

# Amidst the Petals

## Hong Kong in Blossom

[1] The name 'Concrete Jungle' may leave one feeling that the city is nothing but a plot of barren land where only skyscrapers stand. In fact, when the right time comes, the concrete-coloured cityscape may, like many other places, be given a new breath of life as the city's iconic flowers burst into bloom. Scroll down to discover more about the city's flora.

(Click to open)

**Golden Trumpet** [+]

**Magnolia** [+]

**Red Silk Cotton tree** [-]

Let's Think! 

1. What kinds of flowering trees do you like most? Why?
2. What can be done by the government to protect the trees?

[2] Located near almost every school across the city, the red silk cotton tree is best known for its considerable height, spiny trunk, large waxy scarlet flowers and fruits that contain cottony fibres. Due to the tree's imposing stature and spreading branches, it earned its nickname 'hero tree'.



[3] Every plant has its flowering schedule and the hero tree is no exception. In spring, usually in March, the tree starts to blossom before new leaves sprout. This means that the tree would be leafless and dominated by the red of those five-petaled blooms. Being a rich source of nectar to insects and birds, its flowers are in fact also a main ingredient in one of the most popular Chinese herbal teas, namely the 'five flower tea'.

[4] Two or three months after the flowering period, its fruits would ripen and crack open, releasing the cottony fibres and seeds inside into the air. Waterproof and buoyant, these silky, light fibres have long been used to fill mattresses, cushions, quilts, life jackets, etc.

## More to Take Away

The cherry blossom (Sakura) is the national flower of Japan, and is symbolic of life, death and renewal in Japanese culture.

## STEAM CLASSROOM

Pollination is the process in which pollen is carried from one flower to another. This is done by wind or by insects like butterflies, which look for nectar in flowers. Since no seed can be produced without pollen, pollination is an important part of plant reproduction.

### Hong Kong Orchid Tree (*Bauhinia × blakeana*) [-]

[5] First discovered as a rare species in Hong Kong in the 1880s, the Hong Kong orchid tree is a native of the territory that can only be found in the city's urban districts. This unique species, as suggested by its scientific name *bauhinia × blakeana*, is a hybrid of two species—the pink-flowered *B. purpurea* and the purple-flowered *B. variegata*, which is why it has vibrantly reddish-purple flowers. Since 1997, the flower of the tree has been the floral emblem of Hong Kong, representing the city's cultural diversity.



[6] The Hong Kong orchid tree does not produce fruits or seeds. However, it continuously flowers from November to May, occasionally even all year round, meaning that it even blooms in winter. With its long-blooming, modestly radiant five-petaled flowers which release a faint sweet scent that wafts through the air, the tree is widely cultivated in the city for ornamental purposes.

[7] Aside from its exotic flowers and distinctive, butterfly-shaped leaves, which are also known as 'clever leaves', the tree's high resistance to pests and heat is yet another reason why it has been so extensively planted along roads and sidewalks. This ubiquity, coincidentally, speaks volumes for its status in the city.

~440 words

### Looking into Grammar

A mass noun is a noun that names something that cannot be counted, such as a quality and status. Most abstract nouns are mass nouns.


✓ **Happiness** (✗ A happiness) is not something that can be bought with money.

? Circle TWO mass nouns in paragraph 7.

## Part A Multiple Choice Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the web page. Choose the best answer by blackening the appropriate circle.

1. The writer thinks the nickname 'Concrete Jungle' \_\_\_\_\_.
- A. may convey a mistaken impression of Hong Kong
  - B. is not appropriate as a nickname
  - C. causes tourists to think badly of Hong Kong
  - D. is a perfect nickname for Hong Kong

-  2. Which of the following statements are TRUE about the red silk cotton tree?

- I. Its flowers contain cottony fibres.
- II. It is a common tree in Hong Kong.
- III. Its flowers have practical uses.
- IV. Its fruits ripen in early spring.

- A. I and II
- B. I, II and IV
- C. II and III
- D. I and IV

**2** Note that the wording used in the options may be different from that used in the web page.

3. The seeds of the red silk cotton tree \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. are loved by insects and birds
- B. contain a cotton-like substance
- C. are usually used in Chinese cooking
- D. have water inside

4. The Hong Kong orchid tree \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. can be found outside Hong Kong
- B. has been planted on a large scale mainly to absorb heat from the air
- C. is close to extinction
- D. sometimes blooms in summer as well



5. Read paragraph 5. The word 'it' refers to \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. the territory
- B. *B. purpurea*
- C. *B. variegata*
- D. the hybrid

6. In paragraph 7, 'speaks volumes for' can best be replaced by '\_\_\_\_\_'.

- A. causes controversy over
- B. is significant because of
- C. is well-known due to
- D. tells a lot about

**6** Think about the relationship between the tree's ubiquity and its status.

### Self-evaluation Checklist (✓/✗)

- |                                                                                          |                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I understood most of the information provided in the passage.                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I guessed the meaning of unknown words or phrases correctly.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I managed to answer questions by drawing inferences.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I identified and understood the writer's / characters' feelings.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I could identify and summarise the main idea of the passage.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The two reading strategies taught in this module enabled me to read more effectively. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Part B Pre-HKDSE Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the web page.  
For questions 2 and 4, answer in complete sentences.



