



Raffles Institution
2026 Year 6 Preliminary Examination
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

2 September 2026

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Passage 1. *An author questions who benefits from the protection of cultural heritage.*

- 1 The word 'heritage' conjures ancestors, continuity, and the kind of rootedness that modern life seems to threaten. Small wonder, then, that governments, international bodies, and cultural institutions have rushed to position themselves as its custodians. But custodianship implies responsibility to the people whose heritage is being protected, and unfortunately, the record of those institutions is considerably less flattering than their promotional materials would suggest. 5
- 2 Consider what happened when Cambodia sought to protect the ancient temple complex of Angkor Wat. In 2022, citing the need to safeguard the site's UNESCO World Heritage status, the government began removing thousands of families who had lived within the complex for generations. As reported by Amnesty International, residents described officials arriving with short deadlines and meagre compensation: a small plot of cleared land, a few sheets of corrugated iron, and the unspoken warning that those who lingered would receive nothing at all. 10
- 3 Nor is Cambodia alone. In Tanzania, the Maasai people had occupied the Ngorongoro Conservation Area for centuries before UNESCO inscribed it on the World Heritage List in 1979, explicitly acknowledging their right to remain and promising to safeguard their interests. Within decades, access to grazing land was progressively restricted so as to maintain the natural landscape until departure felt less like a choice than a foregone conclusion. Thousands of kilometres away, in Panama City's Casco Viejo district, World Heritage listing guaranteed benefits to the residents through restoration and a surge in tourist numbers. Yet, it resulted in the inevitable eviction of working-class families who had shaped the neighbourhood over generations, as their homes and shops were converted for tourists seeking the authentic urban life those families had created. Heritage protection, it turns out, can be most dangerous for those it purports to protect. 15 20 25
- 4 What is striking about these cases is the gap between what communities valued and what institutions chose to protect. Casco Viejo has undergone intense gentrification since its UNESCO World Heritage designation. Residents who were evicted spoke of the neighbourhood's social fabric they had built across generations such as the street vendors, the communal courtyards, and the neighbours who had known each other for decades. What was preserved immaculately, however, was only the façade of the colonial architecture. In Ngorongoro, the Maasai did not describe their connection to the land in terms of its picturesque grandeur. Instead, they spoke of a way of life shaped by intimate knowledge of grazing routes and the landscape, accumulated over centuries. However, what was protected, and promoted to the world, was merely the view. The institutions overseeing both sites made their priorities clear: the things that could be photographed, packaged, and sold were deemed worth saving. As for the lived experiences? Well, thank you and good-bye. 30 35
- 5 Even where communities are not physically removed, what passes for preservation is often something closer to theatre. Consider the fate of living traditions under pressure from the tourist economy: folk dances drained of their ceremonial meaning and performed on a nightly schedule for hotel guests, and sacred festivals reduced to ticketed spectacles on an events calendar. Worryingly, some governments routinely dramatise whichever aspects of a culture bolster an approved national story — the monuments, the founding myths, the majority traditions — while allowing certain 40 45

minority cultures and inconvenient histories to quietly disappear. What results is a sanctioned version of heritage unrepresentative of a community's living inheritance, a carefully edited portrait that flatters the state and satisfies the tourist. It seems who gets to decide the past and how to preserve it is almost never the communities themselves. When one adjusts the past for the comfort of outsiders, it stops being heritage and simply becomes fiction. 50

Passage 2. *An author argues for the importance of protecting cultural heritage.*

- 1 Cultural heritage, expressed through the languages we speak, the stories we tell, the traditions we practise, and the places we inhabit, is what makes us who we are. Encompassing both tangible forms, such as monuments, artefacts and historic landscapes, and intangible traditions, including customs, rituals, and oral histories, it is continually shaped by the interaction between past and present. Cultural practices differ from one community to another, with some rooted in particular regions and others shared more widely. Yet across the world, culture is disappearing faster than we can protect it. 5
- 2 Why does cultural heritage matter so much? First and foremost, it is the foundation of identity. When a community's shared practices and histories are intact, its members know where they come from and can find meaning in where they are collectively going. History shows that communities stripped of their cultural moorings tend to fracture; those that retain them tend to hold together even under the most severe external pressure. Heritage also functions as a repository of collective knowledge. Through cultural traditions, later generations also inherit knowledge about how to live in a particular landscape, sustain unique crafts, or navigate social relationships. Furthermore, the preservation of heritage promotes dialogue between communities. Exposure to the living practices of other cultures fosters mutual understanding in ways that textbooks alone cannot achieve. 10 15
- 3 Yet cultural heritage faces threats on multiple fronts. In war zones, heritage sites are frequently targeted because by destroying a community's heritage, a community that loses its shared history struggles to articulate a shared future. Climate change poses an equally serious, if less visible, danger. Rising sea levels, intensifying storms and prolonged droughts are eroding physical sites at an accelerating rate, forcing communities whose understanding of those places has been built up over centuries to abandon them. Globalisation exerts a subtler but no less corrosive pressure. As dominant cultural forms spread across borders through media and commerce, traditional crafts become economically unviable, and younger generations find less reason to engage with inherited ways of life. Finally, there is the threat of simple neglect: when governments face competing priorities, cultural heritage budgets are among the first to be cut — a choice that reveals something about how such governments rank what endures against what is merely urgent. 20 25 30

Passage 3. *A writer reflects on her relationship with her family's cultural heritage.*

- 1 Throughout my early days in Coventry, England, sadya, the traditional Kerala feast, was a fixture of our family celebrations, and my mother made sure that I understood the traditions behind it even as a child. She prepared the traditional Kerala feast without a recipe, having learnt it from her own mother, and over the years, I came to associate these rituals with my family's roots in Kerala. When I stood beside her in our kitchen and learned to make some of the traditional dishes, adjusting everything by instinct, I understood that I was not just learning to cook, I was tracing a path back to Kerala through memory and ritual of my childhood — a legacy I now carry with care and will someday pass on to those who come after me. 5

- 2 The cooking began, as it always does in our family, without fanfare. But word had spread among the Kerala community through a WhatsApp message and a Facebook post, and by mid-morning several women had gathered in our kitchen, bearing some of the ingredients my mother had requested. No government or cultural institution was involved in the event. The community had chosen for itself which traditions to honour and how the gathering would unfold. All it took was a personal message passed between friends, ingredients gathered from different shops, and the knowledge my mother had carried with her over the years. 10 15