



**VICTORIA JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2025
HIGHER 1**

**GENERAL PAPER
Paper 2**

8881/02

INSERT

1 hour 30 mins

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

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

[Turn over

Passage 1. *An author writes about the shift in reading culture.*

- 1 What do you read, and why? A few decades ago, these were not urgent questions. Reading was an unremarkable activity, essentially unchanged since the advent of the modern publishing industry in the nineteenth century. In a 2017 article titled 'Before the Internet', the writer Emma Rathbone captured the spirit of reading as it used to be: 'Before the Internet, you could laze around on a couch reading a Roald Dahl paperback, and that would be a legitimate thing to do. No one would ever know you had done it unless you told them.' Reading was just reading, and no matter what you chose to read – the newspaper or *Great Expectations* – you basically did it by moving your eyes across a page in silence. 5
- 2 Today, the nature of reading has shifted. Plenty of people still enjoy traditional books and periodicals, and there are even readers for whom the networked age has enabled a kind of hyper-literacy; for them, a smartphone is a library in their pocket. For others however, the conventional ideal sort of reading – intense, extended, beginning-to-end encounters with carefully crafted texts – has become almost outdated. There is something both diffuse and concentrated about reading now. Readers might start a book on an e-reader and then continue it on the go, via audio narration. Or they might forgo books entirely, spending evenings browsing Google News before drifting down Reddit's lazy river. On the other hand, the lurking presence of YouTube, Fortnite, Netflix, and the like ensures that, once we have begun to read, we must consciously choose not to stop. 10 15 20
- 3 This shift in reading habits has taken decades, and it has been driven by technologies that have been disproportionately adopted by the young. Unsurprisingly, this has led to a greater impact on reading habits for the young compared to other age groups. In 2023, the National Endowment for the Arts reported that, over the preceding decade, the proportion of adults who read at least one book a year had fallen from fifty-five percent to forty-eight percent. That is a striking change, but modest compared to what has happened among teenagers: the National Center for Education Statistics found that, over roughly the same period, the number of thirteen-year-olds who read for fun 'almost every day' fell from twenty-seven percent to less than ten percent. 25 30
- 4 The drop in literacy may not be as alarming as some believe. If we binge-watch *Stranger Things* instead of reading Stephen King, or listen to self-help podcasts instead of buying self-help books, is that the end of civilisation? There are also reasons to be optimistic about the slide away from books. On some level, declines in traditional reading are connected to the exponential increase of information in the digital age through other platforms. Do we really want to return to a time when there was less to read, watch, hear and learn? 35
- 5 Furthermore, with the advent of AI, what will happen to reading culture? In this future, people will often read by asking for a text to be made shorter and more to-the-point, or to be changed into something different, like a podcast or multi-text report. The people who actually read unabridged books will be rare as who would want to read Homer's *Odyssey* in its entirety? One will also no longer have to deliberate on the next book to read when they have AI curations instead. 40

Passage 2. Another author presents the benefits of reading.

- 1 In a media-saturated age characterised by ubiquitous access to digital entertainment ranging from television streaming services to social media platforms, reading endures as an intellectually stimulating activity. Despite the prevalence of these modern diversions, the sustained popularity of literature remains evident; bestselling titles such as Paula Hawkins' *The Girl on the Train* continue to achieve impressive sales figures, with over half a million copies sold annually in the United Kingdom alone. 5
- 2 Studies indicate that engaging in leisure reading for as little as 30 minutes per week can improve self-esteem and bolster confidence through the enhancement of literacy. For young people in particular, regular reading builds vocabulary, strengthens comprehension skills, and contributes to better academic performance across subjects. 10
- 3 Reading stimulates the imagination and encourages original thinking because it functions as a portal into alternate realities. Although visual media such as film and television provide accessible adaptations of literary works, they do not replicate the unique mental engagement that reading elicits. For example, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* presents a quiet, haunting dystopia that loses some emotional subtlety in its film version. It is common for readers to imagine scenes and characters in more detail and depth than what is presented in a film adaptation. This is because books allow for a more personalised interpretation of the story, while films offer a predefined visual and auditory experience. 15
- 4 Beyond the acknowledged cognitive benefits of reading, its impact is both broader and more profound. Reading fiction places us inside other minds and lives, some of which are very different from our own. For instance, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* gives insight into the Nigerian Civil War from deeply human perspectives, something that most of us would never experience in our lifetimes. Although one might acquire factual knowledge about WWII or Victorian social conditions through academic texts, fictional representations, such as Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* or Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, convey these realities with an emotional richness that pure historical texts rarely capture. 20 25
- 5 As such, the many benefits of reading remind us why it continues to matter – even in a digital world. 30

