

Exam practice 7

Changing the world

A There is a charismatic billionaire who wants to change the world for the better with new technology. His plans include making travelling to Mars possible within our lifetime, and slowing climate change on Earth. It sounds like the plot of a Hollywood blockbuster, but these are the dreams of Elon Musk, the co-founder of PayPal who now spends a great deal of his time and money working out solutions to the problems facing the modern world.

B As a young boy, Musk taught himself computer coding and software. He also had talents as an entrepreneur – he designed and sold a video game called *Blastar* by the age of twelve. After studying economics and physics at university, Musk moved to Silicon Valley to focus on three areas – the internet, clean energy, and space travel. Musk's first success was transforming e-commerce with PayPal. After selling PayPal to eBay for \$1.5 billion in 1999, he then turned his attention to space exploration.

C NASA has recently cut back on its programme of space exploration, but it still sends some satellites and rockets into space. Musk's company SpaceX, which focuses on reusable technology and innovation to get astronauts into space, has helped to launch many of these. SpaceX hopes to cut the costs of space travel too, believing that the company could help to reduce fuel costs dramatically. Musk hopes that, one day, reusable technology will make travel to Mars possible.

D Space travel is not the only area that has benefited from Musk's investments. Tesla Motors, Musk's company which develops electric cars, has grown in prominence over the last few years. One of its electric cars – the Model S – was recently found to be more reliable, and performed better, than all the other cars that were tested. The Model S car can travel 426 kilometres on a charged battery, and Musk is now investing in 'charger stations' so drivers can travel greater distances without worrying about losing power.

E While Musk is confident that his inventions can help to reduce climate change, he has also taken steps to ensure that solar energy use is extended across the USA. SolarCity, a company that he supports financially, installs solar energy systems in residential buildings, which helps to cut the use of fossil fuels. Musk has also called for a 'carbon tax' to be placed on large companies and domestic users as a way of funding further research into renewable energy. Changing the world, and our future in it, seems to be Elon Musk's greatest ambition.

Reading

- 1 Read the text and mark the sentences *true* or *false*. Provide evidence from the text to justify your answers.**
- 1 Elon Musk is only interested in making money.
.....
 - 2 Musk's company SpaceX uses technology that can be used again and again.
.....
 - 3 Musk believes only technology can solve climate change.
.....
- 2 Choose the correct answers.**
- 1 Elon Musk's earliest computing achievement was creating ...
A his own video game. B eBay. C PayPal.
 - 2 SpaceX sends ... into space.
A astronauts B astronauts and satellites
C astronauts, satellites and rockets
 - 3 Musk's 'carbon tax' would be paid by ...
A businesses. B the government.
C everyone.

Use of English

- 3 Find words or expressions in the text to match the definitions.**
- 1 having an attractive personality (*paragraph A*)
.....
 - 2 changing (*paragraph B*)
 - 3 the state of being important (*paragraph D*)
.....
 - 4 to be lived in (*paragraph E*)
.....
- 4 Complete the conditional sentences with the correct forms of the verbs in brackets.**
- 1 If people (drive) electric cars, less pollution would be created.
 - 2 NASA (save) a lot of money if it listens to Musk's advice about reusable technology.
 - 3 Unless people (invest) more money in solar energy, the problem of climate change will become worse.
 - 4 If Musk (not buy) Tesla Motors, the Model S might never have been developed.

Writing

- 5 Choose one of the tasks. Write 100–150 words.**
- 1 Write an opinion essay with the following title: 'Over the last 50 years, the world has become a better place to live.'
 - 2 Write a biography of a person who you think has done a lot to change the world for the better.

