

**Select Readings, Second Edition**  
**Intermediate, TOEFL®iBT-Style Midterm**

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

**High-Tech Times**

**Science fiction is now a reality**

Flying cars! Robot teachers! Jet packs! Sounds like the stuff of the newest Hollywood science fiction blockbuster, right? Not anymore. Technological advances over the past 2,000 years have actually come about relatively slowly—electricity, the automobile, telecommunications, and air travel being some of the most obvious innovations of our modern times. However, since the arrival of the Internet some twenty years ago, it seems that we are suddenly moving at warp speed. Here, we take a look at some of the most exciting new technological creations of the past year and how they may just change all of our lives.

**Robots teach English in South Korea**

South Korea, which employs more than 30,000 foreigner educators to teach English, has some new plans for its English-language classrooms. Meet *RoboTeacher*. Starting in late 2009, students in several schools started learning from these brightly-colored little androids, and the results seem promising.

Down the line, the government plans to introduce the RoboTeacher into more and more schools—as many as 20 over the next year—in an effort to give South Korean students a head start in English. Not surprisingly, RoboTeacher has many flesh-and-blood teachers more than a little worried. With a cost far more modest than maintaining a human teacher, experts say the androids could eventually make foreign English teachers pretty much redundant<sup>1</sup>.

**The world's first practical jetpack?**

Since the 1930s, when the first images of future transport appeared on movie screens, the jetpack has always stood out. However, with the exception of the clumsy *Bell Rocket Belt*, developed in the 1960s, no one has been able to make the idea 'fly.' Enter New Zealand inventor Glenn Martin, who has spent nearly 30 years developing what he calls the world's first practical jetpack—the *Martin Jetpack*.

At first glance, the Martin Jetpack doesn't really appear to be practical. It looks more like two leaf-blowers attached to a lawn mower<sup>2</sup> engine. While the design details may still need to be worked out, the Martin Jetpack could just bridge the gap between fantasy and reality. With its 200-horsepower engine, the jetpack is supposed to be able to take its operator to a height of 750 meters. The inventor hopes to start sales by early 2011. But with a price tag of around \$100,000, don't expect to see too many people wearing it to school or work soon.

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<sup>1</sup> **redundant** no longer necessary

<sup>2</sup> **lawn mower** a machine for cutting grass

### **Flying car changes the morning commute**

When the co-founders of Massachusetts-based Terrafugia, husband and wife team Carl Dietrich and Anna Mracek Dietrich, teamed up with a group of aeronautics<sup>3</sup> engineers, they entered an entirely new **frontier**. And their invention, the *Transition*, could just redefine the idea of door-to-door travel. The Transition is a street-legal, airbag-and-parachute-equipped flying car—and at only \$200,000, it costs less than a Lamborghini. The Transition can carry two passengers about 800 kilometers at a cruising speed of 169 km/h, and the first models will be available in 2011.

### **A real-life *Iron Man***

The XOS2, developed by Salt Lake City-based Raytheon Sarcos, is a real-life *Iron Man* suit. Demonstration videos have mesmerized all who have seen them. Allowing even the least **muscular** wearer to lift 90-kg weights easily, and to punch through thick pieces of wood that would ordinarily be difficult to cut with a saw, the XOS2 is like a superhero fantasy. Don't get too excited, though—the suit will only be available to the military and emergency workers for the time being.

1. According to the passage, advances in technology have been
  - moving at warp speed since the arrival of electricity.
  - obviously science fiction.
  - fairly slow over the past 2,000 years, until recently.
  - developed primarily for the movie industry.
2. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraphs 2 and 3?
  - The RoboTeacher has already demonstrated that it can help improve students' English.
  - Foreign teachers of English are already being decreased in favor of the RoboTeacher.
  - The RoboTeacher costs less to maintain than originally projected.
  - Each school in South Korea will eventually have 20 RoboTeachers to use.
3. The word **maintaining** in the passage is closest in meaning to
  - managing
  - recruiting
  - paying
  - assessing
4. Why does the passage say that the Martin Jetpack doesn't appear to be practical?
  - It's made out of leaf-blowers and a lawn mower engine.
  - The design doesn't look very sophisticated at the moment.
  - It doesn't really fly yet.

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<sup>3</sup> **aeronautics** the study of flying through the air

- It was created in the 1960s.
5. What is the main use of the **operator** mentioned in the passage?
- inventor
  - user
  - engineer
  - designer
6. The Martin Jetpack can
- travel a distance of 750 meters.
  - carry two passengers at a time.
  - be purchased for about \$100,000.
  - travel at up to 200 km/h.
7. In paragraph 5, **it** refers to
- jetpack
  - operator
  - inventor
  - price tag
8. All of the following is true about the Transition EXCEPT
- it can carry two passengers at a time.
  - it has both airbags and parachutes.
  - it costs less than a Lamborghini.
  - it currently goes about 800 km/h.
9. The word **frontier** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- territory
  - edge
  - country
  - inspection
10. Which of the following can be inferred from paragraph 7?
- The XOS2 is being used extensively in the construction industry.
  - The XOS2 will probably eventually be sold to the public.
  - To use the XOS2 effectively, the wearer should weigh at least 90 kg.
  - The XOS2 has already been featured in a superhero movie.
11. The word **muscular** in the passage is closest in meaning to
- imposing
  - competent

- healthy
- powerful

12. Which of the following inventions is NOT mentioned in the article?

- the automobile
- a flying car
- a teaching robot
- the light bulb

13. The purpose of the reading is most likely

- to compare newer technology with older science fiction.
- to give readers interesting information about new technological products.
- to persuade readers to buy one of the products featured.
- to inform readers about upcoming changes to certain types of careers.

14. Look at the four squares (labeled A–D) that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the paragraph.

**Of course at this price, not everyone will be able to afford to run out and buy one, but they may soon become more common than you think.**

When the co-founders of Massachusetts-based Terrafugia, husband and wife team Carl Dietrich and Anna Mracek Dietrich, teamed up with a group of aeronautics engineers, they entered an entirely new frontier. [A]  And their invention, the *Transition*, could just redefine the idea of door-to-door travel. [B]  The Transition is a street-legal, airbag-and-parachute-equipped flying car—and at only \$200,000, it costs less than a Lamborghini. [C]  The Transition can carry two passengers about 800 kilometers at a cruising speed of 169 km/h, and the first models will be available in 2011. [D]

Where would the sentence best fit?

- Position [A]
- Position [B]
- Position [C]
- Position [D]

15. **Directions:** An introductory sentence for a short summary of the reading passage is provided below. Choose the THREE sentences that contain the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they give information that is not in the passage, or are only minor ideas in the passage.

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The future may be here sooner than you think—several new inventions are coming soon that could change people’s lives.

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**Answer Choices:**

1. The XOS2, a special suit that gives its wearer incredible strength, has mesmerized people, though it may not be available to the public for some time.
2. In South Korea, a robot developed by foreign teachers is helping students get a head start on English, and may appear in classrooms across the country soon.
3. The Martin Jetpack, the world’s first practical jetpack, and the Terrafugia Transition, a flying car, could change the way that people go places.
4. In South Korea, an English-teaching robot has already shown good results in classroom use, and could eventually make foreign teachers of English there redundant.
5. The XOS2, a special suit that gives its wearer incredible strength, is also known as the Iron Man suit due to its appearance in a superhero movie.
6. The Martin Jetpack, the world’s first practical jetpack, and the Terrafugia Transition, a flying car, can be purchased for \$100,000 each.