



**New  
Internationalist**

# Roads or forests?

Easier English New Internationalist Ready lesson:

# **This lesson:**

- 1) Speaking**
- 2) Vocabulary**
- 3) Reading**
- 4) Focus on sentence structure:  
ordering words**
- 5) Focus on verbs and tenses in  
context**
- 6) Action: writing**

1) **Speaking** in groups: What do you know about forests? And what do you want to know?



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*Loggers cut down trees in Brazil. Brazil is losing more than half-a-million hectares of rainforest every year. © BrazilPhotos.com/Alamy*

- 2) Vocabulary – match:
- 1/ to ruin
  - 2/ a dustbowl
  - 3/ smog
  - 4/ indigenous people
  - 5/ biodiversity
  - 6/ harassment
- a) Air pollution: fog mixed with smoke
  - b) Aggressive pressure
  - c) Native people: descended from the original people in the area
  - d) An area where vegetation has gone so the soil becomes dust
  - e) To destroy something or make it really bad
  - f) The variety of life in one place

**Key:**

**1/ to ruin - e**

**2/ a dustbowl - d**

**3/ smog - a**

**4/ indigenous  
people - c**

**5/ biodiversity - f**

**6/ harassment - b**

a) Air pollution: fog mixed with smoke

b) Aggressive pressure

c) Native people: descended from the original people in the area

d) An area where vegetation has gone so the soil becomes dust

e) To destroy something or make it really bad

f) The variety of life in one place

What do you think this article is about?:

# 'Ruined by roads'

*Nanjala Nyabola is sad about the loss of Nairobi's trees, and writes about the expansion of cities.*



Credit: Nina Stock/Pixabay

3) Reading - read the text twice:

**First quickly:**

**30 seconds to find out if your prediction was correct or not.**

**Then more slowly:**

**3 minutes to find the main problem and the solution to this problem**

Nairobi used to be the 'green city in the sun', but over the past year there has been an attack on the green part. The government of Kenya has cut at least 200 trees across the capital and plans to cut many more as they plan to build an elevated highway to connect the airport in the east to the western suburbs. They will build it over the top of the main road that runs from Kenya's coast all the way to the border with Uganda. All this in the pandemic that has forced more private cars onto the road than ever before.

Parts of Nairobi are now dustbowls where the wind, with no trees to slow it down, picks up dust and sprinkles it over cars and pedestrians like salt from a shaker. We have no evidence to prove it, but those who live here have noticed that temperatures are now much higher. The destruction of the city's famous trees results from state and private action, with unplanned urban expansion and crowded residential neighbourhoods with zero green spaces. There are so many apartment complexes with no common areas, especially in working-class districts. All of the city's protected green areas are in rich neighbourhoods except for two parks in the central business district. Both of them came from the protest actions of women like Wangari Maathai and Zarina Patel.

At the same time, big old trees are torn down to make way for roads. That changed the character of the city but did little to help the traffic problems. Usually after a road is expanded, the traffic jams return, sometimes worse than before. Thika Road, Lang'ata Road, Outer Ring Road – all packed again only months after expensive expansions. Nairobi is learning the lessons that larger cities have also learnt – more roads don't reduce traffic jams. Only investment in good public transport can do that. Most people in the city walk to work and more and more try to use their bicycles, but almost none of the new roads have pavements or bicycle paths.

There's a big lesson to learn from Nairobi's road-building. For the last 50 years, development has seen the natural environment as less important than the need to build. In the early 20th century, cities in rich countries expanded quickly, destroying forests and rivers. Now Amsterdam is changing roads back into canals, and cities across the United States are changing freeways and elevated highways into parks and public spaces. But cities in Africa and Asia are destroying their green areas to continue trying to look modern.

We live in a world where we cannot deny climate change but we are baking cities and choking under dust and smog. To stop the planet becoming impossible to live in, cities in poorer countries have to move away from development that destroys the natural environment. To live in cities, we need trees.

4) Order these words to create summaries:

**Problem:**

**very difficult / to  
build roads / to  
live there / cutting  
trees / is making it  
/ in Nairobi**

**Solution:**

**more trees / cycle  
paths / stop cutting  
/ plant / good public  
/ trees / invest in /  
transport and**

# Did you get these sentences?:

**Problem:**

**Cutting trees to build roads in Nairobi is making it very difficult to live there.**

**Solution:**

**Stop cutting trees, plant more trees, invest in good public transport and cycle paths.**

What do you think this article is about?:

## ‘LET THE PEOPLE PROTECT THE FORESTS’

*Do you want to restore and protect the world's forests? Then protect the rights of the people who live in them, says Danny Chivers.*



*Samela, a 23-year-old activist from the Association of the Satere-Mawe Indigenous Women in Amazonas, Brazil, makes face masks. RAPHAEL ALVES/IMF/CREATIVE COMMONS*

# Now read the text twice:

**First quickly:**

**30 seconds to find out if your prediction was correct or not.**

**Then more slowly:**

**3 minutes to find the main problem and the solution to this problem**

What's the best way to restore the world's forests – and slow the climate crisis? Lawmakers at climate conferences argue about forestry carbon markets or complex 'offsetting' schemes for giant polluters (where they pay, or plant trees in exchange for producing more carbon). But the method that works most often is much simpler: to respect and protect the rights of the people who live there. Governments and businesses in the countries with most forest have been using the Covid-19 pandemic to do exactly the opposite. In a new report by the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), indigenous and local land rights are disappearing around the world. This will have serious effects on the climate.

