



National
Qualifications
2015

X724/76/11

**English
Reading for Understanding,
Analysis and Evaluation — Text**

FRIDAY, 15 MAY

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Total marks — 30

Read the passages carefully and then attempt ALL questions, which are printed on a separate sheet.



The following two passages consider the negative impact of intensive farming.

Passage 1

Read the passage below and then attempt questions 1 to 8.

In the first passage, Isabel Oakeshott gives a disturbing account of her visit to Central Valley, California, an area where intensive farming is big business.

On a cold, bright November day I stood among a million almond trees and breathed in the sweet air. I was in Central Valley, California, in an orchard stretching over 700,000 acres. Before me was a vision of how the British countryside may look one day. Beyond the almond orchards were fields of pomegranates, pistachios, grapes and apricots. Somewhere in the distance were almost
5 two million dairy cows, producing six billion dollars' worth of milk a year.

It may sound like the Garden of Eden but it is a deeply disturbing place. Among the perfectly aligned rows of trees and cultivated crops are no birds, no butterflies, no beetles or shrubs. There is not a single blade of grass or a hedgerow, and the only bees arrive by lorry, transported across the United States. The bees are hired by the day to fertilise the blossom, part of a
10 multibillion-dollar industry that has sprung up to do a job that nature once did for free.

As for the cows, they last only two or three years, ten-to-fifteen years less than their natural life span. Crammed into barren pens on tiny patches of land, they stand around listlessly waiting to be fed, milked or injected with antibiotics. Through a combination of selective breeding, artificial diets and growth hormones designed to maximise milk production, they are pushed so
15 grotesquely beyond their natural limit that they are soon worn out. In their short lives they never see grass.

Could the British countryside ever look like this? If current trends continue, the answer is yes. Farming in Britain is at a crossroads, threatened by a wave of intensification from America. The first mega-dairies and mega-piggeries are already here. Bees are disappearing, with serious
20 implications for harvests. Hedgerows, vital habitats for wildlife, have halved since the Second World War. The countryside is too sterile to support many native birds. In the past forty years the population of tree sparrows has fallen by 97%.

With an eye to the future, Owen Paterson, the UK environment secretary, has been urging families to buy British food. Choosing to buy fewer imports would reduce the relentless pressure
25 British farmers are under to churn out more for less. Paterson's vision is of a more eco-friendly way of eating, based on locally-produced, seasonal fruit and vegetables and, crucially, British meat.

But, as I discovered when I began looking into the way food is produced, increasingly powerful forces are pulling us in the opposite direction. We have become addicted to cheap meat, fish
30 and dairy products from supply lines that stretch across the globe. On the plus side, it means that supermarkets can sell whole chickens for as little as £3. Things that were once delicacies, such as smoked salmon, are now as cheap as chips. On the downside, cheap chicken and farmed fish are fatty and flaccid. Industrially reared farm animals—50 billion of them a year worldwide—are kept permanently indoors, treated like machines and pumped with drugs.

My journey to expose the truth, to investigate the dirty secret about the way cheap food is produced, took me from the first mega-dairies and piggeries in Britain to factory farms in France, China, Mexico, and North and South America. I talked to people on the front line of the global food industry: treadmill farmers trying to produce more with less. I also talked to their neighbours—people experiencing the side effects of industrial farms. Many had stories about
40 their homes plummeting in value, the desecration of lovely countryside, the disappearance of wildlife and serious health problems linked to pollution.

I wanted to challenge the widespread assumption that factory farming is the only way to produce food that everyone can afford. My investigation started in Central Valley, California, because it demonstrates the worst-case scenario — a nightmarish vision of the future for parts of
45 Britain if current practices continue unchecked. It is a five-hour drive south of San Francisco and I knew I was getting close when I saw a strange yellowish-grey smog on the horizon. It looks like the sort of pollution that hangs over big cities, but it comes from the dairies. California's bovine population produces as much sewage as 90 million people, with terrible effects on air quality. The human population is sparse, but the air can be worse than in Los Angeles on a
50 smoggy day.

Exploring the area by car, it was not long before I saw my first mega-dairy, an array of towering, open-sided shelters over muddy pens. The stench of manure was overwhelming — not the faintly sweet, earthy smell of cowpats familiar from the British countryside, but a nauseating reek bearing no relation to digested grass. I saw farms every couple of miles, all with several
55 thousand cows surrounded by mud, corrugated iron and concrete.

