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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/23**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **October/November 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.

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: Why I hate museums

Sophisticated travellers visit museums. Forget beautiful parks, and trendy cafés – what tourists really want, you're told by the tour guide, is to spend an 'unforgettable hour' inside the city's thrill-a-minute Pencil Museum. Apparently, it hosts drawing workshops for families and the biggest pencil collection in the world ... can't wait.

Before entering, ask yourself honestly whether this is really what you want to do. On a recent day trip to a capital city, I was told that I shouldn't leave without visiting a particular museum. When my friend and I arrived there, queueing times were estimated at 45 minutes. I was torn, but she simply asked: 'What do you really feel like doing?' We left the museum, bought street food from a nearby stall and spent two hours relaxing by the river, enjoying idle conversation. It was wonderful.

If you want to witness busloads of school parties shuffling in silence down hospital-like corridors and bored security guards waiting to pounce on anyone who dares to laugh or eat a biscuit, then museums are for you.

There are some decent museums. I enjoyed a trip to the Old Operating Theatre and Museum in London but perhaps that's because I find human organs in pickling jars and medical equipment endlessly compelling. Ceramics, on the other hand, are just dull and old paintings all look the same.

Museum visitors, and staff, are pretty clueless when it comes to, say, Oriental tapestry, yet museums offer painfully little information about the items on display. How useful is a notice that reads 'clay pot, 1200–1300, Russia'?

In 2005, street artist Banksy managed to hang a piece of fake prehistoric rock art, depicting a cave man with a shopping trolley, on the wall of a well-known museum. Days passed before anyone noticed. It's estimated that around 20 per cent of the paintings held by our major museums are fakes.

Famous museums are too crowded: tourists make a beeline to the only painting they've heard of. Worse still, there was even a #museumselfie day last year to add to the shallow and irrelevant 'interactive' displays. Not all museums are free to enter and most of the objects are kept out of sight. In 2004, Australian museums held a total of 54.9 million objects and artworks, but only 5.3 million of these were on display for public viewing.

Finally, no museum visit is complete without being asked to exit through the gift shop, where you'll be lured into purchasing overpriced postcards and novelty mugs.

Text B: Museums are changing

As guests enter the lobby of the museum they are greeted by a two-metre tall blue plastic snail, surrounded by a group of squealing, joyful children daring to touch it. It might not be what most people expect from one of the oldest museums in the country.

The new identity is part of a rebranding trend. Museums are taking revolutionary steps – some cheered, some not – to attract wider, more diverse audiences and their money.

‘Museums need to offer new experiences which may be novel, inspirational and meaningful,’ said museum director Michael Karatzas. ‘The business model at our museum was not sustainable.’

In 2019, the museum, which had previously not charged local residents or students for admission, introduced new fees. The museum also cut staff, reducing the number of curators. The changes worried many. University student, Taylor Parker, 19, says she finds browsing the exhibits calming and knows the health benefits. She admits she won’t visit as frequently now she has to pay.

The museum’s collection of regional art is worth the long drive from town to get here. Perhaps its most instantly recognisable object is the ‘LOVE’ sculpture. Since it was moved to the museum’s great hall last year, ten weddings have taken place in front of its huge letters.

Visiting museums regularly as an adult has been linked to positive emotions, such as optimism, hope and enjoyment along with increased self-esteem, a sense of identity and community. Many museums are adapting their access plans to consider health and wellbeing benefits, targeting specific groups such as those people who are vulnerable, socially isolated, lonely or unemployed.

‘The museum industry must modernise,’ explains Karatzas, ‘or galleries full of the world’s truly greatest creative art will be unseen.’

About that giant blue snail: it’s a precursor to an exhibition opening in June of brightly coloured animals made of regenerated plastic. They will be scattered around the museum with information about the environment and the impact of plastics. A virtual tour can be accessed via the museum’s website.

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