

Answer Key for In-Text Questions

Chapter 15

Title: Chapter 15 Questions for Review

Question/Prompt: 1. What is the cause of the worldwide fertility decline?

Correct Answer Example(s):

The worldwide fertility decline is largely due to changes in child-bearing: people around the world are having fewer babies. Globally, total fertility is projected to decrease from 2.56 children to 2.02 children per woman (or birthing parent) 40 years from now.

Question/Prompt: 2. Why is famine in itself not proof of overpopulation?

Correct Answer Example(s):

According to conflict theorists, famine in itself is not proof of overpopulation. Instead, it results from an unfair and harmful distribution of the world's wealth. By this reasoning, famines that have plagued various less developed parts of the world are a result of exploitation, improper land use, civil war, and bad governance.

Question/Prompt: 3. What is population density?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Population density is a measure of how many people live in a set amount of space.

Question/Prompt: 4. What is the difference between sustainability and environmentalism?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Sustainability refers to the property of a system—in this case, the natural system of planet Earth—that allows for both its use and long-term regeneration. In contrast, environmentalism refers to the belief in and concern for the importance of the natural environment for a society.

Question/Prompt: 5. Define *environmental racism*.

Correct Answer Example(s):

Environmental racism refers to the ways in which neighbourhoods, districts, or countries populated mainly by people of colour and low socioeconomic status are disproportionately burdened with dangerous and toxic hazards.

Question/Prompt: 6. Describe three “green consumer” strategies, and describe whether they are effective.

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Hacking, leaking (or whistle-blowing), and public shaming are increasingly common ways of bringing pressure to bear on environmental polluters. Research finds that the more extreme the media shaming, the more elaborate the disclosure to clear an organization’s public image.
- Another strategy increasingly used against misbehaving organizations is the boycott. This is the withdrawal from commercial relations with an organization, intended as a form of punishment or protest. Research finds that boycotts associated with “shameful” offences are more successful than those sparked by lesser offences at forcing the offending organizations to make concessions. A boycott-triggering event may also set off other actions beyond the boycott itself, like expensive lawsuits and prosecutions. However, boycott-induced drops in sales do not last long.
- In recent years, many people have been active in “buycotts.” This means shifting their buying to a product thought morally or socially better than another product. Unlike boycotts, buycotts are often small, since taking part means spending money, and boycotted goods are often more expensive than boycotted products. Unlike boycotts, buycotts may become routine patterns of everyday life, but boycotts are temporary. Unlike boycotts, buycotts do not need collective mobilization, and unorganized people can take part. Finally, buycotts are less confrontational than boycotts; the buycotters focusing more on “consuming morally” than educating or influencing other consumers.

Title: Chapter 15 Questions for Critical Thought

Question/Prompt: 1. The number of megacities in the world is increasing. What effects will this have for the environment? The economy? Lifestyles and culture? Is 1 city of 20 million people better than 10 cities of 2 million people?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Megacities result in continued population growth. A significant result of continued population growth is environmental degradation, since an increasing population means more consumption and intensified pressure on the natural surroundings. This will lead to human disasters, conflicts over scarce territory and resources, and unequal distribution of wealth.
- Megacities will contain neighbourhoods of greater and lesser comfort, as well as homeless people. Further, there will be environmental racism, which refers to the ways in which neighbourhoods, districts, or countries populated mainly by people of colour and low socioeconomic status are disproportionately burdened with dangerous and toxic hazards.
- According to structural functionalism, rapid urban growth will lead to disorganization, crowding, and stress.

Question/Prompt: 2. We are rapidly exhausting natural resources. Once they are gone, what effects this have for life on this planet?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Ongoing depletion of natural resources will lead to environmental disasters such as famine, water scarcity, deforestation, degraded soils, pollution, and species extinction. Ultimately, it threatens the survival of the human species.
- Further, it will lead to conflicts over scarce materials. For example, countries may fight for control over shared resources, use control over resources as political leverage, and destroy resources to gain military victories.
- It may result in the unfair and harmful distribution of the world's wealth. For example, corporate interests are pushing Canada to sell or privatize its water supply. However, the commercial pricing of water would make it hard for low-income Canadians to gain access to this necessary resource for survival, further intensifying economic inequality.

