



SUBJECT: **English**
DATE: 11th December 2020
TIME: 4:00 p.m. to 7:05 p.m.

Answer **ALL** sections. You are advised to spend about 1 hour on each task.

SECTION A: WRITING

Choose ONE title and write 450 (+/- 10%) words.

1. An international publishing house is commissioning a series of short stories from around the world. The target readers for these stories are young adults and they will explore different emotions commonly experienced while growing up. As the chosen freelance writer to represent Malta, write one of the stories entitled 'Gratitude' which is set in Malta.
2. You have recently agreed to look after a family member's puppy for three weeks. Write a description of a typical daily walk with this puppy. This description will feature in a special issue called 'Caring for a Puppy' which will appear on an online magazine about domestic animals.
3. Technology has ruined dating. Discuss.
4. More and more people are becoming dependent on cars despite the effects this has on the environment. What could be done about this issue?
5. Together with a group of friends, you would like to set up a website that makes it easier for young people to express their views about local and global issues. In order to design and host the website you require funding from Youth Act, an international organisation that specialises in supporting such initiatives.

Write a report addressed to the president of Youth Act to support your funding application.

In the report you might consider focussing on:

- why you think it is important to create the website;
- how content on the website will be structured;
- how traffic to the website will be generated.

6. A large manufacturing company is inviting applications from young people to complete a summer internship at one of its factories. There are a number of manual and office positions available, and the company will teach successful applicants a variety of relevant skills.

Write a formal letter addressed to Ms Portelli, the company's human resources manager. In your letter you might want to explain:

- which position you are applying for;
- why you are applying for the position;
- which skills you are interested in developing during the internship;
- why the company should consider you a suitable applicant.

Sender's details:

Use this fictional name: Ben Theuma

Use this address: 44, Independence Street, Gudja, GDJ 1032, Malta

Recipient's details:

Use this address: Equippa, Bulebel Industrial Estate, Zejtun, ZTN 3000, Malta

(Total: 30 marks)

SECTION B: READING AND LANGUAGE AWARENESS

Read the following passage and answer the questions given below.

It feels like everything is going haywire

Story by Jonathan Haidt and Tobias Rose-Stockwell

In the early 21st century, a technology appeared that—over the course of a decade—changed several fundamental parameters of social and political life.

Facebook’s early mission was “to make the world more open and connected”—and in the first days of social media, many people assumed that a huge global increase in connectivity would be good for democracy. As social media has aged, however, optimism has faded and the list of known or suspected harms has grown: Online political discussions are experienced as angrier and less civil than those in real life; networks of partisans co-create worldviews that can become more and more extreme; disinformation campaigns flourish; violent ideologies lure recruits.

The problem may not be connectivity itself but rather the way social media turns so much communication into a public performance. A social psychologist coined the term *sociometer* to describe the inner mental gauge that tells us, moment by moment, how we are doing in the eyes of others. Social media, with its displays of likes, friends, followers, and retweets, has pulled our sociometers out of our private thoughts and posted them for all to see.

If you constantly express anger in your private conversations, your friends will likely find you tiresome, but when there is an audience, the payoffs are different—outrage can boost your status.

The philosophers Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke have proposed the useful phrase *moral grandstanding* to describe what happens when people use moral talk to enhance their prestige in a public forum. Like a succession of orators speaking to a sceptical audience, each person strives to outdo previous speakers, leading to some common patterns. Grandstanders scrutinize every word spoken by their opponents for the potential to evoke public outrage. Context collapses. The speaker’s intent is ignored.

Human beings evolved to gossip, preen, manipulate, and ostracize. We are easily lured into this new gladiatorial circus, even when we know that it can make us cruel and shallow. As a Yale psychologist has argued, the normal forces that might stop us from joining an outrage mob—such as time to reflect and cool off—are attenuated when we cannot see the person’s face, and when we are asked, many times a day, to take a side by publicly “liking” the condemnation.

In other words, social media turns many of our most politically engaged citizens into arsonists who compete to create the most inflammatory posts and images, which they can distribute across the country in an instant while their public sociometer displays how far their creations have travelled.

