

PART 1 READING (6% of the subject mark)

Read the following article and then answer questions 1–18. From the four choices given, choose the option which best answers each question. You should mark your answers to questions 1–18 on the multiple-choice Answer Sheet.

Our durable planet

'The world's environment is surprisingly healthy. Discuss.' If that were an examination topic, most students would tear it apart, offering a long list of evidence from local smog to global climate change, from the cutting down of forests to the spread of roads and cities, from poisonous harbours to the extinction of species. The list would be largely accurate, the concern justified. Yet the students given the highest marks should be those who agreed with the statement. The surprise is how good things are, not how bad.

- 10 The world's population has tripled during this century, and world output has risen hugely, so you would expect the earth itself to have been affected. Indeed, if people now lived, consumed and produced things in the same way as they did in 1900 (or 1950, or indeed 1980), the world would be pretty disgusting: smelly, insanitary, toxic and dangerous. But they don't. The reasons why they don't, and why the environment has not been totally destroyed, have to do with prices, technological innovation, social change and, in democracies, government regulation in response to popular pressure. That is why today's environmental problems in poor countries ought, in principle, to be solvable.

- 25 Raw materials have not run out and show no sign of doing so. One day they must: the planet is a finite place. Yet it is also very big, and people are ingenious. Each time a material seems to have been running short, the price has risen and, in response, people have sought new sources of supply, found ways to use less of the material, or looked for a substitute. Thus, prices for energy and minerals have fallen in real terms during the century. The same is true for food. Prices fluctuate in response to harvests, natural disasters and political instability; and when they rise, it takes some time before new sources of supply become available. But they always do, assisted by new farming technology.

- 35 It is where prices and markets do not operate properly that genuine problems arise. Markets cannot always keep the environment healthy. If no one owns a resource, no one has an interest in conserving it. The case of fish is the best example of this. Markets also fail if a damaging activity is not subject to a market price but rather is shared by society. 40 Pollution, whether of air, ground or water, is a good example of conflicting corporate and social interests. It is hard to compare the social benefits of environmental protection with the cost of that protection, and hard to judge the best way for governments to intervene. It is sometimes difficult to be sure even of the facts.

- Yet, the record in rich countries this century has been good. Once an issue has been identified, and voters and governments have become convinced that something ought to be done, something has been done. The oldest and worst 50 kinds of air pollution – sulphur dioxide and smoke particles – have been brought steadily under control, ending 300 years of deterioration. So have levels of lead in the air. The only – and it is a significant only – exception is that vehicle emissions of some pollutants have stayed high as petrol

- 55 consumption has grown faster than the effect of tighter controls. Water, whether in rivers or the sea, has become far cleaner since the 1950s. Governments have increasingly insisted on waste water being treated before release.

- In other words, the experience of this century has been the 60 opposite of that claimed by many environmentalists. In rich countries, where great economic growth has occurred, the environment has become healthier. It is in poor countries, where economic growth has been slow, that air and water pollution is an increasing hazard to health. For such 65 countries, the issue is not whether environmental problems can be solved, but how to make sure that they are solved.

- One obstacle to solutions is knowledge. Governments, whether in the rich world or the poor, are not able to assess pollution problems effortlessly or to calculate finely the best 70 way to solve them. And, people's behaviour often goes against expectations. In 1989, when Mexico tried to deal with air pollution by banning certain types of cars on particular days of the week, many people reacted by buying a second, older (and more polluting) car that could be used 75 on those days. The quickest way for a government to improve the environment is by reducing certain subsidies, including those on water and energy, as well as by eliminating tax benefits for polluting industries such as mining. Subsidies and tax breaks are scourges of the 80 environment world-wide.

- This gets to the heart of the matter. The real difficulty lies in reconciling the differing interests and views involved. You can be green if you deprive farmers of their subsidised water, but they will complain. You can be green if you force companies to bear the cost of installing anti-pollution 85 equipment in factories, but the factory owners will protest, lay off workers or try to bribe officials not to enforce the law. In dealing with these trade-offs, the poor countries' problems are more political than economic. Few poor 90 countries are fully-developed democracies with broad equality of power and genuine accountability.

- The improvement in rich countries' environments has been closely correlated with the growth of democracy in those countries. The first tough anti-pollution laws were passed in the 1950s, when democracy was blossoming world-wide. 95 Japan, for example, was hit by a series of pollution disasters such as mercury poisoning in the late 1950s, which gave rise to citizens' protest movements, and then, to new laws to control toxic effluents and air pollution. In their imperfect way, democracies give voice to the social costs of pollution. 100 Authoritarian governments can afford to turn a blind eye.

