

**ST. JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE – 27**

**END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: DECEMBER 2022**

**I SEMESTER - GE 121: GENERAL ENGLISH**

**Time- 2 hrs Max Marks- 50**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**1. This paper contains 9 pages.**

**2. This booklet contains THREE themes.**

**3. You may answer any ONE theme.**

**4. Please indicate your stream (and theme) clearly on the front page of your answer booklet.**

**5. Answer all sections under the theme you have chosen. Do not choose sections at random from different themes.**

**6. You will lose marks for exceeding word limits.**

**7. You are allowed to use a dictionary during the examination.**

**THEME ONE**

**I. Read excerpts from this narrative by Donal Kelly, published on her blog in December 2013:**

After washing my hands with warm water I squirt disinfectant gel on them from the plastic dispenser that hangs on the wall, and stand looking in the mirror while I rub them dry. Looking older? Surely, but it’s so hard to notice, day by day changes, cell by dying cell. Show me a photograph of me from ten years ago and I will jolt with recognition and sadness. Older we go into the unknown, over and older again.

There’s a lot of that here. A mighty sum of accumulated years. I wonder what the average age of the patients is, as I push the bathroom door open with my foot, proud of not touching the handles. My elbows open doors; my feet lift unknown toilet lids.

Simon is sitting where he had been, in the thick green chair next to the bed. He looks noticeably older too. His face is paler; I guess this place adds a few years. He is holding the clipboard that had been hanging at the end of the metal-framed bed, and he is looking at the rise and fall of the numbers on the colour-coded chart.

The old lady in the bed to the right looks up and smiles through her spacious glasses. She is still working on the word-search puzzle. she’s up to page seventy-five now, though she told me she skipped sections when she got bored of them. Earlier I watched her draw surprisingly neat faces on the inside of the cover of the puzzle book then scratch them out. Rosie, the nurses call her, and they all seem to know her name: a friendly name for a friendly face. She talked to me about the kids that sometimes trespass onto her back garden in Athenry to get to the river bank and follow it through the town. She’s like a gentle river herself when she starts chatting, flowing from one topic to the next with an easy but constant rhythm: her son, her neighbours, the tea, the weather, and the changes.

Simon looks worried. I want to tell him that his worrying creases are becoming part of his default face, but it’s the wrong time. He doesn’t appreciate those comments. I don’t believe in Botox but sometimes I try to make my face fully expressionless, even if only for a few minutes. Anyway, I know what he will say. “I have a lot on my plate these days.” I know him well enough to predict full sentences, so they often go unsaid, though I still find it hard to sit still through the longer silences, and my mind keeps proposing phrases or sighs or meaningful long breaths to punctuate the gaps. “Ah well,” I will say, then maybe “It could be worse,” and perhaps I will make the effort of envisioning a potbellied child with flies around its head in a sweltering bone-ash dry desert a thousand miles from a welcoming door, even though I know I shouldn’t do that as it makes me feel too remote. In any case I will invariably fade away with “what can you do?” or “hard to know” or “I dunno”. “I don’t know… don’t know… know… no.” My utterances tend to taper into pregnant pauses that stretch out and taper, maybe like the universe expanding and losing its will to move.

**I.A. Answer the following questions in at least five sentences each:**

**(3x5 = 15 Marks)**

1. What do you imagine, is the setting of the story? And what is the profession of the narrator? Point out at least three words or phrases that leads you to your answers.
2. Describe, in your own words, the relationship between Simon and the narrator. Do you think they are close friends and confidants? Why?
3. “My utterances tend to taper into pregnant pauses that stretch out and taper, maybe like the universe expanding and losing its will to move.” How would you respond to this closing sentence?

**I.B. Answer the following question in approximately 200 words:**

**(1x15 = 15 Marks**)

1. How do you think you would react upon seeing your photograph from 10 years ago? If you had to pick a photograph from your childhood, which one would you pick and explain the reason behind your choice.

**II. Observe the given image carefully:**



Caption: “Couldn't find anything wrong with this one. Maybe he's just lazy.”

**II.A. Answer the following questions in around 150 words each:**

**(2x10 = 20 Marks)**

1. Have you ever felt you have a certain disease or illness, simply by reading or hearing about it? How did you handle it?
2. Have you had any experience of caring for someone who was ill? What did you learn from that experience?

