

## < Deep In The Amazon, An Unseen Battle Over The Most Valuable Trees

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STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

We have a report this morning on the shrinking rainforests of South America. The forests of the Amazon River basin are called the lungs of the world. They take in enormous amounts of carbon dioxide. They breathe out oxygen. They're so vital. And we have learned that a much-publicized effort to save the forest in Brazil is not working nearly as well as planned. NPR's Lourdes Garcia-Navarro has spent two weeks in the Amazon, traveling through the forest. And she's on the line. Lourdes, how bad is it?

LOURDES GARCIA-NAVARRO, BYLINE: Well, the rate of deforestation has gone down dramatically, actually, in Brazil. But, you know, we're losing 2,000 square miles of rain forest every year. And the main problem is not the sort of yearly averages that we hear about but how much forest we've lost over all and where. And when you look at those numbers, scientists that I've been talking to say the ecosystem could be at a point of no return.

INSKEEP: Where did you go to see that happening?

GARCIA-NAVARRO: I went to the smallest Amazonian state of Rondonia. And I chose it because it's a microcosm of the issues at large. You can see the various stages of deforestation, the link between politics and what's happening on the ground, the environmental police and how understaffed they are. And it tells us a little bit also about the small players who are really important, some of whom are directly under threat. To get a picture of how deforestation affects people on the ground, I decided to travel into the jungle on a patrol with the so-called guardians of the forest. No journalist has ever made this trip with them before.

It's a pretty bumpy ride.

We're traveling with a group of rubber tappers in the back of a beat-up pickup truck, bouncing over a rough, overgrown track. We're heading into a part of the Amazon rain forest that the rubber tappers call enemy territory.

They say if there's a problem at any time, basically we withdraw as speedily as we can.

Tappers survive by taking the sap from rubber trees, which are native to the Amazon. They live in protected Amazon reserves, like the one we're in now, peacefully surviving off the forest. But today, they're on a different mission.

ELIZEU BERCACOLA: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Our guides are Elizeu Bercacola, one of the rubber tapper leaders...

BERCACOLA: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: He's got an intense, frenetic energy.

GISELDA PILKER: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Giselda Pilker is the opposite. She's the kind of peace-loving mother of the group. Her son is named John Lennon, after The Beatles. The tappers - and there are seven of them in all - signal to one another when it's OK to proceed.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #1: (Whooping).

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #2: (Whooping).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: We're having to stop and start all the time to make sure that we won't come into sudden contact with illegal logging groups, criminal gangs who steal protected wood from the forest. As we move deeper into the jungle, we see signs that they've been here everywhere. The rubber tappers are having to hack branches and fallen logs out of our way. I'm interpreting what the rubber tappers are telling me in Portuguese.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #3: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: "These trees were thrown down by illegal loggers to stop them from being able to move in and track what they're doing."

The rubber tappers point out some of the more valuable tree species, the ones that are older, therefore bigger, the hardwoods.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #3: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: "These illegal loggers, they send teams into the forest to identify these trees so they know where they are. And then they come in stealthily later and cut them down."

And he says that is the first wave of invasion into the forest.

BERCACOLA: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: "This," Elizeu explains, "is how illegal deforestation begins."

The forest is thinned of its biodiversity, picked apart tree by tree. What's worse, they take the seed-bearing trees, what the rubber tappers call the mothers of the forest. What's driving this trade is demand. Rare Amazonian wood is lucrative. And America is the largest export market for Brazilian timber. The rubber tappers are trying to stop the illegal trade from happening with patrols like the one we're on today. That's put them into direct conflict with what are essentially organized criminal groups, which means the rubber tappers today are armed.

Carrying machetes, pistols, rifles.

Elizeu has a pistol tucked into his belt and his great-grandfather's rifle from 1906. The rain forest here thrums with life. It's cool and wet. But despite the calm of the surroundings, the men are watchful.

BERCACOLA: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Elizeu tells us although we may not realize it, we're approaching the front lines.

