

Corrigé épreuve d'anglais

Corrigé de résumé objectif 250 mots (Microplastics) et short answers

“Our Way of Life is Poisoning Us” By Mark O’Connell from New York Times, April 20, 2023

Correction of Synthesis: 250 words for 20 points

The article is about the effect of micro-plastics (it also mentions nano-plastics, which are even smaller). These plastics are the result of the manufacture of consumer products. Their quantity has been increasing, and they are disposed of everywhere, especially the ocean. Like all plastics, micro-plastics are long-lasting, and their size means they can more insidiously contaminate organic systems. The waste ends up in the sea, water supplies, and other places.

The article’s sources, such as scientific reports, focus on fish and seabirds. Animals and humans can also ingest micro-plastics. It isn’t completely clear how. It is clear that animals swallow them and so the plastics (even ones that are not so “micro”) can be found inside their bodies. Humans may ingest micro-plastics through water and other liquids. It is not clear how harmful the micro-plastics are. Scientists have detected possible negative impacts in animals, including lower growth and changes in behaviour. It is less clear whether humans are so negatively impacted.

Some changes in the features of newborn babies may be ascribed to microplastics, though it has not been conclusively demonstrated. However, the author convincingly indicates that the presence of artificial waste inside of us has a psychological effect, even when the physical effect has not been confirmed. The phenomenon of micro-plastics even contaminates our culture, inculcating more artificial features and values. And thus far it doesn’t seem possible, or at least not efficient, to eliminate or control these micro-plastics that are so present in our environment and our lives.

Questions courtes

Question 1. For you, what is the most worrisome aspect of the impact of micro- and nano- plastics described by Mark O'Connell? Why?

Réponse possible A

The most unsettling aspect of micro-plastics is their permanence. They're long-lasting, and according to the text treated to be even more "durable". They can be passed down from one generation to another. The author describes a photographer's work showing how plastics in a bird's body remain after death and decomposition. They could then be ingested by other animals. He also mentions how micro-plastics are found in mother's milk, and impact babies' health. They may transmit micro-plastics and their effects to their own children. Finally, we can't yet eliminate or remove such plastics, though I've read about bacteria that consume them.

Réponse possible B

Personally, I found most worrisome the fact that microplastics contamination is found in unexposed offspring in the case of fish. This means that the harm caused by the microplastics can become a constituent part of our DNA. It is not a good sign for our species from a philosophical, let alone medical or scientific point of view. The same remarks can be made about breast milk. We could be creating inherent pathologies for our species, which we might have no control over. However, let us not forget « the linking contamination » was observed in the case of fish only.

Question 2. Who, or what institution(s), should be responsible for reducing the use of plastic in the world today? Explain.

Réponse possible A

The most effective institutions for acting are national institutions, especially in Western countries. Other parts of world are responsible for creating many consumer products and disposing of them, but it's the West that consumes and pays for consumption. Regulations on companies, Western and other, would have a big impact. Regulation could also stop companies from outsourcing the responsibility for waste-disposal to countries without the will or means to act efficiently. Of course, groups of countries, such as the EU, can have more reach and authority. The EU can then agree with its allies, such as the US, on regulatory measures.

Réponse possible B

Let me start off by saying that in my opinion, the general population should not be responsible for reducing the use of plastic. Even though measures can be taken by the general population, they often come at a cost they should not be paying.

Plastic is cheap and practical: it is the easiest option today. Non plastic alternatives can be inconvenient. For example, cardboard straws leave a distinctive taste in your mouth. That is why I think it is up to companies to find alternatives that remain cheap and practical. This may be a tough hill to climb, but it must be a focus point of the scientific community.

Réponses QCM

1. A
2. C
3. D
4. BC
5. D
6. C
7. A
8. D
9. C
10. A
11. C
12. A
13. BD
14. CD
15. C
16. A
17. C
18. B
19. C
20. A
21. B
22. B
23. A
24. D
25. D
26. C