- The best hope for poor countries is to replace corruption with the rule of law and authoritarian government with democracy in which all can participate. Only in this way 105 can these countries develop the political will to overcome the environmental problems they increasingly face.

1. The writer considers that
 - A. smog and global climate change are the worst environmental problems.
 - B. the list of environmental problems is surprisingly long.
 - C. we have worse things to worry about than the environment.
 - D. we should be surprised that the environment is not in worse condition.
2. According to paragraph 2, the environmental problems faced by poor countries
 - A. are the result of government regulation.
 - B. cannot be solved by democracy.
 - C. can theoretically be overcome.
 - D. are a response to popular pressure.
3. According to paragraph 3, raw materials generally show no sign of running out because
 - A. the planet is very big.
 - B. we keep on finding alternatives.
 - C. prices often rise after natural disasters.
 - D. developments have been made in farming technology.
4. In the writer's view, the primary reason people change their behaviour in regard to potential shortages of raw materials is
 - A. fears about the environment.
 - B. knowing the planet is a very big place.
 - C. advances in farming technology.
 - D. increases in commodity prices.
5. 'The same' (line 29) refers to
 - A. real prices falling over time.
 - B. raw materials not running out.
 - C. materials running short.
 - D. real prices generally increasing.
6. Fish is used in paragraph 4 as an example of
 - A. a well-protected resource.
 - B. a resource no one takes responsibility for.
 - C. a resource much damaged by pollution.
 - D. a food shared by all of society.
7. A main argument in paragraph 4 is that the most difficult environmental problems are
 - A. caused by conflicts between commercial and public interests.
 - B. best solved by government intervention.
 - C. caused by air, land or water pollution.
 - D. too costly for governments to deal with.
8. According to paragraph 5, what has led to improvements in the quality of the environment in some democratic countries?
 - A. Governments have identified the most important issues.
 - B. Voters have worked with the governments.
 - C. Voters and governments have agreed on the necessity for action.
 - D. The worst sources of air pollution have been identified.
9. According to paragraph 5, in wealthy countries
 - A. air pollution has been deteriorating for 300 years.
 - B. the state of the environment as a whole has improved in recent years.
 - C. all aspects of air quality have improved in recent decades.
 - D. governments have persuaded people to reduce air pollution from vehicles.
10. Pollution from petrol has worsened because petrol
 - A. demand has grown so fast.
 - B. contains sulphur dioxide.
 - C. consumption is hard to determine.
 - D. contains lead.
11. In paragraph 6, the writer suggests that strong economic growth
 - A. cannot solve environmental problems.
 - B. increases environmental problems.
 - C. allows countries to clean up their environment.
 - D. is liked by environmentalists.
12. According to paragraph 6, in poor countries
 - A. environmentalists have identified most problems.
 - B. environmental problems cannot be solved.
 - C. there has been less growth in pollution.
 - D. pollution represents a growing danger.
13. According to the writer, which of the following is probably NOT an effective measure for reducing pollution?
 - A. eliminating tax benefits for the mining industry
 - B. increasing the cost of water to consumers
 - C. banning some cars some of the time
 - D. installing anti-pollution equipment
14. Mexico is used by the writer in paragraph 7 as an example of a country
 - A. where there is too much corruption.
 - B. where there are too many tax benefits.
 - C. which has dealt with air pollution well.
 - D. which found it difficult to improve air quality.
15. The phrase 'scourges of the environment' (lines 79-80) means
 - A. friends of the environment.
 - B. enemies of the environment.
 - C. protection for the environment.
 - D. different aspects of the environment.
16. In the opinion of the writer, which is the biggest problem faced by poorer countries in their struggle against pollution?
 - A. They are rarely democratic.
 - B. Companies are corrupt.
 - C. No one wants to be green.
 - D. Green policies increase unemployment.
17. Japan is cited primarily as an example of a country
 - A. which experienced many pollution disasters.
 - B. with an imperfect democratic government.
 - C. with an authoritarian government.
 - D. where democracy fostered anti-pollution laws.
18. What would be a suitable alternative title for this article?
 - A. *The dangers of pollution*
 - B. *Environmental realities: rich and poor*
 - C. *Pollution in poor countries*
 - D. *A century of continuing pollution*

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(Freely adapted from an article in *The Economist*, 11th September, 1999.)

~ Sentence patterns (SS)
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A = main idea questions
 B = information questions
 C = vocabulary questions