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HOW ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AM I?

Jane Gregson called in an expert to find out.

I like to think that I'm bringing my kids up to care about the world around them. They know that resources are scarce: that they shouldn't waste water and that they should turn lights off to save electricity when they're not in a room. They know that we have to save the rainforests and respect the world's fragile eco-balance. They know that we have to ensure that the air we breathe is clean. I thought my family was environmentally friendly, so I invited Tom Harper from Pollution Prevention Ltd to come and see if I was doing everything right.

Tom arrived at our detached house early on a Saturday morning. I was making breakfast, and my two children, Joshua (aged nine) and Rebecca (twelve) were watching cartoons on TV.

The first thing Tom asked when he came into the kitchen was "How old's your fridge?" I told him it was about fifteen years old. "Well, by the look of it, you ought to think about getting a new one."

"A new one?" I said. "I thought we were supposed to use products for as long as possible before buying new ones. It still works quite well."

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"Well," said Tom, "it may still keep your food cold, but look at those door seals. They're old, so they're leaking cold air. That means your fridge has to work harder to stay cold, so that uses more electricity. A new one would be much more efficient and cost-effective." We moved to the living room. It was November, so the heating was on. "It's nice and warm in here," said Tom, "but, to be honest, there's a problem with your windows. Those aluminium window frames let a lot more hot air out of the house than wooden or plastic frames do. And you don't have double glazing. Double-glazed windows keep in almost twice as much heat as single pane windows. Once again, you're using far more electricity than you need to." "Right, kids," I said. "Turn the TV off, have a quick shower, then come down for breakfast. Okay?"

"Before they have their showers," said Tom, "let's have a look at your bathroom." We all went up. "You see that showerhead?" said Tom. "It's got lots of big holes. That's going to let through about twenty litres of water per minute. A new water-saving showerhead lets through a lot less water, and you still get a good shower. So, if you fit one of those, you'll not only save water, you'll also save hot water, so you'll lower your energy and heating costs." This was more like what I wanted to hear. A new fridge and double-glazing were expensive. A new shower? I could afford that.

While the kids had their showers – Tom was pleased they didn't have baths – we went to look at the car. Now I know cars are bad for the environment, but when you've got two children wanting to go to parties and to the sports centre, what other option is there? The nearest bus stop is too far away. Tom was understanding. "If you have to have a car, you have to have a car," he said. "There's no such thing as an environmentally friendly car, but there are things you can do to reduce the negative impact cars have on the environment."

"I only use it when absolutely necessary," I said proudly. "That's good," said Tom. "But you should make sure the engine is kept properly tuned. This can increase fuel efficiency by as much as 8%. Also, regularly check that your air filters are clean. If they're dirty, that will increase your fuel consumption." By now, the kids were wanting their breakfast. We all sat down together in the kitchen. "There are some things you can do," said Tom, "like checking your car, that won't cost you much money, and they'll save you money in the long run. Equally importantly, they'll help a little to protect the environment. Other things we've talked about, like a new fridge, do cost quite a lot. But you have to be aware that your windows and your fridge at the moment are costing you more than they should in terms of heating bills and electricity use. Nobody benefits from that."

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1. Why did the writer invite Tom Harper to her house?
A. She wanted him to see how difficult it is to be environmentally friendly.
B. She wanted to know if she could be more environmentally friendly.
C. She wanted him to teach her children to be environmentally friendly.
D. She wanted to show him how to be environmentally friendly.
2. The writer was surprised by what Tom said about the fridge because _____.
A. she had had it for so long.
B. it was only about fifteen years old.
C. she wanted it to stop working before she bought a new one.
D. she thought he would not recommend throwing things away.
3. Why is the writer using too much electricity in the living room?
A. A lot of the heat is escaping through the windows.
B. The writer has the heating on in November.
C. The children have the TV on too much.
D. The window frames are not the right size.
4. What does the phrase "one of those" in paragraph 6 refer to?
A. a showerhead with big holes
B. a good shower
C. a water-saving showerhead
D. the shower in the writer's bathroom
5. Tom is sympathetic to the writer's _____.
A. desire not to use public transport.
B. children's desire to have showers.
C. willingness to buy a new shower.
D. explanation of why she has a car.
6. According to Tom, both clean air filters and a properly-tuned engine _____
A. reduce fuel consumption by about 8%.
B. help to reduce the amount of fuel a car uses.
C. prevent high fuel bills.
D. make a car environmentally friendly.
7. Tom points out to the writer that buying a new fridge _____
A. may save her money in other ways.
B. may not be as expensive as she thinks.
C. wouldn't really benefit her.
D. is more important than checking the car.



