

Skills test 4

READING

Driven by a dream

There is a ghost town in the middle of the Amazon rainforest – a little piece of the United States recreated in an utterly remote location, now overgrown with weeds and bushes, and only occasional visitors passing through. How did this distinctive Midwest small town get to faraway Brazil?

It was around 1927 that car manufacturer Henry Ford realized he needed to find a cheap source of rubber for the manufacturing of car tires. At the time, British companies in Asia held a monopoly on rubber, which they grew on enormous plantations in Malaysia. Ford found himself unable to negotiate favorable prices with them, so he decided to make rubber himself. Since all the rubber trees in Asia originally came from South America, he decided to buy land there. He bought more than two million acres from the Brazilian government in return for 9% of all the profits he was going to make; however, he never made any profit.

Ford had a grand vision for his town, which he named Fordlandia. He wanted the town to offer all the luxury ordinary workers could only dream of: brand new housing with all modern conveniences, a hospital, a library, a hotel, a swimming pool, tennis courts, and restaurants, and that's not all. Workers were paid 37 cents a day – which was almost twice the average wage in the USA at the time! Who wouldn't have liked to sign up?

Ford also wanted his workers to lead a clean, American lifestyle; as he said, his intention was "to cultivate workers and human beings". Unfortunately, he didn't do any research into local culture. Native Brazilian plantation workers were forced to learn and speak English, go to poetry readings, and, most crucially of all, eat American food all the time. Restaurants in Fordlandia only served dishes like hamburgers and hot dogs, pasta, and pizza. For healthier options, they had canned peaches, brown rice, and whole wheat bread. Any workers who were caught smuggling in Brazilian food were docked a week's wages – some even got fired. Disease and accidents with poisonous animals in the middle of the jungle were common. But workers suffered most from digestion problems because of the unfamiliar diet.

Ford also imposed American working hours. People had to continue working through the midday heat, instead of taking a siesta between an earlier morning shift and a late evening shift, as is often the custom in tropical climates. Fordlandia workers got so sick and tired of it all at one point in 1930 that the American managers had to flee the town, and the Brazilian army marched in to restore order.

The rubber plantations also turned out to be a disaster. The plantations in Asia were successful because the land was fertile and there were no native diseases affecting rubber trees – unlike in Brazil. Ford also believed the more trees he planted the more rubber he would produce. But planting trees so close together helped diseases and insects to spread more easily from infected trees to the whole plantation, destroying everything time and time again. However, Ford blindly ignored this ... and ordered even more trees to be planted year after year.

In 1933, he began to realize his grand concept was not working, so he had another town, Belterra, built further down the river. In another 12 years, all his investment turned out to be a complete waste, and he had to sell everything back to the Brazilian government. By 1945, synthetic rubber was cheaper and easier to manufacture so nobody needed rubber plantations any more. Despite all Ford's money, not a tiny bit of rubber from Fordlandia or Belterra was ever used in the production of a Ford car! What is possibly even more shocking: in all those 18 years, Henry Ford himself never once visited Fordlandia, the 'dream town' he created.

1 Read the article. Are the following statements true (T), false (F), or not stated (NS)?

- There is an abandoned American town deep in the Brazilian jungle. ____
- In the late 1920s, Asia was the main source of rubber. ____
- Henry Ford paid two million dollars for land in Brazil. ____
- The town had a lot of facilities for the use of its workers. ____
- Workers in Fordlandia all had to use the local language. ____
- Brazilian food was sold at higher prices than American food. ____
- Ford didn't include a midday break in the working day. ____
- The company needed help from the local armed forces. ____
- Ford's orders for the plantations made things worse every year. ____
- The towns were sold back to Brazil at half the original price. ____

2 points for each correct answer

20

2 Match the underlined words in the text with the definitions.

- far from places where other people live _____
- feeling that you have had enough of somebody or something _____
- a level which is normal or typical _____
- the things in a house that make living easier and more comfortable _____
- different and easily noticed _____

2 points for each correct answer

5

Reading total

25

Skills test 4

WRITING

- 1 Write a short email to an old friend that you haven't seen for a long time but recently found on a social networking site. Include some of these details and/or your own ideas:

- how you tracked down and found the person
- explain where you first met
- some anecdotes to help your friend remember you
- names of other people that you both know
- ask about recent events in his/her life
- suggest getting together in person

Write your review in 150–180 words.

