

## Skimming

Every second, 1 hectare of the world's rainforest is destroyed. That's equivalent to two football fields. An area the size of New York City is lost every day. In a year, that adds up to 31 million hectares -- more than the land area of Poland. This alarming rate of destruction has serious consequences for the environment; scientists estimate, for example, that 137 species of plant, insect or animal become extinct every day due to logging. In British Columbia, where, since 1990, thirteen rainforest valleys have been clearcut, 142 species of salmon have already become extinct, and the habitats of grizzly bears, wolves and many other creatures are threatened. Logging, however, provides jobs, profits, taxes for the government and cheap products of all kinds for consumers, so the government is reluctant to restrict or control it.

Much of Canada's forestry production goes towards making pulp and paper. According to the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association, Canada supplies 34% of the world's wood pulp and 49% of its newsprint paper. If these paper products could be produced in some other way, Canadian forests could be preserved. Recently, a possible alternative way of producing paper has been suggested by agriculturalists and environmentalists: a plant called hemp.

Hemp has been cultivated by many cultures for thousands of years. It produces fibre which can be made into paper, fuel, oils, textiles, food, and rope. For many centuries, it was essential to the economies of many countries because it was used to make the ropes and cables used on sailing ships; colonial expansion and the establishment of a world-wide trading network would not have been possible without hemp. Nowadays, ships' cables are usually made from wire or synthetic fibres, but scientists are now suggesting that the cultivation of hemp should be revived for the production of paper and pulp. According to its proponents, four times as much paper can be produced from land using hemp rather than trees, and many environmentalists believe that the large-scale cultivation of hemp could reduce the pressure on Canada's forests.

However, there is a problem: hemp is illegal in many countries of the world. This plant, so useful for fibre, rope, oil, fuel and textiles, is a species of cannabis, related to the plant from which marijuana is produced. In the late 1930s, a movement to ban the drug marijuana began to gather force, resulting in the eventual banning of the cultivation not only of the plant used to produce the drug, but also of the commercial fibre-producing hemp plant. Although both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson grew hemp in large quantities on their own land, any American growing the plant today would soon find himself in prison -- despite the fact that marijuana cannot be produced from the hemp plant, since it contains almost no THC (the active ingredient in the drug).

In recent years, two major movements for legalization have been gathering strength. One group of activists believes that ALL cannabis should be legal -- both the hemp plant and the marijuana plant -- and that the use of the drug marijuana should not be an offense. They argue that marijuana is not dangerous or addictive, and that it is used by large numbers of people who are not criminals but productive members of society. They also point out that marijuana is less toxic than alcohol or tobacco. The other legalization movement is concerned only with the hemp plant used to produce fibre; this group wants to make it legal to cultivate the plant and sell the fibre for paper and pulp production. This second group has had a major triumph recently: in 1997, Canada legalized the farming of hemp for fibre. For the first time since 1938, hundreds of farmers are planting this crop, and soon we can expect to see pulp and paper produced from this new source.

### Multiple-Choice Questions

## Questions

*Select the answer you think is correct.*

The main idea of paragraph one is:

- Scientists are worried about New York City
- Logging is destroying the rainforests
- Governments make money from logging
- Salmon are an endangered species

The main idea of paragraph two is:

- Canadian forests are especially under threat
- Hemp is a kind of plant
- Canada is a major supplier of paper and pulp
- Canada produces a lot of hemp

The main idea of paragraph three is:

- Paper could be made from hemp instead of trees
- Hemp is useful for fuel
- Hemp has been cultivated throughout history
- Hemp is essential for building large ships

The main idea of paragraph four is:

- Hemp is used to produce drugs
- Many famous people used to grow hemp
- It is illegal to grow hemp
- Hemp is useful for producing many things

The main idea of paragraph five is:

- Hemp should be illegal because it is dangerous
- Recently, many people have been working to legalize hemp
- Hemp was made illegal in 1938
- Marijuana is not a dangerous drug

## Questions

*Select the answer you think is correct.*

1. How many species of salmon have become extinct in BC?

- 27
- 31
- 137
- 142

2. How much of the world's newsprint paper is supplied by Canada?

- 31%
- 49%
- 34%
- 19%

3. What equipment on a ship was made from hemp?

- Ropes
- waterproof cloth
- engine fuel
- life rafts

4. What drug can be obtained from a relative of hemp?

- cocaine
- heroin
- amphetamine
- marijuana

5. Where was hemp farming recently legalized?

- the USA
- Canada
- Singapore
- the Netherlands

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**1. How long does it take for 100 hectares of rainforest to be destroyed?**

- a) less than two minutes
- b) about an hour
- c) two hours
- d) a day

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**2. Why is pulp and paper production important to Canada?**

- a) Canada needs to find a way to use all its spare wood.
- b) Canada publishes a lot of newspapers and books.
- c) Pulp and paper export is a major source of income for Canada.

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**3. Who is suggesting that pulp and paper could be produced without cutting down trees?**

- a) the logging industry
- b) the government
- c) the environmental lobby

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**4. Why was the plant hemp essential to world-wide trade in the past?**

- a) Ships' ropes were made from it.
- b) Hemp was a very profitable export.
- c) Hemp was used as fuel for ships.
- d) Hemp was used as food for sailors.

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**5. Why do agriculturalists think that hemp would be better for paper production than trees?**

- a) It is cheaper to grow hemp than to cut down trees.
- b) More paper can be produced from the same area of land.
- c) Hemp produces higher quality paper.

