

DEC 10 Week 8

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Centre for English Teaching




THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

DEC 10 Week 8



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Reading

Wk 8 Reading 1: Paradise well and truly lost

Lesson Objectives

- Identify features of an historical recount
- Identify chronological organisation
- Track text referents
- Practise a range of DEC 10 reading test question types

Adapted from: Paradise well and truly lost. (2001). *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/884045>

Part 1: Before you read

See the activities on Canvas. 

Part 2: Reading and understanding the text

Now read the text and answer the questions.

Reading 1 Questions

1.-2. Complete the following statement. Nauru's main export product is _____,

which is a type of _____ .

3. Circle the correct answer. A **fedora** is a type of:

- a. rock
- b. hat
- c. landform feature
- d. sea bird

4. Circle the correct answer. To be **clobbered** means to be:

- a. praised
- b. ignored
- c. hit
- d. absorbed

5.-10. Write True (T), False (F) or Not Given (NG)

- 5. Nauru had 5 colonisers before independence. []
- 6. Foreigners are two-thirds of the population. []
- 7. Nauruan children are well-educated. []
- 8. Nauru gained independence in 1968. []
- 9. The unhealthy diet leads to heart disease. []
- 10. The Prime Minister has been strongly involved in financial planning. []

11.-12. Give two examples to show how, immediately after 1968, the government planned to overcome Nauru's problems.

11. _____

12. _____

13. The examples of no taxes in Nauru and of free schooling and medical care are given by the author to support what point?

14. *Use your own words.* “Nauruans have enjoyed a way of life that seems enviable ... yet the most popular pastime is ... tossing [the] empty VB cans out of the window”. What is the author implying here?

15. *Use your own words.* What is meant by the expression “Money to burn”?

16. Provide an example of how the government has wasted money.

17. Circle the appropriate answer. Which box contains the correct statistical information?

a

Average life span	55
Value of current investments	\$130m
Deficit for year 2000	18%
% employed by the government	90%

b

Average life span	55
Value of current investments	\$130m
Deficit for year 2000	18%
% employed by the government	95%

c

Average life span	55
Value of current investments	\$1b
Deficit for year 2000	40%
% employed by the government	95%

d

Average life span	55
Value of current investments	\$1b
Deficit for year 2000	18%
% employed by the government	93%

18. – 27. **Summary** Fill in the spaces with one appropriate word.

Nauru's economic situation has deteriorated over the years since 18. _____ and, as a result, the government has instituted a number of 19. _____ to obtain funds. One was to obtain a 20. _____ from the ADB and also to 21. _____ civil servants. Another was to 22. _____ the Australian government. Yet another method of gaining 23. _____ has been through 24. (two words) _____ and also the selling of 25. _____. Finally, the country has been taking in 26. _____ for the Australian government's detention scheme. Overall, Nauru's economy looks like it will continue to 27. _____.

Paradise well and truly lost – Nauru: A little island with big problems

The Economist (US), Dec 22, 2001

Greed, phosphate and gross incompetence in a tropical setting: the history of Nauru really is stranger than fiction.

1. It sits, a tiny eight-square-mile speck, way out in the vast and lonely reaches of the Pacific, halfway between Hawaii and Australia. In 1798 a passing British captain, the first westerner to see it, dubbed it Pleasant Island. That old name sounds cruelly ironic now. Seen from the air, Nauru resembles an enormous moth-eaten **fedora**: a ghastly grey mound of rock surrounded by a narrow green brim of vegetation. But since then, strip-mining has turned Nauru into a barren, jagged wasteland. The once-dense tropical vegetation has been cleared. The exposed rock reflects the heat of the equatorial sun and drives away rain.

2. Unlike many small, remote Pacific islands, Nauru possesses a valuable commodity, phosphate, a sought-after fertiliser ingredient. A high-grade supply was discovered in 1900. For a brief, heady moment in the 1970s, Nauruans were, astonishingly, among the richest people on earth. Now they are poverty-stricken, unhealthy and look set to be **clobbered** by international trade sanctions. The story of Nauru's descent from prosperity to penury is one of the most cautionary tales of modern development.

3. Many of Nauru's problems can be traced back to the 19th century. In the 1870s, civil war between the island's 12 tribes reduced the population by 40%, largely thanks to firearms introduced by passing whalers. Then, starting with the Germans in 1888, the island was colonised not by one country but by five, in quick succession. The Germans brought with them lethal European diseases, which dealt another heavy blow to the indigenous population. **Their rule** was at best neglectful, as was that of the trustees from Britain, Australia and New Zealand who succeeded them at the end of the First World War. By the end of the Second World War, there were fewer than 600 Nauruans left on the island.

4. Phosphate-mining, however, continued apace under rulers of any kind. Phosphate is not easy to get at. It lies between conical pillars of fossilised coral up to five metres high, and cannot be mined without leaving an uneven, unfarmable, impassable forest of white stone pinnacles. In the past, Nauruan landowners were paid just half a penny for every ton of phosphate extracted.

