****

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BENGALURU - 27**

**END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: OCTOBER 2021**

**L1 GE 121 - General English**

**I SEMESTER - BCA, BBA, BCOM BPS/IFA, BSC**

**Time: 3 Hours Max. Marks: 60**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. This booklet contains **THREE** themes and **SEVEN** printed pages.
2. You may answer any **ONE** theme.
3. Please indicate the **theme** clearly on the front page of your answer booklet.
4. Answer all sections under the theme you have chosen. Do not choose sections at random from different themes.
5. You will lose marks for exceeding the word limit.
6. You are allowed to use a dictionary.

**THEME - 1**

**I. Read the following essay titled ‘Girl who saved pickle for me’.**

I relocated to Kerala when I was 11, and my first few years in the place I only visited during vacation was strenuous. Leaving Bangalore was extremely difficult, and it took me sometime to acquaint myself with the culture in Kerala. I pretty much rebelled through all 5 years that I studied in Kerala, and one of the prominent ways in which I showed my rebellion was by showing zero interest in studies.

Since there is so much emphasis on being academically strong and having a good grades in Kerala, I was immediately signed off as someone who would never amount to anything in life. Yes, your grades in 3rd grade is used as a yardstick for determining the course of your life. My class was filled with nerdy students who had the capacity to mug up all the textbooks, word to word, even the punctuation, and very neatly present it during exams.

There used to be a merit system that evaluated students from every batch, and awarded a “Green card” towards the end of the school year for exemplary academic performance. Yes, you guessed right, I never got one. Honestly, I didn’t even aspire for one.

But, I did aspire for one thing- to be accepted. To be accepted by everyone in my class, especially by the girls. I say this because the boys didn’t really have any qualms about acknowledging me. The aspiration arose not just because I wanted attention from the opposite gender, but primarily because every girl in my class befriended a boy only if he studied well, and I didn’t appreciate that bias one bit.

But, there was one girl.

An extremely kind and buoyant girl who never measured me by any metrics related to academics. A human being who didn’t really think about the numbers in my report card for being friends with me. She liked sitting next to me in class even though I didn’t have great numbers in my report card. The first time I shared the bench with her in class is very similar to the bus scene in the movie Forrest Gump. Forrest was denied a seat by everyone, except by a sweet girl named Jenny.

I am not going to romanticize the situation, and paint a picture of how she walked into my life and solved all the difficulties I was facing. But, for me, the gesture of pure acceptance meant the world to me.

Fortunately, the 5 years I spent in that school, she was always in my class (despite teachers doing cruel things like shuffling), and I was grateful for her presence.

Especially during lunch break.

I was content with her accepting me as a friend, but I was overjoyed the day she shared lunch with me for the first time. She didn’t just share the main items in her lunchbox, but also the special homemade pickle. I have always loved pickle, and it genuinely warmed my heart when she shared it with me. It melted the day I found out that she started carrying more pickle just for me. There were days when she would save the pickle for me from others taking it by hiding it under the rice.

The impact this girl created in my life was huge, and I wept inside during lunch breaks on the days she missed school. She offered the kind of companionship that is difficult to explain, or for that matter, even gauge.

I can vividly remember a time in 7th grade when I was paired with her for a play reading during English class, and I grinned ear to ear throughout the class. Not to forget, she also had a beaming smile.

By the end of 7th grade, my family was all set to move back to Bangalore, and the idea of leaving this girl behind hurt a lot. Especially after she wrote her heaven in life was the time she spent with me in my slambook. It was cheesy, but I knew this girl genuinely liked me.

I have tried a lot to track this girl down, but I have failed miserably. If I get to meet her again, I would just want to give her a tight hug for the kindness she showed to a completely directionless and confused boy. In hindsight, I don’t think I had anything to offer in that friendship, but I think, for her, my company was more than enough. Not sure if I would ever get to meet her again, but she would definitely go down as someone who won my respect with kindness.

**I. A. Answer the following questions in about 5 - 8 sentences words. (6 x 5 = 30)**

1. “My class was filled with nerdy students who had the capacity to mug up all the textbooks…” How would you describe your class and classmates?

2. Describe one act of kindness you have experienced from your classmates that changed your relationship with them?

3. What is the most interesting pickle you have had? Narrate the experience of eating it.

4. Guess the gender of the narrator. At what point do you become aware of the gender of the narrator in the passage? Provide evidence for your answer from the passage.

5. What according to you would be the ideal length of a lunch break? Give reasons for your choice.

6. At school what did you do immediately after finishing lunch during the lunch break?

**I. B. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in about 150 words. (3 x 10 = 30)**

7. “The first time I shared the bench with her in class is very similar to the bus scene in the movie Forrest Gump”. If you were to connect an act of kindness you have experienced to that of a scene from a movie, which one would that be?

8. Have you ever had to relocate to another place? How was your new school experience in this new place? If not, have you ever had close friends/ family relocate? What was your response to their relocation?

