Unit 8: Reading Practice

Green and pleasant Curitiba

Curitiba is city of over 1.8 million inhabitants in the south of Brazil, and like many cities in South America, it grew very fast. It was founded in 1693, but by the 1960s there was a huge environmental problem. There were too many people, too many vehicles on the roads and not enough public transport.

There were many other cities with similar problems, but Curitiba managed to find a solution without destroying the old city, without building all over green spaces or creating more and wider roads for cars. On the contrary, the Mayor of Curitiba at the time, Jaime Lerner, did the exact opposite. Lerner is an architect and when he became Mayor, he decided they should close a part of the city centre to cars. Shop owners were very worried about this plan because they thought nobody would come to their shops if they couldn't drive there, but Lerner did it anyway, very quickly and secretly, in just three days. Luckily (and not surprisingly), everybody loved the new pedestrian area and now it is like a huge outdoor mall, full of people shopping and enjoying the city. There are hundreds of shops and restaurants, and there are benches everywhere for people to sit and watch the world go by.

Next, Lerner created a transport system that was cheap and easy to complete. Instead of an expensive underground system that would take many years to finish, he created express bus lanes in the middle of the city's main avenues. Very big buses go in both directions every few minutes, taking people to work and back, quickly and cheaply. Eighty percent of travellers use the buses, which means that there is much less pollution and Curitiba is easier to get around than any other city in Brazil.

Other environmental innovations include having parks that absorb water during the rainy season and so prevent flooding. These also provide around fifty square metres of green space per person in the city. There is also a unique system of recycling and rubbish collection. The poorest in the city can collect rubbish and bring it to neighbourhood centres where they can exchange it for bus tickets and food. This has helped make Curitiba a clean and pleasant city, and the greenest in South America.

1 Read the article and choose the correct answer.

1 What caused the environmental problems in Curitiba?

   a population increase   b the weather   c bad government

2 What did the mayor of Curitiba do in secret in the city centre?

   a close shops   b make a pedestrian area   c build an underground system

3 What is the main transport system in Curitiba?

   a the underground   b cars   c buses

4 What environmental problem do parks in Curitiba help to stop?

   a rubbish   b floods   c traffic

2 Read the article again and choose the correct option in italics.

1 Curitiba's problems in the 1960s were *common / not common*.

2 Many other cities solved their problems by *destroying / investing in* the original city.

3 Jaime Lerner was *a shop owner / an architect*.

4 Lerner carried out his plan secretly because *shop owners / the city council* didn't agree with it.

5 The pedestrian shopping area in Curitiba is *popular / unpopular* today.

6 The bus system *has / hasn't* been very successful.

7 Collecting rubbish in Curitiba can help poor people pay for *transport / accommodation*.

8 There are *fewer / more* environmental problems in Curitiba than in other Brazilian cities.

3 Which sentence best describes the author's attitude towards Curitiba?

a He thinks Curitiba should have a smaller population and be less polluted.

b He thinks Curitiba is a great example of good environmental decision-making.

c He thinks there is still a lot to do to make Curitiba green.