Passage 3. *This passage describes a young person's views on reading.*

- 1 Growing up, I often heard teachers and relatives insist that reading was the most valuable way to learn. They spoke of books as if they were the highest form of knowledge, unmatched in depth or insight. Yet the insistence on reading felt like something passed down more out of tradition than necessity. In my experience, meaningful understanding comes from many sources, not just printed pages. 5
- 2 The rise of podcasts, videos, social media, and other interactive platforms offers ways of learning that are more aligned with how my generation processes information. A short, well-researched documentary can convey complex historical events through visuals, narration, and expert interviews, giving me both the facts and the context in a fraction of the time it takes to read a textbook chapter. 10 Podcasts allow me to hear directly from people in the field, their tone and emphasis adding nuance that text alone cannot capture.
- 3 The skills required to navigate modern media are just as difficult as that of reading. Interpreting the layered symbolism in a film or evaluating competing perspectives in an online debate also requires focus, inference, and critical thinking – skills too often credited solely to reading. 15



VICTORIA JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2025
HIGHER 1

CANDIDATE
NAME

C.T.
GROUP

GENERAL PAPER
Paper 2

8881/02
1 hour 30 mins

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. Why does the author claim that reading was an 'unremarkable activity' (line 2) in the past?

[2]

2. Explain why the author thinks reading is 'both diffuse and concentrated' (line 15) now.

[2]

3. In paragraph 3, how does the author support her claim that there has been 'a greater impact on reading habits for the young compared to other age groups' (lines 23-24)?

[2]

4. Give **two** reasons why the author ends Paragraph 4 with the question 'Do we really want to return to a time when there was less to read, watch, hear and learn' (lines 36-37)?

[2]

5. In paragraph 5, what does the author suggest will happen to the future of reading culture 'with the advent of AI' (line 38)?

[3]

For
Examiner's
Use

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

[illegible]

(words)

From all the passages

7. Passage 1 states that 'the conventional ideal sort of reading – intense, extended, beginning-to-end encounters with carefully crafted texts – has become almost outdated' (lines 13 – 15).

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

[2]

8. Passage 2 states that 'Although visual media such as film and television provide accessible adaptations of literary works, they do not replicate the unique mental engagement that reading elicits' (lines 12-14).

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

[2]

For
Examiner's
Use

9. The passages cover a range of views about the importance of reading in today's world.

How far do you agree that reading is still important?

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

[illegible]

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**VJC 2025 General Paper JC2 Prelim Examination
Answer Scheme**

From Passage 1

1. Why does the author claim that reading was an 'unremarkable activity' (line 2) in the past? [2]

From the Text	Possible Paraphrase
essentially unchanged since the advent of the modern publishing industry in the nineteenth century . (L2-3)	A. Reading has remained the same over time / for many years [1]
... No one would ever know you had done it unless you told them." (L6-7) ... in silence (L9)	B. Reading was carried out privately / quietly / without any fanfare / without making a big deal out of it [1]
"Before the Internet, you could laze around on a couch reading a Roald Dahl paperback... (L5-6) Reading was just reading , and no matter what you chose to read... you basically did it by moving your eyes across a page in silence. (L7-9)	(Inferred) C. Reading was seen as a simple activity / carried out with little effort . [1] OR Reading was not seen as something special .
You could laze around on a couch reading a Roald Dahl paperback, and that would be a legitimate thing to do (L5-6)	(Inferred) D. Reading was seen as an acceptable / valid way of relaxation . [1] Note: Any 2 points for 2 marks

