

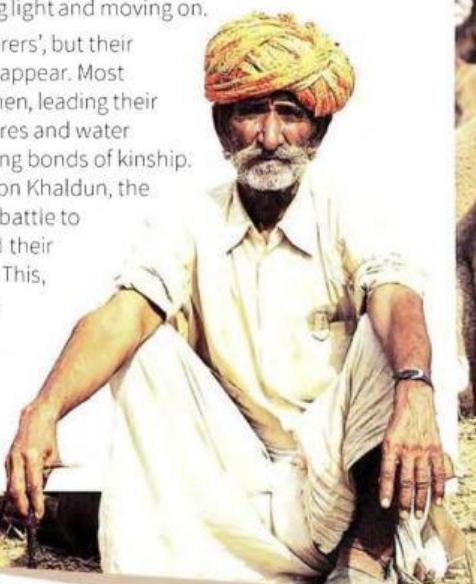
Name: _____

Class: _____

EXAM SKILLS]**11** Read the passage and answer questions 1–6.**NOMADIC CULTURES**

Out of a world population of 7.5 billion, around 30 million people currently lead a migratory lifestyle. Every continent has nomadic groups, leading a life very different from the sedentary communities they come into contact with. Almost all migratory communities are in steady decline for a wide range of reasons: climate change, political unrest, forced resettlement and armed conflict have all impacted on these traditional communities, diminishing their numbers year on year. However, the lure of the travelling lifestyle is as strong as ever. The 'gypsy lifestyle' continues to inspire people – especially the young – who crave the freedom of unstructured movement. Backpacking has become almost a rite of passage for the young. 'Gap years' between school and university often stretch to two years, or even more, as young people become addicted to the culture of travelling light and moving on.

Traditional nomads may be seen as 'wanderers', but their movement is not as unstructured as it may appear. Most nomadic communities are, or were, herdsmen, leading their animals across fixed routes based on pastures and water sources. Their societies were based on strong bonds of kinship. According to 14th-century social historian Ibn Khaldun, the Bedouin community owed their success in battle to *asabiyya* or 'group feeling', which enhanced their ability to protect the group from outsiders. This, along with excellent horsemanship and the rigours of a harsh lifestyle, based around constant alertness needed to protect livestock, made them formidable adversaries in war when compared to their more settled counterparts.





Far from the desert-dwelling Bedouin live a different kind of nomad: the Moken, or sea gypsies, of the Mergui Archipelago between Myanmar and the islands of Thailand's North Andaman coast. During the dry season, they live on traditional houseboats, and during the monsoon season they build temporary villages on sheltered stretches of beach. Theirs is a culture of sharing and giving, to the extent that their language contains no words for individual possessions. This indigenous people has a great understanding of and respect for their environment, making use of over 80 plant species for food and more than 100 for shelter, handicrafts and other purposes. However, the Moken's lifestyle has more recently been affected by government restrictions on their hunter-gathering activities, and legal disputes over ownership of their traditional lands. Somewhat inevitably, they have become a focus for tourism in the area, which they have embraced to some extent as they try to adapt to the modern world.

Nomadic communities exist in Europe too. In the tundras and taigas of northern Scandinavia live a reindeer-herding community, the Sami. Originally travelling freely across the areas which now belong to Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, this subculture has had its traditional lifestyle curtailed by the creation of national borders. In contrast to the Bedouin, the Sami's culture stresses the importance of knowledge and acceptance of the Sami language and traditions over bloodlines. It is an open and egalitarian society that welcomes outsiders. Marked by its rich storytelling and musical traditions, Sami culture has enjoyed something of a renaissance in recent years. Like many traditional cultures, it has both suffered and benefitted from a growing tourist industry as well as from government regulations. Norway now has a specific, protected reindeer-herding region, but the activity is prohibited elsewhere in the country.



Perhaps a better known travelling culture in Europe is the Roma, or Romany, of Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. The group is now spread across Western Europe too due to permanent migration. While their defining characteristic is the nomadic lifestyle, there have always been settled Roma, and the proportion has continued to grow, largely due to state intervention. However, there are some communities that have managed to retain a semi-nomadic way of life, such as the Thracian Kalajdzii (tinsmiths) in Bulgaria and Kortorari in Romania. The Roma tend to function as 'carriers of tradition' in the countries where they live. Cultural change does not happen as fast as it does in mainstream society, so traditions that have all but died out elsewhere are preserved and adapted by the Roma community. An example of this is the Dodola, a 'ritual for rain' in the Balkans, which used to be widespread, but is now limited to the Roma.



In the UK, the term 'gypsy' covers both Roma and Irish travellers, two diverse groups united by a common nomadic heritage. Irish travellers traditionally move in groups of two to four families, which would typically include married sons and their wives and children. Like many other migratory communities, Irish travellers have strong kinship ties due to the practice of arranged marriages as well as their isolation from settled society. In common with other nomads, their traditional way of life has faced many threats. In particular, the crafts, trades and services they practise, once in high demand, have been made redundant by declining rural populations, the mechanisation of farming, improved rural transport systems and the mass production of cheap plastic goods. Life expectancy for Irish travellers is often well below the national average.

In spite of the many obstacles faced by travelling communities all over the world, the world's fascination with the mobile lifestyle has not diminished. Mainstream culture seems to have a confused and contradictory relationship with travellers. On the one hand, the settled majority have a tendency to look down on those who refuse to adopt the sedentary lifestyle. On the other hand, they hold a romantic view of the horse-drawn caravans and campfires of the gypsy or the camel trains and tents of the Bedouin. What is clear is that travelling communities around the world, though reduced in number, are still alive and well and their contribution to world culture is indisputable.



Questions 1-5

Look at the following statements and the list of traveller communities below.

Match each statement with the correct community, A-E. You may use any letter more than once.

- 1 They tend to protect a version of traditions inherited from wider society.
- 2 Where they live is very dependent on weather conditions and the time of the year.
- 3 They do not focus heavily on kinship ties.
- 4 They fully exploit the natural resources available to them.
- 5 Their success in combat was partly due to the demands of their lifestyle.

List of traveller communities

A The Bedouin B The Moken C The Sami D The Roma E Irish travellers

Question 6

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

What is the writer's purpose in the Reading Passage?

- A to compare how successful different nomadic groups are in the modern world
- B to explain the origins of backpacking culture
- C to criticise the lack of tolerance for travelling communities
- D to highlight the current state of traditional travelling cultures in the modern world