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Preliminary Examination Secondary 4 (O-Level Programme)

Humanities (Social Studies, Geography)	2260/01
Humanities (Social Studies, History)	2261/01
Humanities (Social Studies, Literature)	2262/01
Social Studies	

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet

25 August 2025
1 hr 45 mins

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your name, index number and class on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

You may use a soft pencil for any rough working.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

DO **NOT** WRITE ON THE MARGINS.

Answer all questions.

Write all answers on the Answer Booklet provided.

For examiner's use only:

Section A	/ 35 m
Section B	/ 15 m
Total	/ 50 marks

At the end of the examination, fasten your work securely.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

SECTION A (Source-Based Case Study)

Question 1 is **compulsory** for all candidates.

Living in a Diverse Society

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer all the questions.

You may use any of the sources to help you to answer the questions, in addition to those sources, which you are told to use. In answering the questions, you should use your knowledge of the issue to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

1 Study Source A.

What is the message of the cartoonist? Explain your answer. [5]

2 Study Sources B and C.

How different are these two sources? Explain your answer. [6]

3 Study Source D.

How useful is this source in the discussion of digital divide? Explain your answer. [7]

4 Study Sources E and F.

Having read Source E, are you surprised by Source F? Explain your answer. [7]

5 'Government action is the best way to narrow the digital divide.'

Using the sources in this case study, explain how far you would agree with this statement. [10]

What are the challenges of the digital divide?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

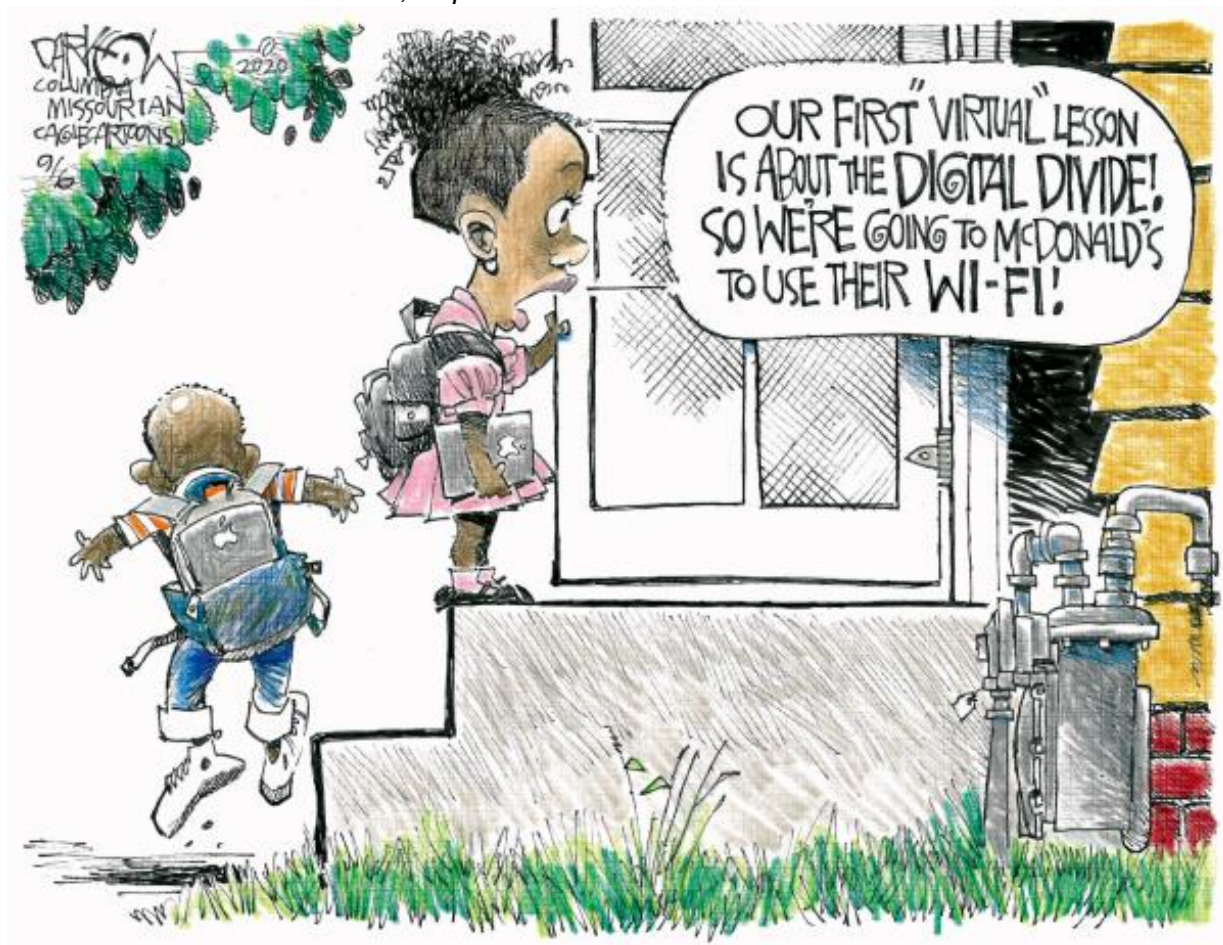
Read this carefully. It may help you to answer some of the questions.

