home</u> For remote <u>workers</u> , third places offer a pleasant alternative / option (to working from home) Note: allow 'middle ground'
12	They give us the chance to change our environments , something that <u>increases</u> our productivity . (lines 15 - 16)	<u>[For remote workers] Change environment to increase productivity</u> <u>Working</u> in a different space can <u>improve their efficiency</u> / help them complete work faster
13	Third places can transform a neighbourhood into a welcoming home, but only if we take ownership of them. (line 19)	<u>Become a welcoming home</u> Third places can make a neighbourhood feel warm / friendly / comforting
14	just short amounts of time when we are able to can go a long way . (lines 28 - 29)	<u>Even a short time can be very beneficial</u> (<i>inferred</i>) Even a brief visit can be very beneficial .

No. of points	1-2	3-4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Marks allocated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

From all the passages

7. Passage 1 argues that 'the gradual disappearance of third places has eroded opportunities for meaningful social encounters' (lines 8 - 9).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

Idea from Passage 3	Possible Paraphrase	Justification	Approach for Justification
(a) "My friends and I don't really have a permanent headquarters. Instead, we drift between different places depending on what we're in the mood for. " (lines 9 – 10)	One idea from Passage 3 is that instead of being fixed locations, third places can now look like flexible <u>venues</u> based on what might be preferred at the moment. [1]	When the locations suit our needs, what we engage in there becomes relevant and valuable, giving rise to purposeful exchanges with others. [1] People often discover true value and meaning when given the freedom to explore without constraints. [1]	How does doing things we are in the mood for lead to meaningful social encounters?
(b) "I run with the same group... silent reading club... conversations begin to flow organically. " (lines 11 – 13)	One idea from Passage 3 is that third places can also look like <u>activities</u> that facilitate the natural development of interactions. [1]	When people engage in authentic exchanges, the quality of interaction / connection increases as they get to know one another better. [1]	Why might interactions that develop naturally become meaningful?
(c) "... my generation is quietly reinventing third places... we're finding new ways – and new places – to keep showing up for one another. " (lines 21 – 23)	One idea from Passage 3 is that third places are now taking on <u>novel / innovative forms</u> , as youths seek to continuously maintain their presence in each other's lives/ continuously support each other. [1]	Continually showing up for others demonstrates a deep level of commitment, signalling to people that they are truly valued, which forms the foundation for meaningful interactions and lasting relationships. [1]	Why does consistently showing up for one another in new ways lead to meaningful interactions?

8. Passage 2 argues that 'some of our third places can be filled with people who, while physically present, are not interacting with one another' (lines 16 - 18).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

Idea from passage 3	Possible paraphrase	Justification	Approach for justification
Others become so wrapped up in networking, fitness or even dating that it's easy to forget why people gathered there in the first place. (lines 17 – 19)	When people gather at a third place, some of them may be so engrossed in their own agenda that they do not remember the original reason for showing up. [1]	People may not participate / lose engagement in the group activity, when they perceive that it does not serve their individual purposes. [1] Pursuing their individual agenda may lead to them being very selective who they socialise with / being oblivious to others' presence. [1] When people focus on achieving their outcomes with efficiency, they often overlook / cut short the process of socialising. [1]	Why does being wrapped up in their own agenda lead to people forgetting why they are gathered there in the first place?

9. The reading passages cover a range of views about third places.

How far do you agree that third places are valuable?

Support your answer with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from at least one of the reading passages
- examples drawn from your experience and that of your society.

[12]

Possible points for discussion

From passage 1	• 'Yet escalating living costs, together with the ubiquity of digitally mediated interaction, have progressively hollowed out these once-vibrant communal spaces.' (lines 6-8) • 'The gradual disappearance of third places has eroded opportunities for meaningful social encounters, contributing to a growing sense of loneliness, particularly among younger generations.' (lines 8-11) • 'While these corporate third places often provide a consistent and "welcoming" experience – comfortable seating, free Wi-Fi, ambient music – they are inherently transactional.' (lines 17-19) • 'Rather than functioning as genuinely egalitarian spaces, third places now feel exclusive, due to the pricing that often caters to a more affluent clientele.' (lines 21-23) • 'At the same time, modern society presents us with the curious paradox of the Internet as a supposed third place.' (lines 29-30) • 'Given humanity's enduring need for belonging and meaningful social connection, physical third places are an essential, irreplaceable aspect of healthy modern life.' (lines 45-47)
From passage 2	• 'In a world where many aspects of our lives are becoming increasingly individualised, third places offer something that is often overlooked: a sense of community. This is particularly important in an era where we are experiencing a crisis of connection.' (lines 1-3) • 'By giving us opportunities to interact with a wider range of people, third places help reduce feelings of loneliness.' (lines 4-5) • 'As supportive environments for people from all walks of life, third places bring together those whose paths might otherwise not converge.' (lines 7-8) • 'Third places give us a release from the stressors of modern life when it can be difficult to establish a healthy work-life balance.' (lines 10-11) • 'Working from a third place like a library or a coffee shop can be a happy medium between going into the office and working at home in isolation.' (lines 13-15) • 'Third places can transform a neighbourhood into a welcoming home, but only if we take ownership of them.' (lines 19-20)

