Deforestation

Deforestation is the clearing of forests so that the land can be used for another purpose. Each year, deforestation destroys around 10 million hectares of forests. Approximately 95% of this destruction occurs in the tropics. Over time, landscapes around the world have been greatly altered by deforestation.

Impacts of Deforestation

The removal of forests means less oxygen is released into the atmosphere. Also, carbon dioxide, a gas that contributes to global warming, is captured by trees. When trees are cut down, the carbon dioxide is released back into the atmosphere, thus putting the planet in danger.

Deforestation results in the loss of various animal species. When even a small area of forest is cleared, many habitats are destroyed. Around 80% of land animals live in forests. Consequently, deforestation threatens the biodiversity of the Earth. Many animal species have already become extinct due to deforestation.

Deforestation also causes erosion. The roots of trees work to hold the soil together, so when trees are removed, areas of land become eroded by rain and wind.

Causes of Deforestation

Trees are cut down and land is cleared for a variety of reasons. The leading cause of deforestation is the expansion of agricultural land, which is land that is used for farming. Farmers require substantial space in which to plant their crops. They also need large areas of land to give their animals space to graze in order to provide nourishment for them. Beef production is the main agricultural driver of deforestation. Forests are also cleared in order to grow crops such as palm oil trees, soybeans and coffee.

While agriculture is the most common cause of deforestation, it is not the only cause. Many trees are cut down in order to harvest timber for resources such as wood, paper and fuel. This is known as logging. To meet the demand for timber, approximately 380,000 hectares of forest are cut down every year.

Another reason for deforestation is the development of human settlements. As the population grows, more land is required for housing and other infrastructure. The causes of deforestation are interconnected. One cause will often trigger another.

Forest areas are cleared to make way for roads to help with the transportation of people and goods.

The new road then allows people access to new parts of the forest that were inaccessible before.

Loggers, both legal and illegal, move in and cut down more trees in order to harvest the valuable resources.

The areas that have been cleared are now attractive for farmers, who want the land to produce animals or crops.

The farmers then clear the forest that remains.

Questions

1. What is logging?

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2. What is the main cause of deforestation?

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3. What does the word 'driver' mean? (5th paragraph)

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4. According to the text, what are three problems caused by deforestation?

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   _____

5. Why do you think the author chose to use images of falling dominoes in the last section of the text?

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6. The last paragraph of the text mentions 'other infrastructure'. Give four examples of what this could be.

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7. Explain how causes of deforestation are interconnected. Give an example.

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Answers

1. What is logging?

   Logging is the cutting down of trees for resources such as timber.

2. What is the main cause of deforestation?

   The main cause of deforestation is the development of agricultural land.

3. What does the word 'driver' mean? (5th paragraph)

   'Driver' means a factor which causes something to happen.

4. According to the text, what are three problems caused by deforestation?

   Deforestation reduces the amount of oxygen released into the atmosphere, results in a loss of animal species, and causes erosion.

5. Why do you think the author chose to use images of falling dominoes in the last section of the text?

   The dominoes show the reader that one factor's occurrence, causes another factor to occur, and so on.

6. The last paragraph of the text mentions 'other infrastructure'. Give four examples of what this could be.

   Answers may vary.
   Roads, train lines, factories, power stations, shopping centres, parks, bridges, sewage systems.

7. Explain how causes of deforestation are interconnected. Give an example.

   Answers will vary.
   When new cities or settlements are built, forests are cut down. As a result, more roads are needed which causes more forests to be cut down. The new roads allow access to new parts of forests. The causes more logging to take place