Part I: Reading Comprehension

Read the article below and then answer questions 1-6.

THE HEALING POWER OF URBAN NATURE

I

As the world rapidly urbanizes, more than half of the global population now resides in concrete jungles, far removed from the natural environment. While cities offer immense economic and cultural opportunities, this shift has sparked a growing concern among public health experts. They argue that the stark, noisy, and fast-paced urban landscape is contributing to a rise in mental fatigue and stress-related disorders. In response, city planners and psychologists are turning their attention to a simple but powerful solution: urban green spaces.

II

The psychological benefits of integrating nature into urban areas are profound. Numerous studies have demonstrated that spending even a brief amount of time in a park, garden, or urban forest can significantly reduce stress. When individuals are exposed to natural settings, their bodies show a measurable decrease in cortisol, the primary stress hormone. Furthermore, researchers have noted that hospital patients who have a view of trees from their windows tend to recover faster and require less pain medication compared to those staring at brick walls.

III

Beyond emotional well-being, green spaces also play a crucial role in cognitive function. According to the Attention Restoration Theory (ART), urban environments demand constant, directed attention—from navigating busy crosswalks to ignoring loud sirens. This constant mental strain inevitably leads to cognitive exhaustion. Nature, on the other hand, captures our attention effortlessly through "soft fascination," such as watching leaves flutter in the wind. This gentle engagement allows the brain’s directed attention mechanisms a chance to rest and recover, ultimately improving focus and memory.

IV

In addition to individual benefits, urban nature fosters social cohesion. Parks act as communal hubs where people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds can interact. These shared environments encourage physical activity, reduce feelings of isolation, and strengthen community bonds. Studies in several major cities have even found a correlation between the abundance of green spaces and lower crime rates, suggesting that nature can act as a stabilizing force in neighborhoods.

V

Despite the overwhelming evidence supporting the value of urban nature, many rapidly expanding cities continue to prioritize commercial development over green infrastructure. Environmental psychologists argue that this is a short-sighted approach. To build sustainable and healthy cities for the future, urban planners must view green spaces not merely as aesthetic luxuries, but as essential public health necessities.

QUESTIONS (60 points)

Answer questions 1-6 in English, according to the article. In questions 1, 3, and 6, circle the number of the correct answer. In the other questions, follow the instructions.

1. What is the main idea of paragraph I?

i) Most people prefer living in nature rather than in cities.

ii) The fast pace of cities is causing economic problems.

iii) Urbanization is causing stress, but nature might be the solution.

iv) City planners are responsible for the rise in stress-related disorders.

(9 points)

2. COMPLETE THE SENTENCE.

According to paragraph II, we can understand that a decrease in cortisol levels is a direct biological sign of _____.

(9 points)

3. What does "This constant mental strain" (paragraph III) refer to?

i) The recovery of memory and focus.

ii) The effort required to deal with a busy city environment.

iii) The gentle engagement of soft fascination.

iv) The theory known as Attention Restoration Theory.

(9 points)

4. How does nature help the brain recover from cognitive exhaustion? (paragraph III)

Base your answer on the text.

ANSWER:
.....
.....

(9 points)

5. Name TWO ways that parks benefit the community as a whole, according to paragraph IV.

1. .....
   .....
2. .....
   .....

(2 x 6 = 12 points)

6. What is the author's main message in paragraph V?

i) Commercial development is more important than green infrastructure.

ii) Environmental psychologists are short-sighted.

iii) Cities are expanding too quickly to build parks.

iv) Green spaces must be treated as essential for public health.

(12 points)

- They encourage physical activity.
- They reduce feelings of isolation.
- They strengthen community bonds.
- They are correlated with lower crime rates / act as a stabilizing force.
- iv) Green spaces must be treated as essential for public health.