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**THEME TWO**

1. **Read the following story titled ‘The Bank Job’ by David Buckley carefully:**

And we all charged in as one.

We had done this a hundred times before, we were well practised at it.

Colin raised his shotgun and made sure all the people in the bank could see it.

“Ladies and gentlemen, this is a bank robbery. Everyone get on the floor and you will not get hurt. All the staff — out front now.”

He spoke calmly and quietly.

Jason, always good with technology, had disarmed all the alarms and cameras. And me, I stood at the door, keeping nosy people out and the customers and staff in.

This was a piece of cake.

“You,” said Colin, and pointed to a middle-aged man by a desk. “Give me the keys to the vault.”

The man faltered and tried to speak but Colin approached him and waved the shotgun in his face.

“This is no time for heroics, my friend,” he said.

The man produced a set of keys and Colin took them from him.

From behind me, Jason let out a laugh. “Sweet,” he said.

We had done all our homework on the bank. We knew exactly how much they had in the vaults. We would be raking it in.

I looked around at the people. They were all lying down on their fronts. Some peeked up at me and Jason.

We must have looked pretty intimidating with our masks on — I was Donald Duck. Jason was Goofy. And Colin was Mickey Mouse because he was in charge.

And then something came over me. I don’t know what it was, but I looked down on all these people lying on the floor of the bank — a man in a suit, a middle-aged woman, her hands trembling, and a security guard. And they were all ordinary people going about their lives. Just normal people trying to get on with life.

And here we were, robbing the bank and making everyone’s life really difficult.

I looked at the gun in my hand. It was loaded. Would I use it if I had to? I don’t know. But it now looked so evil, so bad.

I turned to the side and placed the gun on a counter where people fill in forms.

Then I removed my mask.

The security guard looked up at me in amazement. He couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

Jason stared ahead at all the cashiers’ windows. He turned his head and saw me with my mask off.

“What — what are you doing?” he said. He stepped forward. “Put your mask on. Where’s your gun? What the heck are you doing?”

I shook my head at him.

“This is wrong,” I said. “This is all wrong. We shouldn’t be doing this.”

Jason called out to Colin. He didn’t say his name of course. But he shouted out to him.

Colin rushed out from the door leading to the back of the bank. He saw me and stopped moving.

In a stage whisper, he spoke to me. “What’s wrong with you? Why have you taken your mask off?”

“I’m sorry, guys,” I said. “But this is all wrong. We should not be doing this to these poor people. Look at them. They’re decent, hard-working people.”

Colin came towards me in three large steps. He put his face close to mine. His Mickey Mouse grinning back at me.

“I don’t know what you think you’re playing at,” he said. “But if you don’t put that mask back on, one of these people will recognise you. And they will tell the cops.”

I shook my head.

“I will accept any punishment that is brought to me.”

It just seemed right that I should be punished.

Colin grabbed me by the arm and yanked me towards Jason.

“This is madness,” he said. “This is completely insane.”

He turned back to all the people lying on the ground.

“Everyone stay calm —”

Then by the counter, we saw her.

One of the cashiers, a young woman, she had my gun in her hand. She must have moved so fast.

She was pointing the gun at Colin.

“Don’t move,” she said.

The security guard groaned. “Don’t be stupid,” he said.

The middle-aged woman started to cry.

“Listen, young lady,” said Colin. “You don’t know how to use that gun in your hands. So why don’t you put it down and get back on the ground?”

She shook her head. “I know how to use the gun,” she said. And she moved her hands two centimetres to the right and pulled the trigger.

A loud bang filled the cavernous interior of the bank. People screamed and yelled out.

I watched in absolute amazement at this woman. This was an act of sheer bravery.

She looked at me and smiled.

“I think you’re so brave,” she said, and she smiled again. It was the most genuine smile I had ever seen.

There was something about this young woman, something pure and kind about her. Something that seemed so right.

“My name is Joe,” I said.

“Hi, my name is Karen,” she said. “Nice to meet you.”

Colin called out to the room. “Everyone calm down,” he screamed. “You.” He nodded his head to the woman. “Give me the gun.”

She shook her head. “No. I am not giving you anything.” She looked at me. “Joe. Get over here. Stand behind me.”

At that moment, I would have done anything she asked me to do. She looked so wonderful.

Behind me, Jason was freaking out. “Colin, what’s going on?” he wailed.

