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IUMW4005
WAYS OF THINKING

Portfolio of Writing

1500 Words Total

- 1/ The contemporary human - Divergent thinking - persuasive and descriptive writing. (500 words)**
2/ Problem solving: Convergent thinking and Expository writing. (500 words)
3/ Who am I? Lateral thinking and narrative writing. (500 words)

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SEMESTER/YEAR	: SEMESTER 2, YEAR 1
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SUBMISSION DATE	: 12 th SEPTEMBER 2025, 11:59PM (UK TIME)

1. The Contemporary Human: Technology vs Humanity

People today are living two lives at once: one in the real world and another online. Smartphones, social media, and artificial intelligence have become part of who we are, in some essence, it defines us as a humanity. Many of us spend more hours each day looking at screens than talking to people face-to-face. In this sense, humans are slowly turning into digital beings, and overtime we ponder, “*Who are we without technologies?*” Nowadays, there is a term to describe these beings as ‘chronically online.’ According to an article by The Strand, the term ‘chronically online’ describes people who use social media so much that they lose touch with reality. Struggling to form real-life connections and hold healthy conversations. Examples include users turning normal experiences like making friends or disliking someone into exaggerated online expressions, and ordinary routines into “aesthetics.” (Goraieb, 2022)

Think of a normal day. The first thing most people do when they wake up is check their phone, news, emails, messages, and social media updates before breakfast. Our memories are stored on cloud servers instead of photo albums; while friendships are maintained through texts and comments instead of in person. Even emotions are filtered through emojis and reaction buttons. This shift has benefits. Social media connects people across the world, someone in a rural town can share their ideas with millions. Activists can raise awareness quickly, people can learn new skills from online platforms without leaving home. These tools expand what it means to be human and allow us to share our lives more widely than ever before.

That being said, we must not turn a blind eye to its risks as well. Algorithms decide what we see and sometimes even what we believe. People often compare themselves to filtered images of others and feel inadequate. In the UK, a report called Comparison Culture 2023, where they conducted a study to get an overview of how severe comparison culture is among Gen Z. A large majority, 89%, engage in online comparisons with others, and 59% do this daily. About 93% feel pressure to compare themselves in different areas of life, with 44% feeling the most pressure about body image and 34% about wealth. After comparing themselves to others online, 36% feel jealous, 32% feel unsatisfied, and 96% report being emotionally impacted in some way. (Team Cybersmile, 2023)

The more time we spend online, the more we risk losing focus on real-world relationships. Technology is shaping us, but it is also shaping how we think, what we value, and even how we define ourselves. Still, this digital shift does not mean we are less human. To be human is to evolve, humans have always adapted to new tools, from fire to electricity to computers. Today’s tool is the smartphone, and tomorrow’s may be artificial intelligence; instead, the challenge is to use technology in ways that serve us rather than control us.

The Forbes article compared how using technology today is like having a bad relationship with alcohol, where not having cultural guidance leads to misuse. Our reliance on smartphones has grown without centuries of knowledge about how to use them responsibly. Most of us now spend more than 11 hours a day on digital media, which is designed to keep us interested with data-driven algorithms. (Bornet, 2023) The modern human is not only someone who walks through physical streets but also someone who scrolls through digital ones. We exist in two places at once, and both matters. The question is not whether we are becoming digital beings, but how we can live well in both worlds.

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2. Problem Solving: Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment is a major problem in many countries. Even when students finish school or university, many still struggle to find work. In Malaysia, as of 1st July 2025, the unemployment rate between the age group of 15-24 is 10.2% whereas the age group 15-30 is 6.2%, according to the data collected by Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). Such issues create stress, financial problems, and lost opportunities. The causes are clear, and so are the possible solutions.

First and foremost, one reason is the skills gap. Schools often teach theory but not the practical skills employers want. For example, many jobs today require digital knowledge, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, but students may not learn these in class. The majority, if not all students, are often taught how to score on their examination and other assessments to get good CGPA. As a result, graduates leave school with certificates but lack the training needed to succeed in the workplace.

Another reason is lack of experience. Companies often want workers who already know how to do the job, some even expect the graduates to have a few years of experience under their belt in the related field. But young people cannot gain experience if no one gives them a chance. Internships do help to benefit the students, but many are unpaid, which means only those with financial support can take them. This creates inequality. In addition to that, interns are often asked to do menial tasks that do not help them to gain any related experience.

