



Register Number:

Date: 07-01-2021 - AM

**ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE-27**  
**I SEMESTER BSc/BA/BSW/BCom/BBA/BVC/BCA**  
**END SEMESTER EXAMINATION: JANUARY 2021**  
**GE 118 – GENERAL ENGLISH**

**TIME: 2½ hours**

**MAX. MARKS: 70**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. This booklet contains **THREE** themes across **3** pages.
2. Please choose any **ONE** theme and answer questions from the chosen theme only.
3. Do not choose sections at random from different themes.
4. You will lose marks for exceeding the word limit.
5. Please indicate your stream (CS1, 2 or 3) and chosen theme clearly on the front page of your answer booklet.
6. You are allowed to use a dictionary during the examination.

**THEME 1**

**I. Read the following excerpt from Norah Ephron's *On Maintenance***

You know what maintenance is, I'm sure. Maintenance is what they mean when they say, "After a certain point, it's just patch, patch, patch." Maintenance is what you have to do just so you can walk out the door knowing that if you go to the market and bump into a guy who once rejected you, you won't have to hide behind a stack of canned food. I don't mean to be too literal about this. There are a couple of old boyfriends whom I always worry about bumping into, but there's no chance—if I ever did—that I would recognize either of them. On top of which they live in other cities. But the point is that I still think about them every time I'm tempted to leave the house without eyeliner.

I'm going to discuss only the routine, everyday things required just to keep you from looking like someone who no longer cares.

Hair

We begin, I'm sorry to say, with hair. I'm sorry to say it because the amount of maintenance involving hair is genuinely overwhelming. Sometimes I think that not having to worry about your hair anymore is the secret upside of death.

Tell the truth: Aren't you sick of your hair? Aren't you tired of washing and drying it? I know people who wash their hair every day, and I don't get it. Your hair doesn't need to be washed every day, any more than your black pants have to be dry-cleaned every time you wear them. But no one listens to me. It takes some of my friends an hour a day, seven days a week, just to wash and blow-dry their hair. How they manage to have any sort of life at all is a mystery. I mean, we're talking about 365 hours a year! Nine work weeks!

I myself have taken Draconian measures to reduce the amount of time I spend on my hair: I never do my own hair if I can help it, and I do my best to avoid situations that would require me to. I'm in awe of the women I know who have magical haircuts that require next to no maintenance. I'm completely inept at blow-drying my own hair. I have the equipment and the products, I assure you: I own blow-dryers with special attachments, and hot rollers and Velcro rollers, and gel and mousse and spray, but my hair looks absolutely awful if I do it myself.

So, twice a week, I go to a beauty salon and have my hair blown dry. It's cheaper by far than psychoanalysis, and much more uplifting. What's more, it takes much less time than washing and drying your own hair every single day, especially if, like me, you live in a large city where a good and reasonably priced hairdresser is just around the corner. Still, at the end of the year, I've spent at least 80 hours just keeping my hair clean and pressed. That's two work weeks. There's no telling what I could be doing with all that time. I could be on

eBay, for instance, buying something that will turn out to be worth much less than I bid for it. I could be reading good books. Of course, I could be reading good books while having my hair done—but I don't. I always mean to. I always take one with me when I go to the salon. But instead I end up reading the fashion magazines that are lying around, and I mostly concentrate on articles about cosmetic and surgical procedures. Once I picked up a copy of Vogue while having my hair done, and it cost me \$20,000. But you should see my teeth.

### Hair Dye

Many years ago, when Gloria Steinem turned 40, someone complimented her on how remarkably young she looked, and she replied, "This is what 40 looks like." It was a great line, and I wish I'd said it. Here's another thing Gloria Steinem said: "A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle." (Actually, the first person who said that was Irina Dunn, but Gloria quoted the remark far and wide and she got credit for it.) I wish I'd said that line, too, even though it isn't really true. "This is what 40 looks like" led, inevitably, to its most significant corollary, "Forty is the new 30," which led to many other corollaries: Fifty is the new 40, 60 is the new 50, and even, restaurants are the new theater, focaccia is the new quiche, etc.

Anyway, here's the point: There's a reason why 40, 50, and 60 don't look the way they used to, and it's not because of feminism or better living through exercise. It's because of hair dye. In the 1950s, only 7 percent of American women dyed their hair; today there are parts of Manhattan and Los Angeles where there are no gray-haired women at all.

