You are going to read an extract from a book about a cycle ride from Russia to the UK. For questions **1-6**, choose the answer (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) which you think fits best according to the text.

7

Cycling Home from Siberia, by Robert Lilwall

We had been flying east all night and I awoke to notice that it was already daylight. Looking out of the window onto the empty landscape below, the dark shades of brown and green reassured me that, although it was mid-September, it had not yet started snowing in Siberia. I could see no sign of human life and the view rolled away in an otherworldly blend of mountains, streams and forests to an endless horizon.

My Russian neighbour Sergei woke up and smiled at me sleepily. I had told him that I was flying to the far-eastern Siberian city of Magadan with only a one-way ticket because it was my intention to return home to England by bicycle. 'But, Robert,' he had reasoned with me, 'there is no road from Magadan; you cannot ride a bicycle.' I explained that I had reason to believe that there was a road, though not many people used it these days.

'Alone?' he asked, pointing at me.

'No, I will be riding with a friend called Al.'

'Just one friend?'

'Yes just one,' I nodded. Sergei still looked unconvinced and with just one word 'Holodna' (cold) he pointed outside. I tried to bolster my case by explaining to Sergei with (*line 27*) hand gestures that I had a lot of warm clothes, though I left out the fact that, because my trip was self-funded I was on a tight budget. Most of my clothes and equipment had been bought at slashed prices. In reality, I was not at all sure they would be up to the job. This was especially true of my enormous postman's over-trousers which I had bought for £10.

My life of travel had all started in a lecture hall in Scotland several years ago. The hall that morning was full of students slumped in their seats. Some were taking notes, without energy. The lecturer droned on. I was thinking hard about a particular dilemma. Should I ask him or not? 'Well, why not?' I tore a fresh sheet from my pad and wrote, 'Hi Al, Do you want to cycle across the Karakorum Highway between Pakistan and China this summer? Rob.' In the row in front of me slouched Al, my old school friend. I tapped him on the shoulder and passed the note. He tried to decipher my scrawl, scratched his head, wrote something and passed it back. I unfolded it and held my breath while I read. 'OK,' it said.

Six years later I was going to join Al in Siberia. I had been working as a geography teacher and although I was still far from having full control of my classes, the job did tick many important boxes for me. It was frequently challenging, rarely boring, often fulfilling and of course there were great long

LIVEWORKSHEETS

holidays in which to chase adventures. Twice since I had started teaching I had used these holidays to go to meet Al. He had caught the adventuring bug in a big way after our bike ride through Pakistan and so had decided to do something far more relaxing than teaching: to cycle around the world. I was now joining him for the Siberian part of his trip.

Ever since that first ride we had taken together, Al had been setting himself greater and greater challenges. This round-the-world by-bike trip was certainly his greatest so far. At times he thought that the ride, or the road, would break him. Although it sounded tough, I envied him in many ways. He was having an extraordinary adventure, finding that he could deal with each new challenge even if it seemed impossible. He was proving wrong the sceptics who had told him he could not do it. He was doing something that scared him nearly every day and it made him feel alive.

1 In the opening paragraph Robert reveals that he was
- **A** grateful that the long night was over.
- **B** relieved that the winter weather had not yet arrived.
- **C** surprised that the area seemed uninhabited.
- **D** disappointed by the colours of the earth below him.

2 Robert uses the phrase 'bolster my case' in line 27 to show that he was trying to
- **A** change the subject.
- **B** end the conversation.
- **C** reassure Sergei.
- **D** correct Sergei.

3 Robert uses the example of the over-trousers to show that
- **A** he had been successful in getting local people to help him.
- **B** he had had a restricted amount of money to spend on clothes.
- **C** he was confident that he was well prepared for the extreme cold.
- **D** he had been able to negotiate good prices for his equipment.

4 What do we learn about Robert in the lecture hall?
- **A** He didn't want the lecturer to notice his lack of attention.
- **B** He was puzzled by something the lecturer had said.
- **C** He was unsure about what to write in the note.
- **D** He was apprehensive about his friend's reaction to his suggestion.

5 How can Robert's attitude to teaching best be summarised?
- **A** He felt it was the right career choice for him.
- **B** The holidays were the only positive aspect of the job.
- **C** He felt the job was getting too stressful.
- **D** He enjoyed having the respect of his students.

6 What does Robert say about Al's round-the-world trip?
- **A** Al never doubted that he would be successful.
- **B** Al tried to hide the difficulties he was facing from his friends.
- **C** Al was pushing himself to the limit of his capabilities.
- **D** Al was totally fearless as he enjoyed the adventure.

LIVEWORKSHEETS