



Answer ALL questions.

SECTION A: Reading

You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions which follow.

The writer, Ruben, describes what it is like to compete in the winter sports event called 'the luge'. The small sledge used in this event is also called a luge.

On The Luge

People always ask me, "What's it feel like to hurl yourself down an icy chute at 90 miles an hour? Is it scary?"

Of course it's scary. The luge has  
5 been called the last bit of insanity

left in the Olympic Games. The track is almost a mile long. A mile long chute of mean ice that starts 50 storeys up and snakes down the mountain. You take four runs down the mountain in a 50 lb (23 kg), four foot long sledge. The luge has no brakes. Once you start, you're committed. There's no stopping!



10 Watching it live, the luge is unbelievable! You're standing just a few feet away from a wall of ice. You hear an eerie sound – the rumbling sound of sledge against ice that gets louder and louder as it nears. Suddenly a blur shoots across the ice with a whoosh and disappears down the track.

15 The athletes each wear a helmet and a racing suit so tight that they look like they've been held by the nose and dipped in high-gloss paint. The uniform actually makes them look like human rockets. They paint streaks in the ice as they speed by. You're so close you can look them in the eye, and actually feel the wind they make as they whizz by at almost 90 miles an hour.

20 As they rocket by you ask yourself, "Will he make it? Is this really a race?". Maybe they aren't racing. Maybe they are being sacrificed. You watch each racer, murmur something softly to yourself, and swing around to look up the track for the next one. Watching for the next victim.

Would you like to know what it feels like to take a luge run? Fasten your seatbelts!

25 As you walk up to the start, you can look down the mountain and see the whole track. You're 50 storeys up, the hair stands up on the back of your neck, your stomach gets queasy, your mouth gets dry. You know what can happen down there. You sit on your sledge. Coach is standing right behind you.

My coach is a four-time Olympian and a three-time World Champion. Coach isn't just an expert. He was the best. When Coach says, "Jump!" I say, "How high?"

30 I'm sitting on the sledge and I'll be starting in a few seconds. I close my eyes, I take another mental run, imagining exactly how I will steer each curve. I open up my eyes,



take three deep breaths, hold on to the start handles, rock (one, two, and...) pull with everything I've got.

35 My gloves have spikes on their fingertips. I use them to push on the ice to build up more speed at the start. Then I lie down on the sledge.

40 As you're shooting down the track, the speed and the fear increase dramatically. At 70–80 miles an hour the world seems to turn into a blur. It feels like you're riding on a bar of soap. Everything happens so fast. You feel like a tape recorder stuck on fast-forward. You zip by trees and crowds and somehow try to stay relaxed. You bump a wall, your teeth chatter and your vision gets blurry. At the end you are exhausted, out of breath, sweating even though it might be 20 degrees below freezing.

45 After crossing the finish line, you sit up on the sledge. Then you slow down, slow down, slow down. As soon as you step off the sledge the adrenaline rush hits you. The fear hits you like a ton of bricks. "Wheeeeeewww!!!! I'm never doing that again!". You want to quit with every fibre of your being!

Fortunately, there's a walkie-talkie waiting for me at the finish. I pick up the walkie-talkie, and say, "Coach, this is Ruben." My knees are starting to shake...

50 "Ruben, you must point your toes more, and put your head further back! And Ruben you were so late into curve 6. You must steer harder, harder, harder. And Ruben, you must relax, relaaaax, be one with the sledge..."

Remember I was ready to quit? In the last 18 years I've taken thousands of luge runs. I've wanted to quit after every single one! It only took talking to Coach for 30 seconds to get me back on the sledge. If it had not been for the walkie-talkie, I never would have made it to the Olympic Games. Coach kept me from quitting.

55 I've got news for you. You will have bad days. Whenever things are not working out for you, whenever you're discouraged, whenever you are doubting yourself, don't go out and try to figure it out for yourself. That's when you're the closest to quitting. When things are not going your way, you need to pick up the walkie-talkie. Talk to your best friend, your coach, your mentor, your boss. Someone who cares for you.  
60 Somebody who will get you back on the sledge. Somebody who will get you back on track. Somebody who won't let you quit.



**SECTION A: Reading**

**You should refer closely to the passage to support your answers.**

- 1. Give **ONE** feature that, according to the writer, makes watching the luge 'live' so exciting.

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Q1

**(Total 1 mark)**

- 2. Look again at lines 14 – 18.

Give **TWO** comparisons that the writer uses to describe the athletes, in this section of the passage.

1 .....

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2 .....

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Q2

**(Total 2 marks)**

- 3. What do we learn about the character of Coach from what he says and how he is regarded by the writer? You may use **brief** quotations from the passage in your answer.