The digital divide refers to the gap between individuals, communities, or regions that have access to modern information and communication technologies—such as the internet, computers, and digital skills—and those that do not. The digital divide remains a significant challenge across both developed and developing nations, with disparities in access, skills, and usage affecting social inclusion and economic opportunities.

Marginalised groups—such as the elderly and low-income households—remain most affected. For the elderly, challenges often include limited familiarity with digital tools, slower adaptation to new technologies, and concerns about online security or scams, which can lead to reluctance in adopting digital solutions. Low-income households, on the other hand, may struggle with the high costs of devices, data plans, and reliable connectivity, forcing them to prioritise immediate needs over digital access. Even when these barriers are overcome, both groups may lack the training or confidence to make full use of digital platforms for education, healthcare, government services, and employment opportunities, thereby perpetuating social and economic inequality.

Read the following sources to find out more on the challenges of the digital divide.

Source A: *A cartoon by an American cartoonist depicting American students from low-income families, September 2020.*



Source B: *Adapted by a speech delivered by then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong at an Asian regional technological conference, June 2023. This conference was attended by influential Asian leaders.*

We sometimes assume that access to the digital economy is becoming more common. In a country like Singapore, where we have widespread internet access and very high smart phone penetration rates, we still have some segments who are not fully connected.

For example, we recently issued digital vouchers for households to use in supermarkets and heartland shops. We did it digitally, but we decided to provide an option for those who preferred hard copy vouchers. Not many of them chose it but there were still a number, particularly amongst the elderly who prefer the hardcopy, and we give them the option to do so. These extra arrangements are critical in ensuring a more inclusive approach for digital transformation.

So as countries embark on their digital journeys, what's equally important is to make sure that everyone is on board so that all citizens can move forward together.

Source C: *Adapted from a report written by Daughters of Tomorrow (DOT), 2022. DOT is a non-profit organisation in Singapore that support low-income women in achieving financial independence and enable social mobility for their families.*

Lack of funds to access computers and the internet, as well as limited digital skills, force many mothers from lower-income communities into unemployment or underemployment. Being unfamiliar with technology translates into an inability to obtain coveted office jobs that could be attended during childcare centres' operating hours. Indeed, in the last five years, while hundreds of women assisted by DOT stated an interest in positions such as admin or customer support, only 7% possessed or were able to obtain enough technical skills to be bridged into such positions.

It must be emphasised for women who earn the least, access to digital devices and the internet is still an issue. The existence of the digital divide became particularly apparent when the COVID-19 global pandemic hit Singapore. Even though the circuit breaker ended in 2020, DOT had to continue loaning these devices in significant numbers in 2021.

Source D: *Adapted from a report published on Channel News Asia (CNA)'s website, October 2024. CNA is a Singaporean news network.*

A 2023 study by the Singapore Management University found that while most elderly individuals have smartphones and are happy to use them for leisure, they're reluctant to rely on them for functional purposes. Many elderly individuals in Singapore find the rapid pace of technology's integration into daily life too intimidating. When Community Development Council (CDC) vouchers were digitalised, many elderly also reported struggles with accessing and using them.

Government initiatives should continue to prioritise investing in digital literacy training for the elderly, but such programmes need to be accessible and practical, focusing on basic digital skills like safely navigating apps and online transactions. Tech companies can also improve seniors' digital experiences by creating clear, straightforward interfaces.

The elderly themselves must be open and willing to engage in efforts to help them adapt to digitalisation. To this end, family support can go a long way where external outreach programmes fall short.

