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Understanding the text

1. Locate the lines in the text that support the title 'The Ailing Planet'.

Answer:

The lines that support the title of the chapter are given below.

"The earth's vital signs reveal a patient in declining health."

"Are we to leave our successors a scorched planet of advancing deserts, impoverished landscapes and ailing environment?"

"...the environment has deteriorated so badly that it is "critical" in many of the eighty-eight countries investigated".

"When this happens, fisheries collapse, forests disappear, grasslands are converted into barren wastelands and croplands deteriorate."

"it has been well said that forests precede mankind, deserts follow"

" Several species of life face extinction as a result of its destruction."

"The environmental problem does not necessarily signal our demise, it is our passport for the future."

2. What does the notice 'The world's most dangerous animal' at a cage in the zoo at Lusaka, Zambia, signify?

Answer:

The inscription 'The world's most dangerous animal' in a cage in the Lusaka Zoo in Zambia indicates that man has always been a completely self-centred being. Even though man is civilized and has advanced far beyond all other animals, his vision of a world based on cooperation has yet to take shape. We humans, like all other beings, want to rule this planet rather than coexist with it. That is why we frequently forget that humans cannot sustain themselves on their own. We must instead learn to live in a way that helps the earth sustain itself and thus helps us sustain ourselves.

3. How are the earth's principal biological systems being depleted?

Answer:

There are four major biological systems on Earth – fisheries, forests, grasslands, and croplands. These four systems are not only the basic systems required for survival, but they are also the primary sources of raw materials for the majority of our needs. In a nutshell, they are the foundation of the global economy. However, with rising protein demands, the demand for fish is increasing all the time. The fish stock is being depleted in order to meet this demand. Apart from supplying our food, these four systems provide almost all of the raw materials for the industry, with the exception of minerals and petroleum-derived synthetics. Human demands on these systems have reached an unsustainable level in many parts of the world, reducing their productivity. When this occurs, fisheries fail, forests disappear, grasslands become barren wastelands, and consequently, croplands deteriorate. Overfishing is a daily occurrence in a protein-conscious and protein-hungry world. Local forests are being decimated in poor countries in order to obtain firewood for cooking. Firewood has become so expensive in some areas that "what goes under the pot now costs more than what goes inside it."

4. Why does the author aver that the growth of world population is one of the strongest factors distorting the future of human society?

Answer:

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The author believes that the world's population growth is one of the most powerful factors distorting future human society because a growing population not only increases food demand but also depletes current resources at an unrecoverable rate. Fertility rates are declining as incomes rise, education spreads, and health improves. As a result, development is the most effective contraceptive. However, if the current rate of population growth continues, development may be impossible. The rich get richer, while the poor have children who keep them poor. Having more children does not imply more workers, but rather more unemployed people. It is not advocated that humans be treated like cattle and forced to be sterilized. However, there is no alternative to voluntary family planning that does not involve some form of coercion. The choice is really between population control and poverty perpetuation.

Thinking about language

The phrase 'inter alia' meaning 'among other things' is one of the many Latin expressions commonly used in English. Find out what these Latin phrases mean.

1. prima facie
2. ad hoc
3. in camera
4. ad infinitum
5. mutatis mutandis
6. caveat
7. tabula rasa

Answer:

1. prima facie – at first face or first impression
2. ad hoc – created or done for a particular purpose as necessary
3. In-camera – doing something that the camera rolls.
4. ad infinitum – again and again in the same way
5. mutatis mutandis – making necessary alterations while not affecting the main point at issue.
6. Caveat – a warning or proviso of specific stipulations, conditions, or limitations.
7. tabula rasa – an absence of preconceived ideas or predetermined goals

Working with words

I. Locate the following phrases in the text and study their connotation.

1. gripped the imagination of
2. dawned upon
3. ushered in
4. passed into current coin
5. passport of the future

Answer:

1. gripped the imagination of: received much attention

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2. dawned upon: realised it for the first time
3. ushered in: began the new idea
4. passed into current coin: have been brought into use
5. passport of the future: a thing that makes something possible

II. The words 'grip', 'dawn', 'usher', 'coin', 'passport' have a literal as well as a figurative meaning. Write pairs of sentences using each word in the literal as well as the figurative sense

Answer:

Write your own answer.

