

The Living Planet

1 You are going to read a text about the environment change. What environmental problems do you know?

A. Read the introductory paragraph below and fill in the gaps with words from the box.

resources	destruction	ecology
environment	habitats	

We have come to the end of a millennium of relentless and accelerating (1) of the world around us. While human creativity and technology have blossomed, we have steadily been destroying the (2) of the planet on which we depend for our survival. The sad fact is that every day the diversity of life on Earth gets poorer because of our overuse of (3) and our disregard for the riches of nature. Ecologically, our natural (4) provide services without which life on the planet would become impossible. When we tamper with the (5) , it is not just nature which suffers. Our own way of life is under threat.

B. Read the next part of the text and identify the key environmental issues being described. Then use words and phrases from the box below to fill in the gaps.

acid rain	changes in climate	fossil fuels
gases	greenhouse effect	pollution
ozone layer	toxic waters	leach

Since the industrial revolution, man has burned ever larger quantities of (6) , first coal and then oil, with the result that the composition of the atmosphere has started to change. Burning these fuels produces (7) such as carbon dioxide, which act in the atmosphere like glass in a greenhouse and trap the heat of the sun – this is known as the (8) The overall global temperature has already begun to rise. Global warming is expected to lead to extreme (9) , with more frequent floods, droughts and heat waves. No person, animal, bug or bird will be unaffected.

In addition to greenhouse gases, industrial processes produce poisonous substances which can be virtually impossible to dispose of safely. If these (10) are buried in underground storage sites, there is the danger that they may (11) into lakes and rivers, with serious long-term effects on living organisms. Emissions from industrial plants, such as sulphur, can also enter the atmosphere, where they can cause damage to the (12) around the planet. They may also fall back to Earth as (13) and destroy plants and trees. All these are examples of types of (14) that could be prevented.

C. Now read the continuation of the text. Fill in the gaps with words from the box below.

deforestation	extinction	dying out
wildlife	genetic engineering	wetlands
ecosystems	living organisms	strains
endangered species		

We drain (15) near rivers and coastal areas to create land for building. Through (16), the large-scale cutting down of trees, the (17) that allow species to survive are changed and the amount of land available for (18) decreases. Some species are so reduced in number that they are in danger of (19) At this stage they are known as an (20) and are only one step away from total (21)

We are now beginning to manipulate nature in new ways, without thought for the possible consequences. Technology now allows us to create (22) of plants which are resistant to diseases and which can survive extremes of temperature or salinity (salt content). The danger of this process of (23) is that producing new plants or other (24) like bacteria may bring disaster as well as apparent advantages, as experience has already known.

So, with the new millennium, we need a new beginning, a fresh start. We need to reverse the major threats to our environment. Above all, we need to understand that we cannot go on consuming and polluting with no thought for tomorrow.

D. In technical texts, the writer often helps the reader to understand difficult words or concepts by giving examples or definitions, describing causes and effects, using synonyms, and so on. In this sentence from the text, two examples of ‘fossil fuels’ are given, which explain the meaning of this term.

‘Since the industrial revolution, man has burned ever larger quantities of fossil fuels, first coal and then oil, ...’

What methods has the writer used to help the reader understand the following concepts?

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 1. emission | 3. salinity |
| 2. deforestation | 4. genetic engineering |

E. Without looking back at the text, explain the following concepts.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. the greenhouse effect and global warming | 3. species loss |
| 2. industrial pollution | 4. genetic engineering |

2 Read the information and answer the questions below.



The WWF (World Wide Fund For Nature) and Greenpeace are well-known environmental campaign groups in the UK. The WWF was established as the World Wildlife Fund in 1961 to raise funds from the public for conservation of particular species, for example the Giant Panda, and habitats. Greenpeace is an international environmental group, operating a policy of non-violent action supported by scientific research.

What similar environmental campaign groups exist in your country? What are their aims? What kind of activities are they involved in? Are you a member of such group? Why? Why not?

3 You will hear four different extracts about the environment. There are two questions for each. Before you listen to each extract, look through the questions to get an idea of the focus of that extract. Choose the answer (A, B or C) which fits best according to what you hear.

Extract One

You hear part of an interview with a member of an environmental group.

1. The speaker says that one of her group's achievements has been to
 - A give out information.
 - B make companies more responsible.
 - C reduce levels of toxic waste.
2. The overall attitude of the speaker is
 - A positive.
 - B encouraging.
 - C patronising.

Extract Two

You hear two friends talking about different ways of protecting the environment.

3. What do the speakers disagree about?
 - A the importance of recycling.
 - B public understanding of environmental problems.
 - C the effects of using public transport.
4. What is the woman's attitude towards saving fuel?
 - A It's as effective as recycling.
 - B It has other advantages.
 - C It's easy to do.

Extract Three

You hear part of a lecture about the effects of a green project in a developing country.

5. The speaker suggests that the project failed because
 - A the farmers depended too much on technology.
 - B the wrong type of crop was grown.
 - C the land was farmed too intensively.
6. What was the long-term effect of the irrigation project?
 - A Poor farmers suffered the most.
 - B Rice could no longer be grown.
 - C Rich farmers lost all their money.

Extract Four

You hear part of a television advertisement for a charity organisation.

7. What does the advertisement ask people to do?
 - A Join a large organisation.
 - B Give money regularly.
 - C Help the work of sponsors around the world.
8. The advertisement emphasises how much
 - A the children are suffering.
 - B money is needed.
 - C effect sponsorship can have.

4 Re-express the following sentences from Exercise 3, using the framework given.

- 1 We've made far more progress than anyone would have predicted.
 No-one would
 progress.
- 2 The companies are not only responsible to their shareholders, but to society in general.
 The companies are responsible to
 their shareholders.
- 3 If we recycle paper, fewer trees will be cut down.
 As
 trees will be saved.
- 4 The output of rice had almost tripled.
 They had produced
 rice as before.