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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **February/March 2024**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

This document has **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Read **both** texts, and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A

The following passage is part of a magazine article about overthinking.

It's not at all uncommon for my friends to tell me, 'Don't overthink it, just go with it.'

'Just going with it' is not something I do. I must really understand what I'm doing and then I think through almost every possibility and eventuality. And I plan. When people say things like: 'Who could have imagined that would happen?' about some entirely predictable outcome, my most common response is 'I could'. I have realised that for most people I am an overthinker, but for me, it is others who underthink – I just think.

I've always been a natural observer, able to take the emotional temperature of a room, able to watch people's micro-movements, listen to their language, their tone. Sometimes, today, my children think I'm a mind reader, but of course I'm not. I've just noticed what's been said, what's gone on, and I've overthought what they might do or say. So sometimes I answer a question before they ask it and they think I have a superpower.

Straight out of school, I joined the military, where you had to think not once but several times about the simplest task because everything was a potential trap or some otherwise-overlooked detail might later become vital. Check everything, always. During one lecture, someone came in to give a message to the lecturer and afterwards we were told to describe that person who had just flitted in while we were concentrating on something else.

Of course, overthinking can be exhausting. I must be careful to have boundaries and to give myself time off because burnout is never far away; I also have to be careful not to end up doing people's thinking or memory storage for them. Because, like all emotions and ways of working, there's a plus and a minus side. Other people get used to you doing all their planning and thinking for them.

On the whole, I love being an overthinker. It's enormously enriching and brings me a very rewarding mental world. I go with it now rather than fight it. Examining every aspect of everything can bring with it the most amazing insights.

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Text B

The following passage is an extract from an article.

Thinking about something in endless circles is exhausting. While everyone overthinks occasionally, chronic overthinkers spend most of their waking time ruminating, putting pressure on themselves, making them less able to change.

Overthinking can take many forms, but endlessly deliberating when making a decision and then questioning that decision is common. While hours might be spent deciding, the actual decision is often never made. 'People confuse overthinking with problem-solving,' says one psychologist. 'But what ends up happening is we just sort of go in a loop. We're not really solving the problem.'

In attempting to read what's in other people's minds, overthinkers can create difficulties for themselves and others. People who overthink consistently run commentaries in their heads about what they say and do, and fret anxiously about how others think of them. They find it difficult to make an objective choice or arrange things in the best way because they constantly worry about how their actions will be perceived. Straightforward communication proves impossible because overthinkers are consumed by self-doubt. 'What ifs' and 'shoulds' dominate their thinking, as if an invisible jury is sitting in judgement on their lives. Trying to predict the future by reading into the smallest details to avoid potentially bad outcomes can debilitate them. Overthinking can keep you stuck in the past, unable to make important decisions and pre-occupied with trying to avoid annoying others.

Over time, most people learn to harness and control their overthinking habit. They might always plan and even worry, but they gradually realise that it could be an advantage. Getting to that point, however, can be a difficult journey.

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