**Assessment Task for Reading**

**Topic: Human Health Prospect**

This assessment task focuses on developing senior secondary students’ reading skills.

This set of materials contains the following:

* **The reading text**
* **A set of questions**
* **Suggested answers**
* **Annotated text**

**Reading Text**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1  5  10  15  20  25  30  35  40  45  50  55  60  65  70  75  80  85 | Distinguished judges,  **[1]**I am sure we all enjoyed the first speaker for the proposition’s speech just now. I was very interested to learn of breakthroughs in stem cell therapies, the amazing regrowth of damaged organs, implants which can restore sight, wonderful new drugs, and the many advantages of lasers in surgery. I congratulate the speaker on her research. I was not sure, however, how relevant any of this was to our debate today. The motion is “This House believes \_\_\_\_\_\_(A)\_\_\_\_\_”. Of course, new scientific discoveries will do good, but the debate concerns a much wider question. We are not claiming there will be no advances, but still feel sure the future for human health is darker than the proposition states. Has the speaker asked herself how many people will benefit from the treatments she describes so well? Surely, she cannot have failed to hear of the great crisis in health care costs even in the richest countries. So what chance is there of new expensive breakthroughs affecting the health of the majority of the world’s population?  **[2]** No, that approach to the question won’t do at all. Instead of starting with medical changes, we need to start by considering the human environment. In what directions are we moving? One of the first obvious points is that we are coming together in ever larger megacities. Cities have always been the unhealthiest places for people to live. Throughout history cities had death rates above birth rates but were continually repopulated by newcomers from the countryside. The reason is simple – the closer we live together, the more we pollute our environment and the easier it is for diseases to mutate, spread and flourish. Temporarily, this may not be true, but we are living in conditions which make a disaster possible.  **[3]** Then, there is more travel. More than 2 billion air journeys are now made each year. This creates a great opportunity for microbes. A new one can be a threat around the world in a few hours. By a new one I mean a mutation or possibly a microbe which existed in another species, possibly one humans rarely came in contact with, but has an opportunity to move into human hosts as people faced with ever-growing population numbers move into previously uninhabited areas. Many scientists believe this is what happened with the HIV virus.  **[4]** Megacities, mass travel, opportunities for diseases, and also global warming – these are all factors the proposition cannot deny. Rising temperatures will increase the speed with which smog forms. There’ll also be more pollen and other allergens. Forest fires will be more common and fill the air with dangerous particulates. The result for humans will be worse respiratory disease and lung damage. Global warming will also mean the spread of tropical diseases into new regions and they will do deadly work among populations with no inherited immunity to them. Climate change is also going to lead to water shortages and drought. Sadly, shrinking amounts of water mean more unhealthy water as the many heavy metals, phosphates, pesticides and industrial chemicals we pollute the soil with become concentrated in reservoirs and lakes. Problems with the world’s food supply might even leave people weak and not in a condition to cope with all the health challenges they might have to face.  **[5]** As these elements all move into place to create the perfect health storm, how are our defences looking? And this brings us to a very important matter which I assume, as the first didn’t, the next speaker for the motion will tackle – the anti-biotic crisis. For a few decades, antibiotics have transformed human health. They cured many deadly diseases and made possible lengthy operations. Ironically, they may have worked too well, so we consumed them in vast quantities, and even fed them to our farm animals. As a result, the bacteria we meet with now are strains which have mutated and are resistant to attack. Various very nasty diseases are making a comeback. Superbugs in hospital intensive care units and operating theatres are posing a very serious risk to patients’ health and even survival.  **[6]** Let us now look at one particular health hazard and see how attempts to deal with it present a far from rosy picture. My example is the mosquito and the train of diseases it carries including yellow fever, West Nile fever, dengue fever and probably the world’s largest killer, malaria. Global warming is indeed opening up new areas to this insect and its deadly parasites, and it is flourishing in megacities with endless victims to bite and ready supplies of stagnant water to breed in. And travellers can carry the infection to the untouched parts of the world where it can be passed on to uninfected mosquitoes and take hold in a new place.  **[7]** Many attempts have been made to control the problem, but nothing is simple. There are many different varieties of mosquitoes with very different feeding and breeding habits, and they carry various parasites. One solution is never likely to work. There was one seeming success story in Sri Lanka in the 1950s and 60s. Spraying with the insecticide DDT drastically reduced the number of mosquitoes, and the drug chloroquine worked well to cure malaria. But DDT was discovered to be highly toxic and its use was banned; chloroquine lost its effectiveness as the short lives of the parasites allows for speedy evolution, and population movements into the capital soon wiped out all the gains. A Chinese drug, artemisinin, helped for a time but resistance to it is growing. The insect repellent, DEET, was said to be able to discourage mosquitoes from landing and biting when rubbed on the skin. Well, it did for some time but research now shows it less and less effective. Another repellent, noontatone, is being talked off but it isn’t clear how effective it is and so far it costs HK$28,000 a kilogram. A vaccine to prevent malaria is being worked on – but so far not very successfully and in the face of some scientific opinion which says vaccines are only possible against viruses.  **[8]** Please don’t think I want to be negative about all this good work, but as you see, the insect and the diseases associated with it are affecting more people every year. I am really not sure how my dear opponents can see anything rosy in all of this. Trends in human history have created a dangerous situation; for the majority of people, common diseases are becoming more threatening; new diseases against which we have little immunity (think of AIDS, SARS, avian flu and MERS) are appearing and will continue to; and I fear new laser techniques as introduced by the proposition side are not going to protect us from them. |

