

PART I

A) Comprehension questions on the text. Read the text and choose the correct answer. You must choose and answer only 2 out of the 3 questions below (0,5 points each).

To most of the world they are just amusing pictures of an adorable cartoon bunny sitting beside, or sometimes inexplicably amidst, a bowl of rice. But in China, where these images have been circulating on social media, they carry a deeper, and more serious meaning. "Rice bunny" (米兔), as this collection of images and emojis are known, emerged in 2018 as part of the global #MeToo movement among women to expose sexual harassment. In China, where state censorship saw hashtags related to the campaign being blocked, internet users had to find an alternative to coordinate the movement in their country. As an image it looks innocuous enough, but when the words for the two seemingly unrelated subjects are said aloud, the true meaning becomes clear—they are pronounced "mi tu". Through the use of this translinguistic homophone, women in China were able for a time to share their stories and spread the word about the #MeToo movement within a country that can be highly suspicious of organised social movements.

On the surface, internet memes are a ubiquitous source of light entertainment - a way for people to express themselves through cleverly remixed templates of text, images and videos. They are arguably the wallpaper of our social media feeds and often provide us with a few minutes of idle, amusing fodder for procrastination during our day. But memes also have a serious side, according to researchers looking at modern forms of communication. They are a language in themselves, with a capacity to transcend cultures and construct collective identities between people. These sharable visual jokes can also be powerful tools for self-expression, connection, social influence and even political subversion. Internet memes "are one of the clearest manifestations of the fact there is such a thing as digital culture", says Paolo Gerbaudo, a reader in digital politics and director of the Centre for Digital Culture at Kings College London. Gerbaudo describes memes as a "sort of a ready-made language with many kinds of stereotypes, symbols, situations. A palette that people can use, much like emojis, in a way, to convey a certain content".

According to social media site Instagram, at least one million posts mentioning "meme" were shared every day in 2020. But what is it that makes the internet meme so popular and why is it such an effective way of conveying ideas? Of course, memes have been around long before the rise and reproduction of familiar internet memes like the Distracted Boyfriend or the many wise faces of "Doge". Richard Dawkins, the evolutionary biologist, coined the term "meme" in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, likening discrete bits of human culture that propagate between people to genes. Dawkins shortened the ancient Greek word "mimeme"- with an apology to his classicist colleagues to meme, to rhyme with "cream". He suggested that memes were melodies, ideas, catchphrases or bits of information that leap from brain to brain through imitation, expediting their transmission. He coined the term to highlight just how human culture can replicate itself. And in that sense memes have been around probably since humans have had cultures they have shared. But we can also see the kernels of what makes modern internet memes so successful in ancient forms of popular culture. "We see the replication of mundane reality in many forms of art," says Idil Galip, a doctoral researcher at the University of Edinburgh, and founder of the Meme Studies Research Network. "Even going back to, let's say, Hellenic times, you've got something like tragic theatre, that takes things that happen to you that are upsetting and real-life and makes them into comedic things,

which is what memes do."

With the arrival of the internet, however, memes have become a more tangible phenomenon that can be observed as they grow, spread and mutate. Researchers at Facebook showed in a study in 2014 just how widely memes posted on the social media site can spread and evolve. In one example, they found 121,605 different variants of one particular meme posted across 1.14 million status updates. Shifman's definition of memes, now widely used in the field, describes them as "a group of texts with shared characteristics, with a shared core of content, form, and stance". Broadly, "content" refers to ideas and ideologies, while "form" to our sensory experiences such as audio or visual, and "stance" to the tone or style, structures for participation, and communicative functions of the meme.

Fundamentally, no meme is an island. "A text that just spreads well, and a lot of people see it, is not a meme," says Shifman. "It's viral. But if a lot of people create their own versions then it becomes a group of texts and then it's a meme." But for an idea to become a meme, it needs to be shared. Most successful internet memes- in that they spread wide and far-share a few key attributes. Many of us gained a new appreciation for memes during the pandemic as a welcome source of light relief. Research conducted during the 2020 lockdown in Spain by Lucía- Pilar Cancelas-Ouviña, a professor of didactics of language and literature at the University of Cádiz, found humour was a core feature of memes shared using the messaging application WhatsApp. Cancelas- Ouviaña suggests it helped take the sting out of the fear and uncertainty that was widespread at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, a finding supported by other studies elsewhere.

1. The text is about...

- a) rabbits and the #MeToo movement.
- b) the power of internet memes.**
- c) evolutionary biology in China.

2. According to the text, memes...

- a) are static entities.
- b) made the pandemic more bearable.**
- c) come from Hellenic times.

3. According to the text,

- a) memes' content is exclusively serious.
- b) Internet memes can contribute to the formation of a collective identity among marginalized groups.**
- c) the word 'meme' was coined in Greek times.

B) Use of English. Choose the correct answer. You must choose and answer only 6 out of the 8 questions below (0,5 points each).

4. Javier is a _____ boy, always with a smile on his face.

a) sympathetic b) shy **c) cheerful**

5. He doesn't enjoy his German classes. He is not keen_____ languages.

a) on b) in c) for

6. Don't worry about the exam. Just _____ your best.

a) get b) make **c) do**

7. I was really pleased when I heard she_____the exam.

a) pass **b) had passed** c) passes

8. We've bought a new radio for Mike but it is not very good. We'll have to look for_____one.

a) another b) the second c) any

9. Charles had a car accident._____he_____too fast?

a) Is/driving b) Has/driven **c) Had/been driving**

10. My older sister, who has four children_____, is a musician.

a) of own **b) of her own** c) of her

11. Which word means the same as *however*?

a) also b) moreover **c) nevertheless**

PART II

Write an essay of 150-180 words on ONE of the following subjects (6 points):

A- Technology is making communication easier in today's world, but at the expense of personal contact. To what extent do you agree? Provide ideas from your own experience of life.

Technology has undoubtedly simplified communication in today's world, but it has come at the expense of personal contact. While virtual interactions through text messages, emails, and social media platforms are convenient and efficient, they lack the depth and warmth of face-to-face communication.

As someone who has observed this shift, I have noticed a decline in in-person gatherings as virtual meetings and online events become more prevalent. These digital interactions often lack the nuances and

personal touch that can only be experienced through physical presence.

Moreover, excessive reliance on technology for communication can lead to feelings of isolation and a weakened sense of community. Despite their ability to connect us with a vast network of individuals, social media platforms often leave us feeling disconnected and alone.

In conclusion, while technology has improved communication in terms of speed and accessibility, it has compromised personal contact. It is crucial to recognize the value of face-to-face interactions and strike a balance between virtual and physical connections.

B- Have you ever fallen in love? Do you believe in romantic love? Provide as many details as possible.

Love, to me, is a profound force that thrives on equality and respect. It holds immense significance in my life as it transcends notions of possession and control, instead emphasizing the nurturing of growth and the cultivation of equal partnerships.

My personal experience has revealed the transformative power of falling in love. It challenged my preconceived notions and deepened my understanding of relationships. Through emotional vulnerability and open communication, my partner and I supported each other's personal development and growth.

Adopting an equality-focused attitude in love has enriched my relationships. It necessitates unlearning harmful behaviors, being receptive to feedback, and continually striving for a nurturing and respectful bond.

Love rooted in equality acts as a catalyst for both personal and relational growth. It empowers individuals to embrace their authentic selves and fosters open communication within a partnership where both partners thrive together.

In conclusion, love flourishes when it is built on a foundation of equality and respect. By prioritizing these values, love becomes a transformative force that fosters personal and relational growth, ultimately leading to fulfilling and balanced partnerships.