From passage 3	• 'Now, my friends and I don't really have a permanent headquarters. Instead, we drift between different places depending on what we're in the mood for.' (lines 9-10) • 'Being surrounded by people doesn't always mean you feel like you belong.' (lines 19-20)
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Potential contextual considerations on Singaporean views about third places:

Relevant characteristics of Singapore: Land scarcity and vertical density; commercialisation of space; highly regulated public realm; climate and air-conditioning preference; multiracial and multireligious fabric.

Relevant government policies, agencies and initiatives: URA and Master Plan; PA integrated hubs; HDB town centres and void decks; NLB public libraries; NParks mixed-use urban spaces - "City in Nature".

Recent trends and events: Shift to hybrid/remote work and suburbanisation; digitalisation and virtual third spaces; privatisation and monetisation of community space; adaptive reuse of heritage properties, the evolution of run clubs as third places not needing a fixed location, Hyrox training gyms as new third places, online third places like Reddit, Discord etc.

Stakeholder groups: Elderly/seniors; youths and students; migrant workers; urban planners and commercial landlords.

Socioeconomic implications: Social stratification via exclusive spaces; decline in civic engagement and social capital; mental health and loneliness mitigation; homogenisation of urban identity.

Suggested approach:

<u>Introduction:</u> • Briefly introduce the topic in the context of your society by making references to a few broad relevant characteristics that will be further unpacked later in the body paragraphs. Explicitly state your stand in relation to the question.
<u>Body Paragraphs</u> • Avoid merely rehashing material from the passages. • Aim for thorough evaluation of a selected point by considering different angles. For instance, in the following sample paragraph, you will see how various stakeholders (in this case students and working adults) find third places valuable. • Another way to demonstrate thorough evaluation is to evaluate how exactly third places are valuable, giving context and details.

Text Reference	Explanation and Evaluation	Body Paragraph Elements
Starbucks, perhaps the most recognisable example, explicitly branded itself as a “third place” in the 1990s, creating environments where customers could gather, work, or relax while enjoying a coffee. (Passage 1, line 15)	The author highlights how Starbucks is a prominent third place where customers can relax and enjoy themselves. In Singapore, cafes or coffee shops like Starbucks or Coffee Bean give people the opportunity to hang out, work or study. Students gathering in small groups with laptops and study notes at Starbucks and other cafes are a common sight, as are working adults with their laptops and noise-cancelling headphones. For students, such cafes provide a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere where they can study and interact with their friends. This is valuable as it helps make them feel happier and focus better, as opposed to studying alone home, where they have no one to consult if they are unsure about their academic work and may feel lonely or listless if they have to study for long hours while confined in their rooms in increasingly small local homes. For the working adults, there is value too, but this value manifests somewhat differently. Working away from the office in a third place like Starbucks allows them to work at their own pace, away from workplace interruptions like their bosses constantly checking in on them, or colleagues making various requests throughout the workday. The furniture in these cafes is also more comfortable than the typical furnishings in schools and offices – many of these cafes have large sofas or sturdy, high-backed chairs which allow customers to sit and concentrate for hours. Overall, the value is that these cafes provide a conducive alternative working and de-stressing environment for students and adults. Some may still wish to study in schools or work from the office as they may feel that the formal environment makes them more focused, but the existence of these third places and their comfortable surroundings is a boon to those Singaporeans who need a change of scene or feel too stressed in formal settings and provides them with a valuable alternative should they require it.	Ex: Instances of café third spaces referenced in passage widely applicable to SG Ev: Students and working adults – circumstances that make third spaces appealing for them (limited home environment, loneliness, hybrid/remote work patterns) Ev: Comfort in furnishings and environment in third spaces (at expense of monetary barrier) Ev: Nuance – more comfortable working environment may not be appropriate for everyone
<u>Conclusion:</u> • Briefly highlight the most significant trends relating to third places in your society. • Briefly discuss what could be done next.		