



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Wednesday 21 May 2025 – Afternoon

A Level English Language and Literature (EMC)

H474/01 Exploring non-fiction and spoken texts

Time allowed: 1 hour



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to the question in the Answer Booklet.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer the question.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **32**.
- The marks for the question are shown in brackets [].
- This document has **8** pages.

ADVICE

- Read the question carefully before you start your answer.

Read the **two** text extracts and **answer the question**.

Text A from the anthology is an extract from George Saunders' speech given to graduates at Syracuse University in 2013.

Text B is a fact sheet produced by a British company called 52 Lives: The School of Kindness in 2022. They are a charity who aim to create a culture of kindness. They work in primary schools and offer 'Kindness Workshops' which teach children how to spread kindness. This fact sheet is one resource they have produced to explain the science of kindness on physical and mental health.

- 1 Carefully read the **two** texts and compare the ways in which the speaker in **Text A** and the writers of **Text B** use language to convey meaning.

In your answer you should analyse the impact that the different contexts have on language use, including for example, mode, purpose and audience. **[32]**

Text A

So here's something I know to be true, although it's a little corny, and I don't quite know what to do with it:

What I regret most in my life are *failures of kindness*.

Those moments when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering, and I responded ... sensibly. Reservedly. Mildly.

Or, to look at it from the other end of the telescope: Who, in *your* life, do you remember most fondly, with the most undeniable feelings of warmth?

Those who were kindest to you, I bet.

It's a little facile, maybe, and certainly hard to implement, but I'd say, as a goal in life, you could do worse than: *Try to be kinder*.

Now, the million-dollar question: What's our problem? Why aren't we kinder?

Here's what I think:

Each of us is born with a series of built-in confusions that are probably somehow Darwinian. These are: (1) we're central to the universe (that is, our personal story is the main and most interesting story, the *only* story, really); (2) we're separate from the universe (there's US and then, out there, all that other junk – dogs and swing-sets, and the State of Nebraska and low-hanging clouds and, you know, other people), and (3) we're permanent (death is real, o.k., sure – for you, but not for me).

Now, we don't *really* believe these things – intellectually we know better – but we believe them viscerally, and live by them, and they cause us to prioritize our own needs over the needs of others, even though what we really want, in our hearts, is to be less selfish, more aware of what's actually happening in the present moment, more open, and more loving.

So, the second million-dollar question: How might we DO this? How might we become more loving, more open, less selfish, more present, less delusional, etc., etc?

Well, yes, good question.

Unfortunately, I only have three minutes left.

So let me just say this. There *are* ways. You already know that because, in your life, there have been High Kindness periods and Low Kindness periods, and you know what inclined you toward the former and away from the latter. Education is good; immersing ourselves in a work of art: good; prayer is good; meditation's good; a frank talk with a dear friend; establishing ourselves in some kind of spiritual tradition – recognizing that there have been countless really smart people before us who have asked these same questions and left behind answers for us.

Because kindness, it turns out, is *hard* – it starts out all rainbows and puppy dogs, and expands to include ... well, *everything*.

One thing in our favor: some of this “becoming kinder” happens naturally, with age. It might be a simple matter of attrition: as we get older, we come to see how useless it is to be selfish – how illogical, really. We come to love other people and are thereby counterinstructed in our own centrality. We get our butts kicked by real life, and people come to our defense, and help us, and we learn that we're not separate, and don't want to be. We see people near and dear to us dropping away, and are gradually convinced that maybe we too will drop away (someday, a long time from now). Most people, as they age, become less selfish and more loving. I think this is true. The great Syracuse poet, Hayden Carruth, said, in a poem written near the end of his life, that he was “mostly Love, now.”

Text B



Kindness helps our minds and bodies in so many ways...here are just a few of the amazing effects it has on our health.

KINDNESS CAN HELP US FEEL HAPPIER

When we experience kindness, a hormone called dopamine is released in our brain which gives us a feeling of elevation and lifts our mood – it's often referred to as 'Helper's High'.

KINDNESS IS GOOD FOR THE HEART

Have you noticed that when you are kind to someone you feel good inside? Acts of kindness are often accompanied by a feeling of emotional warmth, which in turn produces the hormone oxytocin in your body. Oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide, which expands your blood vessels, reduces blood pressure and protects your heart.