**END OF READING TEXT**

**Questions**

**Read the debate speech and answer questions 1-14. Blacken the circle when appropriate.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Which of the following best describes the tone of the speaker’s comments on the first speaker’s speech? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | impressed |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | uninterested |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | ironic | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | worried | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
|  |  | | | | | |
| 2. | Which of the following best fits blank A? (line 8) | | | | | |
|  |  | | | | | |
|  | A. | the future for human health gets rosier and rosier. | | | | |
|  | B. | the future for human health gets worse and worse. | | | | |
|  | C. | new scientific discoveries do good to society. | | | | |
|  | D. | expensive scientific breakthroughs do not help improve human life. | | | | |
|  |  |  | A | B | C | D |
|  |  |  | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3. | What does “We” (line 9) refer to? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | human beings |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | scientific discoveries |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | the members in the opposition team | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | the members in the affirmative team | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4. | What does “that approach” (line 15) refer to? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | quoting the cost of expensive treatments |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | citing new scientific discoveries to improve human health |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | stating the gloomy future for human health | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | using the example of great crisis in health care costs in rich countries | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

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| 5. | According to paragraph 2, are the following statements True (**T**), False (**F**) or Not Given (**NG**)? | | | | | | | | | |
|  | (5 marks) | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | **T** | | **F** | | **NG** |
|  | (a) | Medical changes do not affect the natural environment. | | | | ○ | | ○ | | ○ |
|  | (b) | Living in the countryside is healthier than living in cities. | | | | ○ | | ○ | | ○ |
|  | (c) | Cities tend to attract immigrants. | | | | ○ | | ○ | | ○ |
|  | (d) | Urban diets are unhealthy. | | | | ○ | | ○ | | ○ |
|  | (e) | Diseases are easier to control in an urban environment. | | | | ○ | | ○ | | ○ |
|  |  |  | | | |  | |  | |  |
| 6 | What does “a new one” (line 27) refer to? | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  | |  |  |  | |  | |  | |
|  | A. | | microbe |  |  | |  | |  | |
|  | B. | | opportunity |  |  | |  | |  | |
|  | C. | | travel | A | B | | C | | D | |
|  | D. | | journey | ○ | ○ | | ○ | | ○ | |
|  |  | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Read paragraph 3 and complete the following paragraph with suitable words. Make sure the answers are grammatically correct. The first letters of the words have been provided and one has been done for you as an example. | | | | | | | | | |
|  | (7 marks) | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Paragraph 3 explains two problems connected with (e.g.) movement. As the human population (a) g\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, people tend to live in (b) a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ which were once inhibited only by animals. There humans get in (c) t\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with microbes we have (d) h\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ met before and these can cause us (e) s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ illness. And as there is so much worldwide (f) t\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, these new diseases can (g) s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ very quickly from country to country. | | | | | | | | | |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 8. | According to paragraph 3, what do many scientists think about the HIV virus? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | It usually infects people through air journeys. |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | It is highly contagious. |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | It has to live in a human host. | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | It is transmitted from animals to humans. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9. | According to paragraph 4, what are the three main problems caused by global warming? | | |
|  | (3 marks) | | |
|  | (a) |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | (b) |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | (c) |  |  |

