

**CANADIAN ACADEMIC ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT**

**READING BOOKLET**

**RAINFOREST**



**READING 1: FAST FOOD, CHOP CHOP**

**READING 2: GRAPPLING WITH DEVASTATION OF THE  
RAINFORESTS**

**READING 3: BRAZILIAN HIGHWAY: DREAM OR NIGHTMARE?**

**TEST TAKER INFORMATION**

Test Location \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Test ID# \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
LOCATION YEAR MONTH DAY SEAT#

## Reading 1: Fast Food, Chop Chop

**Bite into a hamburger and you could be chomping up half a ton of tropical rainforest. Peter Cox reports on the price we pay for fast food.**

San Bernadino, California, the year 1954. 'San Berdoo' is a rich boomtown of oddball bikers: the end of the road, transcontinental terminus for Route 66. No jobless, no homeless. In motor city everyone drives to the shopping mall or rides the gleaming freeway, never walks. This is the town that gave you Hell's Angels, high priests of the consumer society on wheels: the town that spawned hamburgers on an unsuspecting world -- *fast food for fast times!*

Ray Kroc, 52, kitchen paraphernalia super-salesman from Chicago, wonders why Mac and Richard McDonald buy so much equipment from his company. Flies down to San Berdoo. Meets them. Cash tills ring. 'Visions of McDonalds restaurants dotting crossroads all over the country, paraded through my brain,' he reports, 'padding a steady flow into my pockets.' The deal is struck. The hamburger's time has come. Today McDonalds take over \$12 billion every year and over 95 per cent of Americans will eat at McDonalds during any year. Jobs too: McDonalds has employed at one time or another 20 per cent of the American working public.

Thirty years ago the citizens of Hamburg, West Germany, hadn't even heard of 'hamburgers'. Now the food religion that McDonalds did so much to popularize has spread throughout the world. And still more growth potential! Seventy per cent of all consumers live in poor countries. They can't afford a car or a colour TV, but enough of those people can be

persuaded to find a few cents for a burger to make the potential market extremely juicy. In India '10 per cent of the population can consume on a level with most Americans and Western Europeans,' says management guru Peter Drucker. That's 70 million people -- a bigger market than any country in Europe.

And selling to Third World countries is easy too. Target the impressionable kids, the aspiring young, anyone who's prepared to believe that all things fashionably Western must be good. In Hong Kong and Manila some primary schools even have contracts with hamburger chains who sell their products on school premises. Few countries can resist the onslaught. Morocco has banned a major hamburger chain from setting up shop; Indonesia has prohibited the television advertising of fast-food establishments. But most cultures succumb eventually. Powerful stuff, this advertising. Take the latest campaign in the US featuring TV star Cybill Shepherd, who purrs seductively:

**'Sometimes I wonder if people have a primal, instinctive craving for hamburgers. Something hot and juicy and so utterly simple you can eat it with your hands. I mean, I know some people who don't eat burgers. But I'm not sure I trust them.'**

Got the message? If you don't eat burgers, you ain't a trustworthy American. Other commercials contrast the macho, all-American image of burgers to 'that fancy food they eat in San Francisco'. So you're not just unpatriotic if you don't eat hamburgers -- you're probably homosexual too. Macho advertising is one important ingredient in a

hamburger. The other is a plentiful source of cheap raw materials.

Which is where trees come in.

### The tree connection

In their quest for ever cheaper meat supplies, the international beef industry is always looking for usable tracts of grazing land -- anywhere in the world. As one rancher puts it: 'it boils down to \$95 per cow per year in Montana, \$25 in Costa Rica'. So forests are felled, land is cleared, grass planted, cheap beef is produced and consumer demand is satisfied.

But recently, a few consumers have begun to wonder how much their hamburgers *really* cost. Not in dollars and cents but in terms of natural resources consumed or destroyed. Then someone did a simple but very shocking calculation. They reasoned that a hectare of rainforest—the sort of land regularly cleared for ranching in remote areas—supports about 800,000 kilograms of plants and animals. When the same hectare has been felled, torched, razed and seeded with grass for grazing, it will produce at most 200 kilograms of meat a year -- enough flesh to make about 1,600 hamburgers. The pasture doesn't last long, however, because the land is quickly leached of its nutrients and left barren by over-grazing. In a few years it becomes useless.

