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### INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

This 2-page Insert contains the passages for comprehension.  
Please detach it from the Question Paper. Please retain this Insert for your lessons in Term 3.

Passage 1: <sup>Malcolm</sup> **Malcom Fort** believes that we should stay in our comfort zones.

- 1 Have you ever been accosted by well-meaning friends who urge you to "get comfortable with being uncomfortable" because "all growth starts at the end of your comfort zone"? There are also the motivational speakers and self-help book authors who make it their business to pressure you into reinvention. They tell you to "do one thing that scares you every day" while reassuring you that "every failure is another step to success". These misguided opponents of comfort zones bombard us with endless clichés to convince us to bow to their wisdom. They conceitedly enumerate their personal triumphs and insist that it is self-sabotage to not keep trying something new. 5 12
- 2 What is wrong with doing what we are good at? In today's turbulent world, all of us need a sanctuary – our comfort zone – where we can be at ease. Not only is it reassuring to go about life without worrying about keeping up with the Jones or side-stepping risks, but coasting along also allows us to conserve our energy, spending it only on the people and things that truly matter. In contrast, those who foolishly push beyond their comfort zone at work or in school unsurprisingly end up exhausted by their workload and have disappointingly little to show. Why stumble when we can sail through life? 10 12
- 3 Not only is it disheartening to be mediocre at tasks that do not play to our strengths, but straying out of our comfort zone can be disastrous. For instance, many captains of industry have floundered in uncharted ~~be~~ waters. Two decades ago, Starbucks believed that it could dominate Australia's coffee culture and expanded rapidly, only to realise that the locals were uninterested in its sweet concoctions. Lesson learnt? We continue to see multimillion-dollar mistakes today. Elon Musk, whose name is synonymous with futuristic engineering, thought that he could replicate the successes he forged at Tesla and SpaceX when he acquired communications giant Twitter. He came under attack from all quarters after his barrage of questionable decisions upset employees, users and advertisers. 15 20
- 4 Astute politicians know that to be elected, they must offer predictable politics. Entrenched in their comfort zones, voters want the assurance of the familiar. In contrast, mavericks infatuated with naive dreams of change often fail at the polls because they appear reckless. Before anyone concludes that this is a devastating loss for mankind, history is littered with lessons of charmers who have gained entry into the highest political offices on the back of seductive campaign promises. More often than not, their attempts to break up Big Business and redistribute profits to the masses backfire spectacularly, wrecking the companies and causing unemployment. Conversely, seemingly unremarkable leadership that leverage tried-and-tested collaboration with businesses enables countries to thrive. Time and again, stability and predictability have been shown to be requisites for prosperity and happiness. 25 30
- 5 There will always be naysayers who maintain that fresh ideas and audacity secure us first mover advantage. But do we really want to be the first to fail? We can be observant bystanders who, from the safety of our comfort zones, prepare for change and make sound decisions without bearing the costs of first-hand experience. This is the wise way to navigate the twenty-first century. 35

## Passage 2: Elijah Mumble makes a case for risk-taking.

- 1 When the late Professor Randy Pausch was teaching the "Building Virtual Worlds" course at Carnegie Mellon University, he would give "The First Penguin" award to the team that risked it all in its pursuit of a new idea. The award, which celebrates out-of-the-box thinking, was inspired by the observation that there will always be one penguin that dived into waters where there may be predators while the rest of its colony hesitated. Unlike the proverbial first penguin, mankind is hardwired to be risk averse. This evolutionary adaption has undeniably served us well, but it enfeebles when we should be racing to build a better mousetrap. 5
- 2 In an era when leaving our comfort zones allows us to enjoy greater success, we must stop counting the costs of risk-taking. Although ambitious failure may momentarily delay us, risk-taking compels us to recognise inadequacies and develop strengths that have never crossed our minds. In addition, when risk is reframed as the antidote to stagnation, we feel better and remember experiences that help us to succeed the second time round or move into a previously unexplored field. An excellent case in point would be astronauts, who would not have made it past the application stage if they had comfort zones. Game enough to work with anyone and capable enough to take on any task, they successfully complete months-long missions. Gratifyingly, their contributions to space science enhance life on earth in multifarious ways. 10
- 3 In hypercompetitive business arenas, the individual who takes a calculated risk shines and he outpaces contemporaries who rest on their laurels. A breath of fresh air in staid organisations that need rescuing, he is the visionary candidate who will navigate economic turbulence and implement sweeping changes. Consider Netflix, which started as a DVD rental business but was relaunched as an immensely profitable video streaming service by its maverick founders. Now that other companies have borrowed its business model and fickle-minded subscribers are seeking other distractions, it will have to reinvent itself again to remain a powerhouse in the entertainment industry. 20
- 4 The risk averse like to describe themselves as responsible or cautious, but the truth is that they are timid-minded individuals who hedge their bets to the point of inaction. Paralysed by the thought of failure, they lack the fortitude to make the world a better place. In contrast, the bravely social-minded catapult themselves into the fray, jeopardising their safety in the public square and cyberspace to campaign for pressing concerns. A David against Goliath<sup>1</sup> fearlessness is also on display when small countries admonish big countries for bullying them and come together to form groups to advance their interests, be these climate financing, technological transfers or trade agreements. Grabbing the bull by its horns, they maintain control of the agenda. 30
- 5 The age-old "nothing ventured, nothing gained" adage remains relevant today and even takes on greater relevance given global tensions and spiralling costs. Even if we balk at plunging headlong into danger, we must be entrepreneurial enough to venture in a new direction when the opportunity presents itself. Not only will we become more accomplished, we will be the pioneers who re-write our society's destiny. 35

### Reference

"The Last Lecture" by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow

<sup>1</sup> In modern usage, the "David against Goliath" reference describes a situation in which a smaller or weaker person or organisation faces a bigger or stronger opponent and even wins in an unusual or surprising way.