BERCACOLA: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: "We rubber tappers," he says, "are being hunted because we're trying to protect what you see around you." He tells me 16 rubber tappers in the area, called Machadinho d'oeste in the Brazilian state of Rondonia, have been murdered in the past decade. Elizeu's wearing a battered backpack that has three bullet holes in it. It's from a recent attempt, he says, on his life.

PILKER: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Giselda Pilker, who isn't carrying a gun, describes how one rubber tapper was decapitated as a warning. She says there isn't enough local law enforcement to protect the forest. So that's why they try and do it. Technically, this kind of vigilantism is illegal. But the understaffed police turn a blind eye. We start moving again, and we come across a wide dirt road that cuts through the green. The men tense up. They're loading their weapons in case of a confrontation.

Elizeu tells me what we found is an illegal logging road. But unlike the other track we were on, this one's wide and smooth, an example of how well-used it is and how the illegal loggers operate with impunity. Elizeu tells us there are at least nine of these roads in this area alone. This is illegal deforestation's ground zero.

So we're just driving down this road. And there's a big pile of logs that have been stacked on the side of the road, ready to be taken out of the forest.

And we see dozens of these piles. We get out of the car. There are felled trees everywhere.

So these logs are really thick. They're 30 feet long. They're stacked up on the side of the road. The rubber tappers are telling us that the illegal loggers will probably be back very soon to pick them up on the back of trucks and take them to the mills in town.

We creep up on foot towards a clearing.

We have to be very quiet.

In just this one tiny part of one forest reserve the Amazon, we discover three illegal logging camps.

Basically, it's a tarp over a couple of holes, a place to eat. There's no one here right now, though.

It looks like they just left, and it's making us all jumpy. Elizeu starts rifling around.

So he's opening some of the suitcases that have been left here. And it's pretty sad what's inside, a couple pairs of shorts, some toothpaste, a notebook, very meager belongings.

BERCACOLA: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: "A lot of the people who do the dirty work of illegal logging are actually just the poorest of the poor. It's practically slave labor. They sleep out here in the elements. They're paid very little."

Elizeu and his crew set fire to the camps to make sure they can't be used again. Smoke billows into the air. Suddenly, we're not alone.

PILKER: (Shouting in Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Giselda spots a motorbike coming towards us. We've been warned that the illegal loggers have scouts watching their camps.

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #4: This way.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: This way.

We try and hide, but the rubber tappers, headed by Elizeu, charge after the biker, firing their weapons.

(GUN SHOTS)

UNIDENTIFIED MAN #5: (Shouting in Portuguese).

(GUN SHOTS)

GARCIA-NAVARRO: So we're leaving now because when there's one, more will follow.

It ended up being just the one scout on a motorcycle. And the tappers chased him off.

BERCACOLA: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Elizeu is pumped up and triumphant. It's been a good day, he says. And the group decide to continue their patrol alone. These rubber tappers say they are fighting what they call the war over wood. I asked Giselda, the rubber tapper leader, what the future of the rain forest here is. Her whole family lives off of reserves like these. She broke down sobbing. She says they're losing the fight.

PILKER: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: "We struggle so much to defend the land. We fight so hard," she tells me. "We die. So many have died to defend what you see here."

PILKER: (Speaking Portuguese).

GARCIA-NAVARRO: "To cut down a tree is like cutting out a piece of us. No one does anything to save us," she says. "We people of the forest are peaceful. We don't want this war."

PILKER: (Speaking Portuguese).

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## HISTORY

# < How Clementine Churchill Wielded Influence As Winston's Wife

Updated December 31, 2015 11:55 AM ET Published December 31, 2015 4:44 AM ET  
STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

As presidential voting begins in the new year, two women are on the ballot. Hillary Clinton and Carly Fiorina symbolize change. You sense how much change when you consider the political life of a woman in an era before women commonly ran for office. She was the wife of Winston Churchill, who gave heroic speeches as British prime minister in World War II.

