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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/23**

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: The surprising benefits of extreme sports

The article below outlines some of the benefits of participating in extreme sports.

Jumping off cliffs, scaling vertical rock faces or nailing BMX aerial manoeuvres may not be high on many people's list of fitness pursuits to try, but the benefits of taking part in such high-risk activities can go well beyond bragging rights and burning calories.

Research into the effects of extreme sports has tended to focus on their negative aspects. However, aside from the obvious benefits of physical exercise, there are some surprising psychological benefits to taking your exercise regime to the extreme.

An Australian study found that participating in extreme sports and risky physical challenges can give you a mental boost. Interviews with 15 extreme sports athletes found that facing and overcoming intense fear can lead to transformational changes in confidence and sense of self. Fears can grow from a lack of faith in ourselves, and so conquering them can prove to ourselves that we're capable, the study concludes.

This turns the stereotype of the young, thrill-seeking, adrenaline junkie on its head. It highlights how any sort of activity that scares you – resigning from a job, facing important exams or just competing in a fun run – can promote psychological benefits that can spill into other areas of your life. One can train to become a more resilient person through exposure to stressful experiences, including participating in extreme sports.

After her record-breaking wingsuit flight across the Grand Canyon, 48-year-old cliff jumper Heather Swan spoke of how such risky encounters helped her develop tools to face everyday fears. She says such thrilling encounters have taught her to separate real fears from irrational fears. 'I know how to manage the fear and separate what I know I can do from just being afraid.'

A 2009 study found that involvement in such risky activities had the potential to make people more humble. Researchers found that brushes with death, intense fear and the realisation that nature is far more powerful than us gave participants a profound sense of courage and humility.

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Text B

The article below discusses some of the dangers of participating in extreme sports.

For many young people, there's nothing quite like the exercise and camaraderie you get from being part of a team. Whether it's baseball, basketball, soccer, softball or volleyball, there is fun to be had.

Some athletes take things to the next level, though. Rather than playing traditional sports as part of a team, they engage in lone sports that provide a satisfying rush of adrenaline. These activities – skateboarding, white-water kayaking, ice climbing, heli-skiing, BMX biking, bull riding, cliff diving – are inherently dangerous in some way, but that rush of adrenaline makes participants feel more alive than they've ever been. There are many terrifying ways in which extreme sports athletes can test themselves, and for some it becomes an addictive challenge to attempt ever more risky, dangerous feats.

Watching extreme sports is fascinating, and their popularity has soared in recent years owing to frequent exposure on internet sites and social media. Extreme sports athletes have become so popular that they are offered lucrative sponsorships from companies that want to associate their brands with these cutting-edge thrill seekers. Some sponsorships allow extreme sports athletes to compete in these sports professionally, rather than as merely a hobby.

The best extreme sports athletes can have long and profitable careers, as long as they are true masters of their sport. Unfortunately, even the smallest mistakes can have catastrophic effects. Between 2000 and 2011, experts estimate that over four million injuries were caused by extreme sports. In the most extreme sports, minor errors can lead to serious injuries and even death and can also involve danger to those who have to rescue athletes from caves, cliff edges, canyons or freezing lakes.

Young people who are most likely to engage in extreme sports often lack the judgement of older adults. The lure of internet fame leads many to copy feats that they're woefully unprepared for.

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