2. Explain why the author thinks reading is 'both diffuse and concentrated' (line 15) now. [2]

From the Text	Possible Paraphrase
Readers might start a book on an e-reader and then continue it on the go, via audio narration. Or they might forgo books entirely, spending evenings browsing Google News before drifting down Reddit's lazy river. (L16-18)	(Inferred) A. When we read, our attention is scattered across various mediums / different online/digital sources / we may read from different sources instead of completing a book. [1] OR Readers may have short bursts of engagement with the text before moving on to another source . [1] <i>[Do not accept: diversity of platforms for reading. Focus is on the <u>attention</u> being diffused.]</i>
On the other hand, the lurking presence of YouTube, Fortnite, Netflix, and the like ensures that, once we have begun to read,	B. However, when we start reading, we have to make a deliberate / intentional effort to focus

we must consciously choose not to stop. (L18-20)	/ give it attention as there are <u>many other forms of distractions</u> . (context needed) [1]
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3. In paragraph 3, how does the author support her claim that there has been 'a greater impact on reading habits for the young compared to other age groups' (lines 23-24)? [2]

From the passage	Inferred
...the proportion of adults who read at least one book a year had fallen from fifty-five percent to forty-eight percent. That is a striking change, but modest compared to what has happened among teenagers ...the number of thirteen-year-olds who read for fun "almost every day" fell from twenty-seven percent to less than ten percent. (L25-30)	A. The author supports her claim by citing statistics / data [1] B. to show that the decline in the number of teenage readers is worse than the decline in the number of adult readers. [1] <i>[Note: Comparison between the declines in adult readers and teenage readers must be made for the 2nd point to be credited.]</i>

4. Give two reasons why the author ends Paragraph 4 with the question 'Do we really want to return to a time when there was less to read, watch, hear and learn' (lines 36-37)? [2]

From the passage	Inferred
Do we really want to return to a time when there was less to read, watch, hear, and learn? (L36-37)	<u>Whether the trend of declining reading habits is a negative one</u> A. The author wants to challenge the belief that the <u>decline in reading</u> is a worrying trend / negative phenomenon [1] <u>The value of information from other modes of learning</u> B. To point out that the value of <u>gaining information</u> from other modes of learning is not necessarily inferior to getting the information from books. [1] <u>Whether society was better off in the past or present</u> C. To assert his opinion that we were worse off in the past / society should not want to go back to the past because there was less information available. [1] OR The question is used to persuade the reader that as long as we can get <u>information from other sources</u>, societies are still progressing/ thriving. [1] <i>Note: Any 2 out of 3 possible points.</i> <i>Note: Answers must show the context of reading/access to information accurately.</i>

5. In paragraph 5, what does the author suggest will happen to the future of reading culture 'with the advent of AI' (line 38)? [3]

From the passage	Possible paraphrase
people will often read by asking for a text to be made shorter and more to-the-point , (L39-40]	A. People will request AI to summarise text / make text more concise [1]
or to be changed into something different , like a podcast or multi-text report. (L40-41)	B. process the text into an alternative format / type of information source / mode of presentation. [1]
The people who actually read unabridged books will be rare (L41)	C. It will be uncommon / unique for people to read the original / full / unsimplified / unedited/ whole/ complete book [1]
One will also no longer have to deliberate on the next book to read, when they have AI curation s instead. (L42-43)	D. It will no longer be necessary for people to decide what to read next since they can now rely on AI recommendations . [1]
Note: Any 3 points for 3 marks	