9. The author mentions “Green card” given to meritorious students and how he never aspired to be one. What ways did your school reward such achievements? If you were to change this system and suggest an alternative one what would that be?

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**THEME - 2**

**I. Read the following excerpt from Ritvik Chaturvedi’s article titled ‘Oh, for the postman dear!’.**

Kevalam Subbu is an old postman in Chennai. Having worked with the postal department for over four decades, he must have outlived many of the trees in the city. He obviously cannot cover as many houses as he used to, but he just doesn't feel it. He explains it himself- “People don't write letters as they used to earlier, they now send mails through the internet.” Although he himself has never sent an e-mail, he knows about it quite well. His bag used to be very heavy, but now he does not even carry one. “A postman these days does not require a bag,” he says “He can fasten whatever five or ten letters he has to the bicycle seat.”

The recent years have seen the gradual disappearance of many professions, which once acquired importance in every society. One such person who was ubiquitous but is fast disappearing is the postman. Even two decades ago, people sitting on the verandah, with their eyes longing for the khaki-clad postman, were a common sight. They waited ardently, with hope filled in their hearts, for the news the postman brought with him of a loved one posted faraway, or perhaps even a photograph they had eagerly waited for. As the postman drew nearer, their anticipations suddenly grew until he handed over the letter. They kept their fingers crossed as the envelope was torn open and a letter popped out, giving them information of the well-being of someone, or, maybe, the news of success or failure. The postman waited with his humble bicycle all along as the letter was being read, and also shared the sorrow or happiness, whatever came along with it. But the younger generation of the 21st century hardly knows the priceless value of a hand-written letter. The words and even the feel of the paper became a part of a person's fond memories and would go on to become an heirloom.

R.K. Narayan's story ‘The Missing Mail' is about a postman, Thanappa, who withheld a letter carrying bad news, just to ensure that a marriage took place successfully. Such was the importance of the postman those days. People knew the postman personally, and when this unique harbinger of news did not arrive for a few days, they got worried.

This gradual disappearance of such professions, not only that of the postman, is not confined to India. It started a long time ago with the Industrial Revolution. In the late 18th century, English cartoonist Rowlandson depicted the trades that had started disappearing rapidly with the growth of industrial capitalism. In one such caricature, titled ‘The Rattrap Seller', he shows a picture of how perplexed the residents of London are when a rat-trap peddler knocks on their doors to sell his wares. The calls of hawkers, exhorting people to have their cooking vessels, zippers and suitcases repaired are no longer heard anymore. It's the software engineer who knocks on our door more often. The hawkers, poor as they are, silently go unnoticed. These are small unknown people who will be forgotten if they disappear. Neither would they find a place in our history textbooks alongside those monarchs. We should remember that people's history is as important as the history of kings and queens.

The only hawker who visits our doorsteps nowadays is the newspaperman. Perhaps, many of us won't even know his face or name, as he visits us in the early hours, throws the newspaper on our verandah and goes away without meeting us. The world will move on, supermarkets, malls and stores will mushroom and we will get all our wares there (perhaps, even newspapers!). So the next time you see a hawker, do remember to wave at him with a smile, or sit with him for a chat, even if you don't buy anything.

**I. A. Answer the following questions in about 5 - 8 sentences words. (3 x 5 = 15)**

1. How often do you spot a postman in your locality? Have you ever come across a postwoman? What do you remember of this incident? What were they delivering?

2. “People don't write letters as they used to earlier, they now send mails through the internet.” How often do you send mails? What according to you has replaced emails?

3. Do you write letters? On what occasions and to whom do you write a letter? What are the key challenges you face while writing a letter?

**I. B. Answer the following questions in about 200 words. (3 x 15 = 45)**

4. The author laments the loss of certain professions in this passage. Name one such profession that you have seen disappear in the recent past. What was distinctive about this profession? How did you identify people in this profession?

5. “It's the software engineer who knocks on our door more often.” What is implied in the line here? Who knocks on your door more often?

6. If you were visiting a friend's house what is the quickest and most effective way to get a response?

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**THEME - 3**

**I. Read the following excerpt from Joan Didion’s essay titled ‘On Keeping a Notebook’.**

“‘That woman Estelle,’” the note reads, “‘is partly the reason why George Sharp and I are separated today.’ Dirty crepe-de-Chine wrapper, hotel bar, Wilmington RR, 9:45 a.m. August Monday morning.”

Since the note is in my notebook, it presumably has some meaning to me. I study it for a long while. At first I have only the most general notion of what I was doing on an August Monday morning in the bar of the hotel across from the Pennsylvania Railroad station in Wilmington, Delaware (waiting for a train? missing one? 1960? 1961? why Wilmington?), but I do remember being there. The woman in the dirty crepe-de-Chine wrapper had come down from her room for a beer, and the bartender had heard before the reason why George Sharp and she were separated today. “Sure,” he said, and went on mopping the floor. “You told me.” At the other end of the bar is a girl. She is talking, pointedly, not to the man beside her but to a cat lying in the triangle of sunlight cast through the open door. She is wearing a plaid silk dress from Peck & Peck, and the hem is coming down.