1. Look at the following pronouns and answer what they refer to in the web page.

1 Pay attention to possessive forms.

Pronoun	Paragraph	Reference
its	para. 4	(i)
which	para. 6	(ii)

2. How may a red silk cotton tree look in April?

2 You will need to do some simple calculation.

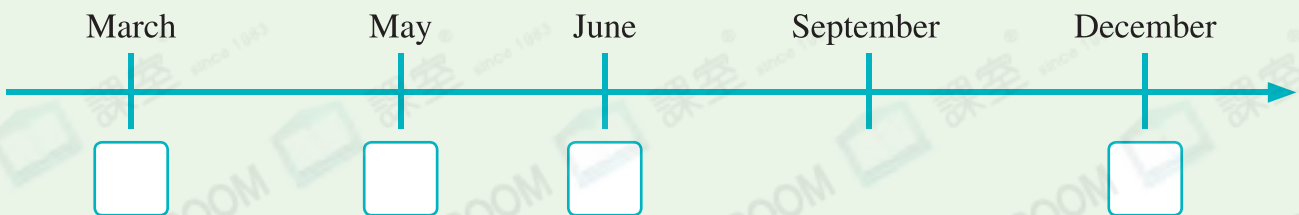
3. Look for words in the web page to match the definitions below.

(i)	_____ (para. 1-2)	( <i>adj.</i> )	unable to produce plants
(ii)	_____ (para. 2-3)	( <i>adv.</i> )	that is to say
(iii)	_____ (para. 4-5)	( <i>n.</i> )	a species that grows naturally in a particular place
(iv)	_____ (para. 5-6)	( <i>v.</i> )	moves gently through the air
(v)	_____ (para. 6-7)	( <i>adj.</i> )	beautiful rather than useful

4. Why was the flower of the Hong Kong orchid tree chosen to represent Hong Kong's cultural diversity? Explain your answer.



5. What happens in the following months? Write the letters (A-D) in the boxes.



A. Hero trees start to flower.

B. Hero trees start to fruit.

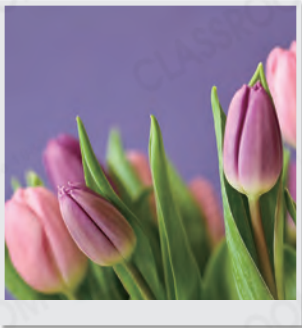
C. The Hong Kong orchid trees are in full bloom.

D. The fibres and seeds in hero trees' fruit waft through the air.

## Part C Vocabulary Bank

Label the photos below with the names of flowers from the word box.

orchid      lotus      peony      chrysanthemum  
sunflower      tulip      daisy      lavender



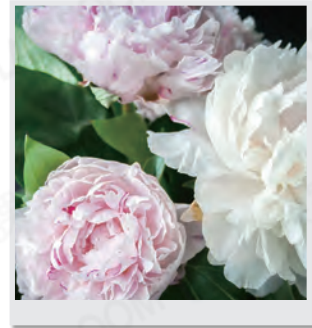
1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



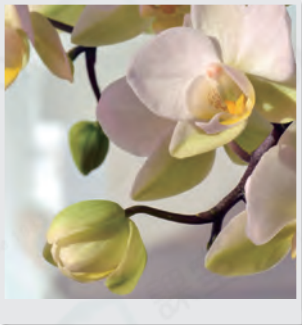
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



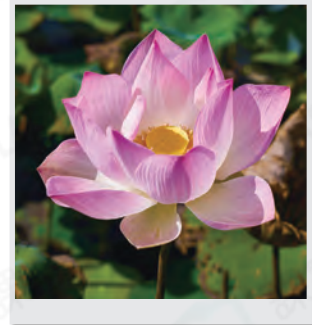
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Let's Discuss!

1. What is your favourite flower? Why?
2. Besides the two species mentioned in the web page, which plant do you think best represents Hong Kong?

### Word Craft

Some idioms include the names of **flowers**. Can you guess what the following mean?

- e.g.** bed of **roses**  
shrinking **violet**  
to gild the **lily**  
come up **roses**  
to push up **daisies**

## Part D Word Game

Solve the riddles below with the appropriate nouns introduced on the previous page.

# All about Flowers

Its petals are usually white, surrounding a yellow centre. Its name stems from Old English *dægesēage*, meaning 'day's eye'. It's so named because this flower opens in the morning and closes at night!

What is it? (1) \_\_\_\_\_

It is one of the most popular garden flowers in spring. Bell-shaped and brightly coloured, the flower grows on a long stem. It symbolises true love and royalty!

What is it? (2) \_\_\_\_\_

It is renowned for its soothing fragrance, which is said to be effective in relieving anxiety and improving sleep quality. Many products, like soap and hand cream, are made from this flower!

What is it? (3) \_\_\_\_\_

It is commonly seen in Chinese paintings. It is a sacred flower in Hinduism and Buddhism that symbolises purity. Almost all of its parts are edible.

What is it? (4) \_\_\_\_\_

Many think that it looks like a pompon. It is in fact the birthday flower for those born in November. In most cultures, the flower is associated with joy and health. You may see it in Chinese tea!

What is it? (5) \_\_\_\_\_

This flower is known for its great variety and its unique elegance. It may be tiny or huge, but it is bilaterally symmetric in most cases! It has long been a symbol of love, opulence and charm.

What is it? (6) \_\_\_\_\_

This flower is most famous for two things: its massiveness and its undivided loyalty to the sun. Magnificently yellow, it is widely recognised as a 'happy' flower for its positive implications!

What is it? (7) \_\_\_\_\_

Being a garden flower, it is also a flower usually seen at wedding parties, as it is symbolic of a happy marriage, romance and compassion. Little do people know that it can live up to 100 years!

What is it? (8) \_\_\_\_\_