Hair dye has changed everything, but it almost never gets the credit. It's the most powerful weapon older women have against the youth culture, and because it actually succeeds at stopping the clock (at least where your hair color is concerned), it makes women open to far more drastic procedures (like facelifts).

I began having my hair dyed about 15 years ago, and for quite a while I was categorized by my colourist as a single-process customer—whatever was being done to me (which I honestly have no idea how to describe) did not involve peroxide and therefore took "only" 90 minutes every six weeks or so. Whenever I complained about how long it took, I was told that I was lucky I wasn't blonde. Where hair dye is concerned, being blonde is practically a career.

Oh, the poor blondes! They were sitting there at the colourist's when I arrived, and they were still sitting there when I left. For the first time in my life, it seemed, there was an advantage to being a brunette.

But then, about a year ago, my colourist gave me several highlights as a present. Highlights, as you undoubtedly know, are little episodes of blondeness that are scattered about your head. They involve peroxide. They extend the length of time involved in hair dyeing from unbearable to unendurable. As I sat in the chair, waiting for my highlights to sink in, I was bored witless. Hours passed. I couldn't imagine why I had been conned into agreeing to this free trial episode. I vowed that I would never ever even be tempted to have highlights again—much less to pay money for them. (They are, in addition to being time consuming, wildly expensive. Naturally.)

But—you will probably not be surprised to hear this—those highlights were a little like that first brandy Alexander Lee Remick drank in Days of Wine and Roses. I emerged onto Madison Avenue with four tiny blondish streaks in my hair, and was so thrilled and overwhelmed by the change in my appearance, I honestly thought that when I came home, my husband wouldn't recognize me. From that moment on, I was hooked. As a result, my hair dyeing habit now takes at least three hours every six weeks or so, and because my hair colourist is (in her world) only slightly less famous than Hillary Clinton, it costs more per year than my first automobile.

**I.A. Answer the following questions in about 5 sentences each: (5x4=20)**

1. "Once I picked up a copy of Vogue while having my hair done, and it cost me \$20,000. But you should see my teeth." What do you think has happened when the writer says the above?

2. 'Hair dye has changed everything, but it almost never gets the credit.' Do you agree with the author? Use an instance from your experience to explain this.

3. What do you worry about the most when you bump into someone? Why?

4. Do you consider grooming time consuming? Answer based on your experience.

**I.B. Answer the following questions in about 150 words each: (10x4=40)**

5. What is the tone the author has used in the above article? What does this tell us about her?

6. Have you had any embarrassing experiences with respect to your hair or skin? Narrate your experience.

7. What do you think the author implies when she says '40 is the new 30, fifty is the new 40 etc? Do you see a problem with that?

8. Do you agree with the author's idea of maintenance? Use your own experiences to support your answer.

**II. Answer the following in about 150 words: (10x1=10)**

9. What are some of the most amusing 'tips' you have received from friends or relatives regarding grooming? This could also alternatively include things you looked up on the internet as well.

## THEME 2

### I. Read this blog piece by localteaparty.

Humans of 2016, I cannot let go of you just like that this year, yet. I HAVE to talk to you about the single most important life skill that all of you must possess no matter where in the world you go and whatever in life you end up doing - The art of cleaning your toilet. Especially unmarried boys, I know you are very busy wondering ki what the hell more you should do to get that girl in your life because you have tried everything that any human being can do and still the girl is not impressed. What to do yaar? They are like that only. And especially unmarried ladies who know everything that the boy is doing to impress them and yet are feeling shy and not telling him means what to do again? Life is tough only. But it's ok, this kind of small things will eventually sort themselves out. But what you really have to put in effort for is learning how to clean your toilet. Boss I'm telling you; this will save your life many times and you will thank me later.

It will all happen in a flash. One moment you are thinking ki oh boss thank god, today is Sunday, means I don't have to move my bottoms even one millimeter haiya jolly and then next second your spouse will say those dreadful words - 'Today we are cleaning the toilet.' I have to tell you upfront that there are few things in life that have a better warning mechanism than this. Tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, parents arriving when you are about to watch adult-only movies etc., for e.g. When these magic words are uttered in the house means there is no going back. You can try to wriggle out of it and all by saying 'Not today I am busy' but you have to give satisfactory answer to the next question 'Doing what?' Having failed to come up with a suitable 2-mark answer, you have to get going immediately.

