3 Object-Oriented Programming (RKH)

Java generics allows an ArrayList object to be constrained to use a single specific type (e.g. ArrayList<Integer>). However, some applications require the ability to store objects of multiple unrelated types. In this question the aim is to store Integer objects alongside LinkedList<Integer> objects.

(a) One solution is to use ArrayList<Object>, since all Java objects extend Object. Explain why this is bad practice. [2 marks]

(b) Seeking to provide a solution that allows an arbitrary set of constrained types, a programmer writes an abstract ConstrainedArray base class. To use it, the class is extended and a specialised void add(...) method should be provided for each acceptable type.

```java
public abstract class ConstrainedArray {
    protected ArrayList<Object> mArray = new ArrayList<Object>();

    public Object get(int idx) {return mArray.get(idx);}    
    public int size() { return mArray.size(); }    
}
```

(i) Show how to create a class IntListArray that extends this base class and accepts only Integer or LinkedList<Integer> objects. Where appropriate, objects should be copied on insertion. [4 marks]

(ii) Describe a sequence of events that would allow external modification of an object stored within an IntListArray, despite correct copying on insertion. How could this be addressed in IntListArray? [3 marks]

(iii) By adding protected void add(Object o) {mArray.add(o);} to the ConstrainedArray class, the mArray field can be made private. Show how this would affect your IntListArray class and discuss the advantages of the change from protected to private. [5 marks]

(c) The solutions in parts (a) and (b) both involve a get() method returning an Object reference.

(i) Explain why this is bad practice. [1 mark]

(ii) Propose an alternative solution for a constrained array of Integer or LinkedList<Integer> objects (only) that addresses this issue. [5 marks]