(SOUNDBITE OF SPEECH)

WINSTON CHURCHILL: I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.

INSKEEP: The woman who helped craft those speeches was Clementine Churchill - actually, (pronouncing differently) Clementine, as she said it. Sonia Purnell wrote a book called "Clementine."

SONIA PURNELL: I confess, like millions of others, I had absolutely no idea who Winston Churchill's wife was. But then I stumbled across this letter that she wrote to him in 1940 when he became prime minister. And France had fallen, the BeNeLux countries had fallen. Really, Britain was all alone, and everyone thought it was about to be invaded itself. But she realized that he was in danger of losing support with the very people he needed most. He was being brusque and rude and rather overbearing. So she wrote him this letter, and it just tells him how he needs to bring people alongside him to make them love him. His behavior changed as a result of this, and people changed their minds about him. So once I'd read that letter, I couldn't wait to find out more.

INSKEEP: Was that normal throughout their lives, that she gave him specific political advice?

PURNELL: Oh yes, I think she realized she couldn't be the ordinary wife. She would lose Winston. She would never see him. So really from very, very early on she threw herself into making herself the right sort of woman for him. She wanted to prove that she was up to it, and lots of people thought she wasn't when she first married him. She'd come from this rackets background. She was quite shy. And so she pushed herself to become this incredibly wise, measured, knowledgeable, well-read person.

INSKEEP: You just said rackets background, which is a word I think I will now start using myself here in the United States. What was her rackets background?

PURNELL: OK, well, she was the granddaughter of a Scottish earl. But her mother was something of a Victorian wild child, Lady Blanche. She was married off. It was a pretty loveless match. He didn't want children. She did. She went about this with some - enthusiasm, shall we say.

INSKEEP: Without him, I guess we should add.

PURNELL: Without him, absolutely. She had up to 10 lovers on the go at once. As a result of this, her mother was shunned by polite society, had very little money. They kept having to move house. None of this was the sort of life you would normally expect of the granddaughter of a Scottish earl.

INSKEEP: What was it about Clementine, when Churchill finally did talk with her, that attracted him?

PURNELL: I think because of her rackets background - she had no money - she was making her own living. She wasn't like the normal society women that he'd met who were interested in frocks and balls and not much else. So suddenly, here was a woman who was interested in what he had to say about all sorts of things, and he found that thrilling. She found it rapturous that here was someone prepared to talk about the great and exciting world events, events which she wished she could be a part of.

INSKEEP: Did she share his ambition to the extent of actually pushing him farther than he might have gone on his own?

PURNELL: I think he always wanted to be prime minister. She always wanted him to be prime minister too. I think the difference she made was that earlier in his career, he made countless mistakes. Take the Dardanelles for instance in the First World War, disastrous military campaign.

INSKEEP: Let's say the word Gallipoli - just to remind people - the Gallipoli Campaign...

PURNELL: Yeah, yeah, the name.

INSKEEP: Notorious defeat for the British, yes.

PURNELL: Exactly, and for many Empire troops, this was something that has, you know, stayed in history as a military disaster. You might argue it wasn't really Churchill's fault. Well, you might argue it was. In any case, he got the blame. And she saw that the way back - he had to redeem himself - that by volunteering to fight in the trenches at the Western Front, he could somehow show people that he wasn't this hothead. He wasn't just all about him.

INSKEEP: You describe a rather breathtaking moment in which Churchill has gone off to the Western Front. He's fighting with the British Army, and she writes him - does she not? - to effectively say don't come back too soon.

PURNELL: Yes, can you imagine? I mean, obviously she knew that she put - a wicked bullet could find him at any moment. But she wanted people to want him to come back. She knew that if he just came back, people would just say well, it's the same old Winston. He's not learned. If he stayed out there long enough that people realized that he was needed, then that would be different.

INSKEEP: You've already given us a glimpse of Clementine advising Churchill as Prime Minister during World War II. Did she also become a power in her own right, someone that people would consult directly, who had her own sources of information, her own ways of getting things done?

