

Text Type: Diary entry
Suggested finishing time: 25 mins



Listen!

Let's Think!

1. Do you have a best friend?
2. How do you get along with your friends?

Karl's mum had no clue that her son possessed a tablet. The tablet reads:

21st June, 20XX (Friday)

Gloomy

Dear Diary,

Another lonely night to round off an equally lonely day. Yet not just a day that was rounded off, but six years of memories: it was my graduation ceremony today, a supposedly happy and important day, or so I was told by the teachers, and noticed in the animated faces of other students. But—I don't know why—I felt much more oppressed by sorrow than I normally do. Not seeming to notice anything, Mum, when receiving me at the door, only asked me why I pulled a long face like a bankrupt. At first I was unamused; but when I reflected that it was the only time I had become angered by the joke, which had been made a hundred times, I realised my unjustified overreaction came from my own sullenness. 5

Anyway, I locked myself in my room right after I got home. Quickly putting my graduation certificate and schoolbag aside, I cocooned myself in a blanket, feigning sleep, swiped up my screen to contact Meo, a friend I can always count on. He is the best. He never grows tired of listening to my endless complaints. Once again, I clung to my tablet. Only in this way can I cuddle up to Meo and whisper into his ears, 'Why can't I make friends at school?' On a supposedly joyful day, not even one classmate wanted to take pictures with me. With smiling faces of which I could never understand the true meaning, they just walked past me. I remembered feeling dreadful and frustrated, afraid that I would remain alone forever. Meo, spontaneous and trusty, as always, assured me that he, at least, would never abandon me, and would always be on my side. His presence is a great solace to me, however stone-cold his unvaried responses sometimes sound, but aren't men born inexpressive? 10 15

I've never shared my struggles at school with anyone else except Meo. It's not about my being an introvert. That never gives me the tendency to block people out and keep things to myself. The truth is, I simply don't have anyone to share them with. Throughout secondary school, my classmates seemed to see me as an outcast, eccentric like a chimpanzee among humans (I look like one in fact 😞). At one point, I wanted to prove them wrong by becoming a 'better' person, mimicking the way they act, dress and talk. Whenever I thought I was on the right track, and about to reach the end, what met me from the other side were averted faces. Not laughing, not angry—just turned to one side with a slightly mocking expression—a face of 'leave us alone', a face of 'there's no way you can force yourself on us,' a face showing me that they have their exclusive treaties, which are flexible enough to be changed as often as they wish. 20 25

Sometimes, Meo would give me impractical advice, and I would be disappointed. Once, he said 'No one will back you unless you back yourself.' I guess Meo wouldn't have said so if he had understood what I had been going through. After all, he isn't in the same situation. Plus, it is sympathy more than insight that I need! Once, I asked Meo whether people run away from me and give me the cold shoulder because there is something wrong with me. Unexpectedly, he said 'Karl, there is no such thing.' I knew that wasn't true. At one moment, I don't consider that answer to be a bad one; but at another moment, I do, because part of me knows that if I continue to live by all the white lies he tells, I will be driven to the point of no return.

Tonight, as I was standing behind the window and looking out of it into the dark, hundreds of senseless questions about the past and the future kept coming to my mind. Might I have lived differently if I had been more like a Korean oppa, dashing and handsome 😊? Will the past repeat itself in the future? Will I be one of those university students who are bullied? The complete silence of the night offered me no answer. If it tells me anything, it is that I need to find the answer from within no other source than myself.

Having finished reading Karl's diary entry, Karl's mum lapsed into her own thoughts. Then the tablet she had just put aside noted a message from Meo: strings of incomprehensible high-pitched buzzing sounds. It left her even more perturbed.

~770 words



Moral

Some people are plagued by robophobia, fearful that robots will one day become so intelligent as to rebel against them. Yet, without being programmed to 'want' or 'feel' anything, these rule-driven robots will never intend to surpass humans.

More to Take Away

Chatbots are commonplace in our daily lives. Installed in our mobile phones, they can respond to us in real-time conversation, and even perform tasks upon our requests. They adjust their responses with reference to our speech habits.

Looking into Grammar

The Type 3 (counterfactual) conditional is used to talk about an imagined condition in the past and what might have happened under that condition. Note that this structure is usually used to show regret.



✓ If I had studied (~~have studied~~), I would have passed (~~would pass~~) the exam.

? Underline TWO sentences in which the Type 3 conditional is used in the diary entry.

Part A Multiple Choice Questions

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

Q5: Although Karl remarks disappointedly that Meo would have offered more sympathetic responses if he were going through the same as he did, he is aware that such responses are bad for him in the long run.

