Questions 30–33

Nowadays even your toaster can be programmed to work in response to a voice command, so it should be no surprise that cars have been assigned the task of driving for us. It seems futuristic, but it now seems certain that cars and trucks will become fully automated. Is this a good thing?

Self-driving cars — also known as driverless or autonomous cars — can scan their immediate surroundings and navigate without any human intervention. The obvious benefit to this technology is convenience, but even if travel becomes less costly and time-consuming, a number of unresolved problems such as safety and liability make this innovation largely undesirable. There are no legal frameworks or government regulations for autonomous vehicles, and driverless cars open up a world of **catastrophic** possibilities for cybercriminals such as hackers or terrorists.

There are clear advantages to automated features such as speed control or emergency braking, but those are fundamentally distinct from the technology of full automation. Driver-assisted technology is a beneficial goal for automotive engineers, but it's time to draw a line and insist that humans — not computers — should drive vehicles.