It may seem hard to imagine such a scene in Britain but it is not far-fetched. Proposals for an 8,000 cow mega-dairy in Lincolnshire, based on the American model, were thrown out after a public outcry. On local radio the man behind the scheme claimed that “cows do not belong in fields”. It will be the first of many similar fights, because dairies are expanding and moving
60 indoors. The creep of industrial agriculture in Britain has taken place largely unnoticed, perhaps because so much of it happens behind closed doors. The British government calls it “sustainable intensification”. Without fuss or fanfare, farm animals have slowly disappeared from fields and moved into hangars and barns.

Adapted from an article in The Sunday Times newspaper.

Passage 2

Read the passage below and attempt question 9. While reading, you may wish to make notes on the main ideas and/or highlight key points in the passage.

In the second passage, Audrey Eyton considers the reasons for the introduction of intensive farming and explains why it could be viewed as a mistake.

The founding fathers of intensive farming can claim, “It seemed a good idea at the time!” Indeed it did, in Britain, half a century ago. The post-war government swung into action with zeal, allocating unprecedented funds to agricultural research. The outcome was that the mixed farm, where animals grazed in the fields, was replaced by the huge factories we see today.

5 The aim in confining animals indoors was to cut costs. It succeeded. Indoors, one or two workers can “look after” hundreds of penned or tethered pigs, or a hundred thousand chickens. Great economies were made and thousands of farm workers lost their jobs. This new policy of cheap meat, eggs and cheese for everyone was completely in tune with the national mood, as Britain ripped up its ration books. It was also in tune with nutritional thinking, as nutritionists at
10 that time thought greater consumption of animal protein would remedy all dietary problems.

So factory farming marched on. And became more and more intensive. Where first there were one or two laying hens in a cage, eventually there became five in the same small space. The broiler chicken sheds expanded to cram in vast acres of birds. Many beef cattle were confined in buildings and yards. Until mad cow disease emerged, such animals were fed all kinds of
15 organic matter as cheap food. In the UK dairy cows still spend their summers in the fields, but many of their offspring are reared in the cruelty of intensive veal crate systems.

The aim of those early advocates of intensive farming was “fast food” — fast from birth to table. Again, they succeeded. Chicken, once an occasional treat, now the most popular meat in Britain, owes its low price largely to the short life of the bird. Today’s broiler chicken has
20 become the fastest growing creature on earth: from egg to take-away in seven weeks. Most farm animals now have less than half of their pre-war lifespan. Either they are worn out from overproduction of eggs or milk, or have been bred and fed to reach edible size in a few short weeks or months.

But meat, eggs and dairy products have indeed become cheap, affordable even to the poor. All
25 of which made nutritionists exceedingly happy — until they discovered that their mid-century predecessors had made a mighty blunder. Before intensive farming brought cheap meat and dairy products to our tables, man obtained most of his calories from cereal crops and vegetables. The meat with which he supplemented this diet had a much lower fat content than intensively produced products. Now, however, degenerative diseases like coronary heart disease
30 and several types of cancer have been linked to our increased consumption of fatty foods. War-time Britons, on their measly ration of meat and one ounce of cheese a week, were much healthier.

With this knowledge, the only possible moral justification for intensive farming of animals collapses. The cheap animal production policy doesn’t help the poor. It kills them. In addition,
35 the chronic suffering endured by animals in many intensive systems is not just a sentimental concern of the soft-hearted. It is a scientifically proven fact. Cracks are beginning to show in our long-practised animal apartheid system, in which we have convinced ourselves, against all evidence, that the animals we eat are less intelligent, less in need of space and exercise than are those we pat, ride or watch.

It is also a scientifically proven fact that intensive farming has caused the loss of hedgerows and wildlife sustained by that habitat, has polluted waterways, decimated rural employment and caused the loss of traditional small farms. We need to act in the interests of human health. We need to show humane concern for animals. We need to preserve what remains of the countryside by condemning the practice of intensive farming. We need to return the animals to
40 the fields, and re-adopt the environmentally friendly, humane and healthy system we had and lost: the small mixed farm.
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Adapted from an article in The Observer newspaper.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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