

# The Living Planet II

You may be asked to write a discursive essay based on some information. Depending on how the task is worded, you may need to:

- present both sides of an argument in a balanced discussion
- present on point of view, giving supporting evidence.

Below you will see the best way to plan your writing and organise your ideas for presenting a balanced discussion.

- 1 You need to understand exactly what the question asks you to write about, and how to use the information in the text you have been given.

Read the following writing task and underline the key words.

## TASK

Your tutor has asked you to write an essay based on the title below.

*'Protecting the environment is the most important problem facing the world today.'*

(300-350 words)

To help you to focus your ideas, your tutor has given you part of an e-mail posted on the website of a radio station. It was written in response to a documentary broadcast by the station the previous week on medical advances.

- 2 Read the extract from the e-mail, and answer the questions below.

Subject

The world has lost its way

The world has lost its way. No-one seems to be addressing the real issues facing us today. Media companies like yours deal with the same 'fashionable' topics time after time – health and the latest medical discoveries, scares about the population – but these are muddying the waters and obscuring the central issue. Shouldn't you be devoting more air time to the real problem – how we can protect our environment?

- 1 Should you:
  - a) write about all the different ways of protecting the environment?
  - b) omit the environment and only write about the other problems facing the world today?
  - c) discuss whether the environment or a different problem (or problems) is the most important in the world today?
- 2 What information from the e-mail do you need to use in your answer? What other global problems would you choose to include?

**3 Read the following essay, which was written in answer to the task. What information has the writer used from the e-mail? What other issues has she included? Would you have chosen the same problems to write about?**

**Now answer these questions.**

- 1 What is the purpose of the introduction? How has the writer attempted to draw the reader into the discussion?
- 2 In what order are the issues introduced?
- 3 Underline the linking expressions used in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4. Which organisational pattern has the writer used?
  - a) a list of specific examples
  - b) contrasting and conceding points
- 4 What is the writer's opinion about these issues in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4? How important does she consider them to be?
- 5 In what way(s) is the issue of the environment different, according to the writer?
- 6 The writer has discussed the issue that she considers most important last. What is the reason for it?
- 7 What is the purpose of the conclusion?

**A**

The modern world faces many major problems to which there are no easy solutions. These include unemployment, health, over-population and of course the environment. All have a bearing on all our lives, but is the environment really the most important?

If people are unemployed, they are unable to earn money and it is a fact of life that without an income it is difficult to live. Of course, work provides more than financial support; it gives people self-esteem and pride. Unfortunately, technological developments and other factors mean that the job market is shrinking world-wide and young people have reduced prospects for work. Although this is certainly a major threat to people's well-being, it needs to be addressed by individual governments rather than globally.

Health is clearly an important concern that affects both individuals and the planet as a whole. Even though many illnesses have been eradicated, others remain a threat, and the overuse of antibiotics has led to the development of resistant strains of bacteria. Nevertheless, on the whole, general health is improving, and in the developing countries medical aid programmes are already working towards creating a healthier population.

Over-population has implications for all of us, and improved general health means that people are living longer. However, as with health, there are already programmes in place implementing measures to deal with not only a rising population, but an ageing population.

So what about environment? There are urgent issues that need to be faced, including global warming, pollution and the loss of species. Unlike the other issues discussed, there is no clearly discernible global move to deal with these problems. Also, unlike the other issues, changes in the environment have a direct impact on the whole planet. Climate change and destruction of ecosystems could endanger all life on the planet if not dealt with quickly and at an international level.

In conclusion, other problems primarily affect only the quality of life, whereas environmental issues affect the actual existence of life itself. It is clear, therefore, that protecting the environment is the most important problem facing the world today.

(348 words)

#### **4 Read essay A again, and complete the following outline in note form.**

##### **Introduction**

Statement of topic: *The world faces many problems.*

Plan of development: *Unemployment, health, over-population, environment.*

##### **First supporting paragraph**

Issue 1: *Unemployment.*

Details: *Need work to live, for self-esteem; but local issue, not global.*

##### **Second supporting paragraph**

Issue 2: .....

Details: .....

##### **Third supporting paragraph**

Issue 3: .....