Shorter writing task

	10
--	----

- 2 Write the story of a significant event in the history of your country. Use the paragraph plan to help you. Add any other relevant details.

Paragraph 1: set the historical context

- when and where it took place
- what was happening in the time leading up to the event
- what was happening elsewhere in the world at that time

Paragraph 2: outline the chain of events

- who was involved
- what their roles were
- what they did
- what happened as a result of these actions

Paragraph 3: conclusion

- what the long-term consequences of the event were
- why it is significant for your country

Write your review in 150–220 words.

Longer writing task

	15
--	----

Writing total

	25
--	----

LISTENING

- 1 You will hear extracts of people talking in five different situations. Circle the correct answer.

- In Extract 1, the couple are arguing about ...
 - who should have picked up their son.
 - who is going to pick up their son.
- In Extract 2, the woman ...
 - has met both of the men before.
 - has only met one man before.
- In Extract 3, the man is ...
 - reluctant to talk.
 - eager to talk.
- In Extract 4, the conversation is a ...
 - business one.
 - social one.
- In Extract 5, the brother and sister end up ...
 - agreeing.
 - disagreeing.

1 point for each correct answer

	5
--	---

- 2 Listen again. Circle the correct answer.

Extract 1

- The man picks up his son ...
 - rarely.
 - usually.
 - all the time.
- At the end of the argument, they both feel ...
 - annoyed.
 - embarrassed.
 - apologetic.

Extract 2

- The host ...
 - is surprised to see them.
 - is glad that they are early.
 - is upset that they can't stay long.
- The male guest ...
 - would like to eat.
 - has already eaten.
 - wants to introduce Sarah to Fay.

Skills test 4

Extract 3

- 5 The caller is inviting Andy ...
a on a weekend vacation.
b to a social event.
c on a romantic date.
- 6 Andy is busy so ...
a he offered to call back later.
b the caller will call back later.
c he promises to call back later.

Extract 4

- 7 She calls to ...
a rearrange the meeting on the 23rd.
b confirm the meeting on the 23rd.
c cancel the meeting on the 23rd.
- 8 Mike ...
a agrees to having the meeting on the 3rd.
b doesn't commit to a date for the meeting.
c will forward the agenda to Nelly.

Extract 5

- 9 The sister is frustrated because ...
a she doesn't have enough time.
b the computer isn't working.
c her brother has interrupted her.
- 10 The brother ...
a knows what he's going to do in the future.
b wishes his sister wasn't applying for college.
c doesn't feel a college education is useful.

2 points for each correct answer

	20
--	----

Listening total		25
-----------------	--	----

Skills test 4

SPEAKING

1 Ask and answer the questions with a partner.

- Which do you think is the best phase of a person's life? Give reasons to support your answer.
- Who was your best friend when you were a child? Describe your friend and what your relationship was like. Are you still in touch?
- What qualities do you think an ideal teacher should have? Would you be a good teacher? Why?/Why not?
- Which of your past actions or decisions do you regret? What should you have done instead? What would you do now in the same situation?
- Where do you think you'll be living in five, ten, and 25 years' time? The same place or different? Give reasons for your answer.

max. 1 point for each topic

	5
--	---



2 Look at the photos. Compare the different types of homes. Imagine how you would try to sell them to a potential buyer if you were a real estate agent. In your opinion, what factors determine people's decisions about buying a home?

max. 10 points

	10
--	----



3 Discuss the statements. Do you agree or disagree?

- "People spend too much time thinking about the past. We should be concentrating more on the future."
- "Technology simply creates more problems than it solves."

max. 5 points for each topic

	10
--	----

Speaking total

	25
--	----

Skills test 4A total

	100
--	-----