**10b Page 120 READING TEXT**

Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

Life on Mars?

**Making the red planet go green**

If we tried to, could we really transform the frozen surface of Mars into something more friendly – a place where humans could live? And equally importantly, should we?

The first question has a clear answer: Yes, we probably could. Most of the work in ‘terraforming’, says NASA planetary scientist Chris McKay, would be done by life itself. ‘We wouldn’t have to build Mars, just modify its atmosphere,’ McKay says. ‘If we warmed it up and threw in some seeds, plants would grow there.’

Enthusiasts such as Robert Zubrin, president of the Mars Society, dream of Martian cities. Zubrin, an engineer, believes civilisation cannot succeed without limitless expansion. He also thinks that if we transformed Mars – a horrifying idea to some – we might learn to manage our limited Earth better. But if I was an astronaut, I wouldn’t be keen on that six-month journey!

YEAR ZERO

**1** The thousand-year project might begin with a series of eighteen-month survey missions. Each crew making the six-month journey from Earth to Mars would add a small habitation module to the base.

100 YEARS

**2** An Earth-like atmosphere could be made. First, the carbon dioxide which is now frozen in the ice would be released. Maybe mirrors could focus sunlight on the ice to do this.

200 YEARS

**3** With enough carbon dioxide, the temperature would go up and rain would fall. Algae and microbes could survive and transform the rocky surface.

600 YEARS

Life

**4** Flowering plants could be introduced when the microbes had created soil.

This would add oxygen to the atmosphere. Forests might even grow.