

CGC1P Unit 3: People, Places and Patterns

Activity 7: Urban Issues

Overview

There are many reasons for living in a city, but there are also just as many reasons to leave the city and to live in a smaller community or even in a rural area. In this activity the student will research and examine the various issues related with the trend towards moving and living in cities. This is called urbanization.

Lesson

There are many opportunities available when living in the city. Examples include:

- cultural events
- affordable and environmentally friendly public transportation
- and the availability of exotic foods to name but a few.

But...there are many inconveniences associated with city living as well.

Urban Problems and Solutions

---▶ Gridlock, when traffic gets so severe that cars can't move during rush hour.

■■■■▶ For gridlock, city planners now try to plan out the roads in a city years before the traffic becomes a gridlock nightmare. New routes are also created or expanded as the population grows. Limiting construction to off-peak hours and car-pooling are ways in which problems could be avoided.

---▶ Vermin are pests, including rodents and bugs like cockroaches.

■■■■▶ Most cities have by-laws pertaining to the control of pests in public places such as restaurants or apartment buildings. The general population is responsible for their own residences.

---▶ Smog is an issue, because the quality of air people breathe can make them sick if the levels are poor.

■■■■▶ Smog. The government of Ontario has solutions like the Drive Clean Program to cut down on exhaust and other air pollution. Other strategies used to improve air-quality are car-pooling, industrial emissions control, reducing the use of electricity, especially air-conditioning, in summer and conserving natural areas. Solutions for this problem involve everyone.

---▶ Have you heard of light pollution? In large cities you can't see the stars at night, but in the country you can. It's hard to be a stargazer in the city.

---▶ Do you live near a nuclear reactor? They are not so much a problem as they are a high risk.

---▶ All cities have homeless people. Homeless people are people who, for various reasons, live on the streets of a city. Homeless people could be found in many cities.

---▶ There is more crime in cities. There is more crime in Canada as a whole than there was when most Canadians lived in rural settings.

---▶ Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing urban centers, big and small, is what to do with their garbage. Hamilton is an excellent example of how a city is trying to reduce its garbage.

---▶ And what about the degraded land that is so polluted it can no longer be used?

■■■■▶ Light pollution is a problem. Some cities limit the number of lights businesses are allowed to leave on at night. We too should be aware of our own personal light use. Although we need to see at night, we tend to overuse light in our communities.

■■■■▶ Although there are many advantages to using nuclear energy, the risks associated with them are high. These risks could be reduced with stringent safety controls and in Ontario, this is the case.

■■■■▶ Many organizations in cities contribute to feeding, housing and/or providing other assistance to the homeless. The citizens of cities must be part of the solution to helping the homeless.

■■■■▶ Crime is a serious problem. Laws are being changed to meet the demands of Canadians. Canadians are also demanding more police officers on patrol. Many initiatives are improving our overall protection.

■■■■▶ Citizens can be part of the solution by limiting the amount of garbage they produce. This could be done by practicing the three R's: reduce, reuse, and recycle. Business and industry must also be part of the solution by reducing waste materials such as with packaging or with advertising. Utilizing new technologies to handle waste has also helped with waste issues in our cities.

■■■■▶ There are many examples of degraded land being reclaimed. Land reclamation involves cleaning up the land that has become so polluted it can no longer be used. Once the cleanup is complete, the land is safely used productively.

Assignment

1. Match the term with the appropriate definition.

environmentally friendly	-an amateur astronomer
degraded land	-formerly productive land which has been converted to non-productive uses
vermin	-activities which reduce the negative human impact on the environment
gridlock	-transforming into usable land areas that had become so polluted that they were not being used
smog	-a traffic jam in which no movement of vehicles is possible, especially one caused by the blockage of key intersections within a grid of streets
stargazer	-fog that has become mixed and polluted with smoke
crime	-an urban center with 10 000 or more people
exterminators	-various small animals or insects, such as rats or cockroaches, that are destructive, annoying, or harmful to health
land reclamation	-unlawful activity
city	-people whose occupation is the extermination of vermin

2. Think of the area that you live in or that is near you and answer the following questions:

- a) Are there enough traffic lights or stop signs to avoid accidents?
- b) Does everyone have access to fresh water, either from a well or from city water?
- c) Is it safe for children to walk and play in your neighborhood?
- d) Are any of the urban problems listed on the previous page of concern to you?
- e) What would make things better? Make a list of five suggestions that could make a difference.