

Opinions About Driverless Cars

by Tom Cardigan

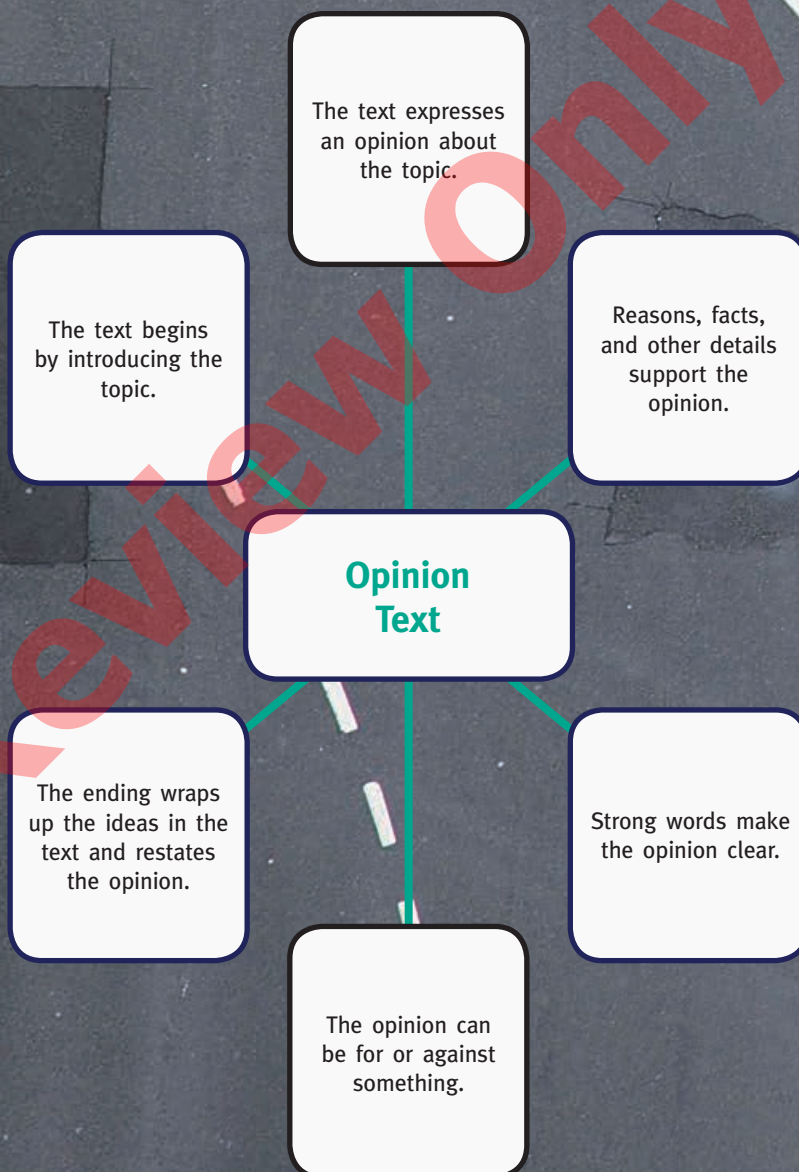


**Should driverless cars
be allowed on the road?**

Level	T/50
Lexile®	970L

Opinion Text

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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Driverless Cars

From Science Fiction to Real Life



▲ One of the early developers of driverless cars is a major technology and Internet company—not a car company.

Driverless cars are no longer the stuff of science fiction movies. Advances in both computer science and the auto industry mean that these vehicles are quickly becoming a part of everyday life. Now some people are asking whether driverless cars are a benefit or a hazard.

Most driverless cars work when a person enters a destination into the global positioning system (GPS).

The computer in the car then steers the car, making all the **navigational** decisions to get to the destination. The computer receives constant traffic updates, which allows it to choose the fastest route.

In the few years that driverless cars have been on the road, they have improved in many ways. But, as with any new technology, there are benefits and drawbacks to this new invention.