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The fur fashion industry is in poor health. The campaigns that started in the 1980s have had their effect and in the US alone the number of fur farms fell by over 50% from 1987 to 1997. In a move that is bound to be a waste of effort, the fur industry has tried to rebuild by using the slogan "fur is back". However, a loss of profits and an uncertain future mean that there are far fewer people working in the fur industry today. The number of manufacturers in the US has fallen from 797 in 1972 to fewer than 200. This trend will continue. We still need to be careful, though. Many people who would never consider buying fur are doing so without knowing it.

Clothes designers are aware of the bad image fur has with many people. Some of them have taken the sensible decision not to work with fur. Those that still encourage this cruel trade are forced to find ways to disguise fur. Coats are often trimmed to make the fur feel like other materials. It's dyed bright orange or powder blue to hide its origins. Perhaps the most common trick is to use a small amount of fur around the edges of coats, hoping that the customer won't realise that animals have died to make their clothes.

As the fur farming industry faces problems, so does the fur trapping industry. Governments have been rather slow to introduce effective laws but the situation is not looking good for fur trappers. The most popular trap is the leghold trap. Around ninety countries have banned these traps and over twenty countries, mostly in Africa, have banned trapping altogether. The use of these shocking devices is falling but there is more that we can do to persuade governments to act. Letter-writing campaigns can still help. Demonstrations still take place around the world against this evil trade.

These actions do produce results. In Sweden, for example, the government agreed to pass a law saying that foxes cannot be kept in cages and that all foxes kept for fur must be allowed to dig. The extra cost will mean that most fur farms in Sweden will go bankrupt. In

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Switzerland, too, the law makes this old-fashioned industry impossible. There, all animals must be given enough space to behave naturally. If only more countries would follow this lead, a lot of suffering would be prevented.

The number of animals suffering around the world for the fur trade has fallen by about twenty-seven million over the last decade. The people working against the industry can be proud of what they have achieved. Employment in this area of the economy has fallen to only about 600 workers. Many of them are looking for other jobs. Most of them realise that their industry has no future. Some of them have taken the brave decision to leave because they recognise the cruelty around them.

The increase in sales of furs in the US does not mean that "fur is back". At a time when the rest of the economy is growing quickly, sales of fur grew by a tiny 1.6% last year. This figure, even if it is correct, is a clear sign that people are moving away from fur. Thankfully, the industry is dying around the world.

1. The writer thinks the fur industry is _____.
A. never going to recover. B. trying harder than ever.
C. becoming more trendy. D. getting more careless.
2. The writer thinks that designers have to _____.
A. make logical choices about their designs.
B. fool people if they want to sell fur.
C. use other materials that look like fur.
D. use little fur because it's expensive.
3. What is meant by "these shocking devices" in paragraph 3?
A. laws against trapping B. forms of protest
C. leghold traps D. fur trappers
4. The industry will suffer in Sweden because companies will have to _____.
A. have more space. B. buy more cages.
C. increase prices. D. keep more foxes.
5. The writer admires people who leave their job when they _____.
A. can no longer survive in the industry.
B. see that profits are likely to fall.
C. are offered other employment.
D. realise the suffering they cause.
6. What is the writer's attitude to the 1.6% growth in the fur industry?
A. It is a worrying statistic.
B. It happened too slowly.

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- C. It may be a lie.
D. It shows the need for action.
7. What would be the most suitable title for this extract?
A. Don't Be Fooled by Designers
B. A Return to Popularity
C. The Decline in the Fur Trade
D. Millions of Animals Are Suffering



45 LOUD AND PROUD IN THE NOISE CAPITAL OF EUROPE

Echoing those academic studies that demonstrate the blindingly obvious, Madrid's local authorities have spent nearly £5.5m in a three-year study that shows that the Spanish capital remains the noisiest in Europe. The results confirm an OECD study some years back that ranked Spain as the noisiest country in the world, after Japan.