PURNELL: She did. She saw that all Britain had in 1940 and 1941 was a collective spirit and that that had to be fostered and nurtured and protected. And yet people were discontented. The air raid shelters during the Blitz were pretty horrible. They were cold. They were dark. They were scary. And so she went about ordering government ministers around. Please put heating in there. Please make sure there's a fire exit there. Please manufacture 2 million new beds so people can sleep alongside their children during the raids and stop them becoming too frightened. She saw that by dealing with these problems, you would foster that incredible Blitz spirit that people still talk about now.

INSKEEP: How, if at all, has this research affected the way that you think about modern political couples when you see them in the news?

PURNELL: Clementine I think found a way of doing some things on her own but in other ways supporting Churchill as prime minister that I would say is unique. And sometimes, I look at some of the political spouses today, and I wonder where their ambition is. I mean, obviously times are different now, but, you know, in Britain you very rarely hear anything about the prime minister's wife apart from what frock she's wearing or where she went on holiday. I'm amazed really that we're still in that position where we don't celebrate the fact that in many ways, we get two for the price of one - because with the Churchills, we did.

INSKEEP: Of course, here in the United States, we had a first couple who advertised themselves as two for the price of one in the '90s, and now the spouse is running for president.

PURNELL: Yes, and do you know what? I think Clementine would be absolutely thrilled if she was still around today. I mean, she once said in earlier life, you know, she would have loved to have been a statesman in her own right if only she had been born with trousers rather than petticoats. I think if she were alive today, I suspect very much that she would be in the British cabinet. She would certainly be an MP. And maybe, who knows, she might have gone for the prime minister's job herself.

INSKEEP: Sonia Purnell author of "Clementine: The Life Of Miss Winston Churchill." Thanks very much.

PURNELL: Thank you.

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## Regional Olympiad 11<sup>th</sup> Form Listening Tasks

### Clementine Churchill

*Choose whether the statements are true or false by writing the word next to the statement.*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1). Clementine Churchill was important only because she was Winston Churchill's wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2). When Winston Churchill became prime minister of Britain, Clementine realized that he was acting rudely to the citizens of nation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3). The expression "threw herself" in the text refers to Clementine's enthusiastic remake of herself as his wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4). Clementine Churchill came from the upper class in Britain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5). What attracted Winston to Clementine was her conventional life in Britain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6). Winston Churchill was a politician who always made the best decisions for his country, in the end.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7). Winston Churchill was a soldier in World War II.

*Choose the best answer in each question.*

- 8). Clementine Churchill sent a letter to Winston
- a) requesting the he never return to her.
  - b) telling him that she loved him.
  - c) disciplining him.
  - d) asking that he stay away as long as necessary.
- 9). Clementine's motivation to write the letter was to
- a) declare her love for him so that he would return quickly.
  - b) manipulate the citizenry of Britain during World War II.
  - c) trick him.
  - d) make people realize that they needed him in power.
- 10). Clementine Churchill
- a) loved Winston.
  - b) advised Winston.
  - c) became a power in her own right.
  - d) all of the above
- 11). Clementine Churchill did not realize that the people of Britain
- a) needed assurance during the war.
  - b) lived without electricity and heat.
  - c) did not need air raid shelters.
  - d) required beds in the shelters.



- 12). The author suggests that Clementine was
- a) similar to most politicians' wives.
  - b) unique in her role as a political wife.
  - c) interested in only her appearance.
  - d) usually uninvolved with politics.
- 13). The author wonders
- a) What is the role of political spouses today?
  - b) Why are spouses not ambitious in their own right?
  - c) Only A
  - d) Both A and B
- 14). In the story, the phrase "get two for the price of one" means
- a) there is gender equity.
  - b) you get a 50% discount on items that you purchase.
  - c) an ambitious spouse is involved in the work of his/her mate.
  - d) none of the above.
- 15). The author states that Clementine would have liked to
- a) worn trousers instead of dresses.
  - b) have been the prime minister today, had she lived now.
  - c) have been born later in history than she was.
  - d) would definitely have been in Parliament, had she lived now.