Now, if you are having a lucky or a lazy background means all your life such kind of things like cleaning your toilet will be outsourced to a third party or insourced to a parent party because in your family when nobody trusts your non-core competency (eating, drinking, sleeping) itself then how will they trust you with core competency jobs like keeping the house clean etc? So now, you only have to get your hands dirty (no, stop thinking puns.)

So now I am going to guide you step-by-step on how to clean your toilet and thereby earn good name in the household.

First of all, you have to pour water all over the place. It is ok even if you pour water in the toilet. Avoid putting water on the walls because now you are being *adhigaprasangi* and nobody asked you to clean the walls.

The health-faucet (HF) is your friend. Make it your best friend. I know we all have love-hate relationship with health faucet, depending on the amount of psi it delivers on your back entrance at the most unexpected moment, but trust me, if you use it properly, it will make your life a lot easy. Use the HF to generously spray water all over the place. (Caution: This can get too much fun and distract you from your mission.)

So now you have properly prepped the place. Excellent. Take a break. (But make sure nobody sees you taking the break.)

Now proceed to clear the entire area from having any obstructions, like bucket, mug, washing machine hose (those darn things are a menace) etc. Wait, this should have been done first, but it's ok, just throw them out or place them on your head or something and keep the floor clear.

Next is the important part. You have to pick up a bottle of Harpic. Yes, that very same liquid they sell on TV when you are eating dinner and want to watch something decent. Take that bottle. Yes, you will be tempted to spend the next two hours admiring the ingenuity of the design of the bottle, but don't. Time is of the essence. You are competing against a pro here.

Remove the bottle cap and stick the nozzle of the bottle under the secret compartment in the WC. Secret compartment = where the water comes from.

Hold the bottle firmly in the middle section (bottle's middle section), fill up your lungs to capacity, and squeeze the bottle firmly. Now depending on its mood (and the amount of liquid left inside) the bottle will dispense either a very-generous quantity (i.e., you will have an obese blue monster splattered on your WC) or just bubbled blue air. Either way something will come out of the bottle.

Next is the tricky part. You have to keep squeezing bottle and draw a circle around the WC with circumference equal to  $\pi D$  ( $D$  is the inner-dia of the WC). This sounds easier than it actually is. Here's what will happen. The Harpic bottle will suddenly make friends with the WC and refuse to move an inch. They don't meet often in your toilet and so they will want to spend some time together. Precisely at this moment, you will spot your spouse with her palm firmly planted on their forehead in disappointment and convince you to vacate the premises immediately. But don't. You are too far in this now to give up. You HAVE to stick to your guns and see this through. If the bottle gets stuck, just trace its path backwards and then go forward again. That will do the trick.

Question: How will you know if you have done the job right?

Answer: You will now see many thin runny blue monsters racing towards the water in the WC and disappear into the abyss.

Next, take the cleaning brush. Pause. Ask yourself if this is the right brush. If your answer is yes, then you are wrong. Ask the spouse if that is the right brush. They will confirm your wrongness and tell you that this is a different brush to clean the wash basin. Put that brush down and pick up right brush.

Grip the brush tightly and attack. Go all out brushing all over the place. Under the secret compartment, under the toilet seat, inside the water, into the abyss (yuck, I know, but there is no time for sentiment right now), brush until you think you have done justice to all the abuse you have put this WC through.

Pause.

Think about your life choices. Realize that you have been a failure in everything you do. Bring out all the negativity in you and lay it out on top of the blue mess inside the WC. Contemplate for a moment. Look deep into the abyss of the WC that your life has become. Ok enough. Snap out to reality.

Hold your breath and pull down the flush. Watch it all get washed away and smile at your masterpiece. A spic and span WC. White and beautiful, returned to its original glory. Ready to be used and abused all over again.

Until the spouse comes and inspects it. And requests you to please not try this again and asks you to step out and says from next time, she will do it herself instead of letting you do such a shoddy job.