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| --- | --- |
| 10. | Explain the expression “perfect health storm”. (line 45) |
|  | (2 marks) |
|  |  |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 11. | Which of the following strategies does the speaker employ to challenge the affirmative side (lines 46-48)? Tick the appropriate boxes. | | |
|  | (2 marks) | | |
|  | (a) | It surprises the audience with an unexpected point. | □ |
|  | (b) | It criticises the first speaker for neglecting an important issue. | □ |
|  | (c) | It shows that the speaker understands the proposition’s strategy. | □ |
|  | (d) | It makes the third speaker discuss the issue even if unprepared. | □ |
|  | (e) | It hides the weakness of the argument. | □ |
|  | (f) | It makes complicated claims. | □ |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 12. | Complete the following table according to the information in paragraph 7. | | |
|  | (6 marks) | | |
| Substance | | Purpose | Problem |
| Artemisinin | | (a) | growing resistance |
| Choroquine | | treats / cures malaria | (d) |
| DEET | | prevents bites /  acts as a repellent | losing effectiveness |
| DDT | | (b) | (e) |
| Noontatone | | (c) | (f) |

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| 13. | What does “good work” (line 80) refer to? |
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**END OF QUESTIONS**

**Suggested Answers to the Reading Task**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Which of the following best describes the tone of the speaker’s comments on the first speaker’s speech? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | impressed |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | uninterested |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | ironic | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | worried | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ |
|  |  | | | | | |
| 2. | Which of the following best fits blank A? (line 8) | | | | | |
|  |  | | | | | |
|  | A. | the future for human health gets rosier and rosier. | | | | |
|  | B. | the future for human health gets worse and worse. | | | | |
|  | C. | new scientific discoveries do good to society. | | | | |
|  | D. | expensive scientific breakthroughs do not help improve human life. | | | | |
|  |  |  | A | B | C | D |
|  |  |  | ● | ○ | ○ | ○ |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3. | What does “We” (line 9) refer to? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | human beings |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | scientific discoveries |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | the members in the opposition team | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | the members in the affirmative team | ○ | ○ | ● | ○ |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4. | What does “that approach” (line 15) refer to? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | quoting the cost of expensive treatments |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | citing new scientific discoveries to improve human health |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | stating the gloomy future for human health | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | using the example of great crisis in health care costs in rich countries | ○ | ● | ○ | ○ |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. | According to paragraph 2, are the following statements True (**T**), False (**F**) or Not Given (**NG**)? | | | | | | | | | |
|  | (5 marks) | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | **T** | | **F** | | **NG** |
|  | (a) | Medical changes do not affect the natural environment. | | | | ○ | | ○ | | ● |
|  | (b) | Living in the countryside is healthier than living in cities. | | | | ● | | ○ | | ○ |
|  | (c) | Cities tend to attract immigrants. | | | | ● | | ○ | | ○ |
|  | (d) | Urban diets are unhealthy. | | | | ○ | | ○ | | ● |
|  | (e) | Diseases are easier to control in an urban environment. | | | | ○ | | ● | | ○ |
|  |  |  | | | |  | |  | |  |
| 6 | What does “a new one” (line 27) refer to? | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  | |  |  |  | |  | |  | |
|  | A. | | microbe |  |  | |  | |  | |
|  | B. | | opportunity |  |  | |  | |  | |
|  | C. | | travel | A | B | | C | | D | |
|  | D. | | journey | ● | ○ | | ○ | | ○ | |
|  |  | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | Read paragraph 3 and complete the following paragraph with suitable words. Make sure the answers are grammatically correct. The first letter of the words have been provided and one has been done for you as an example. | | | | | | | | | |
|  | (7 marks) | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Paragraph 3 explains two problems connected with (e.g.) movement. As the human population (a) grows, people tend to live in (b) areas which were once inhibited only by animals. There humans get in (c) touch with microbes we have (d) hardly met before and these can cause us (e) serious illness. And as there is so much worldwide (f) travel, these new diseases can (g) spread very quickly from country to country. | | | | | | | | | |
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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 8. | According to paragraph 3, what do many scientists think about the HIV virus? | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | A. | It usually infects people through air journeys. |  |  |  |  |
|  | B. | It is highly contagious. |  |  |  |  |
|  | C. | It has to live in a human host. | A | B | C | D |
|  | D. | It is transmitted from animals to humans. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ● |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9. | According to paragraph 4, what are the three main problems caused by global warming? | | |
|  | (3 marks) | | |
|  | (a) | increase in the speed of smog formation |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | (b) | spread of tropical diseases |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | (c) | water shortages or drought |  |