At its inception, social media felt very different than it does today. Friendster, Myspace, and Facebook all appeared between 2002 and 2004, offering tools that helped users connect with friends. The sites encouraged people to post highly curated versions of their lives, but they offered no way to spark contagious outrage. This changed with a series of small steps, designed to improve user experience, that collectively altered the way news and anger spread through American society. In order to fix social media—and reduce its harm to democracy—we must try to understand this evolution.

When Twitter arrived in 2006, its primary innovation was the timeline: a constant stream of 140-character updates that users could view on their phone. The timeline was a new way of consuming information—an unending stream of content that, to many, felt like drinking from a fire hose.

Later that year, Facebook launched its own version, called the News Feed. In 2009, it added the “Like” button, for the first time creating a public metric for the popularity of content. Then it added another transformative innovation: an algorithm that determined which posts a user would see, based on predicted “engagement”—the likelihood of an

50 individual interacting with a given post, figuring in the user’s previous likes. This innovation tamed the fire hose, turning it into a curated stream.

The News Feed’s algorithmic ordering of content flattened the hierarchy of credibility. Any post by any producer could stick to the top of our feeds as long as it generated engagement. “Fake news” would later flourish in this environment.

55 Twitter also made a key change in 2009, adding the “Retweet” button. It essentially enabled the frictionless spread of content. A single click could pass someone else’s tweet on to all of your followers—and let you share in the credit for contagious content. In 2012, Facebook offered its own version of the retweet, the “Share” button, to its fastest-growing audience: smartphone users.

60 The coup de grâce came in 2012 and 2013, when Upworthy and other sites began to capitalize on this new feature set, pioneering the art of testing headlines across dozens of variations to find the version that generated the highest click-through rate. In *Esquire*, Luke O’Neil reflected on the changes wrought on mainstream media and declared 2013 to be “The Year We Broke the Internet”.

65 Social media has changed the lives of millions of Americans with a suddenness and force that few expected. Compared with Americans in the late 20th century, citizens are now more connected to one another, in ways that increase public performance and foster moral grandstanding, on platforms that have been designed to make outrage contagious, all while focusing people’s minds on immediate conflicts and untested ideas. This, we believe, is why
70 many Americans—and citizens of many other countries, too—experience democracy as a place where everything is going haywire.

It does not have to be this way. Social media is not intrinsically bad and has the power to do good—as when it brings to light previously hidden harms and gives voice to previously powerless communities. Every new communication technology brings a range of
75 constructive and destructive effects, and over time, ways are found to improve the balance. Many researchers, legislators, charitable foundations, and tech-industry insiders are now working together in search of such improvements. We suggest three types of reform that might help:

80 **(1) Reduce the frequency and intensity of public performance.** If social media creates incentives for moral grandstanding rather than authentic communication, then we should look for ways to reduce those incentives. One such approach already being evaluated by some platforms is “demetrication,” the process of obscuring like and share counts so that individual pieces of content can be evaluated on their own merit, and so that social-media users are not subject to continual, public popularity contests.

85 **(2) Reduce the reach of unverified accounts.** Bad actors—trolls, foreign agents, and domestic provocateurs—benefit the most from the current system, where anyone can create hundreds of fake accounts and use them to manipulate millions of people. Social media would immediately become far less toxic, and democracies less hackable, if the major platforms required basic identity verification before anyone could open an account. Posting
90 itself could remain anonymous, and registration would need to be done in a way that protected the information of users who live in countries where the government might punish dissent.

95 **(3) Reduce the contagiousness of low-quality information.** Social media has become more toxic as friction has been removed. Adding some friction back in has been shown to improve the quality of content. For example, just after a user submits a comment, AI can identify text that is similar to comments previously flagged as toxic and ask, “Are you sure you want to post this?” This extra step has been shown to help Instagram users rethink hurtful messages.

100 If we want our democracy to succeed—indeed, if we want the *idea* of democracy to regain respect in an age when dissatisfaction with democracies is rising—we will need to understand the many ways in which today’s social-media platforms create conditions that may be hostile to democracy’s success. And then we will have to take decisive action to improve social media.

(Adapted from: *The Atlantic*)

Answer all questions. With the exception of Questions 1(a), 1(b) and 4, use your own words at all times. Write accurately and with clarity.

