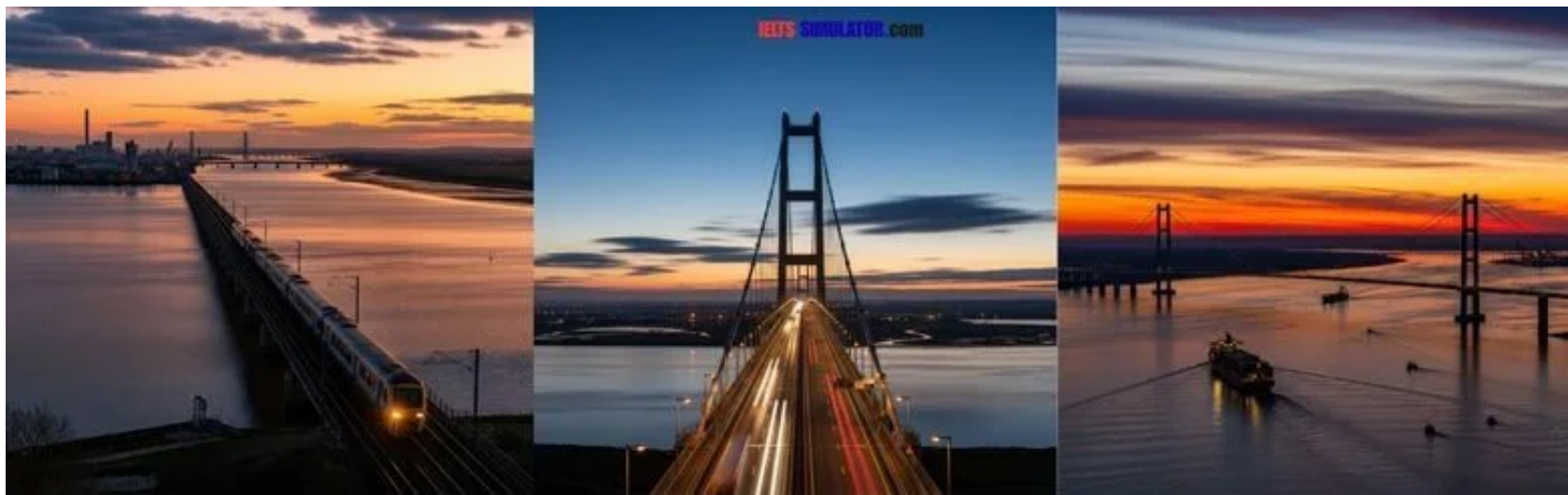


IELTS READING – Crossing the Humber estuary S2GT5



IELTS READING Crossing the Humber estuary Reading Practice Test has 10 Questions..

A For thousands of years, the Humber – an estuary formed Where two major rivers, the Trent and the Ouse, meet – has been an obstacle to communications along the east coast of England, between the counties of Yorkshire to the north and Lincolnshire to the south.

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Before the arrival of the railways in the 19th century, water transportation was the most efficient means of moving heavy or bulk freight, and the Humber, situated at the heart of the waterway system associated with the two major rivers, was one of the chief highways of England. q1 Its traffic brought prosperity to the settlements on its banks, particularly the city of Hull on its north bank, but the river itself tended to cut them off from some of their closest neighbours, as well as obstructing the progress of travellers moving north or south.

B q2 To cater for these local and, as time progressed, wider needs, ferries were provided across many of the streams flowing into the Humber, and in 1315, a ferry was established across the Humber itself between Hull and Lincolnshire. By 1800, this ferry had become fully q8 integrated into the overland transport system, but the changes associated with the industrial revolution were soon to threaten its position. Increased traffic encouraged speculators to establish rival ferries between Hull and Lincolnshire, notably a service between Hull and New Holland which opened in 1826. This crossing was considerably shorter than on the existing Hull to Barton service, which closed in 1851, unable to cope with the increased q9 competition from the rival service.

The New Holland ferry service then grew into a major link between the north and south banks of the Humber, carrying passengers, and cattle and goods bound for Hull Market. In 1968, there was briefly a ferry service from Grimsby to Hull involving q10 hovercrafts This did not last long as the hovercrafts could not cope with the demands of the River Humber. The ferry service between Hull and New Holland ended with the opening of the Humber Bridge in 1981.

C The bridge was the outcome of over 100 years of campaigning by local interests for the construction of a bridge or tunnel across the estuary. The first major crossing proposal was a tunnel scheme in 1872. q3 This scheme was promoted by Hull merchants and businesses dissatisfied with the service provided by the New Holland ferry crossing.Over the next 100 years, a variety of proposals were put forward in an effort to bridge the Humber. In 1928, a plan was drawn up by Hull City Council to build a multi-span bridge four miles west of Hull. However, the scheme was dropped after being hit by the financial woes of the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

D Government approval for the construction of a suspension bridge was finally granted in 1959, although it was not until 1973 that work finally began. q4 The reasons why a suspension bridge was chosen were twofold. Firstly, the Humber has a shifting bed, and the navigable channel along which a craft can travel is always changing; a suspension bridge with no support q11 piers in mid-stream would not obstruct the estuary. Secondly, because of the geology and topography of the area, the cost of constructing a q12 tunnel would have been excessive.

E q5 Work on the construction proceeded for eight years, during which time many thousands of tonnes of steel and q13 concrete were used and upwards of one thousand workers and staff were employed at times of peak activity. The designers had been responsible for two other major suspension bridges in Britain but, with a total span of 2,220 m, or almost a mile and a half, the Humber was going to be the longest suspension bridge in the world. Nowadays designers have computers, but back then everything was done with slide rules and calculators. The towers were concrete rather than the usual steel, since concrete was cheaper and would blend in better with the setting. The bridge was designed to stand for 120 years.

F Malcolm Stockwell, the bridgemaster, recalls that q6 when the bridge first opened, there wasn't a great deal of interest in it. Then children started visiting, and he remembers their astonishment at seeing the control room and all the lights. People who lived in towns on opposite banks a mile apart started crossing the river – a journey that previously might as well have been to the moon. The bridge brought them together.

G q7 The bridge opened up, both socially and economically, two previously remote and insular areas of England, and the improvement in communication enabled the area to realise its potential in commercial, industrial and tourist development. The bridge has saved many millions of vehicle miles and many valuable hours of drivers' and passengers' time – an important factor not only for the drivers and operators of commercial vehicles, but also for tourists and holidaymakers who would have had to travel around the estuary to reach destinations in the region. In the words of Malcolm Stockwell, 'Although it can't beat the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco for setting, it far outstrips it for sheer elegance and as a piece of engineering.'

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