Details: .....

##### **Fourth supporting paragraph**

Issue 4: .....

Details: .....

##### **Closing paragraph**

Conclusion: .....

a) Now read the following extracts from another essay written in answer to the same task. In what way is the organisation of the essay different?

**B**

*There many important issues facing the world today, including unemployment, health and overpopulation. Whether these issues are more important than environmental problems is debatable.*

*The growth in unemployment is a serious problem world-wide. It has partly been caused by improvements in technology as well as changing economic factors, which together mean that the job market is shrinking. While unemployment can of course have a devastating effect on the quality of life of individuals, an environmental issue such as the burning of fossil fuels is potentially more serious. It has resulted in global warming, causing climate change which could threaten the existence of entire nations. Is full employment worth this risk?*

*From this it must be clear that protecting the environment is the most important issue facing the world today. We ignore it at our peril. If we look after the houses we live in as individuals, why do we not take care of the larger house we all share?*

b) Now use information from essay A and your own ideas to complete the following outline for essay B.

### **Introduction**

Statement of topic: *Many important issues facing world today.*

Plan of development: *Unemployment, health, over-population.*

### **First supporting paragraph**

Issue 1: *Unemployment.*

Details: .....

Environmental issue 1: .....

### **Second supporting paragraph**

Issue 2: .....

Details: .....

Environmental issue 2: *Depletion of the ozone layer*

### **Third supporting paragraph**

Issue 3: .....

Details: .....

Environmental issue 3: .....

### **Closing paragraph**

Conclusion: .....

Both approaches are acceptable for an exam answer. However, one is more focused and more complex than the other. Decide which one, and give your reasons.

6

a) Read the following writing task.

**TASK**

Your tutor has asked you to write an essay based on the title below.

*'Generally the future of mankind looks bright. Those who argue otherwise are being unnecessarily pessimistic.'*

(300-350 words)

To help you to focus your ideas, your tutor has given you an extract from a magazine article about the future.

So there is no point in trying to improve matters at this stage – it is too late. The march of technology, overpopulation, and environmental problems have all contributed to a downward spiral which is unstoppable. Some people may try to bury their heads in the sand and pretend that improvements in these areas have made a difference – but what evidence is there for this?

- b) Underline the key words in the task.
- c) Read the information in the magazine extract and decide what points you want to cover in your essay.
- d) Jot down some ideas. What evidence can you think of to support your ideas?
- e) Decide how to organise your essay and complete an outline based on essay A or B in Exercises 4 and 5.
- f) Now write your essay, making sure that you support your ideas with plenty of evidence.
- g) Exchange your essay with a partner. Evaluate each other's work. Use your partner's comments to help you improve your essay.

**7. Read the text below and decide which answer (A, B, C or D) best fits each gap.**

**I**t is sad but true fact that only an environmental catastrophe will actually cause people to think about how they behave – and where their responsibilities (1) ..... . Merely selling ‘green’ items in trendy recycled paper bags with environmental logos clearly displayed will not do the (2) ..... . The problem is bigger than that. Many animals are already threatened as

their traditional (3) ..... disappears, and many valuable and interesting species are in (4) ..... of becoming extinct. Naturalists are still battling to save (5) ..... Species, even though it is already too late for some, but they will be fighting a losing battle if they are not supported by the population as a whole. It is difficult to know how to (6) ..... This message through to the people who most need to hear it

- |   |                     |                      |                     |                      |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | <b>A</b> stay       | <b>B</b> go          | <b>C</b> lie        | <b>D</b> stand       |
| 2 | <b>A</b> work       | <b>B</b> trick       | <b>C</b> task       | <b>D</b> duty        |
| 3 | <b>A</b> ecosystem  | <b>B</b> environment | <b>C</b> nature     | <b>D</b> habitat     |
| 4 | <b>A</b> risk       | <b>B</b> danger      | <b>C</b> verge      | <b>D</b> brink       |
| 5 | <b>A</b> endangered | <b>B</b> embattled   | <b>C</b> imperilled | <b>D</b> jeopardised |
| 6 | <b>A</b> put        | <b>B</b> reach       | <b>C</b> get        | <b>D</b> relay       |