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Reading Strategy

When a text is organised into paragraphs, the first one or two sentences of each paragraph often indicate what information it will contain. Use these paragraph openers to get a general understanding of what the text is about and to help you find your way around longer texts.

1 Read the Reading Strategy. Then read the first sentence or two of each paragraph (1–5). Which paragraph(s) is / are about:

a scientific theories of time travel? _____
b an event organised by a well-known scientist? _____
c an event organised by some students? _____

2 Read the text. Choose the best answer (a–d).

1 What was unusual about the way the party in 2009 was organised?
   a Its location was given as co-ordinates rather than as a normal address.
   b The invitations were sent out after the party had finished.
   c The organiser did not want any guests to arrive.
   d Refreshments were only provided after the guests had left.
2 The party convinced Hawking that travelling back in time:
   a will never be mastered by humans.
   b is not yet possible but will be one day.
   c is a scientific fact.
   d probably exists but cannot be proved.
3 The event at MIT was different from Hawking's party in that:
   a far more invitations were issued.
   b it was not openly publicised.
   c the organisers did not expect anyone to attend.
   d it was not only for people from the future.
4 Why did Mr Dorai suggest that time travellers should bring a solution to world poverty?
   a To prove they are really from the future.
   b Because poverty is a global problem.
   c Because he hoped it would make him rich.
   d To show people that the world is getting better.
5 The creation of 'wormholes' in space-time:
   a is the only proven way to travel back in time.
   b already allows travel into the future.
   c is one possible way that time travel to the past might be achieved.
   d is thought impossible by most scientists.

TIME TRAVELLERS **WELCOME**

1 On 28 June 2009, the famous British physicist Professor Stephen Hawking held a party for time travellers. For several hours, surrounded by decorations and refreshments, Professor Hawking waited for other guests to arrive. Nobody came. The invitation to the party clearly stated the time and venue, even giving the GPS co-ordinates for the location. Unusually, though, no invitations were sent out until after the party had taken place.

2 The point of hosting the party in such a strange way was to demonstrate that time travel is almost certainly impossible. If time travellers existed, the fact that invitations to the party were only issued after the party had taken place would not have been a problem: the time travellers could simply have gone back in time in order to attend. The fact that this did not happen is an indication, in Professor Hawking's view, that travelling back in time is impossible – not only today but at any time in the future.

3 In fact, the idea of inviting time travellers to a special event did not originate with Professor Hawking. In 2005, some graduate students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, led by 22-year-old Amal Dorai, organised a similar event. They called it a 'convention for time travellers' and produced invitations on special long-lasting paper, which they placed inside random books in the library.

4 Unlike Professor Hawking's party, this event was not solely for time travellers; guests from the present era were also invited. An online invitation asked guests from the future to bring something with them that would convince people that they were genuine time travellers. Mr Dorai suggested that a cure for cancer or a solution to global poverty would be particularly appreciated. But he denied that, if no time travellers arrived, it would prove that time travel is impossible.

5 Although most physicists are sceptical about the possibility of travelling back in time, some do not rule it out completely. Einstein's theories of space-time seem to allow for the possible creation of a special kind of tunnel called a 'wormhole', which some people believe could provide a route backwards in time. Of course, travelling forwards in time is much easier; we are doing that constantly! And if we travelled away from Earth on a super-fast spacecraft and then returned, we would find that far less time had passed for us than for the people who had stayed on Earth. People who had been younger than us before we left would now be years older. This kind of travel into the future fits completely with Einstein's theories of space and time. Travelling into the past seems to be a great deal more challenging, if not impossible.