Reading

Read the text and do exercises after it.

Can you count fish in the sea?

Part 1

A lot of our planet is a mystery and perhaps the biggest mysteries are our oceans. Scientists are trying to learn about them. One of the most important questions for them is, 'How many fish are left in the sea?'

Scientists are on a special boat that is leaving from Ullapool in Scotland. They are going to look for fish. But this isn't something new. Scientists have done this for a long time.

The ship is the Scotia and she's special because she is a research ship. The people who sail on her are studying how many fish there are in Scottish waters. The fishermen throw their nets into the water and catch fish. The scientists look carefully at the results. And this happens every year – the same thing. They have to compare this year's catch with last year's. Is it bigger? Is it smaller?

Overfishing is not a new problem. People have been worried about it since the 1950s. Everyone knows that fish and chips is one of the UK's favourite meals. Traditionally the fish is cod. But the number of cod in the North Sea has gone down a lot recently.

The first research ship, the SS Explorer, was built in 1956. She was a strong ship with a lot of new machines. For the first time, scientists used technology to check fish numbers. The Explorer was the first research ship with a computer! The machine was very big and used special paper. They could put lots of information through this computer. Before this, they had to write everything by hand. It was the beginning of a new and important way of counting fish.

Part 2

Today computers on research ships are faster and cleverer. The scientists put in the numbers of fish and the sizes. But they also put in extra information. They want to find out the age of the fish too. This helps when they plan fishing for the future. Fishermen must not fish in some places.

So, how do you know the age of a fish? The scientist takes out a very small bone. It's from the ear. He cuts it in half. There is a circle for every year of the fish's life.

Every fisherman must record how many fish he catches. These fishermen catch fish to sell. It's their job. So they only fish in places where there are lots of fish. The Scotia is different. She must also go to places where there were lots of fish in the past but not now. The scientists need to have a better idea of fish populations.

Today it's good news: fish numbers are increasing a little in the North Sea. Scientists and fishermen are working together.

Perhaps we can't count the exact number of fish in the sea. But we can learn enough to plan and to be sure there is enough fish for us and sea birds in the future.

Exercises:

Task 1 Choose and tick the correct answers.

1 What is the main job of the people on the Scotia?

a to catch lots of fish

b to get information about fish

2 Why was the Explorer an important ship?

a she carried lots of scientists

b she had new electronic equipment

Task 2 Correct the information in sentences 1–4.

1 Ullapool is in England.

2 They check the fish twice a year.

3 The Explorer was the third research ship with a computer.

4 On the Explorer, the scientists had to write everything.

Task 3 Answer the questions.

1 Tick (✓) the information a–e that the scientists need about the fish.

a how many there are

b how big they are

c how old they are

d how fast they swim

e how deep they live

2 Why do they look at a fish's ear bone?

3 Why do normal fishermen and the Scotia travel to different parts of the ocean?

4 What do the results today show?