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| --- | --- |
| 10. | Explain the expression “perfect health storm”. (line 45) |
|  | (2 marks) |
|  | A very bad condition for health when a series of factors/causes occur at the |
|  | same time |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 11. | Which of the following strategies does the speaker employ to challenge the affirmative side (lines 49-51)? Tick the appropriate boxes. | | |
|  | (2 marks) | | |
|  | (a) | It surprises the audience with an unexpected point. | □ |
|  | (b) | It criticises the first speaker for neglecting an important issue. | 🗹 |
|  | (c) | It shows that the speaker understands the proposition’s strategy. | □ |
|  | (d) | It makes the third speaker to discuss the issue even if unprepared. | 🗹 |
|  | (e) | It hides the weakness of the argument. | □ |
|  | (f) | It makes complicated claims. | □ |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 12. | Complete the following table according to the information in paragraph 7. | | |
|  | (6 marks) | | |
| Substance | | Purpose | Problem |
| Artemisinin | | (a) treats / cures malaria | growing resistance |
| Choroquine | | treats / cures malaria | (d) losing effectiveness |
| DEET | | prevents bites /  acts as a repellent | losing effectiveness |
| DDT | | (b) kills mosquitoes | (e) highly toxic / banned |
| Noontatone | | (c) acts as a repellent | (f) too expensive /  not sure if it is effective |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 13. | What does “good work” (line 80) refer to? |
|  |  |
|  | the attempts made to control the mosquito problems |

