

Reading Comprehension – Making a Difference: Youth Participation (Secondary 3 DES Style)

PASSAGE:

Young people today are often described as “the leaders of tomorrow,” but many are already taking action to improve their communities right now. Whether through volunteering, organising events, or speaking up about issues that matter to them, youth participation has become an essential force for positive change.

Fifteen-year-old Jason Lau is one example. After noticing that many elderly people in his neighbourhood lived alone, he started a weekly “Check-in Club.” Every Saturday, he and a group of classmates visit elderly residents to chat, help with simple tasks, and teach them how to use their mobile phones. Jason says the experience has changed him. “I used to think I was too young to make a difference. But when I saw how happy the elderly were just to have someone to talk to, I realised that even small actions can have a big impact.”

Youth participation is not limited to community service. Sixteen-year-old Aisha Khan has been advocating for environmental protection since she was in Primary Six. She began by organising a recycling station at her school, but soon expanded her efforts. Today, she runs a social-media page that shares tips on reducing waste and encourages young people to adopt eco-friendly habits. Aisha believes that young people have a unique advantage. “We are creative, energetic, and not afraid to try new ideas. Adults sometimes think change is too difficult, but we are willing to experiment.”

However, youth participation also faces challenges. Some adults underestimate young people’s abilities, assuming they lack experience or maturity. Others worry that students are already too busy with schoolwork to take on additional responsibilities. Despite these concerns, many educators argue that youth involvement actually strengthens students’ confidence and problem-solving skills. They point out that participation does not always require large amounts of time — even short, meaningful contributions can help build a sense of responsibility.

Experts also emphasise that youth participation benefits society as a whole. When young people take part in decision-making, communities gain fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. More importantly, youth involvement helps build a culture of empathy. By working with people from different backgrounds, young volunteers learn to understand the struggles of others and develop a stronger commitment to social justice.

As Jason and Aisha demonstrate, young people are not simply waiting for the future — they are shaping it. Their actions remind us that making a difference does not depend on age, but on the willingness to care, act, and inspire others.

VOCABULARY SECTION:

Word	Meaning	Example Sentence
advocating	publicly supporting a cause	She has been advocating for cleaner beaches.
underestimate	to think someone is less capable than they are	Don't underestimate young people's creativity.
responsibility	duty to take care of something	Volunteering teaches students responsibility.
empathy	the ability to understand others' feelings	Working with the elderly helped him develop empathy.
innovative	new and creative	The team suggested an innovative solution to reduce waste.

CLOSE-ENDED QUESTIONS:

A. Multiple Choice

1. What was the purpose of Jason's "Check-in Club"?
 - A. To teach children how to recycle
 - B. To help elderly people in his neighbourhood
 - C. To raise money for charity
 - D. To organise school events
2. What does Aisha believe gives young people an advantage?
 - A. Their long experience
 - B. Their ability to follow instructions
 - C. Their creativity and willingness to try new ideas
 - D. Their free time
3. According to the passage, what is one challenge youth participation faces?
 - A. Lack of interest from young people
 - B. Adults thinking students are too busy
 - C. Schools refusing to support any activities
 - D. Communities rejecting youth volunteers

B. True / False

4. Jason originally believed he was too young to make a difference.
5. Aisha only participates in environmental protection at her school.

C. Short Answers

6. What skill do educators say youth participation helps develop?

7. What does youth involvement help build in society?

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:

8. In what ways do Jason and Aisha show that “making a difference does not depend on age”? Use information from the passage to support your answer.

9. Do you agree that “even short, meaningful contributions can help build a sense of responsibility”? Explain your opinion with reference to the passage and your own ideas.

ANSWER KEY:

Close-Ended Answers:

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. True
5. False
6. Confidence and problem-solving skills
7. A culture of empathy

Detailed Open-Ended Sample Answers:

8. In what ways do Jason and Aisha show that “making a difference does not depend on age”?

- Sample Answer: Jason and Aisha both take meaningful action despite being teenagers. Jason created the “Check-in Club” to support elderly people, showing that even small acts like chatting or helping with simple tasks can improve others’ lives. Aisha has been advocating for environmental protection since Primary Six and now runs a social-media page to encourage eco-friendly habits. Their efforts show that young people can create positive change regardless of their age.

9. Do you agree that “even short, meaningful contributions can help build a sense of responsibility”?

- Sample Answer: Yes, I agree. The passage explains that youth participation does not always require a lot of time, and even small actions can help students develop responsibility. For example, Jason’s weekly visits are short, but they teach him to care for others and commit to a routine. In my own experience, small tasks like helping classmates or participating in school events also make me feel more responsible because I learn to manage my time and consider others’ needs.