

General

The Environment and Stewardship

Religious believers think people should look after the environment because it was created by God.

The World is a Way for God to Reveal His Presence

Many believers appreciate the world and what's in it because it is God's creation. They feel that he reveals himself constantly in the world through experiences that inspire awe and wonder, where someone can feel God's presence — e.g. a beautiful sunset, a wild sea or a butterfly's wing might convince someone there must be a creator. But people don't always take good care of the world we live in...

Humans have Damaged the Environment

Global Warming

- Gases in the atmosphere, called 'greenhouse gases', help keep the Earth warm.
- Over the past century, the amount of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere has increased, and measurements show that the Earth has got hotter. This is called global warming. Higher temperatures make ice melt, which causes sea levels to rise. This could lead to flooding in low-lying areas.
- It is mainly caused by the fuels used to generate energy, like oil, coal and gas.

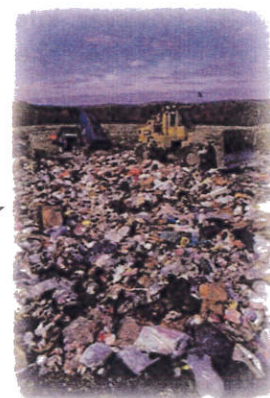


Natural Resources

- A natural resource is anything found naturally that's useful to humans.
- The Earth's population is increasing and people use more raw materials and more energy every year. If people carry on like this, many natural resources will eventually run out.
- Fertile land for growing crops is also rapidly declining. Each year, overgrazing and irresponsible farming methods turn more fertile land into desert.

Pollution

- Pollution from chemicals can contaminate the environment.
- Sewage and chemicals can pollute lakes, rivers and seas. These pollutants harm the plants and animals that live in and around the water, including humans.
- People use toxic chemicals for farming. They also bury nuclear waste underground, and dump a lot of household and industrial waste in landfill sites. The toxic chemicals can kill plants and animals, and cause cancer in humans.
- Smoke and gases from vehicles and industry can pollute the air, cause health problems in humans and damage the ozone layer.



There are Many Ways to Tackle these Problems

- 1) Many people, both religious and non-religious, work to reduce and repair the harm caused to the environment. They think that it's important to look after the planet for future generations.
- 2) Many religious believers feel it's their duty to look after the environment. God gave people the Earth, but expects them to care for it — this idea is called stewardship. See the next page for more details on different religious beliefs.
- 3) Lots of people try to be environmentally friendly by recycling things like paper and plastic. They may also take public transport or walk to cut down on pollution caused by vehicle fumes.
- 4) There's a limit to the Earth's resources, so many people believe it's important to be able to manage the resources currently available and to find alternative, sustainable options too.
- 5) Some also campaign to better inform others about the damage being done to the environment.

Recycle some of this information by using it in the exam...

You've probably been told this a hundred times, but always read the questions carefully. You might come across questions that ask for a specific number of points, so make sure you give the correct number.



The Environment and Stewardship

All religions

Christians Believe in Looking After the Environment

- 1) In **Genesis 1:26**, God said humans could "rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals..." (NIV). This power is known as dominion. Some people think it means humans can use the environment however they want.
- 2) However, many Christians believe that God made them stewards of the environment. They have no right to abuse God's creation, and they have a responsibility to protect it.
- 3) Some Christians believe that everything is interdependent (i.e. everything depends on everything else), so driving species of animal or plant to extinction, or harming the planet, eventually ends up harming people.
- 4) The damage humans do to the environment clashes with their role as stewards. Christian organisations such as CAFOD, Christian Aid and Tearfund® are concerned with putting this responsibility into practice. They put pressure on governments and industry to think more about how people are abusing the planet.

"humanity's dominion cannot be understood as licence to abuse, spoil, squander or destroy what God has made..." **Christian Declaration on Nature, Assisi 1986**

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." **Genesis 2:15 NIV**

Judaism also Teaches Stewardship

- 1) Jews value the world because it is God's and he created it: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters" (**Psalms 24:1-2 NIV**).
- 2) Jews believe in the concept of stewardship. Concern for the natural world is often seen as being at the heart of Jewish teaching.
- 3) God's creations should remain as he intended, and humans have no right to abuse them. The **Jewish Declaration on Nature** also stated that "humanity was given dominion over nature, but was commanded to behave towards the rest of creation with justice and compassion". Some think everything is interdependent, with trees being particularly important. Since the creation of Israel in 1948, millions of trees have been planted to aid the reclamation of the desert and help rebuild the nation.
- 4) Jews also believe that as custodians, they're responsible for making the world better — this is called tikkun olam ('mending the world'). Tikkun olam isn't just about the environment — it's a general ideal that includes helping the poor, and behaving morally.

"...it is our Jewish responsibility to put the defence of the whole of nature at the very centre of our concern."
Jewish Declaration on Nature, Assisi 1986

Muslims are Khalifah of the Earth

- 1) The Earth is seen as being a product of the love of Allah, so Muslims should treat it with love.
- 2) Muslims believe they have been appointed khalifah (vice-regents or trustees) of the Earth. This is the idea that while they're on Earth they should take responsibility for the world (stewardship), and make it the sort of place Allah wants it to be.
- 3) This means Muslims have an obligation to protect the environment. Muslims might carry out their duty as khalifah by being careful with the resources they use, and encouraging others to take care of the environment too.
- 4) The Prophet Muhammad (called Allah's Apostle here) said that planting a tree is a good, charitable deed:

"Allah's Apostle said, 'There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him.'" **Sahih al-Bukhari 39:513**
- 5) At the Day of Judgement, Muslims believe questions will be asked of them. They will be required to answer for any ill-treatment of the planet and its resources.



Look after the environment — it's the natural thing to do...

Define stewardship in your own words, then write a few points about how people might carry it out.