**STAGE III NATIONAL STUDENTS OLYMPIAD IN THE ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE**

**Reading Comprehension Test for 11<sup>th</sup> Form Students**

**3D-printed Eco Bikini Cleans the Ocean as You Swim**

The world's oceans are full of beauty, but they're also full of [pollution](#). Industrial, agricultural and residential waste all make their way into the oceans, not to mention oil spills and waste from deep-sea mining sites. The Sponge Suit bikini, designed by architecture and design firm [Eray Carbajo](#), in collaboration with UC Riverside electrical engineering professor [Mihri Ozkan](#), is designed to absorb pollutants from the ocean as its wearer swims around in the sea. In practical terms, the suit wouldn't make much of an impact. However, it does demonstrate the effectiveness of a material.

The material, on which development began four years ago, is called Sponge. It is designed for cleaning up oil and chemical spills and desalinating water. It is a water-repelling and highly porous carbon material that is light and flexible. It absorbs everything except water, and can absorb up to 25 times its own weight, depending on the density of the material absorbed.

"This is a super material that is not harmful to the environment and very cost effective to produce," Ozkan said. "The form of the Sponge Suit is inspired by the super-porous, mesh-like structure of the Sponge material. The final form of the 3D print shell was obtained through the various iterations of the same undulating form," the team wrote. "The filler amount and the allocation were identified by creating several design alternatives, considering the form and the ergonomics of the human body, while pushing the limits in translucent swimwear design."

The resulting bikini is made the Sponge insert and a frame 3D printed from flexible plastic, called elastomer. It weighs just 54 grams. The Sponge insert can be reused up to 20 times without losing its absorbency, trapping the contaminants in the pores of the material, so they don't come into contact with the wearer's skin. The Sponge material only releases the contaminants it has absorbed when heated to temperatures above 1,000 degrees Celsius.

The design team states: "The Sponge itself is highly cost-efficient with the main precursor being sugar. Per gram cost of Sponge is roughly 15 cents, a reducible cost when achieving economies of scale. Reprogrammability, recyclability and affordability are intriguing properties of the technology, allowing room for further research and development in clean-tech wearable. We aim for a future where everyone, with any shape and form of swimming outfit, can contribute to the cleanliness of the seas by a sports activity or simply a leisurely summer vacation."

**Choose the option that best answers the following questions from the reading above.**

1. Which statement summarizes the greatest importance of the Sponge material?
  - A. The material will be crucial in cleaning up the ocean through swimsuits
  - B. The material's cost effectiveness and wide range of potential uses
  - C. The material is ergonomic
  - D. It only releases contaminants at 1000°C

2. What best categorizes the article?
  - A. An advertisement for an eco-swimsuit
  - B. An argument to only produce Sponge swimsuits
  - C. A scientific article explaining the practical implementation of Sponge
  - D. A scientific article debating the importance of Sponge
  
3. The cost per swimsuit is calculated to be:
  - A. .15 a swimsuit
  - B. Less than \$5 a swimsuit
  - C. Less than \$10 a swimsuit
  - D. Incalculable
  
4. Which would not be a practical application for the Sponge material?
  - A. Floating sheets for chemical spills
  - B. Cloth for cleaning animals covered in oil
  - C. Helping with turning salt water into fresh water
  - D. Using it as a permanent filter
  
5. What is not a characteristic of the Sponge material?
  - A. It's reusable
  - B. It's eco-friendly
  - C. It traps pollutants on the skin
  - D. It's base material is sugar
  
6. Critics might argue that:
  - A. The Sponge is minimally effective as personal swimwear for cleaning pollutants
  - B. The Sponge is highly inefficient at absorbing pollutants
  - C. The Sponge may release harmful pollutants into the water
  - D. The Sponge only has traits ideal for wearable technology
  
