Cleaning Our Mountains

Mount Rainier was very dirty for many years. Hikers left their trash on the beautiful mountain. "We have always loved our mountains, but we haven't taken good care of them," said Park Ranger Maria. She found many plastic bottles, drink cans, and sweet wrappers on her daily walks.

Last year, the rangers started a new program. They visited schools and talked to students about the problem. Many people didn't know that plastic bags take hundreds of years to break down in nature.

Now things have changed. People have learned about the problem. All hikers must take their trash home or pay a big fine. They have to collect their food packaging, bottle tops, and tissue papers. But Maria thinks there is still about 30 bags of old rubbish on the mountain.

"I have worked here for ten years," said Tom, a mountain guide. "I saw how bad it was before. Last month, I found a cardboard box and many foil trays near the top of the mountain. Someone left them there five years ago!"

Many young people have joined the cleaning teams. They go to the mountain every month in summer. Last weekend, they collected fifteen plastic bags full of trash. They found many sweet wrappers, drink cans, and even an old packet of cookies.

"We have already made a big difference," says Alex, a student volunteer. "When I started helping last year, we found a lot of trash. We have removed over 100 plastic bottles from the mountain streams."

The mountain looks much nicer today than it did five years ago. Plants and animals have returned to areas that were too dirty before. Everyone hopes that people will continue to keep our mountains clean.

Write T (true) or F (false) for each statement:

1. Mount Rainier was always clean in the past. _____

2. Rangers talked to students about the problem last year. _____

3. Hikers have to pay a fine if they leave trash on the mountain. _____

4. Tom found a cardboard box at the bottom of the mountain. _____

5. Alex started volunteering this year. _____

6. The cleaning teams have found many plastic bottles. _____

Write short answers to these questions:

1. What items did Ranger Maria find on her walks?

_____

2. How long do plastic bags take to break down in nature?

_____

3. What must hikers do with their trash now?

_____

4. What did Tom find near the top of the mountain?

_____

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5. When do volunteers clean the mountain?

_____

6. How many plastic bottles have the volunteers removed?

_____

7. How does the mountain look today compared to five years ago?

_____

8. What has happened to the plants and animals?

_____

Match each trash item (1-10) with its correct description (a-j):

1. Plastic bottle _____	**a)** a thin shiny paper that covers candy or chocolate
2. Sweet wrapper _____	**b)** a container made of aluminum that holds soda or juice
3. Drink can _____	**c)** a container made of strong paper material used for shipping
4. Plastic bag _____	**d)** a thin piece of paper used for cleaning or wiping
5. Cardboard box _____	**e)** a small circular piece that seals the top of a bottle
6. Foil tray _____	**f)** a container made from plastic that typically holds water or soda
7. Food packaging _____	**g)** a thin carrier made from plastic used to carry items
8. Bottle top _____	**h)** a flat container made of aluminum used for heating food
9. Tissue _____	**i)** small bag or envelope containing food items like chips or cookies
10. Packet _____	**j)** materials used to wrap and protect food products

Complete the sentences with words from the box:

plastic bottles | sweet wrappers | plastic bags | cardboard boxes

foil trays | tissue | bottle tops

1. The volunteers collected many _____ from the mountain streams.

2. Tom found several _____ that people used for their picnic lunches.

3. Small items like _____ and _____ are easily carried away by the wind.

4. The cleaning team filled fifteen _____ with trash they collected.

5. Some people use _____ to pack their food when hiking.

6. Used _____ should always be put in your pocket until you find a bin.

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