Over the next few years, driverless cars will likely get more attention by the media. As a result, more and more consumers will likely be interested in purchasing driverless cars. The roads could soon fill up with these cars. Some people are happy about that. They point to the benefits of driverless cars. Others are not happy. They say that the drawbacks are too many.

▼ **In a driverless car, everyone is a passenger. Everyone can relax without worrying about the road.**

▼ **Early driverless cars sometimes crashed. But the technology has improved since then.**



The benefits of driverless cars are already being seen around the world. Driverless cabs and buses are becoming more common on busy city streets. Cars that navigate by computer cut down on human error. The business consulting firm McKinsey & Co. reports that driverless cars could result in fewer accidents. How? Computers do not fall asleep at the wheel. Computers also do not become distracted by music or by talking to passengers in the car. And computers never look away from the road to make a phone call or text.



▲ **Driverless taxis have been on the streets since 2016.**

▼ **This driverless bus transports hundreds of people every day in London, England.**





- ▲ Most driverless cars today still have a person who sits in the driver's seat. But engineers predict that this won't be necessary in the future.

However, there are downsides to driverless vehicles. Many people are concerned about the safety of these vehicles and how the new invention will affect the transportation industry. For example, people who drive taxis or trucks for a living could lose their jobs. And technology changes so quickly that a person may buy a car today that will be **outdated** in a year.

On top of that, driverless vehicles do get into accidents, like traditional cars.

So should driverless cars be allowed on the road? Read the two informational chapters and the three opinions to learn more about the topic. Then form your own opinion about driverless cars.

The Benefits of Driverless Cars

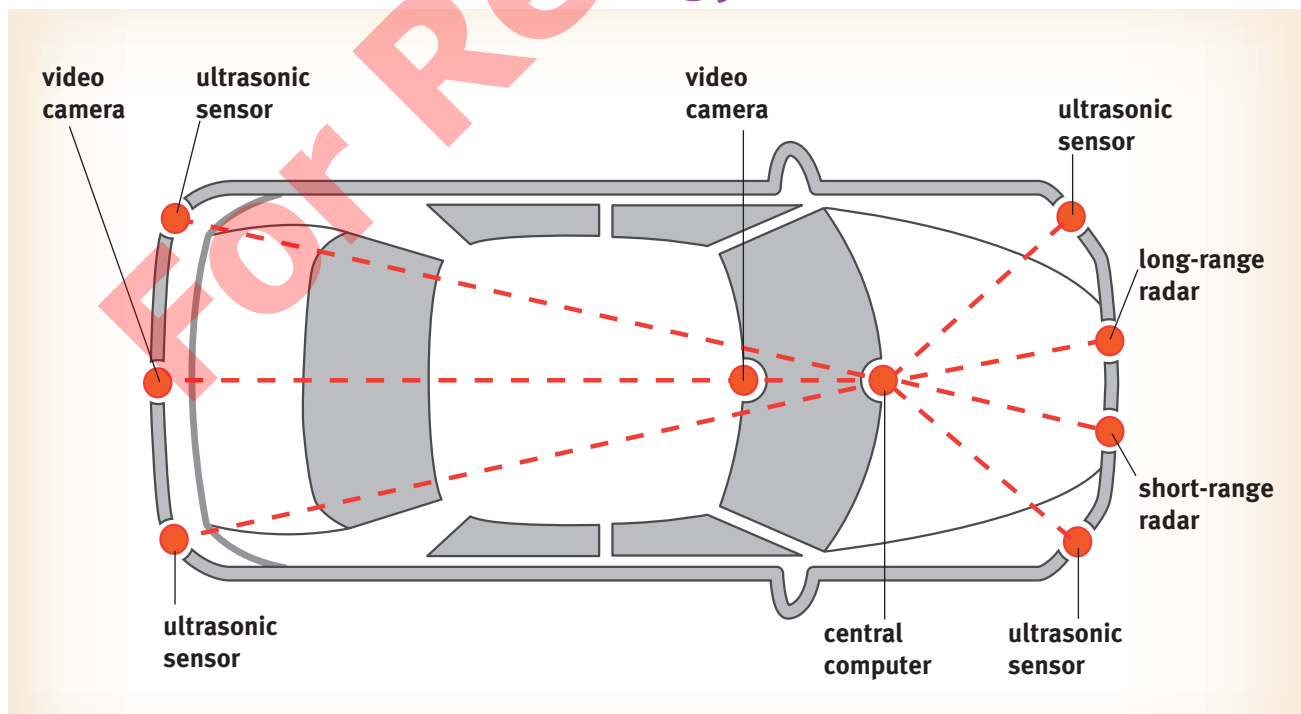
Driverless cars look like ordinary cars. But inside there is a powerful, advanced computer. The computer plots the most efficient route to take, which is updated based on a constant feed of traffic and weather conditions.