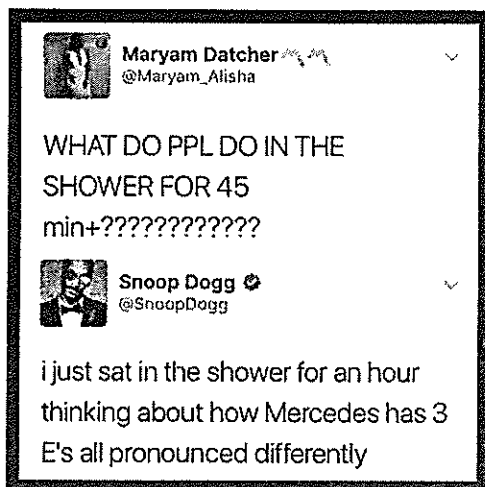
Back away from the area very carefully, slowly and (most important) silently. Go back to contemplating your choices and think about how you can have a better 2017.

May your new year be as sparkling and beautiful as a newly cleaned toilet.

**I.A. Answer the following questions in about 150 words each:(5X10=50)**

1. What is your initial response to the above piece? Describe how you felt as you were reading this.
2. The author uses a very specific kind of language that is very colloquial. Why has the author done that? Pick out words/expressions that make it sound conversational.
3. Pick any 2 instances from the passage that you could relate to and explain why.
4. What impression of the author's spouse do you arrive at from the passage? Make a brief character sketch. Write a small note on their relationship.
5. What kind of excuses do you give to get out of doing household chores? Give an example from your experiences.

**II. Observe the following image and read the following from considerable.com**



I am in the shower. The water sounds like a gentle, rainy static, and feels like a Plinko massage. I am suddenly hit with a flash of brilliance. Maybe it's the answer to a vexing problem at work, the location of my lost USB drive, or perhaps it's just a random, inconsequential (yet totally satisfying) insight.

I started to have what's known as "shower thoughts." You know, those little epiphanies that occur when your brain is occupied with something else, and you suddenly realize for example: "Wow, nothing is on fire, fire is on things."

I don't know about you, but I also win many imaginary arguments in the shower too, "And another thing Karen, I don't think it's my job to restock the printer. You're not the boss of me" I scream in my head.

Yes, lathering up can really get you lathered up. It even occurs to me that someone is probably having an argument with me in their shower right now and, horror of horrors, they're probably winning. Shower thoughts, shower arguments.

**II.A. Answer the following in 300-350 words:**

**(1x20=20)**

6. What do you understand by the term shower thoughts here? Have you had such epiphanies? Would you vouch for bathrooms as a space for contemplation? Why?

### THEME 3

#### I. Read the following excerpt from Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*.

Sometimes in big Hollywood movies they'll have these crazy chase scenes where somebody jumps or gets thrown from a moving car. The person hits the ground and rolls for a bit. Then they come to a stop and pop up and dust themselves off, like it was no big deal. Whenever I see that I think, That's rubbish. Getting thrown out of a moving car hurts way worse than that. I was nine years old when my mother threw me out of a moving car.

It happened on a Sunday. I know it was on a Sunday because we were coming home from church, and every Sunday in my childhood meant church. We never missed church. My mother was—and still is—a deeply religious woman. Very Christian. Like indigenous peoples around the world, black South Africans adopted the religion of our colonizers. By "adopt" I mean it was forced on us. The white man was quite stern with the native.

My childhood involved church, or some form of church, at least four nights a week. Tuesday night was the prayer meeting. Wednesday night was Bible study. Thursday night was Youth church. Friday and Saturday we had off. Then on Sunday we went to church. Three churches, to be precise. The reason we went to three churches was because my mom said each church gave her something different. The first church offered jubilant praise of the Lord. The second church offered deep analysis of the scripture, which my mom loved. The third church offered passion and catharsis; it was a place where you truly felt the presence of the Holy Spirit inside you. I loved church. The thing I didn't love was the lengths we had to go to in order to get to church. It was an epic slog. We lived in Eden Park, a tiny suburb way outside Johannesburg. It took us an hour to get to white church, another forty-five minutes to get to mixed church, and another forty-five minutes to drive out to Soweto for black church. By the time we finally got home at night, I'd collapse into bed.

