



UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA



CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

FIRST EXAMINATION IN ARTS (EXTERNAL) - JUNE 2018

ENGE 101: Writing and Comprehension Skills in English

Time Allowed: Three (3) Hours

Answer all three questions.

1. Write an essay of at least 250 words on ONE of the following topics. (Please note that you are free to adopt any view on the topics.) (40 Marks)
 - I. The Elephant-Human Battle
 - II. Social Media: A Boon or a Bane?
 - III. Should Sri Lanka Allow Private Medical Colleges?
 - IV. Combating Global Warming Should Be a Top Priority

2. Write a precis of the following passage in approximately 180 words. Use your own words as far as possible. (30 Marks)

Today, all British citizens over the age of 18 share a fundamental human right: the right to vote and to have a voice in the democratic process. But this right is only the result of a hard fought battle. The suffrage campaigners of the 19th and early 20th century struggled against opposition from both parliament and the general public to eventually gain the vote for the entire British population in 1928.

Before the first of a series of suffrage reforms in 1832, only 3% of the adult male population were qualified to vote. For the most part, the right to vote depended on how much you earned and the value of your property. For this reason, the majority of people who were able to vote were both wealthy and male. Throughout the 1800s, campaigners fought to extend the franchise and some concessions were made in 1867 and 1884. However, under these reforms women were still denied the vote and an increasing number of groups began campaigning for just that. Campaigners for women's suffrage initially wanted the vote for women on the same terms as it was granted to men. This is because many of the original campaigners for women's suffrage were female middle-class homeowners. Their priority was that the franchise should be extended to women of their own status rather than to all women. This version of reform did not include either working-class men or women but, eventually, universal suffrage – votes for all – became the goal of the campaign.

The inability to vote meant that Victorian women had very few rights and their disenfranchised status became a symbol of civil inequality. Campaigners wanted the vote to be granted to women as they felt that too often the law was biased against women and reinforced the idea of women as subordinate to men. For example, until 1882, a woman's property often reverted to her husband on their marriage. Steps towards equal rights came with the Married Woman's Property Acts of 1870, 1882 and 1884 (amended again in 1925). These enabled women to keep their property and money after marriage, where previously it was the automatic property of their husbands. Even after the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, however, the situation was not much improved – women now had to pay taxes on the businesses the new law permitted them to own, but did not have any say in how those taxes were spent. Campaigners felt that the best way to achieve equal status with men, in society and in the home, would be to get the vote and participate in the parliamentary process.

As a result of campaigns dating back to the mid-19th century, some women were finally granted the vote in 1918. However, many women, particularly working-class women, were still excluded from the franchise. The Representation of the People Act enfranchised all males over the age of 21 and women over the age of 30 who already had the right to vote in local elections and who were also householders, the wives of householders, owners of property worth over £5 or university graduates. In total, the Act enfranchised 8,400,000 women. Universal franchise was finally granted with the Equal Franchise Act of 1928.

3. Read the following passage and answer all the questions given below. (30 Marks)

In the first half of the nineteenth century, one of America's most prominent scientists was a doctor named Samuel Morton. Morton lived in Philadelphia, and he collected skulls. He wasn't choosy about his suppliers. He accepted skulls scavenged from battlefields and snatched from catacombs. With each skull Morton performed the same procedure: He stuffed it with pepper seeds, which he then decanted to ascertain the volume of the braincase.

Morton believed that people could be divided into five races and that these represented separate acts of creation. The races had distinct characters, which corresponded to their place in a divinely determined hierarchy. Morton's "craniometry" showed, he claimed, that whites, or "Caucasians," were the most intelligent of the races. East Asians—Morton used the term "Mongolian"—though "ingenious" and "susceptible of cultivation," were one step down. Next came Southeast Asians, followed by Native Americans. Blacks, or "Ethiopians," were at the bottom. In the decades before the American Civil War, Morton's ideas were quickly taken up by the defenders of slavery.

Today Morton is known as the father of scientific racism. So many of the horrors of the past few centuries can be traced to the idea that one race is inferior to another. To an uncomfortable degree we still live with Morton's legacy: Racial distinctions continue to shape our politics, our neighborhoods, and our sense of self. This is the case even though what science actually has to tell us about race is just the opposite of what Morton contended.

Morton thought he had identified immutable and inherited differences among people, but at the time he was working—shortly before Charles Darwin put forth his theory of evolution and long before the discovery of DNA—scientists had no idea how traits were passed on. Researchers who have since looked at people at the genetic level now say that the whole category of race is misconceived. Indeed, when scientists set out to assemble the first complete human genome, which was a composite of several individuals, they deliberately gathered samples from people who self-identified as members of different races. In June 2000, when the results were announced at a White House ceremony, Craig Venter, a pioneer of DNA sequencing, observed, “The concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis.”

Over the past few decades, genetic research has revealed two deep truths about people. The first is that all humans are closely related—more closely related than all chimpanzees, even though there are many more humans around today. Everyone has the same collection of genes, but with the exception of identical twins, everyone has slightly different versions of some of them. Studies of this genetic diversity have allowed scientists to reconstruct a kind of family tree of human populations. That has revealed the second deep truth: In a very real sense, all people alive today are Africans.

Our species, *Homo sapiens*, evolved in Africa—no one is sure of the exact time or place. The most recent fossil find, from Morocco, suggests that anatomically modern human features began appearing as long as 300,000 years ago. For the next 200,000 years or so, we remained in Africa, but already during that period, groups began to move to different parts of the continent and become isolated from one another—in effect founding new populations.

In humans, as in all species, genetic changes are the result of random mutations—tiny tweaks to DNA, the code of life. Mutations occur at a more or less constant rate, so the longer a group persists, handing down its genes generation after generation, the more tweaks these genes will accumulate. Meanwhile, the longer two groups are separated, the more distinctive tweaks they will acquire. By analyzing the genes of present-day Africans, researchers have concluded that the Khoe-San, who now live in southern Africa, represent one of the oldest branches of the human family tree. The Pygmies of central Africa also have a very long history as a distinct group. What this means is that the deepest splits in the human family aren’t between what are usually thought of as different races—whites, say, or blacks or Asians or Native Americans. They are between African populations such as the Khoe-San and the Pygmies, who spent tens of thousands of years separated from one another even before humans left Africa.

- I. Provide the passage with a suitable title. (Please note that the title should reflect the key arguments made in the passage.)
- II. Describe, in your own words, the experiment, which Samuel Morton conducted and based his claims regarding race on.

- III. Explain, in your own words, what the following sentence means: “In the decades before the American Civil War, Morton’s ideas were quickly taken up by the defenders of slavery” (Paragraph 2).
- IV. According to the author, what is the sense in which Morton’s legacy continues to shape today’s society?
- V. If it is the case that “all humans are closely related,” why do people from different parts of the world look different from each other? (You need to base your answer on the passage.)
- VI. Explain how what is said in the passage could be used to rethink/resolve the tensions among different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.
