

## FACULTAD DE INGENIERIA

NAME:

DATE:

PROGRAM:

## A Reading Comprehension and Writing Exam

## War on plastic is distracting from more urgent threats to environment, experts warn

Circle/underline the best option to complete each exercise in sections 1 – 5

## 1. Predicting (5)

According to the cues provided, what is the text about?

- a. Researches from the University of Nottingham warn about plastic pollution.
- b. Plastic pollution is distracting from other forms of environmental degradation.**
- c. Plastic pollution has been exploited politically.
- d. Plastic waste contaminates the environment.



October 23, 2020

- 1 A team of leading environmental experts, spearheaded by the University of Nottingham, have warned that the  
 2 current war on plastic is distracting from bigger threats to the environment. In an article published in a scientific  
 3 journal, 13 experts say that while plastic waste is an issue, its prominence in the general public's concern for the  
 4 environment is overshadowing greater threats, for example, climate change and biodiversity loss.
- 5 The researchers argue that much of the discourse around plastic waste is based on data that is not always  
 6 representative of the environments that have been sampled. The aversion to plastic associated with this could  
 7 encourage the use of alternative materials with potentially greater harmful effects.
- 8 The authors warn that plastic pollution dominates the public's concern for the environment and has been  
 9 exploited politically, after capturing the attention of the world, for example through emotive imagery of wildlife  
 10 caught in plastic waste and alarmist headlines. They say small political gestures such as legislation banning  
 11 cosmetic microplastics, taxing plastic bags, and financial incentives for using reusable containers, as well as the  
 12 promotion of products as 'green' for containing less plastic than alternatives, risk instilling a complacency in  
 13 society towards other environmental problems that are not as tangible as plastic pollution.
- 14 The article's authors call on the media and others to ensure that the realities of plastic pollution are not  
 15 misrepresented, particularly in the public dissemination of the issue. They also encourage governments to reduce  
 16 the environmental impact of over-consumption, by improving product design, using truly circular waste-  
 17 management systems, and creating well-planned rather than reactionary policies.
- 18 The article also highlights that plastics are not the only type of polluting material originating from human  
 19 activity that contaminates the environment. Other examples include natural textile fibers such as cotton and  
 20 wool, Spheroidal Carbonaceous Particles (remnants of fossil fuels), and brake-wear particles from vehicles --  
 21 all of which are present in different places, where they may have adverse environmental effects. The authors  
 22 note that these materials are often much more abundant than microplastics and some, such as glass, aluminum,  
 23 paper, and natural fibers, are associated with 'plastic alternatives' that are marketed as solutions to plastic  
 24 pollution, but in reality side-step the inconvenience of changing the consumption practices at the root of the  
 25 problem. The eco-toxicological impacts of some of these materials are less well known than plastic and  
 26 microplastic pollution, yet they could have significant impacts.
- 27 The authors concluded that a behavioral science approach should be taken to assess society's relationship with  
 28 single-use items and throw-away culture, and to overhaul waste mismanagement. They say there is an  
 29 understandable desire to minimize the global plastic debris in the environment which should not be discouraged,  
 30 but positive action to minimize plastic pollution needs to be well informed and should not exacerbate or  
 31 overshadow other forms of environmental degradation associated with alternative materials.

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<https://www.sciencedaily.com/>

## 2. Skimming (30)

Choose from the list A-G the main idea for paragraphs 1-6. There is one extra letter that you do not need to use.

- A. The hostility to plastic could promote the use of materials more harmful to the environment. P.....2
- B. The article urges governments to reduce the impact of overconsumption. P 4
- C. Plastic waste is distracting from bigger threats to the environment. P 1
- D. Political gestures towards plastic waste risk overlooking other environmental problems. P 3
- E. We need to rethink the way we produce, consume and dispose of plastic. XXX
- F. Plastics are not the only type of man-made polluting material. P 5
- G. Concern about plastic pollution should not mask other forms of environmental degradation. P 6

## 3. Scanning (10)

1. *How many experts have warned that plastic is not the only threat to the environment?*

- a. 2
- b. 5
- c. 7
- d. 13

2. *What are greater threats to the environment than plastic waste?*

- a. Deforestation
- b. Land-use change
- c. Climate change and biodiversity loss
- d. CO2 emissions and depletion of the ozone layer

3. *What could aversion to plastic encourage?*

- a. Using alternative materials with greater harmful effects
- b. Disposing of plastic objects more carefully
- c. Banning plastics from daily life
- d. Recycling plastic items more often

4. *Who is worried about plastic pollution?*

- a. Governments
- b. The public
- c. The scientific community
- d. The media

5. *What is an instance of small political gestures?*

- a. Giving money to the unemployed
- b. Financing schools and hospitals
- c. Taxing plastic bags
- d. Looking after the citizens

6. *How can governments minimize the environmental impact of over-consumption?*

- a. Through product design
- b. Through truly circular waste management
- c. Through considered policy
- d. All of the above