Here is what it is: The girl has been on the Eastern Shore, and now she is going back to the city, leaving the man beside her, and all she can see ahead are the viscous summer sidewalks and the 3 a.m. long-distance calls that will make her lie awake and then sleep drugged through all the steaming mornings left in August (1960? 1961?). Because she must go directly from the train to lunch in New York, she wishes that she had a safety pin for the hem of the plaid silk dress, and she also wishes that she could forget about the hem and the lunch and stay in the cool bar that smells of disinfectant and malt and make friends with the woman in the crepe-de-Chine wrapper. She is afflicted by a little self pity, and she wants to compare Estelles. That is what that was all about.

Why did I write it down? In order to remember, of course, but exactly what was it I wanted to remember? How much of it actually happened? Did any of it? Why do I keep a notebook at all? It is easy to deceive oneself on all those scores. The impulse to write things down is a peculiarly compulsive one, inexplicable to those who do not share it, useful only accidentally, only secondarily, in the way that any compulsion tries to justify itself. I suppose that it begins or does not begin in the cradle. Although I have felt compelled to write things down since I was five years old, I doubt that my daughter ever will, for she is a singularly blessed and accepting child, delighted with life exactly as life presents itself to her, unafraid to go to sleep and unafraid to wake up. Keepers of private notebooks are a different breed altogether, lonely and resistant rearrangers of things, anxious malcontents, children afflicted apparently at birth with some presentiment of loss.

My first notebook was a Big Five tablet, given to me by my mother with the sensible suggestion that I stop whining and learn to amuse myself by writing down my thoughts. She returned the tablet to me a few years ago; the first entry is an account of a woman who believed herself to be freezing to death in the Arctic night, only to find, when day broke, that she had stumbled onto the Sahara Desert, where she would die of the heat before lunch. I have no idea what turn of a five year-old’s mind could have prompted so insistently “ironic” and exotic a story, but it does reveal a certain predilection for the extreme which has dogged me into adult life; perhaps if I were analytically inclined I would find it a truer story than any I might have told about Donald Johnson’s birthday party or the day my cousin Brenda put Kitty Litter in the aquarium.

So the point of my keeping a notebook has never been, nor is it now, to have an accurate factual record of what I have been doing or thinking. That would be a different impulse entirely, an instinct for reality which I sometimes envy but do not possess. At no point have I ever been able successfully to keep a diary; my approach to daily life ranges from the grossly negligent to the merely absent, and on those few occasions when I have tried dutifully to record a day’s events, boredom has so overcome me that the results are mysterious at best. What is this business about “shopping, typing piece, dinner with E, depressed”? Shopping for what? Typing what piece? Who is E? Was this “E” depressed, or was I depressed? Who cares?

In fact I have abandoned altogether that kind of pointless entry; instead I tell what some would call lies. “That’s simply not true,” the members of my family frequently tell me when they come up against my memory of a shared event. “The party was not for you, the spider was not a black widow, it wasn’t that way at all.” Very likely they are right, for not only have I always had trouble distinguishing between what happened and what merely might have happened, but I remain unconvinced that the distinction, for my purposes, matters. The cracked crab that I recall having for lunch the day my father came home from Detroit in 1945 must certainly be embroidery, worked into the day’s pattern to lend verisimilitude; I was ten years old and would not now remember the cracked crab. The day’s events did not turn on cracked crab. And yet it is precisely that fictitious crab that makes me see the afternoon all over again, a home movie run all too often, the father bearing gifts, the child weeping, an exercise in family love and guilt. Or that is what it was to me. Similarly, perhaps it never did snow that August in Vermont; perhaps there never were flurries in the night wind, and maybe no one else felt the ground hardening and summer already dead even as we pretended to bask in it, but that was how it felt to me, and it might as well have snowed, could have snowed, did snow…

**I. A. Answer ANY THREE of the following questions in about 5 - 8 sentences words. (3 x 5 = 15)**

1. What was your first notebook? Why was it given to you?

2. In order to remember what happened, Didion maintains a notebook. What do you do to remember events in your life?

3. “So the point of my keeping a notebook has never been, nor is it now, to have an accurate factual record of what I have been doing or thinking.” Do you agree with the author? What according to you is the point of a notebook?

4. Do your parents keep notebooks? Have you ever snuck in to read their entries?

**I. B. Answer the following questions in about 200 words. (3 x 15 = 45)**

5. Would you rate the experience as easy or difficult? Why? What would have made the reading experience easier?

6. “At no point have I ever been able successfully to keep a diary…” Consider the comparison Didion makes between a notebook and a diary. How do they differ? Why is she fond of one and not the other?

7. “In fact I have abandoned altogether that kind of pointless entry; instead I tell what some would call lies…” Why do you think Didion wants to lie if the point of keeping a notebook is to remember events?

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***