7. Based on its use in the article, the closest **antonym** of "undulating" is:
  - A. Flexible
  - B. Rigid
  - C. Ineffective
  - D. Breakable

### **China Professor's Wife-Sharing Proposal Sparks Ire**

A Chinese professor's controversial suggestion that poorer men could share wives has sparked debate online on how to solve China's gender imbalance and has been met with heavy criticism over perceived immorality. China has one of the biggest gender imbalances in the world, with about 118 boys born to every 100 girls. The imbalance is largely due to the one-child policy and cultural preferences for male children. Increasing wealth and population movement also means many women are leaving the countryside to work in cities, with men who stay behind struggling to find partners.

In a piece that was widely picked up by local media, Prof Xie noted there were reports that China could possibly have 30 to 40 million bachelors by 2020. The huge demand for women and the lack of supply would result in the "value of women going up", he wrote. "Men with high incomes will have an advantage in finding women, because they can afford the high price. And what about the low-income men? One way is for several men to band together to find a wife. This isn't some pie-in-the-sky idea of mine. In some remote and poor areas there are cases where brothers jointly marry one wife, and they can live happily and harmoniously."

Prof Xie's essay, attracted mostly appalled derision from readers, who criticised his idea as immoral and illegal: "If you can't find a mate then don't bother, if women are just only meant for producing heirs and have to mate with many men just to solve the population growth issue, how does this make us any different from animals?" said Weibo user Superelfjunior.

Jing Xiong said that the gender imbalance problem "is basically a problem stemming from teachings that prioritise men over women. And now the solutions are still very much male-centred. This is extremely ridiculous. Prof Xie's suggestion ignores the wishes and rights of women, and casts women as tools used to satisfy men's needs for sex, marriage and reproduction... this suggestion is basically sexual discrimination."

In a subsequent essay, Prof Xie said he had been bombarded with angry phone calls and comments on social media. But he stuck to his guns, arguing that laws and morals were mutable: "If we wave the big stick of morality, keep to the one-husband-one-wife social contract, and let 30 million bachelors have no women and no hope, they hate society, then we would have a serious social problem. So please don't talk to me about morals. If we don't let the 30 million bachelors have women, their lives would have no hope and then they may go around raping, killing, setting off bombs... (let me emphasise that this is a possibility, I'm not saying they would definitely do that). Don't tell me that is your morality?" he said.

**Choose the option that best answers the following questions from the reading above.**

8. Critics of Prof Xie argue that China's biggest problem surrounding the shortage of women is:
  - A. The attitude men have towards viewing women as a commodity
  - B. The disadvantage poor men have for getting a wife
  - C. Women are just tools for satisfying men's need for sex
  - D. China's one-child policy
  
9. "Stuck to his guns" is an example of:
  - A. A metaphor
  - B. An idiom
  - C. A proverb
  - D. An interjection
  
10. Which basic assumption does Prof Xie make?
  - A. That all men in China are heterosexual
  - B. That women would not enjoy marrying more than one man
  - C. That men don't need to get married to be happy
  - D. That poor men can move into the city to find women

11. Which argument does Prof Xie not present?
- A. That single men will cause social unrest
  - B. That men could search for wives abroad
  - C. Acts of violence could be perpetrated
  - D. That the highest socioeconomic class will be less affected
12. Prof Xie argues that morals are mutable, implying that:
- A. Morals are important only to some people
  - B. Morals happen without a deeper meaning behind them
  - C. Morals are controversial
  - D. Morals are changeable
13. Given his views and the statement: “The huge demand for women and the lack of supply would result in the "value of women going up”, Prof Xie is most likely a professor in which field?
- A. Economics
  - B. Biology
  - C. Mathematics
  - D. Ecology
14. What is a probable and timely solution for the shortage of women?
- A. Allow families to have two children
  - B. Look for wives in nearby countries
  - C. Give men loans so they can afford wives
  - D. Require all women to marry brothers
15. Complete the statement: Prof Xie’s \_\_\_\_\_ article provoked heated responses.
- A. Incendiary
  - B. Balanced
  - C. Inherent
  - D. Coalescing