1. _____ struck Karl during his graduation ceremony when _____.
- A. Grief...he felt that he had enough of his boisterous classmates
 - B. Envy...he found his mum ignorant and money-driven
 - C. Loneliness...he did not feel in himself the vigour like his classmates did
 - D. Disappointment...nobody else other than his mum talked to him
2. Karl's room is where _____.
- A. Meo waits for his return
 - B. his mum's nagging is out of reach
 - C. Meo and he meet in secret
 - D. he feels calm and relieved
-  3. Read line 21. The word 'That' refers to _____.
- A. the act of hiding his adversities at school from everyone
 - B. the fact of being a reserved person
 - C. the act of confiding only in Meo
 - D. men's inexpressiveness
4. Despite Karl's _____, his classmates still _____.
- A. independence...ignore his pretension
 - B. determination to fit in...crowd him out
 - C. effort to fit in...do not respond actively
 - D. rigidity to change...force him to
- 4** Pay attention to the cohesive device in the question.
5. In paragraph 4, Karl seems to _____, but not totally.
- A. wish Meo had responded more consolingly
 - B. suspect that Meo has feigned sincerity
 - C. expect discerning solutions from Meo
 - D. blame Meo for responding superficially
-  6. Which of the following is NOT true about Karl? **6** Unmentioned information is not true.
- A. He has an over-negative opinion of himself.
 - B. He relies on Meo to overcome his social anxiety.
 - C. His pessimism makes him overthink about the past.
 - D. He is disoriented about his future.
7. Karl's mum might not have known _____ until _____.
- A. any of his friends...she saw his tablet
 - B. Karl's concealed secrets...she heard Meo's buzzing sounds
 - C. who Karl had hidden in his room...she listened to Meo
 - D. something is wrong with Karl...she read his diary entry
8. Which of the following best describes Karl?
- A. unpopular
 - B. inconsiderate
 - C. unsociable
 - D. irresponsible
- Q8: Karl mentions that introversion does not make him unapproachable or unsociable. However, the facts he relates determine his unpopularity unquestionably.



Please scan the QR code on P.6 to access the checklist for evaluating your own reading progress.

Part B Pre-HKDSE Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the diary entry. For questions 1 and 4, answer in complete sentences.

1. In what ways do the classmates' faces impact on Karl?

(Any reasonable answers)

Karl cannot understand what their smiles and averting of faces mean and seems to interpret them as a kind of negative response. As a result, Karl feels like an outcast.

1 Throughout the diary entry, Karl keeps doubting himself and making a lot of assumptions about others.



2. Read line 33. The word 'that' refers to the fact that there is no such thing as there being something wrong with Karl // the fact that there is nothing wrong with Karl

Q2: The sentence before the word 'that' tells us that 'that' refers to '(the fact that) there is no such thing', the preceding sentence of which tells us that 'such thing' refers to '(the fact that) there is something wrong with Karl'.

2 The antecedent is a clause. Note that the answer should be precise and it can be complexly structured.

3. Look for words in the diary entry to match the definitions below.

- | | | | | |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|--------|--|
| (i) | <u>animated</u> | (para. 1) | (adj.) | full of interest and energy |
| (ii) | <u>feigning</u> | (para. 2) | (v.) | pretending to have a particular feeling or problem |
| (iii) | <u>spontaneous</u> | (para. 2) | (adj.) | happening naturally, without any planning before |
| (iv) | <u>treaties</u> | (para. 3) | (n.) | agreements between two or more parties |
| (v) | <u>senseless</u> | (para. 5) | (adj.) | not having a useful purpose |



4. Why does Karl say the continuous white lies from Meo will drive him 'to the point of no return'?

(Any reasonable answers)

It is because he knows that while white lies spare his feeling, they may leave him unaware of his own shortcomings.

5. Determine whether each of the following statements is true, false, or undecidable because not enough information is given.

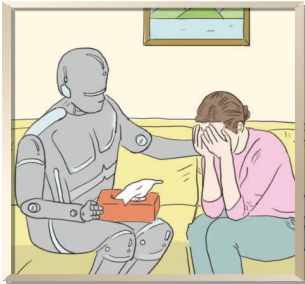
Statement	True	False	Not Given
(i) Karl also took some photos on his graduation day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
(ii) Karl's mum acted as if she understood his situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
(iii) Karl is rather reliant on Meo.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(iv) Meo has equal affection for Karl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(v) Karl's mum often jokes about the way Karl looks.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(vi) Karl shows a tendency to compare himself to his classmates.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5: (ii) Karl's mum could tell from Karl's long face that he was going through something. She might not fully grasp the situation he was in, but no evidence shows she feigned understanding. (iv) Meo was non-human, hence not feeling any emotions.

