



# English Sample Paper 1

1 hour

## Section A: Reading

You should aim to spend 30 minutes on this section.

**Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions which follow.** *Michael Palin is an explorer and TV presenter. Here he describes part of his challenging journey, in a De Havilland Twin Otter aeroplane, to reach the North Pole. The words in **bold** are explained in a glossary at the end of the text.*

### Day 1: The North Pole

- 1) It's 3.45 on a Saturday afternoon and I'm seventeen miles from the North Pole. Somewhere, a long way away, people are doing sensible things like watching cricket or digging gardens or pushing prams or visiting their mothers-in-law.
  
- 2) I'm squeezed tight into a small, noisy aeroplane descending through stale grey cloud towards an enormous expanse of cracked and drifting ice. With me are Nigel Meakin and his camera, Fraser Barber and his tape-recorder and Roger Mills and his pipe. With our two pilots, Russ Bomberry and Dan Parnham, we are the only human beings within 500 miles. Outside my window one of our two propeller-driven engines slowly eats away at a fuel supply which must last us another six hours at least. In little more than ten minutes our pilot will have to **fashion** a landing strip out of nothing more than a piece of ice - strong enough to withstand an impact of 12,500 lbs at eighty miles an hour. Below the ice the sea is 14,000 feet deep.
  
- 3) I'm sure I'm not the only one of us looking down on this **desolate** wilderness who hasn't wished, for a moment, that the North Pole, rather than being in the middle of an ocean, was solid, well-marked and even supplied with a hut and a coffee machine. But the cracked and **fissured** ice-pack offers no comfortable reassurance - no glimmer of any reward to the traveller who has made his way to the top of the world. The Arctic Ocean, known to the Victorians as the Sea of Ancient Ice, stares **balefully** back as we descend towards it, reflecting nothing but the question: Why?
  
- 4) It's too late to ask the producer now, too late to begin to **speculate** why I so eagerly agreed to come here, and completely out of order even to mention that if we survive this ice landing we have only another 12,500 miles to go.

5) At two minutes past four our De Havilland Twin Otter, an aeroplane designed in the fifties and much loved and trusted by Arctic flyers, is finally over the North Pole. One almost looks for a point, a peak, a curve offering **tantalizing** glimpses of those huge land masses - Alaska, Siberia, Scandinavia and Canada - which back on to the Arctic. But all there is to see is ice and the nearer we get to it the more evident it is that the ice is not in good shape. Russ, a self-contained, quiet man about whom I know nothing other than that my life is in his hands, leans forward from the controls, scanning the conditions below and frowning.

6) Technology cannot help him now. The decision as to how, when and ultimately whether to drop the plane onto the ice is for his judgement alone.

7) He clearly doesn't like what he sees and, by my watch, we have circled the roof of the world for nearly thirty minutes before a change in engine note indicates that he is at last throttling back in preparation for a landing. We drop low, running in over a tongue of open water, Russ staring hard at the ice as ridge walls taller than I'd expected rush up to meet us. Brace myself for impact, but it never comes. At the last minute Russ thrusts the overhead throttle control forward and pulls us up **banking** steeply away. He checks the fuel gauge and asks Dan, the young co-pilot, to connect up one of the drums for in-flight refuelling. Dan squeezes his way from the **cockpit** to the back of the plane, where he begins to fiddle around with spanners and tubes until the aircraft is rich with the smell of **kerosene**. Russ takes advantage of some marginally increased sunlight to attempt a second landing. Once again hearts rise towards mouths as the engines slow and a blur of ice and snow and pitch-black sea rises towards us, but once again Russ snatches the plane from the ice at the last moment and we soar away, relieved and cheated.

8) I make a mental note never to complain about a landing ever again. Russ circles and banks the plane for another fifteen minutes, patiently examining the floating ice for yet another attempt.

9) This time there is no pull-out. Six hours after leaving Eureka Base on Ellesmere Island, Canada, the wheels and skis of the Twin Otter find the ground, bounce, hit, bounce, hit, swerve, slide and finally grip the slithery **hummocked** surface. We are down and safe.

## Glossary:

- **Fashion** – make into something
- **Desolate** – uninhabited and giving an impression of bleak emptiness.
- **Fissured** - having long, narrow cracks or openings
- **Balefully** - in a way that seems to threaten to do something evil or to hurt somebody
- **Speculate** - form a theory about a subject without firm evidence
- **Tantalizing** – tormenting or teasing with the sight or promise of something unobtainable
- **Cockpit** - a compartment for the pilot in an aircraft
- **Kerosene** - a light fuel oil used especially in jet engines
- **Banking** (the plane) – an aircraft motion used to change direction
- **Hummocked** - a hump or ridge in an ice field

## Section A: Reading questions

*Answer the following questions in sentences. Refer to the extract about Michael Palin's trip to the North Pole for your answers. The mark allocated is placed after each question. The mark will guide you by indicating how many points you should make.*

1. Paragraph 1 - What does the writer suggest might be a 'sensible' activity to do on a Saturday afternoon?

.....  
.....  
..... (1)

2. Paragraph 2 - What has the writer chosen to do on a Saturday afternoon instead?

.....  
.....  
..... (1)

3. How many men are travelling in the aeroplane?

..... (1)

4. Find two **adjectives** used to describe the ice in paragraph 3?

(i) ..... (1)

(ii) ..... (1)

5. Find an example of **personification** used to describe the sea in paragraph 3.

(i) .....

..... (1)

6. Find one **adverb** used in paragraph 4.

(i) ..... (1)

7. What challenges face Russ the pilot in paragraphs 5 and 6?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....(2)

8. Find three **verbs** used in paragraph 9.

(i) ..... (1)

(ii) ..... (1)

(iii) .....(1)

9. What do the following underlined words from the passage mean?

(i) **Brace** ..... (1)

(ii) **Descending** ..... (1)

(iii) **Expanse** .....(1)

(iv) **Withstand** ..... (1)



## Section B: Writing

*Spend 5 minutes planning your writing. Then spend about 25 minutes completing your response.*

Think about:

- how to start your writing
- how to keep it interesting
- how to conclude it

Choose one of the following tasks:

**EITHER:**

- 1) You have been given the opportunity to embark on an adventure trip of your choice. Describe an exciting day you spend on this trip.

**OR:**

- 2) Having just returned from the North Pole, you have been asked to write a blog for a travel website about the trip. Describe the excitement of this experience so that others feel inspired to go. What did you see there and how did it make you feel?

**Total marks for Section B: 20 marks**