

Comprehension

Genre

A **Nonfiction Article** in a newspaper or magazine presents facts and information.



Evaluate

Fact and Opinion

A fact is something that can be proven to be true. An opinion is a belief that may not be supported by facts.

BEYOND *the* HORIZON

Can people around the world improve their standard of living and still protect the environment?



Kofi Annan

Kofi Annan, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, made a speech to world leaders. The topic was the health of the environment. He described two visions of the future. If environmental warning signs go **unheeded**, he said, the future looks grim. But if people are willing to change their ways, the future can be bright. Here is a summary of what he said:


Imagine a future of constant storms and floods. Islands and coastal regions are flooded. Because of drought, nothing can grow in the hard soil. People are at war with each other over water and other natural resources.

Then imagine a future with cities and towns that are clean and pleasant. Homes, transportation, and industry are energy-efficient. The standard of living for all the world's people is improving.

The choice between these different visions is ours to make. Current trends may not be very encouraging. We know enough about ecological problems to fear the worst. But there is time to draw back from the edge of disaster. Most important, another path is possible. That path is better for **humanity** and less harmful to the environment.

The challenge of living in harmony with Earth is as old as human society itself. Things changed with the Industrial Revolution. The steam engine and the internal combustion engine were invented. People learned to take advantage of the energy locked in such fossil fuels as coal, oil, and gas. Improvements in farming methods and machinery pushed people from farms into factories and cities. The result was a revolution in living standards that the world had never seen or even imagined possible.

A dried-up lake bed in California



Will forests like this one in
New Zealand survive?

Today we need another revolution. We need to change our attitude toward the global environment. For too long, too many people have believed that we can overcome anything that limits us. And too many have believed that technology is the **inevitable** answer to any problem we might face.

Slowly, however, we have become **enlightened**. We have begun to see the dangers in the **prevailing** way of doing things. We can see the dangers in continuing to cut down forests and use up

natural water supplies. We know that an atmosphere filled with poisons puts us at risk. We realize that we cannot continue to over-fish the oceans. The climate itself has begun to talk back in the form of storms and droughts.

People who believe all forms of development are bad do not help either side. For the poorest members of the human family, development offers hope. It means the chance to feed, school, and care for themselves and their children. But prosperity that destroys the natural

environment is no prosperity at all. We are faced with another kind of choice.

We know that development is possible without using up natural resources or ruining the environment. The people of the world must come together. We must show our strong sense of common destiny. We must take this challenge seriously. In the end we must exercise greater responsibility for one another. And we must take responsibility for the Earth on which we depend.

Think and Compare

1. What is the topic of this speech?
2. Do you agree with the main idea of this speech? Why or why not?
3. Would you describe this selection as mostly fact or mostly opinion? Explain your answer.
4. Which of the problems described in “Environmental Dangers” are also referred to in “Beyond the Horizon”?





Test Strategy

Think and Search

Read on to find the answer.
Look for information in more than one place.



Jason McDougald's fourth-grade class poses for a picture during a visit to Graybeard Wilderness.

KEEPING THE WILDERNESS WILD

Robin Tynes, age ten, often goes hiking with her family in leafy Graybeard Wilderness, a nature preserve in Montreat, North Carolina. "It's really nice and quiet," she says.

Robin's fourth-grade class at Black Mountain Elementary School is so fond of Graybeard that they chose it as their precious place. A lot of hikers, backpackers, and mountain bikers feel that way, too. The preserve's popularity has caused problems. Many visitors create their own paths, called "switchbacks." Robin's teacher, Jason McDougald, explains, "If there's a bend on the trail, a lot of people will go straight across it" to make their route shorter. They trample plants and cause erosion.

Other threats to Graybeard include campers who cut down trees for firewood and developers who build homes nearby. Development threatens the natural habitats of Graybeard's animals and can cause water and air pollution.

To protect their precious place, McDougald's class has presented programs on ways to enjoy the wilderness responsibly. They organized a group to spread the message. Among their tips: Stay on the trail and leave campsites just as you found them.

Directions: Answer the questions.

1. Which of the following statements is an opinion the fourth-grade class would agree with?

- A Graybeard Wilderness is a nature preserve in North Carolina.
- B Graybeard Wilderness is a quiet place, loved by hikers.
- C It is okay to cut down trees inside the preserve.
- D Camping causes soil erosion and pollution.

2. What are some threats to Graybeard Wilderness?

- A the peace and quiet
- B wilderness programs
- C loud noises
- D switchbacks and development

3. “Switchbacks” are made by

- A park rangers creating hiking trails in the wilderness.
- B animals such as deer walking through the forest.
- C people who do not stay on the trail and who crush plants.
- D water rushing down the mountain and flooding campsites.

4. How will the tips offered by Robin’s class help save Graybeard Wilderness?

5. Do you think natural habitats and wilderness parks should be protected? Explain your answer.

Tip

Look for information in more than one place.

Write to a Prompt

The rangers at Green Place State Park are thinking about allowing snowmobilers to use its trails in the winter. Do you think this is a good or a bad idea? Write an essay giving your opinion. Explain your reasons for feeling as you do.



I stated my opinion in my introduction.

Help Save Our Park

Imagine a beautiful, snowy forest. All is quiet. Suddenly, a loud, whining engine roars to life. A snowmobile whizzes past, leaving muddy ruts in the path and the smell of gasoline in the air. Snowmobilers should be barred from using Green Place State Park.

The park is a beautiful and peaceful place where people can go when they are stressed out. With snowmobiles around, being in the park is like being on the highway—it's noisy, smelly, and crowded.

Finally, the health of the environment is at stake. If we allow the park to go downhill, we may lose it altogether. Green Place State Park will become unfit as a habitat for wildlife. The ecosystem will be disturbed, and that will affect everyone in the community. All parts of an ecosystem depend on each other—and that includes people!

Writing Prompt

A company wants to buy a large meadow in your community and make it into a water park. There will be an entrance fee. The mayor of your city wants the parks department to buy it and turn it into a public park. Which do you think is the better use of the land? Write an essay giving your opinion and reasons why the land should be a water park or a public park.

Writer's Checklist

- Ask yourself, who is my audience?
- Think about your purpose for writing.
- Choose the correct form for your writing.
- Plan your writing before beginning.
- Use details to support your main idea.
- Be sure your ideas are clear and organized.
- Use your best spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