KINDNESS SLOWS AGEING

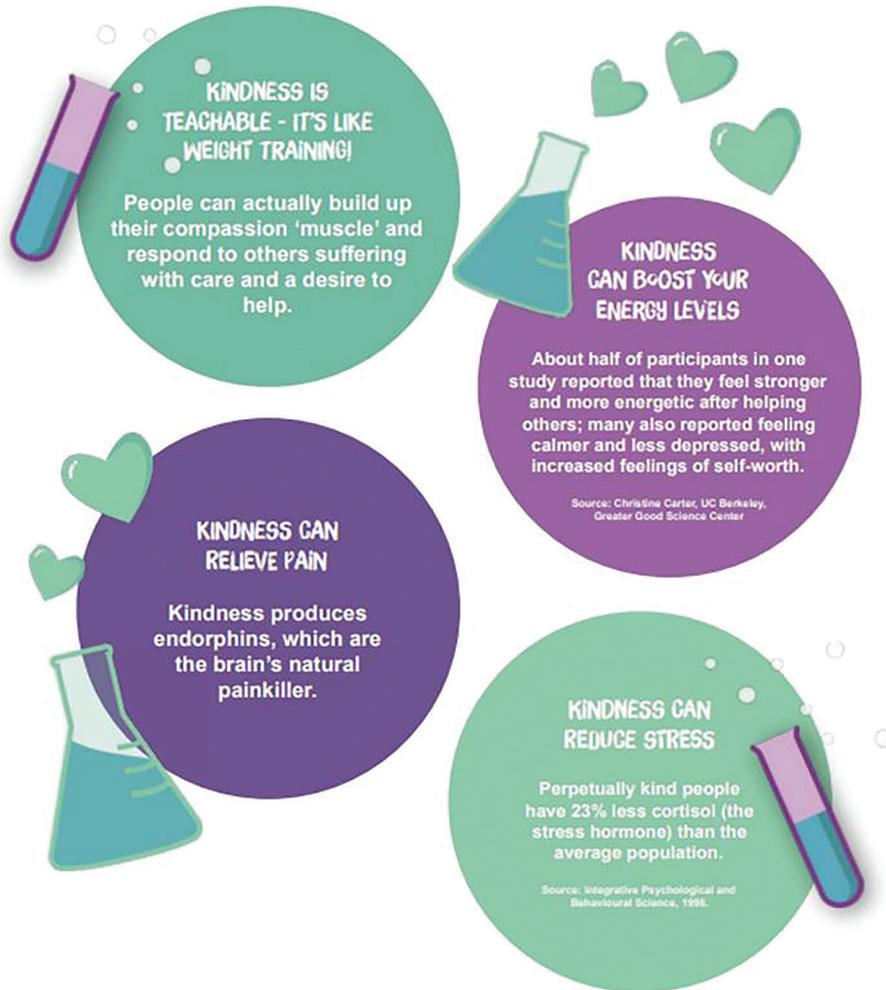
Kindness has been shown to slow the ageing process. Remarkable research found that oxytocin can reduce levels of free radicals and inflammation (two main culprits of ageing) in our cardiovascular system, which slows ageing at the source.

KINDNESS IMPROVES RELATIONSHIPS

We tend to like people who show us kindness. This is because kindness reduces the emotional distance between two people and helps us feel more 'bonded'. Our evolutionary ancestors had to learn to cooperate with one another. The stronger the emotional bonds within groups, the greater were the chances of survival and so 'kindness genes' were etched into the human genome. So today, when we are kind to each other, we feel a connection that strengthens our existing relationships and helps us to create new ones.

KINDNESS IS CONTAGIOUS

Just as a pebble creates waves when it is dropped in a pond, so acts of kindness ripple outwards. When we are kind, we inspire others to be kind and studies show that it actually creates a ripple effect that spreads outwards to our friends' friends' friends – that's an amazing three degrees of separation! This means that when you are kind to one person, that one act of kindness will positively affect up to 125 people!



Thank you to our Scientific Advisor, Dr David Hamilton, for his expertise.

VISIT WWW.SCHOOLOFKINDNESS.ORG TO FIND OUT MORE.

52 Lives is a charity registered in England and Wales (1166238)

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END OF QUESTION PAPER

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