DIRECTIONS
This session contains two reading selections with twelve multiple-choice questions and one open-response question. Mark your answers to these questions in the spaces provided in your Student Answer Booklet.

In the article “Swimming to Antarctica,” Lynne Cox shows how she prepared for a successful attempt to swim one mile in Antarctic waters. In this excerpt, she describes a trial swim in the 33-degree waters of Admiralty Bay, Antarctica. The Orlova is her support boat. Read the excerpt and answer the questions that follow.

from Swimming to Antarctica
by Lynne Cox

1 When I stepped outside the Orlova, I was hit by a blast of glacial wind. Goosepimples rose up all over my body, and my hair whorled around my head like helicopter rotors. Quickly, I retreated into the ship, trying to conserve every calorie of body heat. The water temperature in Admiralty Bay was 33 degrees Fahrenheit, and the air temperature was thirty-four degrees, but the wind off the surrounding glaciers made it feel as if I were standing inside a freezer. Winding my hair around my hand and pushing it into either side of my swim cap, I went back outside and stepped onto the gangway. I looked up and saw clouds rushing past the glaciers. Holding my goggles in my left hand and clutching the railing, feeling the ice-cold metal against my feet, I walked down the stairs. Pausing for a moment, I saw the crew below in the three Zodiacs, looking tense and excited. When I reached the platform at the base of the gangway, I sat down, and it felt as if I were sitting on a wet metal ice-cube tray. The platform was swaying and rolling. The waves were an icy, silvery blue, breaking inches below my feet. I leaned backward to gain momentum and then threw myself forward.

2 The water was searing cold. I felt as if I were naked, standing still, and being sprayed with ice water from a high-pressure hose, and it took all my focus to move. I swam with my head above water, panting. It was incredibly difficult to catch my breath; my lungs felt as if they were being squeezed in a tight corset. I couldn’t get them to expand fully, but I needed oxygen. I knew that I wouldn’t be able to continue for more than a couple of minutes unless I overcame my inclination to hyperventilate. I forced myself to slow down, to pull in a breath through my mouth, and then to blow it all the way out. It was extremely tiring, but concentrating on my breath prevented me from thinking about the cold. As my breathing evened out, I began to notice other sensations. The water felt different from any other water I’d swum in, as if it were more solid than fluid, as though I were swimming through a liquid Sno-Kone. I checked my hands. They were red and swollen and, like my feet, had become numb and achy. I was barely kicking, but I always swam this way: ninety-nine per cent of my propulsion through the water comes from my arms and upper body, while my legs just stabilize my stroke. One friend, who
had spent years studying polar bears, told me I swam like a polar bear, which uses its feet as a rudder, probably, he said, as a means of containing heat. Because I wasn’t kicking, I wasn’t pumping much blood to my feet and legs. I paused in mid-stroke to look at my watch. I had been swimming for only a minute.

A wave shattered in my face. I choked, and started to panic. I knew I had to keep swimming; it was too cold to stop. I kept spinning my arms, trying to swallow and clear my throat. Another wave slammed into my face. I was choking harder, and feeling even more panicked. I couldn’t breathe. I considered rolling over onto my back, but decided it was too cold and this would slow me down too much. Instead, I put my head into the water so that I was no longer choking on the spray. My body flattened, and I began swimming through the water instead of climbing up against it. It was easier to breathe; I could roll my head and shoulder to one side or the other. I was almost swimming normally, pulling, pushing, gliding through the water, slipping under the waves, letting them wash over me, each stroke strong and fluid. As I moved across the sub-Antarctic sea, I looked at the glaciers that encircled the harbor. My torso and head felt warm on the inside, and I relaxed just a little. Turning my head left on a breath, then right on another breath, then lifting my head up, I looked at the faces of the crew, which were filled with concern. I lifted my right foot out of the water and waved it. This was a signal that everything was O.K. They grinned and waved back.

When I glanced at my watch again, I saw that I had reached my goal of ten minutes. But the more I could do now, I thought, the more confidence I would have for the final swim; indeed, if the weather turned, this could be my only opportunity to swim. When I reached the fifteen-minute mark, I glanced down and saw five or six streams of bubbles that looked like vapor trails in the sky—penguins were swimming so fast underneath me that all I could see was their bubbles. To my left were icebergs. We were moving into their float path, and the crew began shouting warnings to me, pointing at the water. I swam around the bergs, and my arms started to feel colder. I could see that we were getting closer to the beach, but the intensity of the cold was sapping my strength. Large chunks of ice were floating all around me, drifting at a rate of about a knot, parallel to the beach. The entire crew was on full alert, helping me to steer through the iceberg field. A piece the size of a soccer ball bounced off my forehead, and it brought hot tears to my eyes. Another piece, twice as big, hit me on the side of the head. I shook my head to ease the pain, and increased my speed, trying to get clear of the ice field.

The crew got out of the boats and scrambled up the embankment, waiting for me with towels and blankets. Ten feet from shore, I saw smooth gray rocks, and then the bottom rose up to meet me. I turned my head to breathe, and saw some of the passengers from the Orlova who had been hiking along the shore. They were running toward us, slipping a little on the ice, and waving. As I stood up, I heard cheers and muffled clapping. I had surprised everyone, including myself. I’d planned to swim for only ten minutes, but I had been in the water for twenty-two minutes and fourteen seconds. The crew surrounded me, blocking the wind and drying me off. In a few moments, I felt very cold. My legs were bright red, and bleeding from tiny scratches made by pieces of ice in the water. My feet and legs felt numb. A crew member took off his boots and helped me put them on, and we trudged across the rocks. Crossing a small brook,

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2 knot — a unit of speed equaling about 1.15 mph
we entered one of the yellow buildings I’d seen from the Orlova, where three startled Polish researchers, who were studying water samples, greeted us. I lay down in a corner, wrapped in blankets, and shivered violently as two doctors, one on either side, helped me to rewarm. One of the doctors then measured my temperature; it had dropped only a little, to 97.7 degrees. It was much higher than expected. Still, I was shaking hard, and my teeth were chattering, but this activity was raising my metabolism and creating heat to counteract the return of cooled blood to the core. It was nearly forty-five minutes before I stopped shivering and felt warm again.