From Passage 2

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

No	From the passage	Suggested Answer
1	reading endures as an intellectually stimulating activity (L3) OR Visual media...do(es) not replicate the unique mental engagement that reading elicits (L13-14)	Reading is a mentally invigorating pursuit / an enriching exercise for the mind / a thought-provoking and enriching habit... OR Reading requires a distinctive / particular cognitive involvement/ immersion
2	Engaging in leisure reading can ... improve self-esteem and bolster confidence (L8)	...which increases / reinforces self-worth / self-assurance / belief in one's value / abilities ...
3	through the enhancement of literacy (L8)	...as one becomes more proficient in reading and writing / improves language skills . □
4	Regular reading builds vocabulary , (L9)	Regular reading expands one's word bank / increases linguistic range
5	strengthens comprehension skills , (L9-10)	sharpens one's understanding / grasp of the text
6	and contributes to better academic performance across subjects (L10)	Improves scholastic achievement / achieve stronger exam results / school grades
7	Reading stimulates the imagination and encourages original thinking (L11)	Reading ignites creativity / fuels inventiveness / promotes innovative thought / nurtures fresh perspectives / inspire independent ideas .
8	because it functions as a portal into alternate realities (L12)	Because it allows us to escape into / acts as an entrance to different worlds / escapism
9	It is common for readers to imagine scenes and characters in more detail and depth than what is presented in a film adaptation. (L16-17)	Books allow readers to visualise/picture settings and characters with greater richness/ nuance/more vividly as compared to movies OR Readers are able to construct clearer mental images of places and characters than if they were represented on screen.
10	This is because books allow for a more personalised interpretation of the story (L17-18)	Books allow us to customise <u>our own</u> understanding / shape <u>our own</u> unique take / tailor <u>our individual</u> reading experiences of the story <i>[Do not accept: original]</i>
11	Reading fiction places us inside other minds and lives (L21)	Reading fiction allows us to be immersed in the thoughts and experiences of others / understand what others are going through / builds empathy
12	some of which are very different from our own (L21-22) something that most of us would never experience in our lifetimes (L24)	...that contrast sharply / diverge greatly / very dissimilar from our personal lives /realities/ encounters □ <i>(Note: Must show contrast)</i>

13	... one might acquire factual knowledge ... through academic texts (L24-26)	Reading academic texts offer concrete information / objective content / data ,
14	fictional representations... convey these realities with an emotional richness that pure historical texts rarely capture (L26-28)	while literature portrays / depicts historical facts with an emotional complexity that is seldom found in / missing from historical writing. OR While novels bring the past to life with more intensity and feeling / in a more heartfelt way. OR Fictional narratives capture the human emotions behind historical events in ways that academic texts often cannot. [Allow lift: emotional]

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 states that ‘the conventional ideal sort of reading – intense, extended, beginning-to-end encounters with carefully crafted texts – has become almost outdated’ (lines 13 – 15).

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
the insistence on reading felt like something passed down more out of tradition than necessity (lines 3-4)	The idea that reading is important seems to be a belief inherited from the past / older generations / that follows previous customs rather than really being useful / of value .	This supports the idea from passage 1 as it suggests that suggests that reading is no longer relevant today / does not serve the needs of people today .
The rise of podcasts, videos, social media, and other interactive platforms offers ways of learning that are more aligned with how my generation processes information . (lines 6–8)	Young people are more used to gaining/acquiring knowledge from modern/digital media .	This supports the idea from passage 1 as it suggests that learning from traditional books/reading is not as attractive as learning via technology for people today .

8. Passage 2 states that ‘Although visual media such as film and television provide accessible adaptations of literary works, they do not replicate the unique mental engagement that reading elicits’ (lines 12-14).

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

Idea from passage 3	Possible paraphrase	Justification
The skills required to navigate modern media are just as difficult as that of reading. (line 13)	A full understanding / ability to know how to use new media platforms is just as challenging / hard as that of reading.	This shows that new / visual / other forms of media can <u>also</u> be intellectually stimulating , not only reading.
Interpreting the layered symbolism in a film or evaluating competing perspectives in an online debate also requires focus, inference, and critical thinking — skills too often credited solely to reading.(lines 14-16)	When unpacking the deeper meaning in a film or tracking the arguments in an online debate, the viewer needs to pay attention and exercise analytical reasoning / rational analysis / reflective judgement , which are skills attributed only to reading.	

9. The passages cover a range of views about the importance of reading in today's world. How far do you agree that reading is still important?

