

## CAE READING COMPREHENSION: DEFORESTATION

Answer the following questions with reference to the article which follows.

Choose from A to G the answers to the numbered questions.

According to the passage, where is vegetation

01. ... burnt because there is no market for it?
02. ... extremely difficult to regenerate?
03. ... stolen for profit?
04. ... burnt for pastoral purposes?
05. ... almost 50 per cent destroyed?
06. ... in need of police protection?
07. ... in economic competition with grassland?
- 08/09. ... being destroyed in national parks?
10. ... threatened by a policing action?
11. ... mostly used for firewood?
12. ... the subject of competition between peasants and the timber industry?

- A. Asia
- B. Amazonia
- C. Brazil
- D. Vietnam
- E. Peru
- F. Arizona
- G. Bolivia

## DEFORESTATION

A recent report from the United Nations indicates that the world's tropical forests are vanishing faster than previously thought. Up to 50 million acres a year are disappearing, almost the area of West Germany, 50 per cent more than expected. The World Resources Institute, which compiled the report, says that the rising rate of deforestation was "a tragedy for the biological richness of the earth and an ominous signal for the climatic conditions of the future." About 100 forest species become extinct every day, with irreparable loss of part of the world's genetic resources. The report says that deforestation accounts for a third of the world's emissions of carbon dioxide, the biggest cause of global warming.

The loss of the forests is largely the result of overpopulation. Hungry landless masses in Asia compete with commercial logging for the available resources. At the moment, the landless masses are winning. The overwhelming bulk of the wood and timber of tropical forests is burnt where it stands. Of that which is extracted, only 17 per cent goes for industrial use. The rest is used for firewood. The concept of natural forest as spare land ready for agriculture is predominant. It is the central reality of the deforestation crisis. In 1988, 60 million acres of Rondonia in the Brazilian Amazon was burnt for grazing and cropland. Billions of dollars worth of timber went up in smoke, wasted because there was no ready economic market for it. The forest was seen to have more value as agricultural land than as standing forests to be harvested.

Just how bad the situation is can be revealed by satellite photograph. Such a photograph of the Amazon basin will reveal hundreds of points of light stretching from Bolivia to the Atlantic. Each point of light indicates a man-made forest fire at least half a mile wide. In 1988 and 1989, there were at least 15,000 such fires which meant that Brazil sent half as much carbon into the atmosphere as Japan.

The head of Brazil's environment institute points out: "It's a problem of awareness. Farmers just don't think of anything but making money, and some regional administrations support them because they think this is development. In one state, farmers are killing the rubber tappers. In another, they think only of profits from cattle ranching. They set fire to nature reserves. They could all think about the environment a little more." The head of the satellite agency which analyzes the problem on a daily basis is more blunt. He says: "We know that burning in the Amazon is gigantic. It's time they showed us a wealthy farmer in handcuffs."

If you want to know what happens when the rain forests are destroyed, the place to go is Vietnam. During the Vietnam war, the American air force sprayed more than 72 million litres of herbicides and defoliants over the country, dropping bombs and napalm over much of the rest. Almost half of Vietnam's landscape is derelict. Since the end of the war things have got worse: the country's 60 million people, like most inhabitants of the tropics, are dependent upon wood for fuel and construction. Demand for fuel and the clearance of land for agriculture has also destroyed

thousands of acres. What the Vietnamese have discovered is that when the tropical forests go, they go for ever. The soil is poor. Once the cover is gone, tropical rainstorms wash out the nutrients. In the dry season, the grass catches fire and saplings are killed. Then more top soil is washed away. Tropical trees flower unpredictably, and their seeds are difficult to collect and germinate.

The Americans, given a choice between being green and fighting the Peruvian drug barons, have chosen, as one would expect, to fight. The weapon to hand is Spike, a close relative of Agent Orange, the herbicide used in Vietnam. Spike would have carried deforestation into the densely forested eastern slopes of the Andes. However, the President of Peru, having made a helicopter flight over the area, called for a scientific study. He said: "An international scientific team should determine if the proposal is positive or negative for the environment." He might have added that the Peruvian peasants and the coca barons can manage their own deforestation quite well without any help from American herbicides, thank you very much.

It is not only the tropical trees that should fear man's depredations. Even the cactus in the desert is being uprooted. It seems that the inhabitants of the palatial desert homes of Las Vegas and Palm Springs require a large cactus as a status symbol, just like a stretch limousine. The finest of the cacti of Arizona, despite being in protected tourist amenity areas, are being ripped out of the ground by organised gangs of cactus rustlers. These Saguaro cacti grow as high as five or six metres and weigh up to four tonnes. Larry Richards works full time as a cactus cop. He says:

"I grew up on this land. I can tell you, in the last 10 years the Saguaros here have been thinned out by, oh, maybe half. In the next 10 years another half or more of the rest will go. These are prime, saleable specimens. It's just a matter of time. There are 120 crooked dealers active in Arizona. They use lifting equipment and large trucks to transport the giants instantly to California, about 400 miles away, where black market prices are highest, about \$40 for every foot of stem, and up to \$100 for every arm which survives the move. A fairly ordinary sample can fetch \$800. A big one, \$15,000. A whole generation, covering 60 years of growing, is being wiped out." In one case, the cactus fought back. It fell on top of a young man who was taking pot shots at it with his rifle, and killed him.

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ANSWERS

01. B

02. D

03. F

04. B

05. D

06. F

07. B

08/09. C, F

10. E

11. A

12. A