1. 'Social media has changed the lives of millions of Americans with a suddenness and force that few expected' (lines 65-66). (3)
 - a. Choose the correct type of clause (complement, verb, adverbial, subject or object) for:
 - i. Social media
 - ii. has changed
 - iii. the lives of millions of Americans
 - iv. with a suddenness and force
 - b. Which **ONE** of the following phrases is a noun phrase?
 - i. with a suddenness and force
 - ii. has changed the lives of millions of Americans
 - iii. the lives of millions of Americans
 - iv. few expected
2. With reference to the second paragraph (lines 3-9), explain how Facebook's promise of an open and a better connected world turned sour. (2)
3. The writers claim that connectivity is not the problem, but rather, it is the transition from a private to a public demonstration of 'private thoughts' through the social media platform that has brought about harmful effects. By focussing on the writers' use of words and phrases like 'sociometer', 'moral grandstanding' and 'gladiatorial circus', explain the transition. (3)
4. In the seventh paragraph (lines 31-34), the writers' language paints an image of anger spreading fast. Supporting your answer with evidence from the paragraph, how do the writers convey this image through their choice of language? (2)
5. Observe how the words: like (line 47), retweet (line 55) and share (line 58) are presented graphologically in the article.
 - a. What are the graphological features that distinguish these words?
 - b. Why are they presented in this way? (2)
6. Write a summary in a single paragraph of between 80 and 100 words focussing on the developments and changes of the platforms mentioned in the article in lines 35-64. (10)
7. Which **ONE** of the text structures listed below best represents lines 65-78? (1)
 - a. Comparison
 - b. Cause and Effect
 - c. Problem and Solution
 - d. Sequence
 - e. Description
8. Throughout the article the writers argue how democracy is threatened by social media. In a paragraph, give **THREE** reasons why such a conclusion is drawn. (3)
9. How, in the writers' opinion, can social media restore democracy? (4)

(Total: 30 marks)

SECTION C: LITERARY AWARENESS

Choose only ONE question. The sum total of your answers must be 500 (+/- 10%).

EITHER

1. Central to the short stories 'A Devoted Son' and 'The Voyage' is the notion of cross-generational relationship. Compare and contrast the relationship between Rakesh and his father with that between Fenella and her grandmother. (30)

OR

2. Read the following passage from 'The Teddy-bears' Picnic' by William Trevor and answer the questions below.

Edwin was an agile young man with shortish black hair and a face that had a very slight look of an alligator about it. He was vigorous and athletic, sound on the tennis court, fond of squash and recently golf. His mother had once stated that Edwin could not bear to lose and would go to ruthless lengths to ensure that he never did. She had even remarked to her husband that she hoped this quality would not one day cause trouble, but her husband replied it was probably just what a stockbroker needed. Mrs. Chalm had been thinking more of personal relationships, where losing couldn't be avoided. It was that she'd had on her mind when she'd had doubts about the marriage, for the doubts were not there simply because Deborah was a pretty little thing: it was the conjunction Mrs. Chalm was alarmed about.

'I didn't happen to get any lunch,' Edwin snappishly said now. 'I've had a long, unpleasant day and when I get back here -'

'I'm sorry, dear.'

Deborah immediately rose from among the plum-coloured cushions of the sofa and went to the kitchen, where she took two pork chops from a Marks and Spencer's carrier-bag and placed them under the grill of the electric cooker. She took a packet of frozen broccoli spears from the carrier-bag as well, and two Marks and Spencer's trifles. While typing letters that afternoon she'd planned to have fried noodles with the chops and broccoli spears just for a change. A week ago they'd had fried noodles in the new Mexican place they'd found and Edwin said they were lovely. Deborah had kicked off her shoes as soon as she'd come into the flat and hadn't put them on since. She was wearing a dress with scarlet petunias on it. Dark-haired, with a heart-shaped face and blue eyes that occasionally acquired a bewildered look, she seemed several years younger than twenty-six, more like eighteen.

- a. With a specific focus on the language used in this passage, write about 'the conjunction' Mrs. Chalm is alarmed about. (13)
- b. With reference to the whole short story, show how William Trevor presents Edwin as an obsessively self-centred character. (17)

(Total: 30 marks)