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**6. When was hemp production banned in Canada?**

- a) 1930
- b) 1960
- c) 1996
- d) 1938

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**7. Why was hemp banned?**

- a) It is related to the marijuana plant.
- b) It can be used to produce marijuana.
- c) It was no longer a useful crop.
- d) It was destructive to the land.

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**8. What chemical ingredient of cannabis plants is a powerful drug?**

- a) Fibre
  - b) Marijuana
  - c) **THC**
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**9. True or false: Some activists believe that both marijuana and hemp should be legal.**

- a) True
  - b) **False**
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**10. True or false: Canada has just legalized marijuana.**

- a) True
  - b) **False**
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**1. "Every second, 1 hectare of the world's rainforest is destroyed. That's equivalent to two football fields."**

**What does "equivalent to" mean?**

- a) more than
  - b) less than
  - c) **the same as**
- 

**2. "In British Columbia, where, since 1990, thirteen rainforest valleys have been clearcut, 142 species of salmon have already become extinct."**

**What does "clearcut" mean?**

- a) a few trees have been cut down
  - b) many trees have been cut down
  - c) **all the trees have been cut down**
- 

**3. "Logging, however, provides jobs, profits, taxes for the government and cheap products of all kinds for consumers, so the government is reluctant to restrict or control it."**

**What does "reluctant" mean?**

- a) **doesn't want to**
  - b) is not allowed to
  - c) would like to
- 

**4. "According to its proponents, four times as much paper can be produced from land using hemp rather than trees."**

**What does "proponents" mean?**

- a) people who are against something
  - b) **people who support something**
  - c) people in charge of something
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**5. "In the late 1930s, a movement to ban the drug marijuana began to gather force."**

**What does "gather force" mean?**

- a) appear
  - b) get stronger
  - c) get weaker
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**6. "One group of activists believes that ALL cannabis should be legal."**

**What does "activists" mean?**

- a) people trying to change something
  - b) people against the government
  - c) people who smoke marijuana
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**Which country legalized the growing of cannabis plants in 1997?**

- a) Burma
  - b) Holland
  - c) Columbia
  - d) Canada
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**1. "The rainforests are quite simply the richest, oldest, most productive and most complex ecosystems on Earth."**

- a) the forestry industry
  - b) the environmentalists
  - c) the hemp farming lobby
  - d) the marijuana legalization lobby
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**2. "Some have calculated that if Canada converted the entire pulp and paper production in Canada to hemp, it would be necessary to plant hemp over 18% of the country."**

- a) the forestry industry
  - b) the marijuana lobby
  - c) the environmentalists
  - d) the hemp farming lobby
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**3. "Farmers... can grow hemp without pesticide or herbicide application because it grows quickly and is not likely to fall to disease."**

- a) the Canadian government
  - b) the hemp farming lobby
  - c) the forestry industry
  - d) the marijuana legalization lobby
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**4. "Each year, forest fires destroy more forests than are used for making pulp and paper."**

- a) the environmentalists

- b) the Canadian government
  - c) the hemp farming lobby
  - d) the forestry industry
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**5. "Decriminalizing cannabis could well result in a greater use of the drug by Canadians, thereby increasing the health and safety hazards associated with it."**

- a) the marijuana legalization lobby
  - b) the hemp farming lobby
  - c) the Canadian government
  - d) the environmentalists
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**6. "The government added marijuana in 1923 to The Opium Act of 1908 without any health concerns inherent in the law whatsoever. The Opium Act was introduced as a purely racist measure to deport and jail Chinese-Canadians."**

- a) the hemp farming lobby
  - b) the Canadian government
  - c) the forestry industry
  - d) the marijuana legalization lobby
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**7. "67% of the fibre used to make Canadian pulp and paper comes from sawmill residue and recovered paper that used to be disposed of in landfills."**

- a) the environmentalists
  - b) the hemp farming lobby
  - c) the forestry industry
  - d) the marijuana legalization lobby
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**8. "Hemp is about business and the environment. Marijuana is a moral question about the government's control of what drugs people consume. These two questions have nothing in common but the shape of the leaf, and we have to separate the issues."**

- a) the hemp farming lobby
  - b) the marijuana legalization lobby
  - c) the forestry industry
  - d) the Canadian government
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**9. "In the Vancouver Grasstown Riot, of 1971, police attacked and injured hundreds of peaceful marijuana smokers in one day."**

- a) the marijuana legalization lobby
  - b) the forestry industry
  - c) the Canadian government
  - d) the hemp farming lobby
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**10. "Logging is still the biggest employer and the single biggest contributor to tax revenue in BC."**

- a) the hemp farming lobby
- b) the forestry industry
- c) the Canadian government

d) the hemp farming lobby

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**1. What area of forest do you think is destroyed in BC every year by logging?**

- a) 200 hectares (=400 football fields)
  - b) 2,000 hectares (=4000 football fields)
  - c) 20,000 hectares (=40,000 football fields)
  - d) 200,000 hectares (=400,000 football fields)
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**2. Approximately how much of the world's newsprint paper is produced by Canada?**

- a) 10%
  - b) 20%
  - c) one-third
  - d) half
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**3. Which country legalized the growing of cannabis plants in 1997?**

- a) Burma
  - b) Holland
  - c) Columbia
  - d) Canada
- 

**4. Which of these famous British people used marijuana?**

- a) Queen Victoria
  - b) Prince Charles
  - c) Winston Churchill
  - d) Princess Diana
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**5. Which of these famous Americans grew cannabis plants on his land?**

- a) Bob Dylan
  - b) George Washington
  - c) Bill Clinton
  - d) Kurt Cobain
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