This particular Sunday, the Sunday I was hurled from a moving car, started out like any other Sunday. My mother woke me up, made me porridge for breakfast. I took my bath while she dressed my baby brother Andrew, who was nine months old. Then we went out to the driveway, but once we were finally all strapped in and ready to go, the car wouldn't start. My mom had this ancient, broken-down, bright-tangerine Volkswagen Beetle that she picked up for next to nothing. The reason she got it for next to nothing was because it was always breaking down. To this day I hate secondhand cars. Almost everything that's ever gone wrong in my life I can trace back to a secondhand car. Secondhand cars made me get detention for being late for school. Secondhand cars left us hitchhiking on the side of the freeway. A secondhand car was also the reason my mom got married. If it hadn't been for the Volkswagen that didn't work, we never would have looked for the mechanic who became the husband who became the stepfather who became the man who tortured us for years. I'll take the new car with the warranty every time.

"Come," she said. "We're going to catch minibuses." — My mother is as stubborn as she is religious. Once her mind's made up, that's it. Indeed, obstacles that would normally lead a person to change their plans, like a car breaking down, only made her more determined to forge ahead. "It's the Devil," she said about the stalled car. "The Devil doesn't want us to go to church. That's why we've got to catch minibuses." Whenever I found myself up against my mother's faith-based obstinacy, I would try, as respectfully as possible, to counter with an opposing point of view. "Or," I said, "the Lord knows that today we shouldn't go to church, which is why he made sure the car wouldn't start, so that we stay at home as a family and take a day of rest, because even the Lord rested." "Ah, that's the Devil talking, Trevor." "No, because Jesus is in control, and if Jesus is in control and we pray to Jesus, he would let the car start, but he hasn't, therefore—" "No, Trevor! Sometimes Jesus puts obstacles in your way to see if you overcome them. Like Job. This could be a test." "But, Mom!" "Trevor! Sun'qhela! Sun'qhela is a phrase with many shades of meaning. It says "don't undermine me," "don't underestimate me," and "just try me." It's a command and a threat, all at once. It's a common

thing for Xhosa parents to say to their kids. Any time I heard it I knew it meant the conversation was over, and if I uttered another word I was in for a hiding—what we call a spanking. Standing outside Rosebank Union, I was literally falling asleep on my feet. Not a minibus in sight. Eventually my mother said, "Let's hitchhike." We walked and walked, and after what felt like an eternity, a car drove up and stopped. The driver offered us a ride, and we climbed in. We hadn't gone ten feet when suddenly a minibus swerved right in front of the car and cut us off. A Zulu driver got out with an iwisa, a large, traditional Zulu weapon—a war club, basically. They're used to smash people's skulls in. Another guy, his crony, got out of the passenger side. They walked up to the driver's side of the car we were in, grabbed the man who'd offered us a ride, pulled him out, and started shoving their clubs in his face. "Why are you stealing our customers? Why are you picking people up?" It looked like they were going to kill this guy. I knew that happened sometimes. My mom spoke up. "Hey, listen, he was just helping me. Leave him. We'll ride with you. That's what we wanted in the first place." So we got out of the first car and climbed into the minibus. We were the only passengers in the minibus. In addition to being violent gangsters, South African minibus drivers are notorious for complaining and haranguing passengers as they drive. This driver was a particularly angry one. As we rode along, he started lecturing my mother about being in a car with a man who was not her husband. My mother didn't suffer lectures from strange men. She told him to mind his own business, and when he heard her speaking in Xhosa, that really set him off. The stereotypes of Zulu and Xhosa women were as ingrained as those of the men. Zulu women were well-behaved and dutiful. Xhosa women were promiscuous and unfaithful. And here was my mother, his tribal enemy, a Xhosa woman alone with two small children—one of them a mixed child, no less. "Oh, you're a Xhosa," he said. "That explains it. Climbing into strange men's cars. Disgusting woman." My mom kept telling him off and he kept calling her names, yelling at her from the front seat, wagging his finger in the rearview mirror and growing more and more menacing until finally he said, "That's the problem with you Xhosa women. You're all unfaithful—and tonight you're going to learn your lesson." He sped off. He was driving fast, and he wasn't stopping, only slowing down to check for traffic at the intersections before speeding through. Death was never far away from anybody back then. At that point we were in danger. We could be killed. These were all viable options. I didn't fully comprehend the danger we were in at the moment. I was so tired that I just wanted to sleep. Plus my mom stayed very calm. She didn't panic, so I didn't know to panic. She just kept trying to reason with him.

