PROVA

THE HOT ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Combating **global warming** is one of the most significant political challenges of our age. In the last decade, warmer-than-average temperatures have been recorded around the globe, and scientists warn that temperatures may soar by 1.8 to 4° C before the close of the century. As a consequence of this heat wave, human and animal populations will suffer, and the future of our planet may even be at risk.

Climate change is nothing new, of course: in the past, the globe has experienced many fluctuations in temperature. A thousand years ago, Britain was warm enough for Roman soldiers to plant vines and make wine. A few centuries later, Britain underwent what has been described as a 'mini ice age': seventeenth-century Londoners even used to go ice-skating on the River Thames! What is different about the recent climate change, however, is that this time it has been caused by human activity, and especially by the emission of **greenhouse gases**, such as carbon dioxide and methane. As a result of industry, as well as technological advances such as cars and planes, the concentration of these gases has intensified. These gases act like a **blanket** in the atmosphere, making the world warmer.

So, why should we be worried? In northern European countries, having milder summers even seems quite appealing! Unfortunately, nearer the equator, the hot dry weather is making deserts expand, and putting water resources under pressure. In Spain, it is thought that nearly a third of country may eventually be affected by desertification, and six percent of Spain's **soil** has already been lost to desert. Fertile land is gradually disappearing, and there is a growing pressure on water resources in some regions, with a huge cost to the economy. South of Europe, in some of Africa's poorest countries, the problem of desertification is turning to tragedy. With diminishing land for crops or animal grazing, and very low rainfall, the problems of **drought**, famine and disease are exacerbated. Climate change in Africa is already costing lives.

Countries further away from the equator have no grounds to feel complacent, however: climate change will affect everybody. Warmer temperatures in the Arctic and Antarctic are melting the ice caps, which in turn is leading to rising sea levels. It is not yet known what the consequences of this might be, but there are several alarming theories. Several scientists have predicted that the additional ice water may cause the warmer currents or streams in the ocean to cool. Without the warmth provided by these currents, the average temperatures in northern Europe and America could drop by 5 to 10 °C, which will make some areas virtually uninhabitable. Paradoxically, it seems, global warming may actually be experienced as a big freeze in some parts of the world.

We cannot ultimately predict all of the possible consequences of climate change. However, there is one thing which most scientists agree on: if we do not act now, the earth will continue to heat up. We must take better care of our planet – before the problem gets too hot to handle.

global warming: escalfament global /calentamiento del planeta
greenhouse gases: gasos hivernacle /gases de invernadero
blanket: manta / manta
soil: sòl / suelo
drought: sequera / sequía

Part 1: Reading comprehension

Choose the correct answer. Only ONE answer is possible.
[0.5 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.16 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions.]

1. **In the past ten years,**
   a) temperatures have risen by 1.8–4° C.
   b) scientists have begun to study temperatures around the world.
   c) global warming has become the biggest issue of our time.
   d) the world has experienced hotter temperatures.
2. **In the past, climate change was**
   a) not necessarily caused by human action.
   b) particularly a problem in Britain.
   c) always the result of pollution.
   d) the cause of several mini ice ages.
3. **In the 1600s, British people**
   a) often went ice-skating.
   b) enjoyed warmer summers and colder winters.
   c) could plant vines and make wine.
   d) experienced freezing temperatures.
4. **According to the text, greenhouse gases are**
   a) warmer than other gases.
   b) present in the atmosphere.
   c) emitted by all industries.
   d) mainly emitted by cars and planes.
5. **In Spain, climate change has**
   a) created more demand for water.
   b) had more serious consequences than in Africa.
   c) changed a third of the land into desert.
   d) not affected the country as badly as northern Europe.
6. **Climate change is a serious issue in Africa, because**
   a) there is already less fertile land in Africa than Spain.
   b) it makes existing problems worse.
   c) countries are too poor to pay for solutions.
   d) people cannot survive such hot temperatures.
7. **What will be the effect of melting ice caps?**
   a) The ocean will warm up.
   b) No one can imagine what might happen.
   c) Different theories have been suggested.
   d) The main ocean currents will cool down.
8. **What might happen in the USA?**
   a) It might form a new ice cap.
   b) No one will be able to live there.
   c) The temperature could get cooler.
   d) It might become colder than northern Europe.

Part 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Write about number 1 or 2. Minimum length: 100 words. [4 points]

1. You are a member of an environmental group at your school. The group is concerned that the government should be doing more to help the environment. Write a letter to the Minister for the Environment. Express your concern about climate change, and suggest a few ideas about how we could help the environment.

2. Your uncle is a charity worker in the Sahara Desert in Africa. You want to find out more about what he does there. Your uncle explains the situation today and tells you about what they hope to achieve there in the future. Write the dialogue you and your uncle have.