The economy also plays a role. In difficult times, businesses cut entry-level jobs first, the COVID-19 pandemic showed this clearly, as youth unemployment rose sharply while companies reduced hiring. In many cases, young workers are seen as easy to replace, which makes them more vulnerable. During the height of COVID-19 in Malaysia, Malaysia Now reported the recession worsened employment and income challenges for Malaysia's youth, who make up 16.7% of the labour force and already faced higher unemployment than adults. Youth unemployment rose from 10.5% in 2019 to 12.5% in 2020, with job losses hitting young and lower-income workers hardest, especially in middle- and low-skilled jobs. Even graduates were severely affected, with unemployed graduates increasing by 22.5% to over 200,000 in 2020, along with declines in labour participation, salary cuts, and a forced shift into self-employment. (Aun and Kevin, 2021)

With every cause, solutions do exist. Firstly, schools and governments should improve skills training. Programs that connect education directly to industry needs, like apprenticeships or vocational courses, help bridge the gap. Secondly, there should be fair, paid internships. If young people are expected to work and learn, they should be compensated. Paid opportunities make it possible for everyone, not just the wealthy, to gain experience. And lastly, government policies can make a difference. Tax breaks for

companies that hire young workers, support for start-ups, and career guidance in schools can all help reduce the problem. Encouraging entrepreneurship is also important, as many young people can create their own opportunities if given the right support.

Youth unemployment is more than a personal issue. It affects whole societies. Without jobs, young people lose confidence, delay building families, and feel excluded. Moreover, youth unemployment slows down economic growth by lowering productivity. This is especially true in countries with a lot of young people, where a lot of the workforce is not being used. It also makes people spend less due to those who are unemployed have less money to spend, which hurts businesses and slows growth. (Generation, 2022) But with practical steps such as training, fair work experience, and supportive policies, the problem can be reduced. The solutions are realistic, and what is needed now is commitment to act.

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3. Who am I? Conversation with Alternate Self

One day, I was walking home on a brick pavement under a cloudy sky when I saw someone who looked exactly like me, walking from the opposite direction of me on the other side. It was almost like looking into the mirror; same scrunch up face when in thought, same gait, same exact habit of adjusting glasses. But she was somehow different...? She stood straighter, dressed sharper, and presented herself with confidence.

It felt like meeting a version of myself from an alternate universe. She turned her head to the left and saw me. Suddenly, she was telling me how she was the one who made different choices, the one who took risks instead of playing it safe. She showed me moments I never experienced: speaking on a stage, collecting awards, traveling to new countries, taking chances I was too afraid to try. At first, I felt jealous and I loathed her for showing off the version of me that I could have had if I was not a coward. Her life seemed fuller and braver. I start to wonder where I went wrong?

Maybe I should have chosen to study social sciences instead of pure science in high school? Maybe I should have studied harder during the pandemic lockdown? Maybe I should have given more thoughts on what I should study in university? Maybe I should have explored more during my university days? Maybe I should have been doing more internships instead of rotting on my bed wondering what kind of human being I will become? As I was standing there face to face with this perfect version of myself, in a constant cycle of wondering what my life could've become, she spoke again.

She admitted something surprising to me: she envied me too; lame ol' me. While she chased big dreams, she lost time for close relationships. Although I do not have millions of friends, I did form meaningful, intimate, and real relationships with those close to me, according to her. She said I had built a life with stability and peace, things she sometimes wished she had. Listening to this, I guided the both of us to the nearest bench, and we talked for hours; time stopped for a moment, and we realised that neither of us was "better" than the other. We were simply different. Her path was full of risks and rewards, mine full of steadiness and care. Both had value. True to Viktor E. Frankl words in his work *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Life never ceases to have meaning."

When she left, I thought about what her presence meant. Maybe our lives are not one fixed story but many possible versions. We are shaped by choices, but also by the choices we could still make. Meeting her reminded me that I do not have to stay the same. I can take risks, even small ones, to grow into new versions of myself that would open another branch in my story. As I walked home alone, I carried her courage with me. Maybe tomorrow I will try something new. Maybe that would open another branch in my story. Maybe I could actually live my life instead of wondering.

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