



# Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint

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**ENGLISH**

**0861/01**

Paper 1 Non-fiction

**October 2025**

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**1 hour 10 minutes**

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**INFORMATION**

- This insert contains the reading text.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



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This document has **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Text for **Section A**, an extract from the book *Made in America* by Bill Bryson

No technology in history has taken off more swiftly, more breathtakingly, than the car. And nowhere did it take off faster than in America. In 1898, there were not thirty working cars in the whole of the United States. Within a little over a decade there were not just 700 cars in America, but 700 car factories. In just the first four months of 1899 – just the first four months – American investors provided no less than \$388 million for new automobile companies. 5

It is not easy to understand nowadays just how improbable was the success of the car at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1900, cars were costly, unreliable and fearsome. ‘You can’t get people to sit over an explosion,’ remarked one observer.

Being in control of several hundred kilos of metal was a frightening challenge that proved too much for many. On her first attempt to drive, Mrs Stuyvesant Fish switched on the engine and promptly ran over a servant who had been stationed nearby should she require assistance. As the man struggled dazedly to his feet, Mrs Fish threw the car into reverse and backed over him. Panicking, she changed gears and mowed him down a third time. At this Mrs Fish fled to the house and never went near a car again. I suspect the servant didn’t either. 10 15

All the infrastructure necessary to support an automotive society – petrol stations, traffic signals, road maps, insurance policies, drivers’ licences, parking lots – was entirely lacking in the first years of the twentieth century. Cars were not just unnecessary but, since there was almost no place to go in them, effectively pointless. As late as 1905, America possessed not a single kilometre of paved rural highway. Such roads as existed were unmarked dirt tracks, which became swamps<sup>1</sup> in the wet months. In many parts of the country even a dirt track would have been welcome. To drive across the states of Nebraska or Kansas often meant to cross a trackless prairie<sup>2</sup>. 20

Those who made long journeys were deemed heroic. In 1903, Dr Horatio Nelson Jackson of Vermont, accompanied by a mechanic named Crocker and a dog named Bud (who, like his companions, wore goggles throughout the trip) made the first transcontinental crossing by car. It took them 65 days. For the most part, cars of the period weren’t up to the challenge. Those who tried to drive through the Rocky Mountains discovered that the only way was to back up them; otherwise, the fuel flowed away from their engines. 25

But the absence of highways didn’t stop anybody. America’s 8000 motor vehicles of 1900 had jumped to almost half a million by 1910 and to 2 million by 1915. Infrastructure began to appear. Licence plates made their first appearance in 1901. Four years later, the Automobile Gasoline Company of St Louis began the first chain of gas stations – already people were casually shortening *gasoline* to *gas* – and people everywhere were singing Gus Edwards’s ‘In My Merry Oldsmobile<sup>3</sup>’: 30 35

Come away with me, Lucille  
In my merry Oldsmobile,  
Over the road of life we’ll fly  
Autobubbling you and I.

An exciting new vocabulary emerged. Not everyone could yet afford to go *autobubbling* (a short-lived term for a pleasure spin<sup>4</sup>), but soon most people were bandying about expressions like *road-hog*, *station wagon*, *joy ride*, *to step on the gas*, *hitchhike* and *rattletrap*. 40

The two million cars of 1915 rose to ten million five years later. By 1920, the state of Michigan alone had more cars than Britain and Ireland. Kansas had more cars than France. Before the decade was half over, America would be producing 85 per cent of all the world's cars and the automobile industry, which hadn't even existed a quarter of a century earlier, would be the country's biggest business. 45

Most of the credit for this can go to a single person, Henry Ford, and a somewhat oddly named vehicle, the Model T. Ford always used initials for his early cars, but in a decidedly hit-and-miss manner. For reasons that appear to have gone unrecorded, he disdained<sup>5</sup> whole sequences of the alphabet. His first eight models were the A, B, C, F, K, N, R and S before he finally produced, on 1 October 1908, his first universal car, the Model T. 50

By 1912, just four years after its introduction, three-quarters of the cars on American roads were Model Ts. With his revolutionary methods and by keeping the car basic – 'You can have any colour you want as long as it's black' was his oft-repeated quip – Ford cut the time it took to produce a Model T from fourteen man-hours in 1910 to just two man-hours in 1913, and with it of course the price fell. The first Model T cost \$850 and rose the next year to \$950, but after that, with Ford's novel and wondrously efficient production lines, the price fell continuously. By 1916 a new Model T cost as little as \$345. 55

### Glossary

<sup>1</sup>swamps: very soft wet land

<sup>2</sup>prairie: a wide area of flat land covered with grass

<sup>3</sup>Oldsmobile: an early make of car

<sup>4</sup>spin: a short drive

<sup>5</sup>disdained: strongly disliked

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