By then of course, more forest has been destroyed and converted to stop-gap pasture land. This makes the *true* cost of a hamburger something in the region of half a tonne of rainforest for each burger -- or about nine square metres of irreplaceable natural wealth,

forever destroyed for the price of a quick unhealthy snack.

Some burger companies -- McDonalds for example -- make it clear that they never have and never will use beef from Central or South American sources. McDonalds use US domestic beef from dedicated suppliers. Other companies like Burger King, who used to buy beef from Costa Rica, have recently changed their buying policy and now no longer accept beef from Central American sources. The fact remains, however, that the West's apparently insatiable desire for cheap meat (whether for burgers, pet food or processed meat products), exerts enormous market pressures on beef producers to exploit the cheapest and most available land -- which is often tropical forest.

### **To kill a forest**

A forest must be ravaged three times before it dies, for the scrub and remaining undergrowth must be burned for three consecutive years before its life-force becomes spent and the jungle is rendered barren. Then you can plant grass to graze your cattle.

A forest may be destroyed in several different ways. First, roads must be driven deep into its being. Slashing, ramming, mutilating and violating. An image of rape? Certainly. Men have always had a violent relationship with Mother Nature. Then the timber companies can extract their prizes--mahogany trades for \$20 per cubic metre in Brazil and \$4,000 in London when made into furniture for affluent, but unthinking consumers.

It is wrong to call this type of operation forestry, for it is quite flagrantly the plundering of a

priceless natural resource. Nigeria, for example, lost four per cent of its forests in the first half of the 1980s, and the best trees have long since been turned into designer furniture or toilet seats for the trend setters. Nigeria now imports *100 times* more wood than it exports.

Another irresistible force pitted against the survival of the last rainforests comes from settlers. They are jobless, the landless, the displaced and the dispossessed -- those who dream of escape from grinding poverty. Such as Luis Bernardi, who journeyed penniless from Sao Paulo on Highway BR-364, a dirt track leading to the heart of virgin forest in Brazil's Rondonia state. Fourteen years later, he now owns an eight-bedroom house and 740 acres of land.

As many as 60,000 people make the same journey each month, hoping for similar wealth. 'The Bold Ones March Westwards' say the government-sponsored TV commercials. Such people are unlikely to understand Western concerns about conservation when their own survival and future prosperity is at stake.

'We have the same right to destroy our wilderness as the Americans had in the Far West,' says Adeildo Martins de Lucena, a newspaper editor from the Brazilian border town of Vilhena. The settling of forest areas is frequently the result of impossible pressure for land resources elsewhere, caused by inequitable land distribution in Latin America where 7 per cent of the landowners control 93 per cent of the arable land. Under such circumstances, colonization of wildernesses can relieve pressure for land reform and promote national unity.

Although the new settlers intend to stay and prosper, it doesn't often work out like that. Sometimes they get moved out or even killed by hired

gunmen working for absentee landowners who are eager to annex small holdings into a good-sized cattle ranch. (The average price for a settler's life is \$25.) Other times, the land gives out after a few years of producing cash crops. The soil beneath the rainforest canopy is poor. Without protection, it erodes and within a few years is leached of nutrients. So the settlers move on, having cleared the rainforest for the benefit of the incoming ranchers.

While meat production increases, local meat consumption decreases. Two-thirds of Central America's arable land is now used for beef rearing, whilst domestic per-capita consumption steadily drops. In 1959 Costa Ricans ate 30 pounds of beef per year. By 1979 beef production had doubled, but its inhabitants got less than 19 pounds per annum.

Ethiopia, recently the target of much Western media attention, has suffered a similar fate. From a forest area covering 16 per cent of the land in the 1950s, less than four per cent is now left. Multinationals which were welcomed with generous tax incentives proceeded to develop the best and most fertile areas, evicting the indigenous population, who then struggled to survive on fragile upland areas. The consequent tree felling, overgrazing and land degradation has exacerbated the country's problems. Nevertheless Ethiopia still exports beef to the West: one Italian multinational has been shipping Ethiopian beef to Europe for the past two years, although the country of origin is sometimes obscured on labels. 'It has been rejected in some quarters,' the UK importers are quoted as saying, 'because the emotive value makes it too hot for the retailer to handle'.