The computer connects to sensors and radar devices that “see” things such as lane lines painted on the road, street signs, and other cars. The sensors and radar devices are located all over the car.

There are also video cameras on the vehicle. The cameras are located in different places to show a very wide view of the area around the car. The cameras work with the sensors and radar to help tell how far the car is from the objects seen by the cameras.

The computer processes all the data instantaneously and can respond faster than a human.

Driverless Car Technology



Fewer Accidents

Driving requires paying constant attention to the road. An accident can occur when a driver looks away from the road for even just a few seconds, such as to read a text, answer a phone call, or turn on the radio. According to the website for the U.S. Federal Communications Commission, over 1,000 people are injured daily from accidents involving distracted drivers.

A driverless vehicle cuts down on these human errors because the computer takes over for humans in terms of making driving decisions.

The computer knows exactly when the car should stop, turn, or change speeds, based on the data it receives from the cameras, sensors, and radar.

Many drivers, of course, do pay attention when they drive. But when something happens that could cause a crash, they have to react quickly. And someone who is tired might not react quick enough.

In contrast, driverless cars react quickly to dangerous situations every time. Although driverless cars still get into accidents with other cars, most of those are the fault of human drivers.



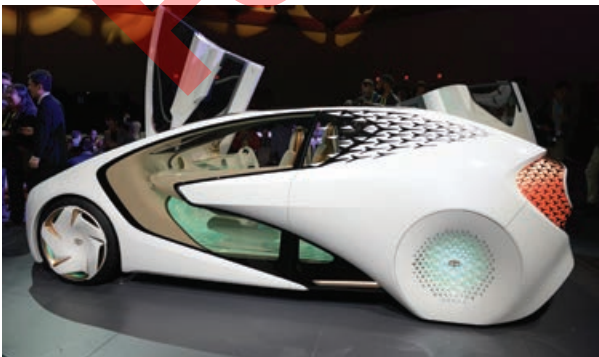
▲ In a regular car, a driver can become distracted by a passenger.

More Free Time

With a regular car, the driver must focus on the road and use their hands to steer the wheel. However, with a driverless car, the computer does all the work. The person in the car has their mind and hands free from the task of driving.

Hands-free driving will change how people travel. With the car handling the road, the person who would have been the driver in a regular car will be able to do other things. That person could watch a movie, read a book, play games, sleep, or do many other things with their newfound free time. The person could even work, improving their job **productivity**. The editor of one car magazine believes that all driverless cars will one day include pull-out desks and other devices people need to work comfortably.

▼ Some driverless cars have futuristic designs.



Science Fiction Fantasies

For hundreds of years, people have fantasized about vehicles of the future. The popular 1960s cartoon *The Jetsons* featured flying cars. Flying cars also appeared in many science fiction movies, such as *Back to the Future 2*.

Although no one knows for sure what travel will look like many years from now, it's fun to see how artists imagined and keep imagining the future.

▼ *The Jetsons* showed a future of flying cars and helpful gadgets.



▲ The car featured in *Back to the Future 2* could drive above the traffic!

Advantages of Driverless Cars

① navigates for the driver



② enhances safety



③ increases relaxation



④ frees up space inside car

