

CLASS XII

SUBJECT - ENGLISH

TOPIC- COMPREHENSION PRACTICE

SPACE TOURISM

If NSYNC singer Lance Bass can't afford the \$20 million price tag for a ride into space now, he should try again in, say, a decade.

But within a decade or so, even some of Bass's fans could afford a quick and safe trip to the suborbital edge of space — roughly 50-60 miles above earth, says Frank Seitzen, president of the Space Transport Association.

"I think you're maybe 10 or 12 years away from having companies that are reliable and that can go through that process for \$5,000 or \$10,000," Seitzen said.

There's a hungry demand from would-be space tourists and a \$10 million prize is inspiring designers. The X Prize, created in 1994 to spur the development of new space travel technologies, has attracted at least 21 space vehicle designs from people in five countries. The non-profit X Prize Foundation, founded by a group of donors inspired by the \$25,000 Orteig Prize that Charles Lindbergh won in 1927, will give the prize.

Each design team is hoping to develop the first reusable rocket capable of blasting a pilot and two to five passengers to a height of 62 miles. NASA awards astronaut status for flights above 50 miles.

Some design contestants boast that such trips will be available by 2005, although the first few travellers will face \$100,000 bills until the market matures.

Despite steep prices and lagging technology, Seitzen and others are convinced that a lucrative travel business awaits. Space Adventures, a travel agency that helped coordinate the first tourist trip to the International Space Station last year by US businessman Dennis Tito, claims it has collected \$2 million in deposits from more than 120 would-be suborbital tourists. For client Wally Funk, who has paid her deposit, suborbital travel is a disappointing, yet feasible, alternative to decades of trying to reach space. Funk, a retired aviation safety investigator says, "I would do (a space station trip) in a heartbeat, but I can't because I'm not a millionaire."

Compared to Tito's ground breaking effort last year, future suborbital flights look easy. Tito was subjected to rigid medical requirements and a gruelling six-month training course in Russia.

But suborbital travellers will need only a few days of training and, pending FAA approval, would have to pass a much lower bar for medical standards.

"We always say that if you can safely ride a rollercoaster, then you are fit for a suborbital flight," says Space Adventures spokeswoman Tereza Predescu.

Four commercial spaceports, which launch rockets into space like airports launch planes, are already licensed to operate by the FAA in Virginia, California, Alaska and Florida, and they are eager to welcome extra business from space tourists, negating the need to catch a ride to Russia.

For those reasons, suborbital travel may represent a \$1 billion a year market,

according to Space Adventures President and CEO Eric Anderson. Translated, that's 10,000 travellers paying \$100,000 each during the first few years of adventure space travel.

Questions:

A. Choose the most appropriate option: (1 x 4 = 4 marks)

(a) Space adventure claims that.....

1. it is a lucrative business
2. it is a business of less profit
3. people don't want to go to space
4. none of the above

(b) Some design contestants feel convinced that.....

1. space trips will never be made available
2. space trips are not feasible
3. space trips are disappointing
4. space trips will soon be made available

(c) Tito.....

1. underwent rigid medical check ups
2. attended a six month training course
3. both (i) and (ii)
4. none of the above

(d) Suborbital travellers will need

1. two years training course
2. a few days of training
3. a lot of money
4. none of these

B. Answer the following questions briefly: 1 x 6 = 6

(a) Name the first tourist to the International Space Station. What difficulties did he face?

(b) Why is Lance Bass unable to have a ride into space now? What is likely to happen in a decade?

(c) Which two factors are inspiring the designers of new space vehicle—the reusable rocket?

(d) How do you think suborbital tourism is a poor alternative to space travel?

(e) What are the prospects of suborbital travel? Give two examples in support of your answer.

(f) What are the prerequisites for space travelling?

C. Find words in the passage similar in meaning as: 1 x 2 = 2

(a) profitable (lines 15 to 25)

(b) severe, exhausting (lines 25 to 30)