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Q3

**(Total 5 marks)**









## SECTION B: Reading and Writing

You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Remind yourself of the following passage from the London Examinations Anthology, and then answer questions 5 and 6.

From **Taking on the World**

*Ellen MacArthur became famous in 2001 when she competed in the Vendée Globe solo round-the-world yacht race. She was the youngest (24 years old) and probably the shortest (just 5ft 2in!) competitor. She came second, despite appalling weather, exhaustion and, as she describes here, problems with her boat.*

5 I climbed the mast on Christmas Eve, and though I had time to get ready, it was the hardest climb to date. I had worked through the night preparing for it, making sure I had all the tools, mouse lines and bits I might need, and had agonised for hours over how I should prepare the *halyard*<sup>1</sup> so that it would stream out easily below me and would not get caught as I climbed.

10 When it got light I decided that the time was right. I kitted up in my middle layer clothes as I didn't want to wear so much that I wouldn't be able to move freely up there. The most dangerous thing apart from falling off is to be thrown against the mast, and though I would be wearing a helmet it would not be difficult to break bones up there.

15 I laid out the new halyard on deck, flaking it neatly so there were no twists. As I took the mast in my hands and began to climb I felt almost as if I was stepping out on to the moon – a world over which I had no control. You can't ease the *sheets*<sup>2</sup> or take a *reef*<sup>3</sup>, nor can you alter the settings for the autopilot. If something goes wrong you are not there to attend to it. You are a passive observer looking down at your boat some 90 feet below you. After climbing just a couple of metres I realised how hard it was going to be, I couldn't feel my fingers – I'd need gloves, despite the loss of dexterity. I climbed down, getting soaked as we ploughed into a wave – the decks around my feet were awash. I unclipped my *jumar*<sup>4</sup> from the halyard and put on a pair of sailing gloves. There would be no second climb on this one – I knew that I would not have the energy.

25 As I climbed my hands were more comfortable, and initially progress was positive. But it got harder and harder as I was not only pulling my own weight up as I climbed but also the increasingly heavy halyard – nearly 200 feet of rope by the time I made it to the top. The physical drain came far less from the climbing than from the clinging on. The hardest thing is just to hang on as the mast slices erratically through the air. There would be the odd massive wave which I could feel us surf down, knowing we would pile into the wave in front. I would wrap my arms around the mast and press my face against its cold and slippery carbon surface, waiting for the shuddering slowdown. Eyes closed and teeth gritted, I hung on tight, wrists clenched together, and hoped. Occasionally on the smaller waves I would be thrown before I could hold on tight, and my body and the tools I carried were thrown away from the mast; I'd be hanging on by just one arm, trying to stop myself from smacking back into the rig.





35 By the third *spreader*<sup>5</sup> I was exhausted; the halyard was heavier and the motion more violent. I held on to her spreader base and hung there, holding tight to breathe more deeply and conjure up more energy. But I realised that the halyard was tight and that it had caught on something. I knew that if I went down to free it I would not have the energy to climb up once again. I tugged and tugged on the rope – the frustration was unreal. It had to come, quite simply the rope had to come free. Luckily with all  
40 the pulling I managed to create enough slack to make it to the top, but now I was even more exhausted. I squinted at the grey sky above me and watched the mast-head whip across the clouds. The wind whistled past us, made visible by the snow that had begun to fall. Below the sea stretched out for ever, the size and length of the waves emphasised by this new aerial view. This is what it must look like to the albatross.

45 I rallied once more and left the safety of the final spreader for my last hike to the top. The motion was worse than ever, and as I climbed I thought to myself, not far now, kiddo, come on, just keep moving... As the mast-head came within reach there was a short moment of relief; at least there was no giving up now I had made it – whatever happened now I had the whole mast to climb down. I fumbled at the top of the rig,  
50 feeding in the halyard and connecting the other end to the top of Kingfisher's mast. The job only took half an hour – then I began my descent. This was by far the most dangerous part and I had my heart in my mouth – no time for complacency now, I thought, not till you reach the deck, kiddo, it's far from over...

55 It was almost four hours before I called Mark back and I shook with exhaustion as we spoke. We had been surfing at well over 20 knots while I was up there. My limbs were bruised and my head was spinning, but I felt like a million dollars as I spoke on the phone. Santa had called on Kingfisher early and we had the best present ever – a new halyard.

Ellen MacArthur

<sup>1</sup>*halyard*: a rope used for raising and lowering sails

<sup>2</sup>*sheet*: a line to control the sails

<sup>3</sup>*reef*: reduces area of sails

<sup>4</sup>*jumar*: a climbing device that grips the rope so that it can be climbed

<sup>5</sup>*spreader*: a bar attached to a yacht's mast

