**END OF SUGGESTED ANSWERS**

**Annotated Text**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1  5  10  15  20  25  30  35  40  45  50  55  60  65  70  75  80  85 | Distinguished judges,  **[1]**I am sure we all enjoyed the first speaker for the proposition’s speech just now. I was very interested to learn of breakthroughs in stem cell therapies, the amazing regrowth of damaged organs, implants which can restore sight, wonderful new drugs, and the many advantages of lasers in surgery. I congratulate the speaker on her research. I was not sure, however, how relevant any of this was to our debate today. The motion is “This House believes \_\_\_\_\_\_(A)\_\_\_\_\_”. Of course, new scientific discoveries will do good, but the debate concerns a much wider question. We are not claiming there will be no advances, but still feel sure the future for human health is darker than the proposition states. Has the speaker asked herself how many people will benefit from the treatments she describes so well? Surely, she cannot have failed to hear of the great crisis in health care costs even in the richest countries. So what chance is there of new expensive breakthroughs affecting the health of the majority of the world’s population?  **[2]** No, that approach to the question won’t do at all. Instead of starting with medical changes, we need to start by considering the human environment. In what directions are we moving? One of the first obvious points is that we are coming together in ever larger megacities. Cities have always been the unhealthiest places for people to live. Throughout history cities had death rates above birth rates but were continually repopulated by newcomers from the countryside. The reason is simple – the closer we live together, the more we pollute our environment and the easier it is for diseases to mutate, spread and flourish. Temporarily, this may not be true, but we are living in conditions which make a disaster possible.  **[3]** Then, there is more travel. More than 2 billion air journeys are now made each year. This creates a great opportunity for microbes. A new one can be a threat around the world in a few hours. By a new one I mean a mutation or possibly a microbe which existed in another species, possibly one humans rarely came in contact with, but has an opportunity to move into human hosts as people faced with ever-growing population numbers move into previously uninhabited areas. Many scientists believe this is what happened with the HIV virus.  **[4]** Megacities, mass travel, opportunities for diseases, and also global warming – these are all factors the proposition cannot deny. Rising temperatures will increase the speed with which smog forms. There’ll also be more pollen and other allergens. Forest fires will be more common and fill the air with dangerous particulates. The result for humans will be worse respiratory disease and lung damage. Global warming will also mean the spread of tropical diseases into new regions and they will do deadly work among populations with no inherited immunity to them. Climate change is also going to lead to water shortages and drought. Sadly, shrinking amounts of water mean more unhealthy water as the many heavy metals, phosphates, pesticides and industrial chemicals we pollute the soil with become concentrated in reservoirs and lakes. Problems with the world’s food supply might even leave people weak and not in a condition to cope with all the health challenges they might have to face.  **[5]** As these elements all move into place to create the perfect health storm, how are our defences looking? And this brings us to a very important matter which I assume, as the first didn’t, the next speaker for the motion will tackle – the anti-biotic crisis. For a few decades, antibiotics have transformed human health. They cured many deadly diseases and made possible lengthy operations. Ironically, they may have worked too well, so we consumed them in vast quantities, and even fed them to our farm animals. As a result, the bacteria we meet with now are strains which have mutated and are resistant to attack. Various very nasty diseases are making a comeback. Superbugs in hospital intensive care units and operating theatres are posing a very serious risk to patients’ health and even survival.  **[6]** Let us now look at one particular health hazard and see how attempts to deal with it present a far from rosy picture. My example is the mosquito and the train of diseases it carries including yellow fever, West Nile fever, dengue fever and probably the world’s largest killer, malaria. Global warming is indeed opening up new areas to this insect and its deadly parasites, and it is flourishing in megacities with endless victims to bite and ready supplies of stagnant water to breed in. And travellers can carry the infection to the untouched parts of the world where it can be passed on to uninfected mosquitoes and take hold in a new place.  **[7]** Many attempts have been made to control the problem, but nothing is simple. There are many different varieties of mosquitoes with very different feeding and breeding habits, and they carry various parasites. One solution is never likely to work. There was one seeming success story in Sri Lanka in the 1950s and 60s. Spraying with the insecticide DDT drastically reduced the number of mosquitoes, and the drug chloroquine worked well to cure malaria. But DDT was discovered to be highly toxic and its use was banned; chloroquine lost its effectiveness as the short lives of the parasites allows for speedy evolution, and population movements into the capital soon wiped out all the gains. A Chinese drug, artemisinin, helped for a time but resistance to it is growing. The insect repellent, DEET, was said to be able to discourage mosquitoes from landing and biting when rubbed on the skin. Well, it did for some time but research now shows it less and less effective. Another repellent, noontatone, is being talked off but it isn’t clear how effective it is and so far it costs HK$28,000 a kilogram. A vaccine to prevent malaria is being worked on – but so far not very successfully and in the face of some scientific opinion which says vaccines are only possible against viruses.  **[8]** Please don’t think I want to be negative about all this good work, but as you see, the insect and the diseases associated with it are affecting more people every year. I am really not sure how my dear opponents can see anything rosy in all of this. Trends in human history have created a dangerous situation; for the majority of people, common diseases are becoming more threatening; new diseases against which we have little immunity (think of AIDS, SARS, avian flu and MERS) are appearing and will continue to; and I fear new laser techniques as introduced by the proposition side are not going to protect us from them. | Q.1  Q.4  Q.1  Q.2, 3  Q.5b  Q.5c  Q.5e  Q.7f  Q.6, 7g  Q.8, 7c, 7d  Q.8  Q.7a, 7b  Q.7e  Q.9a  Q.9b  Q.9c  Q.10  Q.11b, 11d  Q.13  Q.12b  Q.12d, 12e  Q.12a  Q.12c  Q.12f  Q.13 |

**END OF ANNOTATED TEXT**