

Next stop: Mars

People have been walking on the surface of Mars for more than a century, in fantasy. Now, however, the possibility is so real that many people think the question is not whether humans will go to Mars, but when they will go, how they will get there and who will go first.

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Although there is growing agreement that reaching Mars will be some kind of multinational effort, a prosperous nation, like the United States, seems capable of such an achievement by itself. For the US it is a political priority. *The cost of the project has been estimated at \$60 billion, about double the price of the Apollo Moon project.*

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Of all the other planets in the solar system, Mars is the most like Earth. With about half the Earth's diameter, with one third of the gravity and only one percent of the atmosphere, space vehicles have found that Mars hides an important amount of water under its surface and in its frozen poles. While Venus is closer, with an average temperature of about 850 degrees, it is hostile.

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From the presence of water and a relatively moderate climate comes another powerful attraction. The fascination with Mars centres around the issue of life. Mars is key to answering that critical question: Is there life somewhere other than on Earth?

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(A) COMPREHENSION (3 points)

a) Answer questions 1-2 according to the information given in the text. Use your own words. (1 point per answer)

- 1) Is reaching Mars only a scientific challenge? Why?
- 2) What is the most interesting reason for exploring Mars?

b) Are these statements true or false? Justify your answers with words or phrases from the text. (0.5 points per answer)

- 3) Mankind has actually set foot on Mars.
- 4) Reaching Mars can cost as much as reaching the moon.
- 5) Mars is the same size as the Earth.
- 6) Venus's climate is gentle.

(B) USE OF ENGLISH (3 points)

**7) Find in the text the word which has the following definition:
(0.25 points)**

"a plan for work or activity of any kind" (noun)

- 8) Find in the text one opposite for FRIENDLY (adjective).(0.25 points)**
- 9) Give a noun with the same root as POLITICAL (adjective).(0.25 points)**
- 10) Give one synonym for PROSPEROUS (line 5) (adjective).(0.25 points)**
- 11) Join the following sentences using a relative pronoun. Make changes if necessary.(0.5 points)**

A dog was sent into space in 1957. Its name was Laika.

12) Turn the following sentence into the passive voice (0.5 points)

We are going to invite Dr Livingstone to participate in the project.

13) Rewrite the sentence without changing its meaning. Begin as indicated. (0.5 points)

African countries are too poor to build a space station.

African countries aren't ...

14) Use the words in the boxes to make a meaningful sentence. Use all and only the words in the boxes without changing their form. (0.5 points)

useless	space	people	exploration	consider	many
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(C) PRODUCTION (3 points)

15) Write a composition (80-100 WORDS) Choose ONE of the following options. Specify your option.

a) Should the money of the Mars project go to poor countries? Why?

b) Do you believe there is life outside our planet? Why?

Answers

A)

Question 1:

No, it isn't. The United States consider the project of landing on Mars as a political matter. The reason is that the country which achieves this will gain a very good reputation and will be considered as an extremely powerful country.

Question 2:

The most interesting reason for exploring this planet is that it could reveal whether there is life outside our planet or not. Mars is the most likely planet to have living beings, apart from the Earth, because it has water and a mild climate (compared to other planets).

Question 3:

False. *People have been walking on the surface of Mars for more than a century, in fantasy.*

Question 4:

False. *People have been walking on the surface of Mars for more than a century, in fantasy.*

Question 5:

False. *With about half the Earth's diameter,...*

Question 6:

False. *While Venus is closer, with an average temperature of about 850 degrees, it is hostile.*

B)

Question 7: project

Question 8: hostile

Question 9: politics/politician...

Question 10: rich

Question 11: *A dog, whose name was Laika, was sent into space in 1957.*

Question 12: *Dr Livingstone is going to be invited to participate in the project.*

Question 13: *African countries aren't rich/wealthy enough to build a space station.*

Question 14: *Many people consider space exploration useless.*

C)

Question 15:

This is a sample composition on option b)

Should the money of the Mars project go to poor countries? Why?

There is no doubt that space exploration is an exciting subject that appeals to all kinds of people. To prove this, we only have to think of the first time man landed on the Moon and how this adventure was followed on TV by millions of people all over the world. However, space projects are becoming more and more expensive while Third World countries are poorer and poorer.

Although finding out whether there is life in Mars is very appealing, the humankind can wait a few years longer to get the answer to that question. Anyway, we are not sure whether we will ever solve this mystery. However, poor countries really need money from the rest of the world in order to survive. Lots of people starve every day and time does matter to them because they have not got much left. So, the money invested on the Mars project, or part of it, should be given to the Third World.