Question/Prompt: 3. Developing nations have high birth rates and fast-growing populations. How might this trend promote or hinder the development of these same nations?

Correct Answer Example(s):

High birth rates and fast-growing populations may promote the development of nations in the following ways:

- High population densities can support industrialization and urbanization. Some report that urbanization helps to lessen poverty. For example, the World Bank has shown that urbanization decreases poverty by offering new opportunities to those moving to cities. It also opens new opportunities for those who stay behind in rural regions.
- Nations can move toward renewable and sustainable energy sources by harnessing the power of solar, wind, geothermal, river, and ocean resources.

High birth rates and fast-growing populations may hinder the development of nations in the following ways:

- Rapid population growth can produce conflicts over scarce territory and resources, and can lead to human disasters (for example, war, plague, and starvation).
- The large family with many children is a liability in nations where the government wants children to attend school for many years, becoming consumers and not producers of family well-being.

Question/Prompt: 4. In a modern world defined by urbanization, globalization, technological progress, and mass communication, how much do you think location still affects lifestyle?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Throughout the world, and especially in the Global South, poor people and members of minority groups are more likely to suffer from environmental problems. Indeed, despite our modern world defined by urbanization, globalization, technological progress, and mass communication, disadvantaged and often racialized populations tend to suffer disproportionate harm from hazardous environmental conditions. This is known as environmental racism, which refers to the ways neighbourhoods, districts, or countries populated mainly by people of colour and low socioeconomic status are disproportionately burdened with dangerous hazards.

Question/Prompt: 5. What is the connection between population growth and environmental degradation? Do more people simply make more mess?

Correct Answer Example(s):

A significant result of continued population growth is environmental degradation, since an increasing population means more consumption and intensified pressure on the natural surroundings. Indeed, exponential population growth may outpace the Earth's carrying capacity for humans. In this way, the projected end to population growth could help us achieve a more sustainable population.

However, environmental degradation is not simply a result of too-rapid population growth, too large a world population, or too-dense population settlement. Today's major environmental problems also come from public policy decisions and investments, and the effects of capitalism, colonialism, and modernity. For example, conflict theorists propose that the challenges poor countries face today result not from overpopulation but from an unfair and harmful distribution of the world's wealth.

Question/Prompt: 6. What kinds of technology, if any, can save us from our current problems with population growth and environmental degradation?

Correct Answer Example(s):

Your answer should include or relate to the following points:

- Technology is both the cause and potential solution of our current environmental issues.
- Every year, millions of used electronic goods, such as computers and televisions, end up improperly dumped in landfills. The improper disposal of this e-waste has harmful effects for both the environment and human health.
- Some societies have begun moving toward renewable and sustainable energy sources by harnessing the power of solar, wind, geothermal, river, and ocean resources. These energy sources renew themselves naturally; just as important, they emit none of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change. However, renewable energy sources are often less reliable, less efficient, and more expensive than fossil fuels.
- Environmental reforms have led to the use of “cleaner” technologies that use fewer natural resources per unit of production—a good thing, environmentally speaking. However, a result of “green” technologies is that these natural resources become less expensive than they used to be, and this leads to higher public consumption.
- Further, scientific advancement cannot necessarily solve or prevent environmental problems and often brings new risks and unforeseen dangers. As well, science and technology work within a political and commercial context, with other goals that they must satisfy.
- An environmentally unfriendly belief is the growth ethic, which is especially popular in North America. This view, linked closely with materialism, celebrates the (imagined) ability of technology to quickly solve all the problems in the world, including those that technology itself has caused.