National Qualifications 2024

X824/75/11

English
Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

TUESDAY, 7 MAY

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Total marks — 30

Attempt ALL questions.

Write your answers clearly in the answer booklet provided. In the answer booklet you must clearly identify the question number you are attempting.

Use **blue** or **black** ink.

Before leaving the examination room you must give your answer booklet to the Invigilator; if you do not, you may lose all the marks for this paper.

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X8247511

Random acts of kindness

In this article, the writer meets people who perform acts of kindness.

A few weeks ago Marilyn Devonish stopped a stranger to compliment her outfit. It was a stylish, co-ordinated purple jacket and shoes, but that wasn't the point. Dashing home from a shopping trip, she had noticed the woman's harassed look and slow, defeated steps. 'The weight of the world was on her shoulders, but she was dressed in such a lovely way and I just had to tell her that,' Devonish explains. The subject of her attention was taken aback. Just minutes earlier she had caught her reflection in a shop window and told herself how bad she looked.

Devonish, 54, is a stealth 'angel of good deeds' who suffered depression into her own early adulthood and sees it as her calling to bring some sunshine into fellow Britons' days with a nice word about their shoes, hairstyle, jewellery or smile. Compliments passed on, she melts back into the city streets, unnamed and untraceable.

Devonish, who also anonymously returns neighbours' wandering wheelie bins and holds doors open for strangers, says: 'The point is not to be known for your good deeds — though, of course, I'm talking about them now — but to do a little something for someone else to make the world a slightly nicer place in that moment.' It's a life philosophy which centres on radiating human kindness and gratitude.

Voluntary giving is one of the fastest and most reliable ways to improve a giver's own wellbeing. Many scientific papers have shown that it stimulates activity in brain regions associated with pleasure and reward, reduces stress levels and leads, when giving becomes a habit, to long-term improvements in the life satisfaction of those who do good deeds.

In the past few years, though, a new breed of 'good Samaritan' has swaggered on to social media, toting wads of cash. They include one TikTok user who drops £20 notes at strangers' feet and gifts his targets extra cash if they attempt to return them, and another who films himself hovering behind unsuspecting shoppers at the till as he pays their checkout bills. It's a broadcasted form of giving, which often features the homeless as the unwitting recipients of money or gifts, that has attracted criticism for rebranding acts of kindness as a form of humanitarian drama.

In fact, a recent study found that we might want to refrain from becoming charitable boasters. The study looked into whether publicised or unpublicised donations to good causes lead to greater happiness and discovered that unpublicised gifts brought the giver a 16% greater sense of happiness. The researchers suggested that this boost comes from the fact that showy gifting makes a donor doubt their own motivations. Are we giving to others, for example, to enhance our reputation or to genuinely do good?

Vic Wood, who is 43 and lives in Sussex, finds TikTok's loadsamoney random kindness actors 'a bit crass, to say the least.' She subscribes to the 'pay it forward' philosophy — a movement that has its roots in early 20th century America. Payitforwardism imagines that the happy recipient of a good deed will be prompted to go on and perform a good deed for someone else and so on in a global chain of kindness. The term was coined by southern anti-racist reformer Lily Hardy Hammond in her 1916 book *In the Garden of Delight*, as a comment on the devotion parent figures exhibit towards their children: 'I never repaid Great Aunt Letitia's love to her, any more than she repaid her mother's,' she wrote. 'You don't pay love back, you pay it forward.'

For Wood, who routinely leaves money for fares taped to bus stops and bunches of flowers accompanied by heartwarming notes on park benches around her village, secrecy is both the key to being a genuine good Samaritan, and much of its art. 'I would love to pay for someone's shopping by tapping my card on the payment machine, but it's so hard not to be caught in the act,' she says. For Wood's 40th birthday she promised to perform 40 anonymous good deeds in 40 days, encouraging her friends to do the same rather than buying her gifts. 'Even small gestures, I really recommend them,' she adds. 'I don't know how to explain it other than it makes my heart feel really full.'

The power of anonymous good deeds has long been understood by many cultures. Islam, for example, says that Allah will 'grant shade' to 'the man who gives in charity and conceals it to such an extent that the left hand does not know what the right has given'. Unreciprocated giving is also an important part of a Hindu's religious duty. And the gospel according to Matthew tells Christians: 'Do not your good works in public,' avoiding, it says 'the trumpet fanfare'. Former Guides and Scouts might recall being expected to do a humble daily 'good turn'.

Therapist Janey Holliday advises her clients to boost their own sense of self-worth by performing small good deeds as a daily practice. 'Time and again my clients say they feel like their lives aren't worthwhile,' she explains. The antidote to this, in Holliday's view, is to become a good-deed-doer — smiling at a glum-looking shop worker, for example, or complimenting someone's shoes. 'It creates so much more good in the world, and a much greater sense of joy, than the things many people think they should pursue — being super-successful, say, or having pots of money.'

But for all the good intentions, anonymous good-deed-doing can backfire. Victoria Tretis, a financial consultant based in Nottingham, began leaving £1 coins on the railings of her local park and later graduated to sending anonymous gifts to family and friends. But on one occasion, Tretis sent a box of chocolate brownies to her sister who, concerned they were poisoned as there was no stated sender, refused to eat them. 'I had to confess all and talk her down as she was quite paranoid,' Tretis says, 'although she did eventually scoff them.'

Early in her complimenting career, Marilyn Devonish noticed a very smartly dressed man near a tube station in London. 'I thought, "Oh my God he looks amazing with this three-piece suit, bright handkerchief and a dazzling tie, I just have to tell him."' The beneficiary of Devonish's effusive praise smiled graciously. 'It turns out he was the fashion designer Ozwald Boateng,' Devonish said. 'He was well aware he looked fabulous!'

Adapted from an article by Sally Howard in The Observer

MARKS

Total marks — 30

Attempt ALL questions

1. Look at lines 1–6.

Using your own words as far as possible, explain how Marilyn Devonish's actions were unexpected **and/or** kind.

You should make **three** key points in your answer. **3**

2. Look at lines 7–15.

By referring to **two** examples of language, explain how the writer makes clear Devonish's approach to doing 'good deeds'. **4**

3. By referring to any part of the sentence in line 16 ('Voluntary giving . . . own wellbeing'), explain how it helps to provide a link between the writer's ideas at this point in the passage. **2**

4. Look at lines 20–31.

By referring to **two** examples of word choice, explain how the writer's criticism of public acts of kindness is made clear. **4**

5. Look at lines 32–47.

Using your own words as far as possible, summarise what we learn about Vic Wood's beliefs **and/or** actions.

You should make **six** key points in your answer. **6**

6. Look at lines 48–53.

By referring to **two** examples of language, explain how the writer highlights the idea that good deeds should **not** be attention seeking. **4**

7. Look at lines 54–59.

Using your own words as far as possible, identify **three** positive effects of kindness. **3**

8. Look at lines 60–65.

Using your own words as far as possible, explain how the writer uses the example of Victoria Tretis to show that generosity can go wrong.

You should make **two** key points in your answer. **2**

9. Look at lines 66–70.

Select any expression from these lines and explain how it contributes to the passage's effective conclusion. **2**

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

OPEN OUT FOR QUESTIONS

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