

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

GRADE 12 | READING COMPREHENSION | CEFR B2-C1

Name: _____	Date: _____
Class: _____	Score: _____ / 14

Before you read

Think about this question: **When a neighborhood improves, who should benefit?** Keep your answer in mind as you read.

Reading goals: Identify the central claim, distinguish evidence from opinion, infer the writer's perspective, and explain how details support an argument.

Shade for Everyone

On a July afternoon, the temperature on a tree-lined street can feel several degrees lower than it does on a nearby block of bare pavement. That difference is more than a matter of comfort. In cities, shade can reduce heat-related illness, lower energy use, and make public spaces safer to walk through. Yet the neighborhoods with the fewest trees are often the ones whose residents have the least influence over planning decisions.

For years, city officials treated tree planting as a simple numbers game: choose a location, plant as many young trees as the budget allows, and count them. The approach produced encouraging totals, but totals did not always tell the whole story. Some saplings died during their first dry season. Others were planted where roots could damage sidewalks or where no one had been asked whether trees were wanted there. A tree on a spreadsheet is not the same as shade on a sidewalk.

That gap prompted the city of Bellwether to test a different method. Before planting, its urban forestry team met with residents, school groups, shop owners, and tenant associations in three heat-vulnerable districts. Participants marked routes they used every day, places where older adults waited for buses, and blocks where children played after school. They also raised concerns: Would construction block a shop entrance? Who would water the trees? Could a greener street attract higher rents?

The last question was not a rejection of trees. It was a warning about how improvement can happen. When a neighborhood becomes more desirable, housing costs may rise, placing long-time residents at risk of displacement. Researchers sometimes call this “green gentrification.” The term does not mean that parks or trees are harmful. It describes a problem that can occur when environmental investment arrives without protections for the people who have endured the greatest environmental burdens.

Bellwether’s plan therefore paired planting with other commitments. The city hired local crews to care for young trees, offered grants to small businesses affected by construction, and directed housing counselors to tenants in the target districts. Residents could report damaged trees through a text-message service, and the forestry team published updates showing which suggestions had changed the plan. These steps did not eliminate every concern, but they made responsibility more visible.

Two years later, survival rates for the new trees were higher than in the city’s earlier program. Residents also reported using the shaded routes more often. Those results are promising, although they do not prove that consultation alone caused the improvement: the new trees were younger, the maintenance budget was larger, and rainfall varied from year to year. The city has not yet shown whether the housing measures will prevent displacement over time.

Bellwether’s experience suggests that successful climate planning depends on more than planting the right species in the right soil. It also depends on who helps define the problem, who maintains the solution, and who can afford to stay long enough to benefit from it. A fair measure of progress, then, is not simply how many trees a city plants. It is whether people who need shade can help shape the greener future arriving on their block.

1 | CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Choose the best answer for each question. (6 points)

1. What is the central idea of the article?

- A. Cities should focus on planting the greatest possible number of trees.
- B. Greening projects work best when residents help shape them and can share in their benefits.
- C. Tree planting is too expensive to be useful in heat-vulnerable neighborhoods.
- D. Local businesses are the main cause of urban heat.

2. Why did the city consult residents before planting?

- A. To let residents choose the tree species for the entire city.
- B. To reduce the number of trees in the plan.
- C. To learn how people used local spaces and understand their concerns.
- D. To prove that earlier city programs had failed.

3. What does “green gentrification” mean in this article?

- A. Environmental improvements may contribute to rising costs that displace long-time residents.
- B. A city replaces all roads with parks and gardens.
- C. Residents refuse environmental improvements in their area.
- D. Trees grow more quickly in wealthier neighborhoods.

1 | CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING (CONTINUED)

4. Which statement best describes the writer’s attitude toward Bellwether’s results?

- A. Completely skeptical: the program produced no useful results.
- B. Certain that consultation was the only reason for success.
- C. Indifferent: the results do not matter.
- D. Cautiously hopeful: results are promising, but other factors and long-term effects remain uncertain.

5. Which detail is evidence that the city made residents’ input visible?

- A. The city counted how many young trees it planted.
- B. The forestry team published updates showing which suggestions changed the plan.
- C. The city experienced different rainfall each year.
- D. Researchers gave the issue a name.

6. What can the reader infer about the earlier tree-planting approach?

- A. It was designed entirely by neighborhood residents.
- B. It focused mainly on preventing rent increases.
- C. It measured success by tree counts without fully accounting for survival, location, or community needs.
- D. It planted trees only near schools.

2 | VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Write the letter of the best meaning. (4 points)

7. displacement Answer: _____

- A. The movement of trees from one place to another
- B. Being forced to leave one's home or neighborhood
- C. A temporary interruption to bus service

8. promising Answer: _____

- A. Already proven beyond doubt
- B. Likely to be expensive
- C. Showing signs of potential success

9. burdens Answer: _____

- A. Difficult conditions or problems people must bear
- B. Financial rewards for residents
- C. Tools used by forestry crews

10. consultation Answer: _____

- A. A final decision made by experts
- B. A process of asking people for their views or advice
- C. A public announcement after construction

3 | THINK DEEPER

Answer in complete sentences. Use details from the article. (4 points; 2 points each)

11. The writer says the results do not prove that consultation alone caused higher survival rates. Name two other factors that could have influenced the results.

12. Explain how the final paragraph develops the article's central idea. Use at least one specific detail from the text.

Self-check / teacher review: For each response, award 1 point for an accurate, relevant idea and 1 point for supporting it with a precise text detail.

4 | YOUR RESPONSE

In 2–3 sentences: What should cities measure to decide whether a greening project is fair and successful? Support your view with one idea from the article.

Extension: Write a one-sentence policy recommendation for Bellwether's next phase.

Suggested benchmark: 8/10 auto-scored-equivalent points (questions 1–10), plus thoughtful written responses.