Source E: *Adapted from an article written by an Estonian journalist, April 2017.*

The inspiring story of how Estonia became E-stonia began in 1996, with the help of the Tiger Leap Foundation, a government-backed technology investment body. Not long after its independence in 1991, the country decided that the online economy and massive technological innovation was the way forward for a tiny country with no natural resources to fall back on. Through Tiger Leap, all Estonian schools were online by the late 1990s, and large investments were made in computer networking and infrastructure.

Multiple private and public companies collaborated to bridge the country's "digital divide" by providing free computer training to 102,697 participants, or 10% of the adult population. And Estonian children are taught computer programming starting at the age of seven. There's been no looking back. In July 2016, 91.4% of Estonians used the internet; a big jump from 2000, when only 28.6% of the population was connected.

Source F: *Adapted from an article written by an Executive Vice President of an American Multinational Corporation related to communication technology, January 2024.*

Approximately one-third of the people on Earth still lack access to the internet. Moreover, connectivity is closely linked with a country's development. 93% of people in high-income countries use the Internet, compared with only 27% in low-income countries. Global inclusion on the internet could bring 7% of the world's population above absolute poverty levels and add \$6.7 trillion to global economic output.

While connectivity is fundamental, digital skills training is also key for unlocking the potential connectivity holds. At a recent event at a school in Mexico City, an older gentleman in the audience shared about his struggle to access financial services given the rapid transition to tech-first interfaces.

No single entity can close the digital divide. With the emergence of Artificial Intelligence, technology is again accelerating. This could deepen and accelerate the digital divide if we do not recognize the urgency of this moment.

SECTION B (Structured-Response Question)

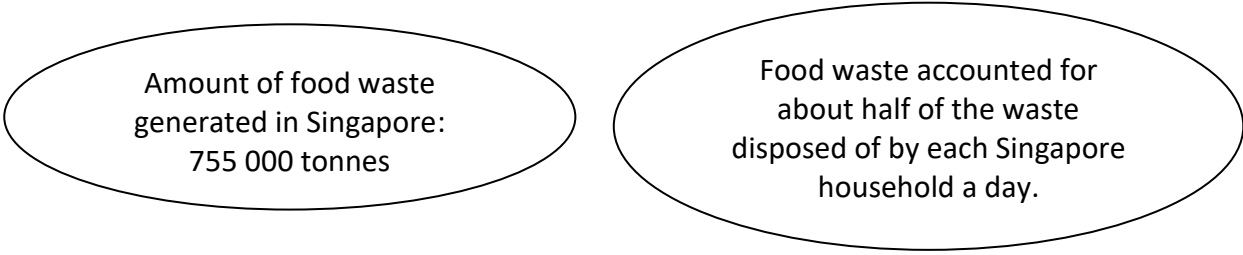
Question 2 is **compulsory** for all candidates

Exploring Citizenship and Governance

Study the extracts carefully, and answer the questions.

Extract 1

The National Environment Agency (NEA) figures for 2023 show the following:



Amount of food waste
generated in Singapore:
755 000 tonnes

Food waste accounted for
about half of the waste
disposed of by each Singapore
household a day.

Extract 2

One role of the government is to maintain law and order. To do so, the government ensures that citizens' lives and properties are protected from harmful acts. The government also ensures justice.

Extract 3

One role of the government is to ensure the economic well-being of citizens. To do so, the government has to devote significant resources to the public, and create conditions for growth.

- 6 Extract 1 shows that Singapore generates a large amount of food waste.

What important messages would you share with Singaporeans to help reduce the amount of food waste generated? Explain your answer using **two** messages. [7]

- 7 Extract 2 and 3 describe the key roles played by the government in working for the good of society.

Do you think that maintaining law and order is a more important role of the government in working for the good of society than ensuring economic well-being of citizens? Explain your answer. [8]

-- End of Paper --

Copyright Acknowledgements:

Source A : <https://politicalcartoons.com/cartoon/243086>

Source B : <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/DPM-Lawrence-Wong-at-the-Asia-Tech-x-Singapore-2023>

Source C : <https://daughtersoftomorrow.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Digital-Inclusion-Report.pdf>

Source D : <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/commentary/singapore-elderly-tech-digital-isolation-social-lonely-4694131>

Source E : <https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/global-lessons-estonias-tech-savvy-government>

Source F : <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/the-action-that-needs-to-be-taken-now-to-close-the-digital-divide/>

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