

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

English Language B

Paper 1

Thursday 9 June 2016 – Afternoon
Extracts Booklet

Paper Reference
4EB0/01

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Text One

'Environmentally Conscious Teens and College Students on the Decline' adapted from an article by Martha Irvine



College students have a reputation for being environmentally minded do-gooders. But, an academic analysis of surveys spanning more than 40 years has found that today's young Americans are less interested in the environment and in conserving resources than the previous generation.

The findings go against the widespread belief that environmental issues have hit home with today's young adults who have grown up amid climate change discussion and the motto 'reduce, reuse, recycle.' The environment is often listed among top concerns of young voters. 5

'I was shocked,' said Jean Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University, who is one of the study's authors. 'We have the perception that we're getting through to people. But compared to previous generations, we're not.' 10

Based on two longstanding national surveys of high school and college students, Twenge and her colleagues found a steady decline in people's concerns about the environment and also a decline in people prepared to take personal action to save the environment.

Emily Stokes, a 20-year-old geography student, thinks people who grow up in beautiful natural environments are more likely to take environmental issues seriously. 'But I still find myself pretty frustrated a lot of the time,' said Stokes. 'I just think our generation seems to be fairly self-centred – and we seem to have the shortest attention span.' 15

Kelly Benoit, a 20-year-old political science student, went as far as calling her peers 'lazy'. 'I think it can be due to our upbringing. We want what we want when we want it,' said 20

Benoit, who has worked in her State to try to ban the use of plastic bags in stores. She thinks members of her generation, like a lot of people, simply don't want to give up conveniences.

Or are they just overwhelmed?

Mark Potosnak, an environmental science professor, has noticed less enthusiasm for environmental issues. 'It's not so much that they don't think it's important. They're just worn out,' Potosnak said. 'It's like poverty in a foreign country. You see the picture so many times, you just don't notice it.' 25

'A lot of young people also simply don't spend that much time exploring nature,' said Beth Christensen, a professor who heads an environmental studies programme. When she attended university in the 1980s, she said it was unusual to find a fellow student who hadn't hiked and spent time in the woods. 30

'Now a lot of these students have very little experience with the natural world,' Christensen said. So one of her goals is to get her students out into marshes and onto beaches – and even coral reefs in Australia – to help them connect with a natural world many have only seen on television. Some of her students also volunteer with a group that cleans up rubbish in the bays around the islands – one of many examples of young people who are taking environmental issues seriously. 35

At Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania students are running a biodiesel fuel plant on campus and building 'permaculture' (indefinitely sustainable) gardens in their back yards. 40

Richard Niesenbaum, a biology professor at Muhlenberg, identifies his students as:

- 5 to 10 percent are committed environmentalists.
- 5 percent are anti-environment. (These are the students who purposely avoid putting their rubbish in campus recycling bins, for instance.)
- 85 to 90 percent are open to protecting the environment and natural resources, but are not interested in being seriously inconvenienced or paying a cost to do so. 45

Jean Twenge, the study's lead author, said the numbers speak for themselves.

'I hope that young people see these findings as a challenge rather than a criticism,' she said, adding that the lack of interest in environmental issues isn't exclusive to young people. 50

'This is a change in overall culture,' she said, 'and young people reflect the changes in culture.'

Text Two

'Teens Unite for the Planet' adapted from an article by Vanessa Campisi



It might be shocking news to some. Teenagers – those headphone-wearing introverts so often viewed as lazy, irresponsible and not interested in world issues – care about the environment. They really care, suggest the results of an Australian survey released earlier this week. More than 80 percent of 4000 teens surveyed are concerned for the environment, quoting worries such as bushfires, climate change and animal extinctions at the top of the list. And two-thirds of them believe that their government is too inactive on the green front. 5

These sustainability sentiments are being echoed by Canada's own generation of green-inclined teens. Young Canadians are concerned about the environment, and some are taking extraordinary steps to help out. Simon Jackson started a campaign to save the rare Spirit Bear at the age of 13. He founded Spirit Bear Youth (one of the world's largest youth environmental organisations) and has been featured in a documentary. Alysia Garmulewicz organised and directed the Canadian Youth Climate Change Conference at 17 years old. Colin Carter, a grade 10 Toronto student, recently released a documentary on climate change after being inspired by a class assignment. He called it *Fight for the Planet*, and he poignantly asks, 'If we don't... who will?' 10 15

This urgent sense of responsibility to fight for their planet, since no one else is, comes from disillusionment with governments and older generations, whose apparent inaction in the face of major environmental crises will surely affect teens' futures.

As Greg Ross of the Sierra Youth Coalition explains, 'Teens are realising that they will be the ones having to deal with all the environmental problems left behind from the older generation, and they are not going to wait around and do nothing. Canada used to be viewed as an environmental leader and now we are heading in the wrong direction and young people do not want this to happen.' 20

It's therefore time to put away the stereotypes of teens as apathetic and having no interest in politics, says Jenn Savedge, author of the forthcoming *The Green Teen: The Eco-Friendly Teen's Guide to Saving the Planet*.

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Teens today are uniting around the green cause, upholding Gandhi's powerful message that 'You must be the change you wish to see in the world'. This change is loud and strong across the country. From large environmental youth groups, to eco-clubs in high schools, to individual initiatives, Canadian teenagers are making 'green' mainstream.

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The success of these green teen initiatives is due in large part to social media and networking. Facebook, MySpace, blogging and Twitter provide teen-led campaigns with a huge advantage, says Savedge. (Yes, those activities that keep teens holed up in their room for hours might actually be working towards the greater good.) Social networking allows youth activists from every corner of a country – no matter how far – to unite online and there are hundreds of eco-themed youth-driven Facebook groups to prove it.

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Once filled with enthusiasm for environmental issues and helped along by social media, there is no stopping teens' success. But that doesn't mean there aren't challenges along the way. One of the biggest barriers is their youth! Teens with great green ideas are not always taken seriously at first because of their age. It can be difficult to get the grants from sponsors, the support from politicians or the participation of communities, says Savedge. Ross also agrees that a lot of teenagers these days do not feel that adults take them seriously. And yet they persevere – establishing prominent organisations like the many Canadian youth-led groups and campaigns, such as 'Teens Turning Green'.

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Today's teens seem to be living up to the words of Julia Butterfly Hill, an environmental activist famous for her 1997 tree live-in protest. She once said: 'We are constantly told that we are the leaders of tomorrow... That's a lie. We are the leaders of today.'

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/15/environmentally-conscious-teens-coeds_n_1346733.html

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