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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **February/March 2025**

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:

This text is a magazine article about the habit of keeping books.

I used to have, or rather hoard, a lot of books. Still do, I think, at least by the standards of the average home. In the last couple of years I have given away hundreds. If the thought of this fills you with horror, then maybe look away – because sometimes I even put them in the recycling.

The book purge began when I went through the shelves and discarded any book I didn't want to keep, for various reasons. Since then, I've been jettisoning them every few months. Only twice have I needed to look something up in a book I've thrown away, and there's always the internet for that.

I used to treat books like totemic, magical objects. About 10 years ago, my parents moved house and gifted me a number of books about which I might feel sentimental. Before we were married, my husband had very few books, not because he wasn't a reader, but because he likes an uncluttered home. Even now, once he has read a book, he donates it to a charity or gives it away.

The other day I saw an internet discussion about a man who said he only owns one book at a time, buying a new one after he has read the last one and got rid of it. 'The horror! How could he?' people wrote, leading me to reflect again on that tendency to treat having books as part of their identity. Of course, there are reasons to keep some books, but all of them?

There is something smug about the cult of book ownership. I don't mean reading – if you have a local library where you can borrow books for free, that is a pastime that is accessible to almost everyone. No, I mean owning books, treating having a lot of books as a statement about you, or believing that simply owning a lot of books, read or not, makes you 'know things'.

There's a Japanese word, tsundoku, for allowing books to pile up unread. Instead, I choose to donate mine to places where people can most benefit from them or leave them on the wall outside my house to be picked up.

I found my own copy of a classic novel by similar means. It turned out to be the impetus I needed to tackle that great novel. Why keep it on my shelves when I'm finished, when someone else could delight in it as I did?

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Text B: *Books are for life*

For children, growing up in a home full of books is a crucial indicator for producing not just literate young people but independent learners with a life-long reading habit. Books will help you be happier, earn more, and even stay healthier, experts say. Plus, plenty of the smartest names in business insist that the best way to get smarter is to read. So go out and buy books, lots of them.

But life is busy, and intentions are one thing, actions another. Soon you find your shelves (or e-reader) overflowing with titles you intend to read one day, or books you flipped through once but then abandoned, as well as books you've read and enjoyed. Is this a disaster in your quest to become smarter, more cultured and accomplished?

Well, if all your unread books remain on the shelves, just taking up more living space, then yes. There are ways to squeeze more reading into your daily life. But if your book reading doesn't keep pace with your book buying, I have good news for you. Your overstuffed library isn't a sign of failure or ignorance, it's a symbol of success.

Your bulging shelves aren't just there to fill expensive space in your living room with a piece of furniture that'll impress visitors, they're a research tool. They should contain as many books as you can afford about things you don't know. Unread books are more valuable to you than read ones. The growing number of unread books will look at you, sometimes menacingly and often invitingly. By living with that reminder daily you can nudge yourself towards developing a genuine kind of intellectual humility and curiosity.

So don't be too hard on yourself for buying more books than you'll ever read. Those you have read are there for you to savour and return to and those you haven't will be there when you need them.

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