Reading

3   **a**   Read the texts. Which community did each website target?

   a   Fashionable people ☐

   b   Readers ☐

   c   People who have goods to sell ☐

1

Pierre Omidyar, the son of French-Iranian immigrants, was already a millionaire before launching eBay. Omidyah's electronics site, e-shop, was bought out by Microsoft in 1996, making him a millionaire before he'd turned thirty. With this money, he set up an online auction company which allowed people to show items they wished to sell; other users then made a bid. Omidyar wanted to name the site Echo Bay Technology Group, but this name was already owned by a Canadian mining company, so he shortened the name to eBay, and a legend was born. Almost immediately eBay made a profit. The site sold goods ranging from computers to posters to underwear. The growth of eBay was phenomenal. It is now the world's most successful online business and its users consider themselves part of a distinct community. 150 million registered users buy and sell goods worth $1,050 every second. The website is used by big companies such as Vodaphone and IBM to sell off excess stock, but the majority of goods still sell for less than $50.

2

It was the early 90s, the Internet boom was just beginning, and Jeff Bezos wanted to be a part of this brave, new, forward-thinking community. After leaving his job on Wall Street, Bezos decided to set up an online bookselling business. Using his garage in Seattle as an office, Bezos created Amazon.com. The idea was to make the buying of books cheap and easy, with more choice than the traditional bookshop could provide. The site had a number of features which made it attractive to potential users: fast service, search capabilities, low costs for users, tools for comparing prices of books, and personalisation in the form of customer-written book reviews. As a twenty-four hour virtual bookshop, Amazon was convenient, cheap and reliable. Gradually, through word-of-mouth, the company grew in popularity. Bezos had originally handled customer orders himself, but soon he realised that the company was growing too fast for one man. By 1998 the net sales were $540 million and a whole generation of book buyers was hooked.

3

Ernst Malmsten, an events organiser, and Kajsa Leander, a supermodel, grew up in Lund, Sweden. In the late 90s, they decided to launch boo.com, a website that would create a global fashion community by selling designer clothes all over the world.

From the beginning there were difficulties. Clothing companies didn't trust the Internet and were reluctant to sell online. Also, no one was sure that people would buy clothes without trying them on first. On 3rd November 1999, the day boo.com was launched, the website had 25,000 hits, but these resulted in only eight actual orders for clothes. Worse, a well-known journalist wrote a negative article about boo.com, explaining how it had taken him eighty-one minutes to order a product. Other problems included viruses and a fraud detection system that rejected customers' orders. By March 2000, half of boo.com's workforce had lost their jobs. While most Internet start-ups are run from garages or bedrooms, boo.com had luxurious offices in six of the world's most glamorous and expensive cities. Fresh fruit and flowers were delivered daily. Malmsten and Leander, who always travelled first-class, claimed that companies in the fashion industry needed this image. But boo.com was spending faster than it was earning, and the company was doomed.

Write one of the following words in ecah space : ebay , Amazon or boo.com

b Are these statements true about eBay, Amazon. com or boo.com?

1 The founder originally wanted a different name for the website. _____

2 The company had a high-class, stylish image. _____

3 Users of the site could post their own opinions of the things being sold. _____

4 The site sold a range of goods from the beginning. _____

5 The type of goods for sale weren't ideal for online shopping. _____

6 The founder/founders originally ran the website alone. _____

7 The founder/founders was/were already rich before launching the website. _____

8 The company had some technical problems. _____

c Find words in the texts that mean:

1 offer of a price for something (*v, n*) (Text 1) _____

2 extraordinary or remarkable (*adj*) (Text 1) _____

3 a store of goods ready for sale (*n*) (Text 1) _____

4 unwilling/not wanting to do something (*adj*) (Text 3) _____

5 new company (especially Internet companies) (*n*) (Text 3) _____

6 extremely comfortable and expensive (*adj*) (Text 3) _____

7 destined to end badly or in failure (*adj*) (Text 3) _____