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

Ideas from Passage 1:

- “there are even readers for whom the networked age has enabled a kind of hyper-literacy; for them, a smartphone is a library in their pocket” (12-13)
- “the conventional ideal sort of reading – intense, extended, beginning-to-end encounters with carefully crafted texts – has become almost outdated...Readers might forgo books entirely, spending evenings browsing Google News...” (L13-18)
- “Readers might start a book on an e-reader and then continue it on the go, via audio narration” (L16—17)
- “shift in reading habits...has been driven by technologies that have been disproportionately adopted by the young. Unsurprisingly, this has led to a greater impact on reading habits for the young compared to other age groups.” (L21-24)
- “declines in traditional reading are connected to the exponential increase of information in the digital age through other platforms” (L34-35) “Do we really want to return to a time when there was less to read, watch, hear, and learn?” (L36-37)
- “people will often read by asking for a text to be made shorter and more to-the-point, or to be changed into something different, like a podcast or multi-text report” (L39-41) “The people who actually read unabridged books will be rare as who would want to read Homer’s ‘Odyssey’ in its entirety?” (L41-42)

Ideas from Passage 2:

- “reading endures as an intellectually stimulating activity” (L2-3)
- “Regular reading builds vocabulary, strengthens comprehension skills, and contributes to better academic performance across subjects.” (L9-10)
- “Reading stimulates the imagination and encourages original thinking because it functions as a portal into alternate realities.” (L11-12)
- “Reading fiction places us inside other minds and lives, some of which are very different from our own” (L21) “(Fictional works) give insight into deeply human perspectives, something that most of us would never experience in our lifetimes.” (L23-24)

Ideas from Passage 3:

- “Meaningful understanding comes from many sources, not just printed pages.” (L5)
- “The rise of podcasts, videos, social media, and other interactive platforms offers ways of learning that are more aligned with how my generation processes information.” (L6-7)
- “The skills required to navigate modern media are just as difficult as that of reading.” (L13-14)

Possible Points	Possible Evaluation and Evidence
From Passage 1	
<u>Passage 1 Paragraph 2</u> ... the conventional ideal sort of reading – intense, extended, beginning-to-end encounters with carefully crafted texts – has become almost outdated... Readers might forgo books entirely, spending evenings browsing Google News... <i>(Idea: Long-form reading for leisure is on the decline.)</i>	Agree: Given the fast-paced lifestyles in Singapore, many people in Singapore are too busy with their work and studies to pick up a book to read for leisure. Even weekends are spent working from the office for some, and they have no time to visit bookstores to browse through the collection of fiction books for their reading pleasure. It is no wonder that bookstores are closing down with the decline in reading habits among Singaporeans. People often turn to their smartphones to obtain information through online videos and news blogs rather than spending time reading a story book. Examples: Borders bookstore was a popular American bookstore chain that expanded to Singapore in 1997, with locations at Wheelock Place and Parkway Parade. It became known for its large store size, wide selection of books, and comfortable browsing atmosphere. However, both the US-based Borders Group and its Singapore operations ceased operations in 2011 due to financial difficulties. Another major chain, Times Bookstore, shuttered its last outlet in Singapore in 2024, after almost 50 years in business.
	Disagree: Reading is a hobby that continues to attract fans and may even have enjoyed a resurgence in recent years due to the rise of book clubs, which enable readers to find like-minded people to share their passion for reading. This is due in part to the National Library Board (NLB)'s National Reading Movement, which runs numerous book clubs in various libraries across Singapore. Beyond national efforts, community-led book clubs have also been initiated by passionate everyday bookworms. Examples: Several book clubs in Singapore cater to diverse interests and age groups. These include the National Library Book Clubs, the Singapore Literature Book Club, The Hungry Hundred Book Club, and the Silent Book Club Singapore. There are also genre-specific clubs like the Book Lovers' Club, focusing on relationships and inspirational stories. Additionally, some clubs are tailored for specific demographics, such as seniors in The Golden Circle or young adults in the Pseudo Book Club. The National Library Board (NLB) offers various book clubs, including the Singapore Literature Book Club, which explores local literature, and The Golden Circle, for seniors. As reading books forces one to slow down, it may well be the very antidote to the rushed and anxiety-induced lifestyles that Singaporeans experience.
<u>Passage 1 Paragraph 2</u> “there are even readers for whom the networked age has enabled a kind of hyper-literacy; for them, a smartphone is a library in their pocket” <u>Passage 1 Paragraph 4</u>	Agree: With an educated and digitally savvy population, Singaporeans are changing the way they read, rather than giving up on reading altogether. Overall readership among Singapore residents remains healthy according to NLB's National Reading Habits Study (NRHS) 2024, with almost nine in ten adults, and eight in ten teens reading news, books and online articles multiple times per week. Examples: The Libby reading app designed by Singapore's National Library Board (NLB) allows Singaporeans to download