At least 50 per cent of the world's land is in the traditional territories of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, and other traditional communities. After years fighting for more control, communities now have legal rights to 10 per cent of this land, and part recognition for another 8 per cent. They might lose a lot of this progress now because of mining. Research by FPP shows that the governments of the world's five most tropically forested countries (Brazil, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia and Peru) have been taking away the rights of local people ending protection of forest – while the world is worried about Covid. A board member of FPP said it is now 'business as usual on steroids'.

In Brazil, between March and May 2020, Jair Bolsonaro's government passed 195 new laws that stop environmental protection and make it easier to grab land illegally in indigenous territories. In Peru, no-one has punished the big businesses for many new oil spills in indigenous territories. Also, the government says that the hydrocarbon and mining businesses are really important for economic recovery. So they relaxed regulations to help these industries expand. In Indonesia, a 'job creation' law, passed in October 2020 as part of post-Covid economic recovery, says that indigenous territories are 'abandoned land'. So mining, tree-cutting and agricultural companies can use it.

The legally protected areas of indigenous peoples' lands include 80 per cent of the world's biodiversity, according to the World Bank. The areas where local people have land rights have less deforestation, more biodiversity, and store carbon more successfully. But no one listens to them, or worse, treats them with violence.

In all five countries with most tropical forest, indigenous peoples have been fighting against this. But they have often suffered from government violence, harassment and criminalization. This year, 2021, there are big UN conferences about climate and biodiversity. We need indigenous peoples to be part of these talks. And defending them and expanding their rights needs to be at the centre.

Order these words to create summaries:

**Problem:**

wanting to / of  
trees / and  
businesses / the  
climate crisis /  
clear land / and  
governments /

**Solution:**

and biodiversity /  
indigenous people /  
protect forests /  
protect / because  
they / and their  
rights /

# Did you get these sentences?:

**Problem:**

**The climate crisis and governments and businesses wanting to clear land of trees.**

**Solution:**

**Protect indigenous people and their rights because they protect forests and biodiversity.**

# Speaking, in small groups:

1/ Do you have forest in your country / area?

2/ How do these 2 texts relate to your country / area?

3/ What other problems are there related to forests?

## 5) Add the verbs in the correct tenses:

Nairobi ..1.. the 'green city in the sun', but over the past year there ..2.. an attack on the green part. The government of Kenya ..3.. at least 200 trees across the capital and ..4.. to cut many more as they ..5.. to build an elevated highway to connect the airport in the east to the western suburbs. They ..6.. it over the top of the main road that ..7.. from Kenya's coast all the way to the border with Uganda. All this in the pandemic that ..8.. more private cars onto the road than ever before.

### **Verbs to use:**

force / cut / build/  
run / plan / be

### **Choice of tenses:**

- Future simple
- Used to + infinitive
- Present perfect
- Present simple

# Add the verbs in the correct tenses:

The areas where local people ..1.. land rights ..2.. less deforestation, more biodiversity, and ..3.. carbon more successfully. But no one ..4.. to them, or worse, ..5.. them with violence.

In all five countries with most tropical forest, indigenous peoples ..6.. against this. But they ..7.. from government violence, harassment and criminalization. This year, 2021, there ..7.. big UN conferences about climate and biodiversity. We ..8.. indigenous peoples to be part of these talks. And defending them and expanding their rights ..9.. to be at the centre.

## Verbs to use:

treat / need / suffer /  
be / store / fight / listen  
/ have /

## Choice of tenses:

- Present perfect
- Present perfect continuous
- Present simple

# 6) Action

**What can we do to:**

**a) get people to value forests more?**

**b) stop forests disappearing?**

**Some ideas:**

- **make a poster**
- **write a letter**
- **write a tweet**
- **create a social media post**

# Follow-up:

1/ Quiz and infographic:

<https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=QUIZ>  
[- FORESTS](#)



2/ More ready lessons on Powerpoint and pdf:

**FORESTS:**

<https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=FORESTS> -  
[1.5/2 hr lesson for Intermediate learners: Reading, Speaking, Writing](#)

**WHERE ARE THE FORESTS GOING?:**

[https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=READY LESSON \(for Upper Intermediate learners\) : WHERE ARE THE FORESTS GOING%3F](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=READY_LESSON_(for_Upper_Intermediate_learners)_:_WHERE_ARE_THE_FORESTS_GOING%3F)