## Stage III National Students Olympiad in the English Language

### Speaking Comprehension Test for 11<sup>th</sup> Form Students

*DIRECTIONS: In this test you will select three task slips from those before you. After selecting three, choose the one you feel you are most capable to speak about and return the other two to the table face down. Then take about a minute to collect your thoughts before you begin to speak on the topic. You may refer to the topic as needed. Take a deep breath and begin.*

1. In 200,000 years, humans have risen to be one of the most successful animals on the planet. Today there are more than 7 billion humans on earth, and we affect the planet in many ways.
  - a. What traits or characteristics have made humans such a successful species?
  - b. Describe one way that humans have changed the planet.
  - c. Have humans made more positive or negative changes? Explain your reasoning.
  
2. In many cultures, women traditionally do most of the cooking. In America, women cook 78% of dinners. But it is becoming more and more common for men to cook, for many reasons.
  - a. Does your father/brother/you cook?
  - b. Is it important for men to know how to cook? Why or why not?
  - c. Would it change the family if fathers cooked?
  
3. In America, it is considered bad luck to meet a black cat, or to walk under a ladder, good luck to find a penny, and if your ears burn it means someone is talking about you. These are some common superstitions- old beliefs that people still sometimes hold onto.
  - a. What are some superstitions in Ukraine? What things are supposed to bring good or bad luck? Are there other superstitions?
  - b. Where do you think superstitions come from? Do people still believe in them?
  - c. Do you believe in superstitions? Why or why not?

4. “Some people go to priests; others to poetry; I to my friends.” – Virginia Woolf.
  - a. What can people get from these three things; religion, poetry, and friendship?
  - b. What do you think Virginia Woolf is saying about herself in this quote?
  - c. Where do you find comfort and help?
  
5. “Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart.” –Khalil Gibran
  - a. What do you think the poet is expressing in this quote?
  - b. What does this quote mean to you? Do you agree with it?
  - c. Describe a time when you met someone whose character was different from their appearance.
  
6. Everyone is good at something. Finding and nurturing that skill is one of the healthiest and most rewarding things that a person can do.
  - a. Describe something that you are good at. Did you practice to become good at it?
  - b. How can you work to improve this ability? What motivates you to improve it?
  - c. How have you used this ability?
  
7. 15 % of the population in Ukraine is older than 60. In many cultures, it is considered important to respect your elders and to care for them.
  - a. Is it important to respect your elders? How do you and Ukrainian culture show respect for them?
  - b. What things can we learn from old people? What role do they play in your life?
  - c. What do you know about the life of your grandfather or grandmother? Do you know any stories about them?

8. Urbanization is the process of people moving into the city, causing it to grow and expand. Cities all over the world are getting bigger and more crowded.
  - a. Do you think it is better to live in the city or in the country. Why?
  - b. Is it a good thing for so many people to move into the city? What are some positive or negative effects?
  - c. If you could live in any place, in any city or any country, where would you live? Why?
  
9. Dreams are part of our sleep cycle, and are important for the brain.
  - a. Do you think that dreams have meaning?
  - b. Can you describe one dream that you've had?
  - c. Do dreams have any traditional meaning in your culture? If so, what?
  
10. Scientists have found liquid water on Mars. Astronauts are running a simulation of a trip to Mars. Some world leaders have even said that they want to send people to Mars. In your lifetime it might become possible to visit Mars.
  - a. Do you think that exploring space is important? Is it necessary? Why or why not?
  - b. If you could live on Mars, would you? Why or why not?
  - c. What do you think would be the challenges of living on Mars?
  
