



Raffles Institution
2025 Year 6 Timed Practice
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

21 May 2025

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Passage 1. *Michael Lewis explores why art has lost relevance today.*

- 1 In 1971, the performance artist Chris Burden stood against the wall of a California art gallery and ordered a friend to shoot him through the arm. That air rifle shot was the opening salvo of a movement that came to be called ‘endurance art’—an unnerving species of performance art in which the performer deliberately subjects himself to pain, deprivation, or extreme tedium. Try as he might, Burden never quite matched the shock of his spectacular debut (and he did try, once letting himself be crucified onto the back of a Volkswagen Beetle). 5
- 2 I recently showed my students the footage of Burden’s shooting. Curiously, the clip did not provoke them as it had their predecessors in my classrooms in decades past. No one expressed any palpable sense of shock or revulsion. One student pointed out the legal liability of the shooter; another intelligently placed the work in historical context and related it to anxiety over the Vietnam War. This refusal to judge or take offence can be taken as a positive sign, suggesting tolerance and broadmindedness. 10
- 3 But there is a broadmindedness so roomy that it is indistinguishable from indifference, and it is lethal. For while the fine arts can survive a hostile or ignorant public, or even a fanatically prudish one, they cannot long survive an indifferent one. And that is the nature of the present Western response to art, visual and otherwise: indifference. 15
- 4 In terms of quantifiable data—prices spent on paintings and photographs and sculptures; visitors accommodated; funds raised; and square footage created at museums—the picture could hardly be rosier. A recent Christie’s auction set several records, including the highest price ever paid at an auction for a work of art: USD179.4 million for Picasso’s *Women of Algiers*. Clearly, the art market is robust. One can expect more such record-breaking in the art market over the next few years as it is bolstered by Hong Kong dollars, Swiss francs, and Qatari riyals. 20 25
- 5 But quantifiable data can only describe the fiscal health of the fine arts, not their cultural health. The picture is not so rosy. A basic familiarity with the ideas of the leading artists and architects is no longer part of the essential cultural equipment of an informed citizen. Fifty years ago, educated people could be expected to identify the likes of Saul Bellow, Buckminster Fuller, and Jackson Pollock, while today, one is expected to know about the human genome, AI and the debate over global warming. Today, nobody is thought ignorant for being unable to identify the architect of the Freedom Tower or name a single winner of the Tate Prize (let alone remember the name of the most recent winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature). 30
- 6 The consequences are dire. The fine arts and the performing arts have indeed ceased to matter in Western culture, other than in honorific or pecuniary terms, and they no longer shape in meaningful ways our image of ourselves or define our collective values. This collapse in the prestige and significance of the arts is the central cultural phenomenon of our day. 35
- 7 Indeed, this estrangement has been a disaster for the arts, which need to draw inspiration from the society and culture that is its substrate¹. It is a myth that an art 40

¹ *a substance or surface that an organism grows and lives on and is supported by.*

withdrawn from the realm of public inspection and disapproval is a freer and superior art. The impulse to evade censure can inspire raptures of ingenuity. We hear much about art enriching the human experience, which is an agreeable platitude. But it is the other way round. The human experience is needed to enrich art, and without a meaningful living connection to the society that nurtures it, art is a plucked flower. 45

Passage 2. *An arts association investigates why art continues to remain relevant today.*

- 1 Art is anything that has the power to stir something deep within us. From its beginnings on caves, to being considered as the hobby of the elites, to being a medium of marking territories, art has managed to survive the confines of what was considered as 'true art'. In what ways is art still relevant today? Can it function as a medium of change or is it merely to be admired? 5
- 2 Art is a form of performative and visual language, and for many it has been an important contributor to an existing discourse. It has even created a new narrative around a particular issue. Art has also exposed issues of social justice. As a cultural tool, art has helped actualise the emotions, grievances, and fears of those who may not have another place to voice concerns. As an illustrative tool, art has inspired us to action. What art depicts can evoke a visceral, almost cellular reaction. 10
- 3 However, not all forms of art are seen equally. In fact, art and popular culture have been considered as polar opposites. The money-minting nature of popular culture, which monetises overused and repetitive tropes, has caused some to dismiss it as not art even though it could challenge the perspective of the masses. This is causing only certain forms of art to precede others. However, popular culture that challenges mainstream perspective can still have a positive impact on society. For instance, Beyonce's visual album *Lemonade* highlighted the struggles of black women because of their race and gender, and was an important contribution to the narrative around the Black Lives Matter movement. 15
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- 4 Art is everywhere, and that is why it continues to be relevant to many. Increasingly, cultural institutions play a key role in preserving art over the decades and thus, have become a visual biography of their surrounding culture. Mallika Sarabhai, a pioneer of using dance and the arts for social change put it best in her TED Talk, *Dance to Change the World*, 'What I need to say to the planners of the world, the governments, the strategists is, "You have treated the arts as the cherry on the cake. It needs to be the yeast."' 25

Passage 3. *Afzal Ibrahim offers reasons for the powerful impact of art.*

- 1 Art has the power to educate people about almost anything. It can create awareness and present information in a way that could be absorbed by many easily. In a world where some don't even have access to good education, art makes education an even greater equaliser of society.
- 2 Art also promotes cultural appreciation among a generation that's currently preoccupied with technology. In fact, if it weren't for people's understanding and enjoyment of art, your history, culture, and traditions would be in more danger of being forgotten than they already are. 5
- 3 Third, art breaks cultural, social, and economic barriers. While art can't really solve poverty or promote social justice on its own, it can be used as a level playing field for discourse and expression. Everyone has emotions and personal experiences, and therefore anyone can learn to appreciate art regardless of social background, economic standing, or political affiliation. 10
- 4 Finally, art accesses higher orders of thinking. Art doesn't just make you absorb information. Rather, it makes you think about current ideas and inspire you to make your own. In fact, studies have shown that exposure to art can make you better in other fields of knowledge. 15