“Don’t use my name,” yelled Colin. He waved his shotgun at the people in the bank. But I could see he was losing his cool.

Then in the distance, the sound of police car sirens.

I stood behind Karen. It seemed like the safest place in the world to me.

**I.A. Answer any THREE of the following questions in around 150 words each:**

**(3x10 = 30 Marks)**

1. What is happening at the beginning of the story? Why do you think the story begins with “And”? Elaborate your answer.
2. What details in the narrative suggest that the three characters are quite expert at what they are doing? Identify at least three details.
3. The word ‘Onomatopoeia’ refers to words like ‘wow’, ‘crash’. What similar words can you find from the text above? Which is the most effective and why?
4. Do you think the change of heart comes to Joe, because it became all too easy?

**I.B. Answer the following question in around 250 words:**

**(1 x 20 = 20 Marks)**

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to change your mind or had a change of heart? What caused you to change?

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**THEME THREE**

1. **Read the following excerpt from the piece titled, “The Sad Demise of the Greeting Card” from Arré.com published on December 26, 2017:**

Once upon a time there was Archies Gallery. It was a place not unlike wonderland, where all our heart’s most precious desires – soft toys, cheesy baubles, posters of Leonardo DiCaprio, and love-soaked cards – lived. As young people in the burning throes of our first love, hours were spent agonising over the perfect greeting card – one that had just the right amount of love, mush, humour, and maybe something extra. Frills like a three-fold that told the object of your affection just how much you were “into them”.

Once upon a time the weight of your teenage love had to be carried by the greeting card; it had the power to make or break a relationship. Every Archies and Hallmark gallery would house multiple aisles stocked with cards for every occasion – from birthdays to anniversaries, from Christmas to New Year’s greetings, and no-occasion cards if you were in the mood for love. But the test of true affection was the holy grail of the ’90s: Valentine’s Day cards.

You chose a card depending on the “stage of your relationship” – the straightforward one, the Hallmark-y one with an earnest quote and room for a personal inscription, the cheeky card that you picked if you wanted to play the fool, or the novelty cards that would light up or play music. They came in oversized avatars and were a great distraction from how cheap or uncreative your V-Day gift was. These aisles would be teeming with young lovers, harrowed spouses, confused children, and brown-nosing\* students, all of them looking for that one card greater than Draw 4.

Today, those aisles lie vacant. Actually, I’m not sure where the Archies stores are anymore, or if they even stock greeting cards or just Mont Blanc and Moleskine knockoffs. So for my parents’ anniversary, I decided to find out. A hunt through the bylanes of Colaba and Churchgate yielded results, and I found myself in a deserted little store, with three attendants giving me a pleading look, practically begging me to buy something.

This was nothing like the trips I remember making during my high-school days. I would wake up in the morning, look at the wall calendar, and realise it’s a friend’s birthday, before scheduling a trip to the gallery. Thinking about it makes me realise that these excursions petered off once I started getting my notifications from Facebook instead of my wall calendar. Just like video killed the radio star, the internet killed the greeting card.

The rise of social media, where users are constantly online and connected with one another, did away with the need for greeting cards. Why would someone go out to Archies to buy a card, when you could send them an e-card with glittery fonts and even a snazzy GIF? And why an e-greeting when you can just leave a message on someone’s wall instead? Slowly, the card was replaced by the status update, the tag, and the tweet.

\*brown-nosing (v.): (informal) to try too hard to please someone, especially someone in a position of authority.

**I.A. Answer the following questions in around 150 words each:**

**(2x10 = 20 Marks)**

1. Have you ever come across a greeting card? In what context and what emotional value would it hold for you?
2. The gifts we exchange are sometimes generous and genuine; sometimes, out of social rules and obligations. What do you keep in mind, when picking a gift for someone?

**I.B. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in around 200 words each:**

**(2x15 = 30 Marks)**

1. Why do you think people write “no presents please”, on the invitation cards to weddings, birthdays etc.? What would you do if you received a gift that you disliked?
2. “...I found myself in a deserted little store, with three attendants giving me a pleading look, practically begging me to buy something.” Have you ever found yourself buying something that you didn’t need it, simply because the sellers seemed needy?
3. Pick out a gift for your newest friend in class, and share the reasons for your choice. You want to accompany the said gift with a greeting card - draft the message to be written on this card.

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