"I'm sorry if we've upset you, bhuti. You can just let us out here—"

"No."

"Really, it's fine. We can just walk—"

"No."

He raced along Oxford Road, the lanes empty, no other cars out. I was sitting closest to the minibus's sliding door. My mother sat next to me, holding baby Andrew. She looked out the window at the passing road and then leaned over to me and whispered, "Trevor, when he slows down at the next intersection, I'm going to open the door and we're going to jump." I didn't hear a word of what she was saying, because by that point I'd completely nodded off. When we came to the next traffic light, the driver eased off the gas a bit to look around and check the road. My mother reached over, pulled the sliding door open, grabbed me, and threw me out as far as she could. Then she took Andrew, curled herself in a ball around him, and leaped out behind me.

It felt like a dream until the pain hit. Bam! I smacked hard on the pavement. My mother landed right beside me and we tumbled and tumbled and rolled and rolled. I was wide awake now. I went from half asleep to What the hell?! Eventually I came to a stop and pulled myself up, completely disoriented.

I looked around and saw my mother, already on her feet. She turned and looked at me and screamed. "Run!" So I ran, and she ran, and nobody ran like me and my mom. It's weird to explain, but I just knew what to do. Had I lived a different life, getting thrown out of a speeding minibus might have fazed me. I'd have stood there like an idiot, going, "What's happening,

Mom? Why are my legs so sore?" But there was none of that. Mom said "run," and I ran. Like the gazelle runs from the lion, I ran.

The men stopped the minibus and got out and tried to chase us, but they didn't stand a chance. We smoked them. I think they were in shock. I still remember glancing back and seeing them give up with a look of utter bewilderment on their faces. What just happened? Who'd have thought a woman with two small children could run so fast? Once we stopped running I realized how much pain I was in. I looked down, and the skin on my arms was scraped and torn. I was cut up and bleeding all over. Mom was, too. My baby brother was fine, though, incredibly. My mom had wrapped herself around him, and he'd come through without a scratch.

As we caught our breath and waited for the police to come and drive us home, she said, "Well, at least we're safe, thank God." But I was nine years old and I knew better. I wasn't going to keep quiet this time. "No, Mom! This was not thanks to God! You should have listened to God when he told us to stay at home when the car wouldn't start, because clearly the Devil tricked us into coming out tonight." "No, Trevor! That's not how the Devil works. This is part of God's plan, and if He wanted us here then He had a reason..." And on and on and there we were, back at it, arguing about God's will. Finally I said, "Look, Mom. I know you love Jesus, but maybe next week you could ask him to meet us at our house. Because this really wasn't a fun night."

She broke out in a huge smile and started laughing. I started laughing, too, and we stood there, this little boy and his mom, our arms and legs covered in blood and dirt, laughing together through the pain in the light of a petrol station on the side of the road in the middle of the night.

**I.A. Answer the following in about 150 words each: (5x10=50)**

1. What is your impression of Noah as a young boy from your reading of the above excerpt?
2. Do you own any second hand object? What is the memory associated with that object?
3. The author mentions a stereotype he observed, 'The stereotypes of Zulu and Xhosa women were as ingrained as those of the men. Zulu women were well-behaved and dutiful. Xhosa women were promiscuous and unfaithful.' Have you had to deal with any stereotypes with respect to your community? How did you respond to it?
4. 'Like the gazelle runs from the lion, I ran.' How do you understand this statement? Narrate an incident from your life where you had to run like a gazelle from a lion.
5. '... laughing together through the pain in the light of a petrol station on the side of the road in the middle of the night.' What does this tell you about the relationship that Noah shared with his mother?

**I.B. Answer the following in about 5 sentences each: (4x5=20)**

6. 'I was nine years old when my mother threw me out of a moving car.' Without reading the rest of the excerpt, how would you respond to this sentence?
7. Describe your earliest memory of religion.
8. Trevor Noah's mother uses "Trevor! Sun'qhela!", to indicate that the conversation is over. What word or phrase do your parents or guardians use as an ultimatum? Does it work?
9. Which instance from the above passage did you find most striking? Why?