Six acoustic measuring points set up throughout the city registered a noise level of more than 65 decibels for most of the time. This is the safety limit of tolerance set by the World Health Organisation and the EU's "maximum permitted sound level". Main roads roar beyond the city's own 70 decibels limit, and big traffic intersections hit a mighty 80 decibels during the three daily rush hours: from 6.30 a.m. to 10 a.m., 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

An angry opposition socialist councillor, Ruth Porta, complained this week: "The conservative city council has spent Pts1.3bn (£5.4m) to measure the noise level we have to endure, but hasn't contributed a single peseta to reducing it". Eighty per cent of the noise pollution is caused by traffic – car horns, engines and motorcycle exhausts – and the rest from industry, bars and shopping areas.

The authorities insist that noise levels are no worse than 20 years ago, despite a 30 per cent increase in traffic. "In southern cities like ours, we have more street life, there is more activity, and you notice it," explains the head of noise control at the City Hall, Placido Perera.

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Stress, insomnia, aggression and lack of concentration are the main effects, but according to Mr Perera, "city noise does not cause permanent damage".

The best way of quietening the row, the authorities admit, is for people to use public transport rather than the private car, but nobody seriously expects that to happen. The Socialists propose roundabouts instead of traffic lights, more acoustic screens – the last one was put up in 1991 – and repaving streets with a more porous asphalt that absorbs moisture and reduces noise.

So what will the city do? Set up more measuring stations, for a start: there will be 25 throughout Madrid by September. From next week they will start measuring the noise produced by heavy lorries and building works.

The problem is that most people don't find noise a problem. Spaniards – whose own language was described by the writer Laurie Lee as "the dry throaty rattle of pebbles being rolled down a gully" – are mostly self-assertive and sociable and used since childhood to raising their voices to make themselves heard. You find gentle speakers outside Madrid, but few in the capital.

Awoken on a Sunday morning by a monotonous shouting down a megaphone, I looked from my terrace to see two men selling bouquets of roses off the back of a truck, inflicting a horrible form of noise pollution upon a quiet residential street. But it seemed to be effective: a woman not only bought two bunches, she broke off a bloom and pinned it behind her car.

(adapted from "Loud And Proud in the Noise Capital of Europe" by Elizabeth Nash,
The Independent, Sunday, 7 June 1999)

1. Finding out that Madrid is the noisiest capital of Europe has _____.
 - A. come as a surprise.
 - B. been a long process.
 - C. contradicted the results of an OECD study about Spain.
 - D. changed the ranking of Japan as the noisiest country.
2. Madrid's local safety limit of noise level suggests that _____.
 - A. there must be more tolerance of noise in the city than in other parts of Europe.
 - B. the city's authorities should pay more attention to the EU's official regulations,
 - C. it's no use trying to set down the regulations nobody follows,
 - D. it must be very difficult to control the noise during the city's rush hours.

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3. Which sentence best summarizes what paragraph 3 is about?
- A. The authorities have failed to notice Madrid's problem.
 - B. Solving Madrid's problem has cost too much.
 - C. Madrid's problem has been studied but not solved.
 - D. The city's real problem is a conflict between politicians,
4. According to Madrid's authorities, _____
- A. noise in the city has recently risen by 30 per cent.
 - B. typical Madrid street life makes noise more noticeable.
 - C. stress and aggression are worse than the effects of noise.
 - D. city noise will be under control very soon.
5. The most effective method of stopping the noise pollution would be _____
- A. unacceptable to most people.
 - B. contrary to the Socialists' suggestions.
 - C. technically difficult to introduce.
 - D. based on new traffic regulations.
6. Laurie Lee's description of Spanish is mentioned in the text in order to _____
- A. prove that it is a difficult language.
 - B. emphasize some of the Spaniards' best qualities.
 - C. explain why Spaniards can't help being what they are,
 - D. suggest what makes Madrid different from other cities of Spain.
7. The form of noise pollution in the last paragraph is described as "effective" because it _____
- A. helped sell the product.
 - B. didn't disturb anybody.
 - C. made the writer feel good.
 - D. was pleasing to the Spanish ear.

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