“declines in traditional reading are connected to the exponential increase of information in the digital age through other platforms” “Do we really want to return to a time when there was less to read, watch, hear, and learn?” <i>(Idea: Singaporeans are changing in the way they read and its impacts/implications)</i>	eBooks/Audiobooks into our devices. Such a convenient means of acquiring reading material has allowed Singaporeans to expand their reading options as they can read on the go, as well as borrow and return resources easily. A recent survey in 2024 by NLB showed that while physical books are still the most popular format across all age groups, there is also a shift towards digital formats among older adults. Other than the NLB digital resources, Singaporeans also benefit from accessing multiple news digital platforms such as the Straits Times and Channel News Asia applications. Agree: While reading is still an important means of acquiring knowledge, schools and tertiary institutions have also embraced multimodal learning. The pandemic necessitated online learning, and schools have harnessed learning resources of different modes (e.g. videos, podcasts, infographics, gifs) as supplementary resources, to create a more enriching learning experience. Examples: The Student Learning Space (SLS) supports multimodal learning by integrating text, visuals, and interactive videos within a single platform, allowing teachers to create varied learning experiences for deeper engagement. NUS and NTU also collaborate with Coursera and edX to combine video lectures, discussion forums, assignments, and reading materials. Both undergraduates as well as adult students gain from this blend of visual learning platforms with reading resources.
<u>Passage 1 Paragraph 5</u> “people will often read by asking for a text to be made shorter and more to-the-point, or to be changed into something different, like a podcast or multi-text report” “The people who actually read unabridged books will be rare” <i>(Idea: The impact of AI on reading culture)</i>	Agree: It is no surprise that Gen AI has been rapidly adopted in Singapore by students, given how digitally connected they are. Furthermore, with students’ packed academic schedules and heavy content load, it is only pragmatic for them to turn to AI to help them synthesise and comprehend long and difficult readings. Examples: While AI in examinations is largely not accepted in Singapore, Singapore students are already using AI tools such as ChatGPT and Deepseek to break down lengthy amounts of text for subjects such as Biology and History. A survey of 500 students by Channel News Asia in 2025 revealed that all of them had gotten help with their homework from AI, with 84 per cent of those at secondary school using it at least weekly in multiple areas, including language-heavy subjects. Attempt at balance: The use of AI for learning seems to present a danger that extensive reading will no longer be viewed as an important skill by students in Singapore. Nevertheless, AI need not necessarily be seen as a threat to reading, but as a complement to making reading easier and more enjoyable for readers. Examples: In 2024, Simpler, an AI tool, was developed in Singapore. Partially developed by the Ministry of Education, it rephrases sentences and breaks them down into shorter fragments to allow for easier reading. By just highlighting words on a webpage, Simpler is able to display different versions of words and sentences aligned with students’ preferred reading levels, enabling them to more easily understand online content.

