

## The Quiet Strength of Trees

In many towns and cities, people pass trees every day without giving them much thought. They stand silently beside roads, in parks, and along rivers, asking for little while giving a great deal. Yet trees play an important role in the health of our planet and in the well-being of the people who live on it. Their value is not always obvious at first glance, because their work is often quiet and gradual rather than dramatic.

Trees act as natural cleaners of the air. Through a process called photosynthesis, they absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, helping to maintain the balance of gases in the atmosphere. This simple exchange allows animals and humans to breathe more easily. In busy cities, where traffic and industry can pollute the air, trees can make a noticeable difference. A street lined with leafy branches may seem ordinary, but it can improve the quality of life for those who live nearby.

Trees also help to control temperature. During the summer months, their shade protects the ground from the full force of the sun. Pavements and buildings surrounded by trees often remain cooler than those exposed to direct sunlight. In this way, trees quietly help towns remain comfortable places to live.

However, trees do more than simply clean the air and cool the streets. They are also home to a wide variety of wildlife. Birds build nests in their branches, insects hide beneath their bark, and small mammals use them for shelter. A single mature tree can support an entire community of living creatures. Without these natural homes, many animals would struggle to survive.

Despite their importance, trees have often been treated as if they were easily replaceable. In the past, large areas of forest were cleared to make space for farms, roads, and buildings. In some cases, this happened without careful planning. When

too many trees were removed, the natural balance of the environment could go awry.

Soil that had once been held firmly in place by roots was washed away by rain.

Rivers flooded more easily, and wildlife lost the habitats on which they depended.

Today, many people recognise that protecting trees is essential. Governments and environmental organisations encourage the planting of new trees to replace those that have been lost. In some cities, special programmes invite residents to help care for young saplings until they grow strong enough to survive on their own.

Interestingly, trees do not grow with any sense of ostentation. They do not compete to appear grand or impressive. Instead, they grow slowly and steadily, often over many decades. A towering oak may take more than a century to reach its full height, quietly strengthening year after year.

Throughout history, trees have also played a role in human culture. In many stories and traditions, they symbolise wisdom, patience, and endurance. Ancient travellers sometimes relied on well-known trees as landmarks, guiding them safely through unfamiliar landscapes.

Yet trees can also face powerful challenges. Storms, disease, and drought can threaten even the strongest specimens. In some cases, human activity becomes their greatest foe. Pollution, careless construction, and unnecessary cutting can shorten the life of a tree that might otherwise have stood for generations.

For this reason, many communities now work hard to protect the trees around them. Schools organise tree-planting days, and volunteers help care for local parks and woodlands. These efforts remind people that the natural world does not simply exist for decoration; it supports life in countless ways.

The next time someone walks beneath the branches of a tall tree, it may be worth pausing for a moment. What appears to be a silent part of the landscape is actually performing many tasks at once. Without ostentation or complaint, trees continue their quiet work—cleaning the air, protecting wildlife, and reminding humans that patience and balance are often the greatest strengths of all.

# Comprehension Questions

1. What is the main purpose of the passage?
  - A. To describe different types of forests around the world
  - B. To explain why trees are important and why they should be protected
  - C. To tell a story about people who plant trees
  - D. To explain how trees grow faster in cities
  
2. According to the passage, how do trees help improve air quality?
  - A. By producing carbon dioxide
  - B. By absorbing oxygen
  - C. By absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen
  - D. By blocking pollution completely
  
3. What does the word *ostentation* most nearly mean in the passage?
  - A. A showy display intended to attract attention
  - B. A quiet and private action
  - C. A dangerous activity
  - D. A scientific experiment
  
4. Why might the natural balance of the environment go *awry* when too many trees are removed?
  - A. Trees stop growing entirely
  - B. Soil may be washed away and wildlife may lose habitats
  - C. Rivers stop flowing
  - D. Birds refuse to live near humans
  
5. What can be inferred about mature trees from the passage?
  - A. They grow very quickly in a few years
  - B. They only grow in forests
  - C. They cannot survive storms
  - D. They often support many forms of wildlife

6. In the passage, the word *foe* most nearly means:

- A. Helper
- B. Enemy
- C. Leader
- D. Teacher

7. Why are trees helpful in cities during the summer?

- A. They produce more rain
- B. They block traffic noise
- C. Their shade helps keep areas cooler
- D. They remove all sunlight

8. What role did trees sometimes play for ancient travellers?

- A. They provided food during journeys
- B. They were used as landmarks
- C. They were cut down for firewood
- D. They marked the borders of cities

9. What does the passage suggest about modern attitudes towards trees?

- A. People believe trees are unnecessary
- B. People are increasingly trying to protect and plant them
- C. People are cutting down more forests than ever
- D. People think trees should only exist in the countryside

10. What overall message does the final paragraph convey?

- A. Trees should only be planted in forests
- B. Trees are mostly decorative features
- C. Trees perform many important roles quietly
- D. Trees will soon disappear from cities

# Answers

1. **B**

2. **C**

3. **A**

4. **B**

5. **D**

6. **B**

7. **C**

8. **B**

9. **B**

10. **C**