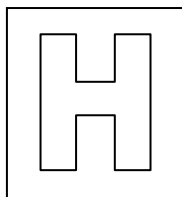


Candidate Name: _____

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2014 Preliminary Examination 2 Pre-University 3

GENERAL PAPER

8807/02

Paper 2
Wednesday

3 Sep 2014

1 hour 30 minutes

INSERT

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your **name**, **class** and **admission number** in the spaces provided at the top of this page.
This insert contains the passages for Paper 2.

This insert consists of 4 printed pages.

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Catherine Hakim writes about the implications of beauty

- 1 France looks back at the 1911 theft of the Mona Lisa from the walls of the Louvre as one of the most startling art heists in history. The emotions it aroused then and even today go beyond that because stealing Leonardo da Vinci's painting was like stealing beauty itself. Even today, beauty has lost none of its power to bewitch, bother and be bold. Therefore, it is not surprising that beauty holds power over our decisions on marriage and work, and pervades every aspect of our lives. 5

- 2 Women's traditional mindset of trading looks for economic support in marriage prevents them from breaking free of the oppressive patriarchal system. This is nothing new and cuts across many cultures. A Chinese study confirmed that the husbands of unappealing women earn about ten percent less than those of their prettier counterparts. Even education has done little to change that mindset. Graduates today still aspire to marry up because they want their husbands to look after them. Where women escape from the sale of their sexuality in the marriage market, to which they had been confined by economic dependence, their new bid for economic independence is met with a nearly identical barter system. The higher women climb up the rungs of professional hierarchy, the harder it is to shake off the shackles of beauty that undermine them each step of the way. 10
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- 3 In fact, both physically attractive women and men earn more than average-looking ones, and very plain people earn even less. In the labour market as a whole (though not, for example, in nuclear physics), looks have a bigger impact on earnings than education, though intelligence — mercifully enough — is valued more highly still. Beauty is naturally rewarded in jobs where physical attractiveness would seem to matter, such as prostitution, entertainment and customer service. However, attractiveness also yields rewards in unexpected fields. Plain-looking soccer players earn less than their handsomer counterparts, despite comparable skill and experience. Therefore, many would argue that the world is a bed of roses for the beautiful. 20
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- 4 The importance of beauty in the labour market is also far more pervasive than one might think. Studies have repeatedly shown that attractive women are more likely to be promoted than their plain Jane colleagues because people tend to associate positive traits such as sensitivity and poise with them. Employers too believe that attractive workers bring in more business, so it often makes sense for firms to hire them. Whether rewarding them accordingly — and paying their less attractive peers more stingily — is good for society is another matter. 35

- 5 Attractive people seemingly have an easier time getting a loan than plain folks, even as they are less likely to pay it back. They receive milder prison sentences and higher compensations in legal proceedings. Pretty girls almost always receive help from strangers in the supermarket even when they did not ask for it, whether it is to retrieve items from the top shelves or carry heavy items to their cars. All these examples quite conclusively show that attractive people have all the luck. Or do they? 40 45
- 6 Not everything comes easier: good-looking women seeking high-flying jobs in particularly male fields may be stymied by the “bimbo effect” until they prove their competence and commitment. Attractive women must work harder and put in longer hours, not to mention downplay their womanliness so that they will be taken seriously. Beautiful and successful women also often have to contend with unfavourable perceptions of how they rise to power and fend off uninvited sexual advances. It is almost as if people find it unconceivable that women can be beautiful and capable at the same time. Moreover, studies have shown that while good-looking males are more likely to be called up for interviews, attractive women are not. This could be due to the fact that most Human Resource Departments tend to be staffed by women. Therefore, the unavoidable – and unpalatable – conclusion is simply that the old-fashioned jealousy led women to discriminate against pretty candidates. Women are harsher on their own kind after all. 50 55 60
- 7 This could perhaps explain women’s preoccupation with beauty at whatever the price. Why would any woman willingly subject herself to an entire day on their feet in high heels or go through repeated procedures to fix a nose that was not even broken in the first place? Valerie Lukyanova who has gone under the knife more than 250 times just so she can look like Barbie, is a case in point. Virtually all females consider their looks as key to their self-image. In fact, a survey of young women found they would prefer to be hit by a truck than be fat. If you feel a sense of indignation at this you are not alone. However, this is considered normal, which is unfortunate, because the more women focus on improving their looks, the less they think about others. 65 70
- 8 Discriminating against people on the grounds of personal appearance reinforces the subordination of groups where unappealing characteristics, including obesity, are concentrated among the poor and some ethnic minorities, limits a person's right to equal opportunity, and restricts self-expression. Yet because ugliness is harder to define than race or sex, some argue that anti-discrimination laws are impossible to enforce. And anyway, most employers wrongly believe that appearance is often relevant to the job at hand. In instances where beauty is essential to a business, 75

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- such concerns about an employee's effectiveness often reflect the biases of employers, not customers. In this light, we cannot discount the influence laws have on attitudes over time by denying those with prejudices the opportunity to indulge them. Indeed, there is light at the end of the tunnel. 80
- 9 Of course, perspectives can differ. Where some people see discrimination, others may see an opportunity for women to enhance their power “in the bedroom and the boardroom”. It is a complex mix of physical and social assets such as beauty, sex appeal, self-presentation, social skills, liveliness and sexual competence. Like other sorts of power, sex appeal is important for success, but unlike others, it is largely independent of birth and class. It is especially valuable for the poor, the young and the otherwise unqualified. Therefore, feminists who want women to throw away their femininity are overlooking a powerful asset. Women should be given the freedom to earn a return on whichever personal asset they choose. 85 90
- 10 The definition of masculinity is also undergoing a makeover, thanks to economic growth, higher disposable incomes, shifting gender roles, and the eagerness of fashion and cosmetics industries to expand their customer bases. No longer content to be the drabber sex, males are preening like peacocks, perming, plucking and powdering themselves to perfection in an effort to make themselves more attractive to their bosses, their peers and, of course, women. They tend to live in or near a metropolis because that is where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. Indeed, men are cleaning up their acts because women can afford to be more selective when finding a mate. 95 100
- 11 Sexualised images are everywhere, and the world that has emerged is one in which no one can afford to pretend beauty does not matter in jobs and society. Having lost their monopoly of well-paid jobs, men are discovering face cream and marching off to gyms in record numbers. Perhaps this explains Mona Lisa's bemused smile. She knew what was coming. 105

Adapted from “The Line of Beauty - The economics of good looks”