<u>Passage 2 Paragraph 2</u> “Regular reading... contributes to better academic performance across subjects” <i>(Idea: Reading literacy contributes to early academic success.)</i>	Agree: Reading is still very important in Singapore. As a knowledge-based society, students who have good literacy skills are more likely to achieve academic success and move on the higher levels of education. Improving literacy for the less privileged students has implications for addressing socio-economic inequality in Singapore, providing a more level-playing field, and help prevent students from being left behind in the highly competitive Singapore education system. Examples: The critical importance of literacy for early academic success is well recognised by MOE. Students identified to be unable to read when they enter primary 1 are put in a Learning Support Programme (LSP) that focuses on literacy in the English Language by trained teachers in every school. This programme is a form of specialised and targeted early intervention to prevent these students, typically from less privileged home backgrounds, from lagging behind their more literate peers. Upon completion of the LSP in Primary 1, there is also the MOE Reading Remediation Programme (RRP), a literacy support programme for Primary 3 and 4 students who face reading difficulties but are not diagnosed with dyslexia. These support programmes are crucial for early academic success as subjects like Science and Mathematics in Singapore schools are taught in English and the ability to read is important for students for students to be able to read and understand the questions in order to answer them in their assignments and assessment papers.
<u>Passage 2 Paragraph 3</u> “Reading stimulates the imagination and encourages original thinking because it functions as a portal into alternate realities” <i>(Idea: Reading has a positive impact on creativity and inventive thinking for the next generation.)</i>	Agree: The importance of reading to develop creative thinking cannot be overstated enough. Inventive thinking is one of MOE’s identified 21st century competencies for students. Given the importance of developing a future generation of creative young people who can contribute to new industries, set up entrepreneurial ventures and solve problems in a rapidly changing world, encouraging students to read widely beyond textbooks is the best way to develop creative thinkers. Singapore’s education system places a strong emphasis on performance and results, which can sometimes discourage risk-taking and original thought. For example, at primary and lower secondary levels, students are required to write stories, but many fall back on predictable “safe plots” (e.g. losing and finding a wallet, helping an elderly person) rather than take risks with original plots. Reading fiction, however, offers students a safe space to explore ideas and practice independent thinking. Disagree: Unfortunately, the benefits of reading and studying fiction to enhance imagination and innovative thinking are not fully recognised by some parents and students in Singapore. Example: Many secondary schools in Singapore are not offering Literature in the upper secondary curriculum as they respond to the desire of students and their parents to choose other humanities subjects like Geography and History that they feel are ‘easier to score’ than Literature. Singaporean students are increasingly opting

	out of studying literature due to a perceived lack of practical value and difficulty in achieving high scores. The pragmatic and results-oriented culture in Singapore often prioritises subjects seen as more directly linked to career opportunities, such as those in science and mathematics. This has implications for our fledging local literary arts scene. While the National Arts Council supports Sing Lit through grants for local fiction writers and organisations like Sing Lit Station have ground-up initiatives to promote local literature, the general lack of interest in reading fiction means that the local market is small and makes writing local fiction not so viable a career option. The creativity and imagination of our local writers in telling stories about our own people in their unique voices are therefore not given enough space.
<u>Passage 2 Paragraph 4</u> “Reading fiction places us inside other minds and lives, some of which are very different from our own” “(Fictional works) give insight into deeply human perspectives, something that most of us would never experience in our lifetimes.” <i>(Idea: Reading fiction helps develop empathy)</i>	Agree: As a multicultural society, reading stories that place readers in the shoes of people from different communities helps young Singaporeans understand perspectives beyond their own, reinforcing social harmony. Furthermore, most young people in Singapore grow up in relatively safe, comfortable, and structured environments. Daily life is well-organised, basic needs are met, and exposure to hardship or very different life experiences may be limited. Because of this, they can be somewhat sheltered from the realities that others—both within Singapore (e.g. migrant workers, lower-income families) and outside of it—face. Examples: <i>Me Migrant</i> is a collection of poems originally written in Bengali by Mohammed Mukul Hossine, a migrant worker from Bangladesh who worked as a construction worker in Singapore. His musings reflect the hopes and dreams of numerous other migrant workers in Singapore, helping readers empathise with those who build and sustain the city but often remain invisible. <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee is an excellent story that explores racial prejudice and justice, resonating in a society that values multiracial harmony.