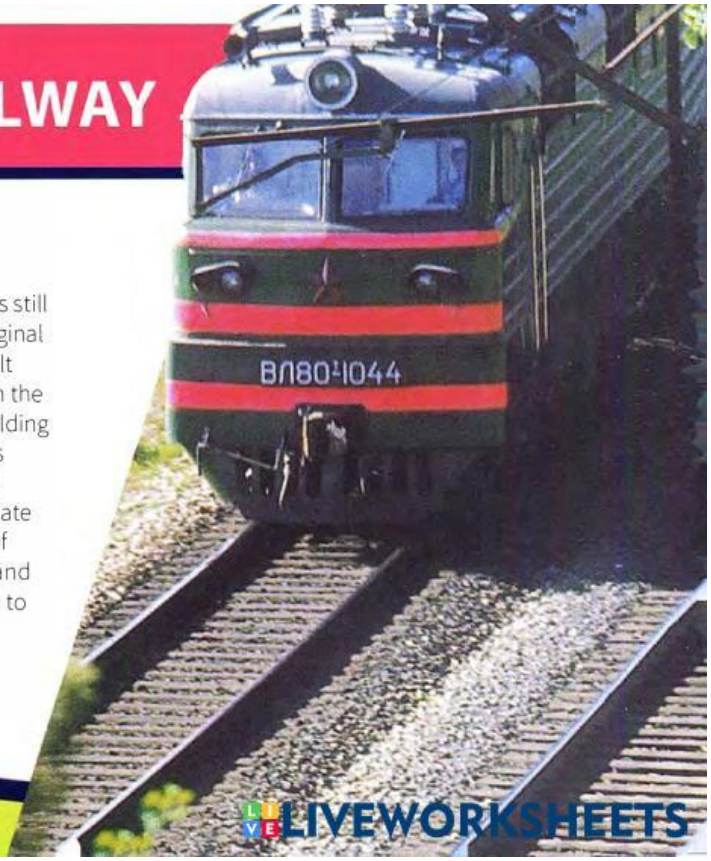
The TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY



A _____

The Trans-Siberian Railway has been described by some as the most memorable journey on Earth. Measuring nearly 9,300 km, it is the longest railway line in the world and takes approximately a week to complete. It is one incredible train journey from Red Square to the Great Wall, taking in Siberia, Mongolia, the Gobi Desert and arriving in the great city of Beijing. The journey has captured the imagination of travellers from far and wide since construction began in 1891.

B _____

Although officials have been building this line since 1891, it is still being expanded today. The original Trans-Siberian Railway was built from Moscow to Vladivostok on the orders of Tsar Alexander III. Building the line was not an easy task as there were only a few qualified engineers and the difficult climate often slowed progress. A lack of workmen meant that soldiers and convicts had to be conscripted to help. Up to 90,000 men were employed in its construction.

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C _____

From the moment building began, the project faced many difficulties. Even though it was considered a technological marvel at the time, there were arguments about the quality of work. Rails were considered too light and bridges not strong enough. Many claimed convicts had sabotaged the line. Furthermore, the project also caused serious problems for the Russian economy.