11. Humans have accomplished some amazing things while we have been on this planet. Things like the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and other things have been declared "wonders of the world."
  - a. What are some new wonders of the world? What do you think are the greatest things that humans have accomplished?
  - b. What are some of the wonders, or famous buildings or monuments of your country? Have you ever visited them?
  - c. Which would you prefer to see, human wonders or natural wonders?



12. Musical styles change so quickly, sometimes year by year! And of course the music of today is very different from the music of 20 or 30 or 40 years ago. What do you think of the changes in musical style over time?

- a. What kind of music do your parents listen to? Do you like that music, too?
- b. What do you think of traditional Ukrainian music? How does it compare with current popular music?
- c. How and where do you usually listen to music? Are you alone or with friends? Do you buy songs or listen to music online?

13. An English proverb says, "The early bird gets the worm."

- a. What does this mean to you?
- b. Describe a time when you benefitted by being the first person to volunteer.
- c. There is another saying that states, "The second mouse gets the cheese." What does this mean? How is it different from the previous saying?

14. Imagine that an alien has to Earth. Explain basketball to them.

- a. What are the rules of basketball?
- b. What people like basketball? Why do we play it?
- c. Do you like basketball? Describe a personal experience with basketball.

15. All children are taught to be polite, to say "please" and "thank you", to ask permission for things, to greet people they know. These things together are referred to as "manners."

- a. What are some other examples of good manners? What are some examples of bad manners in Ukraine?
- b. Are manners important? What difference do manners make in society?
- c. What do you think when you see someone with very bad manners? Can you give an example?

16. Many people enjoy gambling. Some do it just a little, but there are many people who are addicted to gambling, and who lose tremendous amounts of money.
- Do you believe that gambling is a problem? Why or why not?
  - Is there a difference in risk? Is there such a thing as good risk and bad risk? What's the difference?
  - Describe one time that you took a risk and how it turned out.
17. "TV is chewing gum for the eyes." Frank Lloyd Wright, famous architect
- What do you the speaker means by this?
  - How much time do you spend watching TV? Is that too much time or do you wish you could watch it more?
  - Is TV artistic? Do you think that culturally important things happen on TV? Why?
18. The internet has made it easier than ever before to find people with similar interests and hobbies. Many of these people have formed into groups called subcultures, with their own unique culture and philosophy. Some examples include, goth, emo, punk, cosplayers, gamers, hipster, steampunk, etc.
- Describe one subculture that you know of. How do they look? Act? What are they interested in?
  - Is there any subculture that you are interested in knowing more about or joining?
  - Do you think that subcultures are a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
19. What do you think the most important invention of the last 100 years has been?
- How has that invention changed people's lives?
  - How has that invention changed your life?
  - What would the world be like without that invention?
20. Two years ago, the mayor of New York City made it illegal to sell soda larger than a certain size. The people of New York were very angry about this.
- Why do you think he made this law? What problem might he have been fighting?
  - Why do you think the people became so angry over a law about soda?
  - Do you think that it is right for the government to tell people what they can and can't do with their own bodies?

2016

Stage III National Students Olympiad in the English Language  
Writing Comprehension Test for 11<sup>th</sup> Form Students

1. Nelson Mandela, former prisoner and then prime minister of the Union of South Africa, writes: “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us...As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

What does Mandela mean by “our own light?”

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your position on it using reasoning and logic, in addition to specific examples from your life or that of another person. Convince your reader of your position in your essay.

2. Margaret Mead, a noted American anthropologist, writes: “Do not think that a small group of awakened individuals cannot change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Explain what this quote means to you.

Correlate its meaning with recent events in Ukraine.

Even at your age, people contribute to the improvement of their countries. What would you commit to doing now to help Ukraine flourish and grow?

3. David Shenk, an American author, writes: “Talent is a process, not a thing. Failure is not proof of an innate limit but rather is an indication of a skill we haven’t yet developed.”

For what reasons do you agree or disagree with Shenk that “talent is a process?” Be specific in your answers.

Explain your own definition of “talent,” using details from your own life in your essay.

Describe your own talents,