Reading

1 **Look at the two houses on this page. Which one do you think has the following features? Write A or B.**

1 It's environmentally friendly. ☐
2 It costs a lot to heat. ☐
3 It is built 'in the air'. ☐
4 Storms can damage it easily. ☐
5 It has a lot of curves, and no corners. ☐
6 It is very light inside. ☐

2 **Read the article about earth houses. What is surprising about them?**



Earth Houses

A move in the right direction?

Do you live 'in the air'? Most people do, because their homes are built on the ground. The result is that most homes lose heat and the outside of them wears out because of the effects of the weather. But this doesn't happen to earth houses! They are very different from traditional homes. They are built into the ground, which covers them like a blanket and protects them from rain, wind and low temperatures. **1** ☐ Instead of working against it, they work with it. This means that they are close to nature, and their curves also remind people of the shapes in nature.

As well as fitting into the environment, earth houses benefit the environment. In the past, when architects designed houses, they didn't think about the effect their buildings would have on the environment. **2** ☐ The architect Peter Vetsch, who designed earth houses, says, 'The design saves a lot of energy. In fact, they need about half the energy of a typical house, the kind that people build in the air.'

The design also means that air cannot easily enter the house from outside. This makes it easier to control the room temperature and also means that these homes are quieter. Stefan, who moved into an earth house for the first



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3 **Four sentences have been removed from the text. Choose from the sentences A-F the one which fits each gap (1-4). There are two extra sentences which you do not need to use.**

A They look like sculptures.
B They offer an exciting new living experience.
C They use their environment to their advantage.
D Today, however, they are used to considering environmental matters.
E He no longer needs to do that.
F The earth house, on the other hand, keeps cool in summer and warm in winter.

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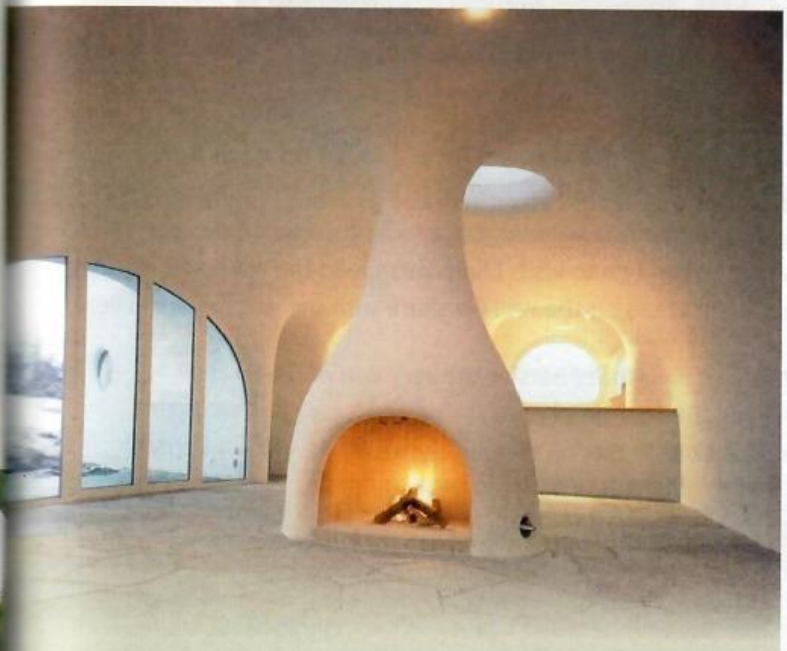
When you do missing-sentence tasks, look for the personal pronouns that refer to objects, ideas or people in the previous sentences. For example, what do *they* in sentence D and *He* in sentence E refer to?

4 **Complete the definitions with the correct nouns.**

architect basement central heating curve damage temperature

1 A(n) _____ is the part of a traditional building which is underground.
2 A(n) _____ is a line that is not straight.
3 A(n) _____ is a person who designs buildings.
4 The word _____ describes how hot or cold something is.
5 We say there is _____ when something is broken and needs to be repaired.
6 _____ is a system which heats a whole building.



time last year, explains, 'The heating bills in our previous house were enormous. **3** Our old house also used to be very dry in winter because of the central heating, but our earth house provides a comfortable humidity.'

Traditional houses sometimes get damaged by wind because of the way we build them. Stefan remembers that he would often repair the roof of his old house after storms. **4** The architecture of earth houses protects them against wind damage. The roof is part of the environment and the wind cannot blow it off.

Did anything surprise Stefan about his earth house? 'I didn't expect it to be so light! Everyone is used to the idea that basements and ground floor flats are rather dark and whenever visitors come, they are always amazed at how light my earth house is.' The truth is that earth houses are filled with sunlight. There are wide glass fronts and dome lights, which are special lights in the roof. Both allow plenty of light to enter and create lovely bright rooms.

5 **Imagine you are trying to sell a home. Write an advertisement describing it and try to sell it to your partner. Your partner asks questions to find out what the house is really like. Which of these ideas will you use?**

- It's got a big bathroom.
- It needs some repairs.
- There are lovely views.
- It's close to shops and schools.
- It's close to the airport.
- The neighbours are a bit noisy.
- The garden needs some work.
- The previous owners had three large dogs.
- There are three bedrooms.
- The rooms are rather small.
- The kitchen is quite dark.



Lovely family home.

3 bedrooms, kitchen, living room, 2 bathrooms
The garden needs some work!

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