D _____

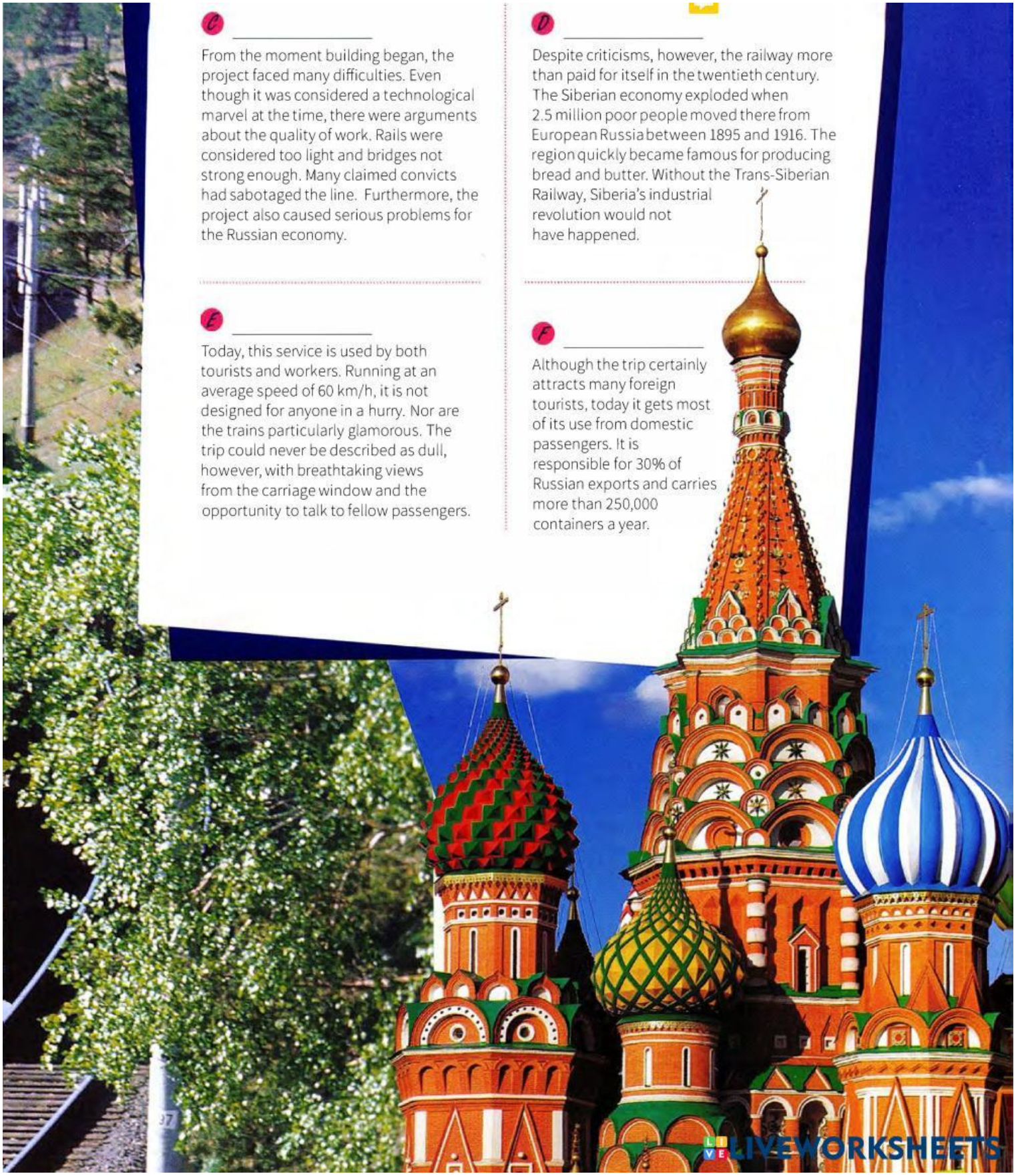
Despite criticisms, however, the railway more than paid for itself in the twentieth century. The Siberian economy exploded when 2.5 million poor people moved there from European Russia between 1895 and 1916. The region quickly became famous for producing bread and butter. Without the Trans-Siberian Railway, Siberia's industrial revolution would not have happened.

E _____

Today, this service is used by both tourists and workers. Running at an average speed of 60 km/h, it is not designed for anyone in a hurry. Nor are the trains particularly glamorous. The trip could never be described as dull, however, with breathtaking views from the carriage window and the opportunity to talk to fellow passengers.

F _____

Although the trip certainly attracts many foreign tourists, today it gets most of its use from domestic passengers. It is responsible for 30% of Russian exports and carries more than 250,000 containers a year.



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EXAM SKILLS

12 **The reading passage 'Trans-Siberian Railway' has six paragraphs, A–F. Choose the correct heading for paragraphs A–F from the list of headings. Write the correct number, i–ix, in the boxes provided.**

TIP 12
Be careful! There are more headings than paragraphs.

TIP 12
Matching-heading questions always come before the text in the exam.

List of headings

- **i** The impact the railway line had on Siberia
- **ii** The reasons why peasants migrated to Siberia
- **iii** The construction of the line
- **iv** The speed and style of the train
- **v** The controversy which surrounded the building of the line
- **vi** The attraction of the Trans-Siberian Railway
- **vii** The role of prisoners and soldiers in the building of the project
- **viii** The length of time it took to build the line
- **ix** The role the line has in the local economy

1 Paragraph **A** ☐
2 Paragraph **B** ☐
3 Paragraph **C** ☐
4 Paragraph **D** ☐
5 Paragraph **E** ☐
6 Paragraph **F** ☐

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