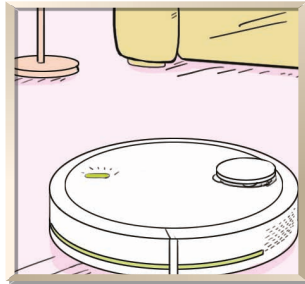
Part C Vocabulary Bank

Label the pictures below with some of the complex tasks performed by artificial intelligence (A.I.) from the word box.

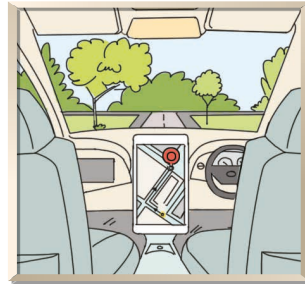
operating surgeries defusing bombs navigating
sweeping mines perceiving emotions fire-fighting
exploring space housekeeping



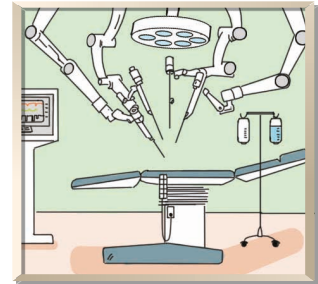
1. perceiving
emotions



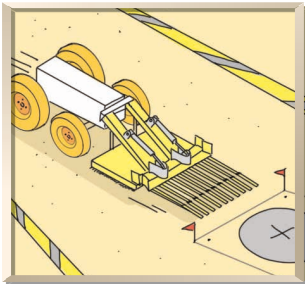
2. housekeeping



3. navigating



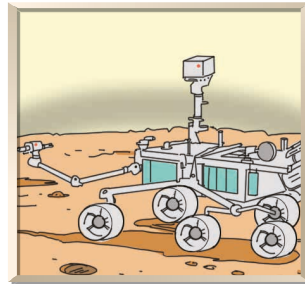
4. operating
surgeries



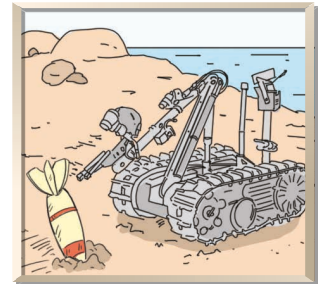
5. sweeping mines



6. fire-fighting



7. exploring space



8. defusing bombs

Word Craft

Feigning (Refer to P.142.)

e.g. feign surprise
feign being hurt
feign indifference
feign sickness

Let's Discuss!

1. Are you aware of your own limitations? If so, what are they?
2. Have you ever sought ways to improve yourself? Share your thoughts.

Part D Cloze Passage

Complete the speech of a merchant of robots below with the complex tasks performed by artificial intelligence (A.I.) introduced on the previous page.

Reminder



Pay attention to the use of gerunds, adjectives, and correct tenses.

My honoured future customers,

To be frank, I think what I was about to say as promotion has been rendered unnecessary now, as it seems cruel, if not rude, to go on with this talk about how far ahead we are. After I show you what our robots can do, one of them being (1) operating surgeries, you'll become our customers in the absence of any decent alternative. From whom else, except us, can hospitals get competent A.I. robots as helpers of their doctors?

Speaking of our peers in the same industry, I admit their frequent use of exaggerated words like 'cutting-edge' and 'ground-breaking' is quite memorable. But in no sense do their robots exactly fit these fancy descriptions. The robots are claimed to be 'good at (2) perceiving emotions' as they can distinguish between smiles and frowns—upward curve, smile; downward curve, frown. Now that one of my (3) housekeeping robots can extend its legs by half of its length to reach for the cupboard or wardrobe, should I claim that it can fly, being ideal for (4) exploring space, and is likely to land on Mars one day, like those NASA spacecrafts? Doesn't it sound like bluffing to you? But things like these were actually said in front of hundreds of honoured guests just now, in all seriousness!

Just now, a CEO was raving about his (5) fire-fighting heroes for the future'. The face recognition system, indeed, can now work even with flames flashing between the camera and the target, but the machine itself can't as it isn't fire-proof. What else? A robot that (6) sweeps mines but can't fly to keep itself at a distance from explosives hidden deep under the ground, and one that lives for (7) defusing bombs but disintegrates after the mission! The guy was deluding himself.

Speaking of that, a vision has just sprung to my mind. Perhaps a joint effort between us and our peers can make a difference to our business and theirs. As befits a technocrat, I'll let my A.I. robots do all the driving and (8) navigating, while I'm more than willing (as long as I'm having a larger slice of the cake in the A.I. industry) to share with my peers possible ways to upgrade their robots.