7. *What materials are marketed as solutions to plastic pollution?*

- a. Glass
- b. Aluminum
- c. Paper and natural fibers
- d. All of the above

8. *What is not known about the alternative materials to plastic?*

- a. They are more expensive
- b. They have eco-toxicological impacts on the environment
- c. They are lighter
- d. All of the above

9. *How can consumption practices be changed?*

- a. A behavioral science approach should be taken
- b. A worldwide environmental campaign should be conducted
- c. The number of items to be bought should be restricted
- d. Consumption practices can be changed on a personal level little by little

10. *The text does NOT mention:*

- a. Who carried out the study
- b. What the problem was
- c. How the problem could be tackled
- d. Whether governments are truly interested in the problem

#### 4. Inferencing (25)

1. *What is the environment?*

- a. A place where wild animals live
- b. The air, water and land on Earth
- c. Human's activity
- d. Urban areas

2. *What are bigger threats to the environment than the use of plastics?*

- a. Paper
- b. Cardboard
- c. Natural fibers
- d. All of the above

3. *Why are these alternative materials bigger threats to the environment?*

- a. They cause sea level rise
- b. They cause deforestation
- c. They cause glacier melting
- d. They cause acid rain

**4. What are the effects of deforestation?**

- a. Desertification
- b. Global warming
- c. Climate change
- d. All of the above

**5. Why is plastic pollution being used politically?**

- a. It distracts public's attention from other environmental problems more difficult to tackle
- b. It has captured the attention of the world
- c. Politicians are worried about people's wellbeing
- d. None of the above

**6. What is the throw-away culture?**

- a. A practice by means of which items are bought to last long
- b. A practice by means of which items are borrowed instead of bought
- c. A practice by means of which items are discarded quickly
- d. A practice by means of which items are recycled

**7. What is the environmental impact of over-consumption?**

- a. Long period of droughts
- b. Natural resource depletion
- c. Glacier melting
- d. Sea level rise

**8. What does "single-use items" imply?**

- a. The same items are used for many years
- b. Different items are used for different purposes
- c. Items are used only once and thrown away
- d. Items are used and then recycled for a new use

**9. What can be done on a personal level to minimize over-consumption?**

- a. Reduce
- b. Reuse
- c. Recycle
- d. All of the above

**10. What is the message of the text?**

- a. Alternative materials should be used instead of plastics
- b. Plastic pollution has captured the attention of the world
- c. Plastic pollution is overshadowing other forms of environmental threats
- d. Plastic pollution is not as harmful as it was previously thought

**5. Vocabulary (10)**

**1. The verb "spearheaded" in line 1 can be understood as:**

- a. assessed
- b. flowed
- c. led
- d. admired

2. *The noun “issue” in line 3 can be replaced by:*
- problem
  - method
  - asset
  - object
3. *The adverb “potentially” in line 7 can be interpreted as:*
- emotionally
  - quickly
  - absolutely
  - probably
4. *The noun “concern” in line 8 can be understood as:*
- belief
  - worry
  - feeling
  - information
5. *The verb “instilling” in line 12 can be described as:*
- implanting
  - distilling
  - recycling
  - burying
6. *The adverb “rather than” in line 17 can be replaced by:*
- otherwise
  - or else
  - instead of
  - hence
7. *The verb “contaminates” in line 19 can be interpreted as:*
- harms
  - pollutes
  - conserves
  - cleans up
8. *The noun phrase “consumption practices” in line 24 can be understood as:*
- the way we use items
  - the way we manufacture items
  - the way we store items
  - the way we dispose of items
9. *The adjective “significant” in line 26 can be described as:*
- everlasting
  - important
  - similar
  - minor
10. *The verb “to assess” in line 27 can be understood as:*
- to avoid
  - to cause
  - to evaluate
  - to identify

**6. Reference (20)**

*Write the referent word(s) at the end of each sentence.*

1. Find a synonym for the noun “researchers” in line 1.
2. What does the possessive adjective “its” in line 3 imply?
3. What examples of “greater threats” are given in lines 4?
4. What does the relative pronoun “that” in line 6 indicate?
5. What “small political gestures” are mentioned in lines 10-11?
6. What does the noun phrase “the issue” in line 15 refer to?
7. What does the noun phrase “other examples” in line 19 point to?
8. What does the subject pronoun “they” in line 26 stand for?
9. Find a synonym for the noun “waste” in line 29.
10. Find a synonym for the verb “worsen” in line 30”

1. Experts
2. Plastic waste
3. Climate change & biodiversity loss
4. Environments
5. Legislation banning cosmetic microplastics, taxing plastic bags & financial incentives for using reusable containers, etc.
6. Plastic pollution
7. Polluting material
8. These materials
9. Debris
10. Exacerbate

**Writing (100)**

Choose ONE of the following topics and write a paragraph. (about 100 words)

- a. “Plastic pollution” (Cause-Effect organization pattern )
- b. “Paper bags vs. plastic bags” (Compare-Contrast organization pattern)
- c. “How consumers can reduce plastic waste at home (Process Description organization pattern)