

Name _____

Date _____

Riches from the Earth

Key Words

fossil fuels

inexhaustible

minerals

natural resources

nonrenewable

renewable

soil

weathering

What do you think makes life on the Earth possible? Did you think computers, televisions, or homes? While these things are important to us and make our lives easier, they are not what make it possible for us to survive and thrive on the Earth. Earth's **natural resources** are what make it possible for life to exist. Natural resources are the things found in nature that plants and animals use to survive. There are many natural resources found on the Earth: some are easily seen and others are hidden deep beneath the Earth's surface.

The environment holds only a certain amount of some resources. When they are used up, nature cannot replace them quickly enough to meet people's needs. These important resources that people use are classified as **nonrenewable**. **Soil**, made from weathered rocks and organic materials, is a nonrenewable resource. It can take over 100,000 years for the process of **weathering** to make a few inches of new soil. Rocks, **minerals**, and **fossil fuels** such as coal, oil, and natural gas are also considered to be nonrenewable resources. Fossil fuels formed hundreds of millions of years ago from the remains of dead plants and animals. The remains were buried under layers of sand and mud. Over millions of years, heat and pressure changed the layers into rocks and the plant remains into fossil fuels. These resources can never be replaced or can be replaced only over thousands or millions of years.

How we use nonrenewable resources is an important issue. This is because these resources are limited—and people use great amounts of them every day. For example, oil is an important natural resource. We make oil into fuel to run our cars and our airplanes and heat for our homes. We burn oil in power plants to make electricity.

We also make products such as plastics and drugs from petroleum products.

Renewable resources include animals, trees and other types of plants. When we use these resources, nature can replace them over fairly short periods of time—several years or decades. (A decade is ten years.) People cut down trees for paper and lumber to build houses. However, new trees can be planted and grow in their place. People use animals for food and clothing. Still, new animals are born and grow every year.

Inexhaustible resources are also important natural resources because they can be used over and over without being used up. Water, wind, and sunlight are all inexhaustible resources. No matter how much solar energy we use to power our homes or electrical devices, there will be no less solar energy for someone else to use.

The world is rich in natural resources. We have water, sunlight, and soil all around us and minerals and fossil fuels underground. Although some resources are plentiful and others are renewable, it is necessary that we use all of the Earth's resources wisely.

1. Which of the following is a nonrenewable resource?

- A Wind
- B Trees
- C Oil
- D Water

2. Why is it important to conserve, or use wisely, our natural resources?

- A They are better resources than others.
- B We can make them last longer.
- C They are more polluted than other resources.
- D They will never run out.

3. What is the main idea of paragraph 2?

- A Nonrenewable resources are used more quickly than nature can replace them.
- B Soil, made from weathered rock, is a nonrenewable resource.
- C Fossil fuels formed millions of years ago from the remains of dead plants and animals.
- D The three main types of fossil fuels are coal, oil, and natural gas.

4. The author's purpose for writing this selection was mainly—
- A to entertain the reader about Earth's history
 - B to influence the reader to conserve natural resources
 - C to inform the reader about natural resources
 - D to help the reader become a better scientist
5. Which of the following is the best brief summary of paragraph 5?
- A Sunlight is an inexhaustible resource.
 - B Inexhaustible resources can never be used up.
 - C Inexhaustible resources come from nature.
 - D Solar energy is energy from the sun.
6. Making electricity with wind power rather than by burning coal is a good idea because—
- A wind power is clean and can never be used up
 - B coal is a renewable resource
 - C wind should be the only source of energy
 - D it is hard to make electricity by burning coal

7. Plants and animals are a renewable natural resource because—
- A they are living organisms
 - B they can be replaced in a short period of time
 - C they can be recycled like paper and aluminum
 - D the supply of animals will never run out
8. Which of the following is an opinion?
- A Earth's natural resources make it possible for life to exist.
 - B People cut down trees to use for paper and building homes.
 - C The environment only holds a certain amount of some resources.
 - D Most of the electricity we use should be produced from wind power.

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<p>A fuel formed from the decayed remains of ancient plants and animals</p>	<p>A resource that can be used over and over without being used up</p>
<p>A solid natural material that has a crystal form and its own set of properties</p>	<p>Materials in the environment that are useful to people</p>
<p>Resources that cannot be replaced at all or can be replaced only over millions of years</p>	<p>Resources that can be used and replaced over a relatively short time period</p>
<p>A material made of tiny pieces of rock, minerals, and decayed plant and animal matter</p>	<p>The breaking down and wearing away of rock</p>