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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/21**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2020**

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. Blank pages are indicated.

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

Text A: Why space tourism matters

The article below outlines some of the benefits of space tourism.

Right now, one of the most exciting space facilities in the world is a Second World War hangar in the Mojave Desert, in California. The wooden hangar belongs to one of the companies building rocket planes to fly tourists into space. Further along the runway, another billionaire is developing a new space launch system. Eleven other small space businesses are spread around the site at the Mojave Air and Space Port.

Some of these companies are charging huge sums for the privilege of experiencing five minutes of weightlessness; others will charge for a ride in a two-seater rocket ship. The cost alone puts this fledgling space tourism industry beyond most of us, but it's worth outlining why space tourism matters.

There's already talk of drastically reducing flight times between cities by planes that can use space as a result of the work done by scientists working with space tourism companies. Space tourism will also inspire a new generation of engineers. 'It's an engineer's dream job,' one 26-year-old working here says. 'Most engineers sit behind a desk all day. I get to come out here in the shop, turn wrenches and fire rocket engines.'

What's more, the cost of reaching space will go down. Conventional space rockets could only be used once, at huge cost, but space tourism is developing space planes which will be able to reach orbit many times. Space, the final frontier, could finally become economically viable to a lot more people.

Space travel will provide a new view of our planet. It is widely accepted that one of the greatest achievements of the Apollo mission was the view of the Earth from space. Apollo 8 astronaut, Bill Anders, summed it up: 'We came all this way to explore the Moon,' he said, 'and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth.' The images put us in our place, a blue marble against the backdrop of nothingness.

Every astronaut I have interviewed talks about how seeing the Earth from space changed their view of the world. As a result, could it influence the decisions we make on pollution or climate change?

Text B: Why on earth would I be a space tourist?

The passage below is an article arguing against space tourism.

Indulge me with this scenario for a moment: you have a (very) rich old uncle with a serious passion for all things space. He'll give you a very large sum of money if you promise to fulfil a dream he knows he's now too frail to achieve. Yes, he wants you to book one of the first available tourist seats on a commercial rocket into space.

A thrilling prospect beyond your wildest dreams? I, for one, would have to respectfully suggest my uncle bestows his generous legacy elsewhere.

Even without speculating about how much good all that money could do for a really worthwhile cause, it's hard to justify the cost, both financially and environmentally, of space tourism. There are millions of people who have never travelled outside their own regions and for whom the very idea of tourism here on Earth is unattainable. Even in wealthy countries, travel beyond the borders is still relatively unusual. Sixty-four per cent of US citizens have never left the country. Before space becomes the new, must-see tourist destination, wouldn't it be nice if more people got to see more of their own beautiful world?

Relieving poverty and the effects of conflict are not fashionable fields of endeavour for billionaires with money to burn. They won't have a good return on their investment in 10 or even 50 years. I can see the appeal of cutting-edge technology and shiny new rockets lifting off in a blaze of fire. But for the tiny elite of people who benefit, either as tourists or from jobs in the industry, a huge and struggling population remains benighted and bereft.

It seems that all astronauts who have gazed down from space on their terrestrial home are powerfully struck by its beauty. Don Thomas, who has been in space four times, says as more people get to see such an awe-inspiring sight on their tourist flights, 'the better off we're all going to be.' But he also describes how fragile the Earth looks from space and how 'paper-thin' the layer of atmosphere is protecting it. I'm really not sure how the burgeoning space tourism industry is going to help with that!

My imaginary space-obsessed uncle will have to find someone else to waste his money on, I think.

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