**Who pays?**

Organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Fund, the African Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank have all provided loans for livestock production and meat processing in developing countries. It is essential that pressure is brought to bear on these development organizations to curtail such catastrophic loan programmes.

Some organizations like the Environmental Defense Fund are doing just that, and having a degree of success. A newly formed group, Conservation International, pulled off a coup recently when it purchased \$650,000 of Bolivian debt in exchange for a promise to set aside 3.7 million acres for conservation. And after much lobbying, US Treasury Secretary James Baker ordered his representative to the African Development Bank to oppose a loan for a cattle abattoir in Botswana. Such victories are comparatively small but important in as much as they show that something can be done -- if we are prepared to try. In the end, of course, it is Western consumers who by producing a demand for cheap beef make the whole process economically worthwhile.

In the words of James Nations and Daniel Komer, two staff members at the Texas-based Center for Human Ecology, **“Consumers must be made aware that when they bite into a fast-food hamburger or feed their dogs, they may also be consuming toucans, tapirs and tropical rainforests.”**

Have a hamburger you say? You must be choking.

Peter Cox is author of 'Why You Don't Need Meat' and 'Active Ingredients' (soon to be released). Both are published by Thorsons.
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## Reading 2

# Grappling with devastation of the rainforests

by Dave Todd, *Southam News*

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA  
Is saving the earth's tropical rainforests too daunting an economic and political challenge for mankind to handle?

As Alarm mounts over the accelerating destruction of the forests that girdle the equator, there is not shortage of imaginative schemes emerging for arresting the ecological catastrophe that is looming.

But if everyone wants or has a vital interest in saving what many environmentalists poetically describe as "the lungs of the planet," who is willing to absorb the cost?

The problem has never even been discussed by the governments of leading industrial nations and the Third World, where the rainforests are located. And the Third World already owes hundreds of billions of dollars to industrial nations.

The urgency of finding solutions is clear. At the current rate of loss, almost all of the rainforests will have disappeared 60 years from now, says the World Wide Fund for Nature.

The United Nation's World Conservation Strategy (the Brundtland Commission report) sounded the warning nine years ago. It predicted that 110,000 square kilometres a year of tropical forests were being felled and burned, mostly by peasants-settlers in search of new farmland and fuel.

But this year in the Brazilian Amazon alone, 200,000 square kilometres of virgin forest—an area larger than Canada's Maritimes—may be destroyed largely by soil-poisoning, slash-and-burn techniques. Only 10 per cent of those trees are harvested.

In addition, the Brazilian government has grandiose plans for a

network of hydroelectric dams that would floor huge areas of the western Amazon River basin, disrupting the ecological balance and the culture of primitive Indian forest tribes in remote areas.

Despite a growing international outcry that has delayed World Bank loans, Brazil's plans for the project have provoked an extraordinary gathering in the frontier boomtown of Altamira, 3,300 kilometres northwest of Rio de Janeiro.

Hundreds of Indians from 37 native groups are meeting on the remote Zingu River, a tributary of the Amazon, in an encounter anthropologists say marks the first time in thousands of years that they have united for a common goal: protecting themselves from the life-threatening ways of the modern world.

Of Brazil's 145 million people, there are only about 220,000 jungle Indians.

As Brazil's economic plight has worsened -- its \$120-billion foreign debt is the largest in the developing world -- it has had a devastating effect on the dwindling population of jungle people.

The country believes the answer to its economic woes is to settle the territories west towards the Andes.

But now there is potential for a terrible tragedy.

The imperative to develop the Amazon as the key to the country's future prosperity threatens serious damage to the world's environment -- and compounds a classic, already genocidal conflict over the demands of pastoral and industrial interests.

In the case of the proposed Xingu River dams, the cultural gap that threatens to ruin a jungle civilization and thousands of square kilo-

metres of forests has taken an exceptionally ugly twist.

Kararao is the name selected by Brazilian authorities for the first hydro dam—an 11 million kilowatt-generating development second only in size to the Brazilian project on the Paraguayan border.

The Kararao is a famous battle cry of the forest people of Indian chief Paulinho Paiakan, who visited Canada and the U.S. last year as part of a campaign to muster world support to stop the project.

"To our youths, the (Brazilian) government is calling us to war," he said this week.

