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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/23**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2021**

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.

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

Text A: Anyone up for a New Year challenge?

The article below discusses some strategies for keeping resolutions.

No one seems sure when the idea of making resolutions at the turn of a new year began. The ancient Babylonians are believed to have celebrated the beginning of a new planting season by resolving to make changes for the better. The Roman god Janus – the one that looks both backwards to the past and forwards to the future – inspired citizens to promise improvements in the coming year. In the modern world, many countries and cultures celebrate their new year with 'wishes' rather than resolutions, but social media, perhaps inevitably, has ensured that personal struggles to exercise more / study harder / eat more healthily / be kinder have become collective experiences.

Most people will not succeed with challenges for more than a few weeks: willpower is not a talent that a lucky few are born with, according to some research. Willpower is a skill to be practised. Frank Ryan, author of 'Willpower for Dummies', explains: 'Our level of willpower fluctuates according to our motivation in any given situation. Everybody can learn to use their willpower more effectively.'

To maximise our chances of sticking to resolutions, Ryan says, we should identify our 'willpower profile'. 'Some people are more impulsive than others. That comes down to personality. For some, scheduling time to reflect on your progress by keeping a diary can be helpful. For others, signing up for a group where everyone has a common goal can help to strengthen your resolve, as can sharing even small progress with others.'

Magdalena Bak-Maier, a neuro-scientist and coach, encourages people to make a written plan which sets specific goals. 'You might have announced: this year I'm going to write a novel or I'm going to run a half-marathon, but those are just ideas, not plans. A plan is: I'm going to get up at 6:30 Monday to Friday and write 500 words of my screenplay before I leave for work. Or I'm going to sign up for 10 water-colour classes and go every Monday at 18:00.'

Finally, be kind to yourself. 'Anticipate lapses and plan for them,' says Ryan. 'Changing habits, or establishing new ones, is a motivational marathon, with inevitable trips along the way.' It's important to stay optimistic. 'Feeling negative and self-critical actually reduces your willpower,' says Ryan. 'Negative moods are the enemy of willpower and self-blame is the main culprit.'

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Text B

The article below is about some of the benefits of making resolutions.

I like a challenge, and what better way to push myself than at the start of the New Year with wholly ridiculous resolutions?

One year, I randomly decided I'd practise yoga every day for the following 12 months without ever having tried yoga before – very ambitious. Last year I promised myself I'd go bouldering every single Thursday ... indefinitely. And of course, for the past two years, I've attempted to have a plant-based diet for the first month of the year knowing I love cheese more than most things in this life. Needless to say, all my grandiose New Year's resolutions have been a tremendous flop.

Essentially every year I set myself up for failure. Normally I feel exceptionally guilty about how much of a slob I've become by the end of the year and try to rectify it by attempting resolutions that are ambitious at best and delusional at worst.

Luckily, I'm not alone with my futile declarations as 80 per cent of New Year's resolutions fail within weeks. I lasted 27 days the first time I attempted a plant-based diet – all it took was one encounter with a margherita pizza and all my hard work was undone 4 short days before the end of the challenge. And when it came to bouldering, I got a (not so cheap) 10-day pass to a climbing centre, and let's just say a year later there's still about four visiting passes left to use.

Yes, my resolutions never go to plan, but they have taught me a wealth of new, sometimes pointless, skills. I'm often too hard on myself and forget all the days I did actually stick to my challenges and what I'd gained from them. I lasted 27 whole days as a vegan yet I was more upset about the four days that I didn't manage. I stuck at it the next time though, learning from my mistakes.

The fully vegan diet didn't stick but I now know how to realistically work more plant-based meals into my diet rather than going cold turkey (excuse the pun) and spending a whole month in near starvation. And I didn't do yoga every day, because that's ridiculous, but I did practise it daily for the first few months and continued on and off long after that – it truly made me feel stronger and happier in myself. I definitely don't go climbing as often as I'd like to but the point is I still go when I can.

Being realistic in my expectations is where I really fail every year. Daily challenges, massive changes to my diet and physical activity can't just happen overnight.

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