

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION BOARD

HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

CLASS XI

ANNUAL EXAMINATIONS (THEORY) 2023

English Compulsory Paper I

Listening Passage I

Astrology

In some ways, astrology may seem scientific. It uses scientific knowledge about heavenly bodies, as well as scientific sounding tools. Some people use astrology to generate expectations about future events and people's personalities, much as scientific ideas generate expectations. And some claim that astrology is supported by evidence – the experiences of people who feel that astrology has worked for them. But even with these trappings of science, is astrology really a scientific way to answer questions?

Astrology's basic premise is that heavenly bodies have influence over or are correlated with earthly events. It uses a set of rules about the relative positions and movements of heavenly bodies to generate predictions and explanations for events on Earth and human personality traits.

Some have used astrology to generate very specific expectations that could be verified against outcomes in the natural world. For example, according to astrology, one's zodiac sign impacts one's ability to command respect and authority. Since these traits are important in politics, we might expect that if astrology really explained people's personalities, scientists would be more likely to have zodiac signs that astrologers describe as 'favourable' towards science. If used to generate specific expectations, astrological ideas are testable.

Sharing one's findings and critically evaluating the results of others are not integral parts of practicing astrology. An astrologer can go his or her entire career and not present findings at a scientific meeting or publish a single article. When astrologers do publish, these articles are not usually peer-reviewed or published in places where they will be critically scrutinised by the scientific community.

Scientific studies involving astrology have stopped after attempting and failing to establish the validity of astrological ideas. So far, there are no documented cases of astrology contributing to a new scientific discovery.

Scientists don't wait for others to do the research to support or contradict the ideas they propose. Instead, they strive to test their ideas, try to come up with counterarguments and alternative hypotheses and ultimately, give up ideas when warranted by the evidence. Astrologers, on the other hand, do not seem to rigorously examine the astrological ideas they accept.

Source: Adapted from 'Astrology: Is it scientific?' as published on undsci.berkeley.edu

Listening Passage II

The God of Small Things

Estha had always been a quiet child, so no one could pinpoint with any degree of accuracy exactly when he had stopped talking. The fact is that there wasn't an "exactly when." It had been a gradual winding down and closing shop. A barely noticeable quietening. As though he had simply run out of conversation and had nothing left to say. Yet, Estha's silence was never awkward. Never intrusive. Never noisy. It wasn't an accusing, protesting silence as much as a sort of estivating, a dormancy, the psychological equivalent of what lungfish do to get themselves through the dry season, except that in Estha's case the dry season looked as though it would last forever.

Over time, he had acquired the ability to blend into the background of wherever he was to appear inanimate, almost invisible to the untrained eye. It usually took strangers awhile to notice him even when they were in the same room with him. It took them even longer to notice that he never spoke. Some never noticed at all.

Estha occupied very little space in the world.

Estha finished school with mediocre results, but refused to go to college. Instead, much to the initial embarrassment of his father and stepmother, he began to do the housework. As though in his own way he was trying to earn his keep. He did the sweeping, swabbing and all the laundry. He learned to cook and shop for vegetables. Vendors in the bazaar began to recognise him and would attend to him amidst the clamouring of their other customers. They gave him rusted film cans in which to put the vegetables he picked. He never bargained. They never cheated him. When the vegetables had been weighed and paid for, they would transfer them to his red plastic shopping basket (onions at the bottom, brinjal and tomatoes on the top) and always a sprig of coriander and a fistful of green chilies for free. Estha carried them home in the crowded tram. A quiet bubble floating on a sea of noise.

Source: Adapted from '*The God of Small Things*' by Arundhati Roy