Brazilian interior minister Joao Alves maintains that the government will not halt its power development plans for the region, and that the Xingu scheme will only dislocate 280 Indians.

But after the Balbina project, the first major Amazon dam was built up-river in the mid-1970s, the local Waimiri-Atroari tribe dwindled from more than 1,000 people to only 100 who may still exist today.

"Forced resettlement without compensation and inadequate health care have brought physical and economic ruin upon a once flourishing people," says John Porter, a U.S. congressman from Illinois who has developed a passionate interest in the Amazon.

But now there is serious danger of full-scale frontier war breaking out. The Indians of the region are warning this week that they are prepared to begin a war against developers in which they will be willing to die en masse to save their societies -- and their precious forests, which are also the rest of the world's environmental legacy.

It is a war they cannot win without massive international pressure being placed on the Brazilian government to back away from its development plans.

Are Brazil's plans for its economic development fatally flawed? The world's major commercial banks have recently been reaping a fortune on profits on the country's

debt, and the economic program that, increasingly, is exacerbating rainforest devastation.

"This is clearly Brazilian bonanza time," Wall Street financial analyst Carole Berger of Morgan Grenfell Inc. said last month.

Major U.S. banks have enjoyed "spectacular earnings" in recent

months, said Berger. This is almost entirely because the government of Brazil has made an immense effort to try to meet overdue interest payments with the goal of influencing lenders to provide new development loans.

## Reading 3

### Brazilian highway dream or nightmare

by Marlise Simons, *The New York Times*

#### RIO BRANCO, BRAZIL

When Flaviano Melo, the young governor of Acre, holds up his favourite map, it shows a new highway stretching west from the Amazon rain forest, across the Peruvian Andes and down to the Pacific coast. There it joins a giant arrow pointing to Japan.

When environmentalists look at the same map, they see a road that will accelerate destruction of the rain forest by providing a new and shorter supply route for the world's largest consumer of tropical hardwood.

The 800-kilometre highway, which would link existing road systems in western Brazil and neighbouring Peru, is still only a plan. But Melo has already begun negotiating financing for the \$300 million U.S. project with the Japanese government.

If built, the new route would open up huge tracts of mostly undisturbed rain forest now reachable only through the vast grid of rivers that drain this western corner of the Amazon.

"That road fits us like a glove," said Melo, explaining that the people of this isolated and poor state are currently unable to market forest products like wood, resin, rubber and nuts. "If Japan wants wood, we have it, and we can also think of selling our products to the rest of the world."

Japan's new interest in the western Amazon, which prompted it to invite Melo to Tokyo in late 1987, reflects its enormous demand for tropical hardwoods used mainly in construction.

As supplies are rapidly dwindling in the forests of Southeast Asia, timber tradesmen said, Japan and other importers have begun looking more carefully at Brazil's extraordinary untapped forestry reserves.

Tokyo's interest in the highway has rapidly become the latest topic in a growing international debate about the impact that migration, development and deforestation are having on the Amazon basin.

As news of the project has leaked out, it has triggered protests from environmental groups in the United States, Europe and Japan, who clamour for the protection of South America's great equatorial rain forest because it anchors fragile soil, holds at least half of the earth's animal and plant species and plays a vital role in world climate.

Alarm over the road project is heightened by a new and belated awareness of the devastation that has followed construction of other highways into the

Amazon basin, above all the BR-364, which sweeps northwest from Cuiaba.

More than a million migrants have moved up this road through Mato Grosso and Rondonia in the last decade, and settlers and loggers have razed the jungle along its 1,400-kilometre route.

Once again, the controversy over the new highway is pitting the pressures of migration and development against the interests of conservation, showing the dilemmas that Brazilian federal and state authorities face as they seek to design a long-term policy for the Amazon.

Melo of Acre is not an enemy of the forest. When he first moved into office two years ago, he stopped what he now calls the "indiscriminate and uncontrolled" cutting of valuable trees by putting a 100-per-cent tax on logs.

Most of these were destined for the United States. Infuriated lumber barons here threatened to kidnap the governor before a local court revoked the legality of the decree.

"In Acre we are forest people and we have an interest in protecting it," said Melo, speaking in his office in a stately white mansion, a memento of the time when this small river port was at the heart of Brazil's rubber boom.