5. At **the time**, the colonial rulers introduced foreign labour to speed the plunder of the island. Today, out of a total population of 12,000, some 4,000 are foreigners. Australians serve as managers, doctors and engineers, Chinese run the restaurants and shops, while other Pacific islanders do the dirty work in the mines. During most of the twentieth century Nauruans did not need to work but nowadays few Nauruans are capable of doing **these jobs**. Only a third of children go to secondary school.

6. Foreigners continued to govern Nauru until 1968. **By then** some two-thirds of the phosphate was already gone--with all the destruction **that** entailed. In a terrible indictment of its own stewardship, the government of Australia declared Nauru uninhabitable and offered to resettle the population on a deserted island off the coast of Queensland. The Nauruans, determined to win control of their own affairs, opted instead for independence.

7. Nevertheless, Nauru's problems seemed surmountable. Indeed, the future looked bright. The government planned to set aside a portion of its revenues from mining to rehabilitate the land. Another portion would go towards public services and economic development, and yet another would be invested to provide for future generations. Nauru bustled with optimism and activity. The islanders, no longer bound by colonial loyalties, began selling to new buyers, such as Japan and South Korea. All **this** helped push up revenues to \$123m by 1981 --around \$17,500 for each islander.

8. The government lavished much of **this money** on ordinary Nauruans, on a scale that has since proved unsustainable. There are no taxes of any kind in Nauru. The government employs 95% of those Nauruans who work. Schooling and medical care are free. If Nauruans need treatment that neither of the two hospitals on the island can provide, the government pays to fly them to Australia instead. Students who want to go to university are also sent to Australia on the government's tab. Electricity, telephones and housing are all subsidised.

9. With their government salaries and low living costs, Nauruans have enjoyed a way of life that, to other Pacific islanders, might seem enviable. Office hours are flexible. A much-used golf course fills some of the last green spaces on the island. A government station broadcasts three television channels for the islanders' enjoyment. Yet the most popular pastime seems to be idly driving the 20-minute circuit around the island, drinking imported Victoria Bitter beer and tossing the empty cans out of the window.

10. In the island's biggest general store, three times more shelf-space is given over to biscuits than to fruit and vegetables. Greasy fried rice is another staple. No wonder Nauru has become something of a case study for research on obesity and diabetes. Nauru appears to have one of the world's fattest populations, and certainly one of the most diabetic: around 50% of Nauruans suffer from the disease which stems from their sedentary lifestyle and fatty diet. Male life expectancy has fallen to just 55 years, some 20 years less than relatively nearby New Zealand.

11. In the decades following independence, Nauru still had money to burn, even after the government had indulged its citizens' leisurely lifestyle. Surplus revenue was invested in property around the Pacific rim, stakes in different businesses and all manner of financial schemes. Outsiders valued its investments at over \$1 billion as recently as the early 1990s. Since **then**, however, the value of **those investments** has plummeted to something nearer \$130m as a result of ill-advised investments and embezzlement by outsiders.

12. Nauruans, too, wasted **their fair share**. Many investments were made for reasons other than economic merit. Prime pieces of property have languished, undeveloped, for decades. The government of Fiji recently repossessed a hotel in its capital that Nauru had bought years ago and then left to rot. Another hotel, in the Marshall Islands, has been under construction for more than 20 years.

13. In 1993, the man brought in to run the Nauru Phosphate Royalties Trust, the government's main investment vehicle, resigned after just two months, complaining that it was on the brink of insolvency through mismanagement. The root cause of the trust's difficulties, though, has been the government's failure to own up to Nauru's reduced circumstances. Phosphate production peaked in the 1980s, and has since fallen by two-thirds. The price of phosphate has also dropped, greatly reducing Nauru's revenues. To cover the shortfall, the government has simply run up enormous debts for years and passed the bill to **the trust**. In 2000 the deficit reached 18% of GDP, according to the Asian Development Bank.

14. Eventually Nauru's leaders had to do something about **their increasingly dire financial situation**. In 1998, they persuaded the ADB to lend the country \$5m to help overhaul the public sector. Since 1999, as part of the deal, the government has sacked roughly a third of its civil servants.

15. Suing colonial governments for the destruction wrought by mining has also proved a handy source of revenue. In 1989, Nauru brought a case against Australia at the International Court of Justice in The Hague--despite the fact that, since independence, it had been as responsible for its own misfortunes as any foreign government. In 1993, Australia settled out of court for \$72m.

16. But Nauru's biggest money-spinner by far is offshore banking. For as little as \$25,000, anyone can set up a bank in Nauru, without ever setting foot on the island. Some 400 people have done so; all are registered to the same post-office box at a tiny cabana in Nauru. There is next to no regulation and banks incorporated in Nauru are not required to keep records at all. As if that were not enough, Nauru also sells citizenship--a useful last resort for evading extradition. However, the island's days as a banking haven are numbered.

17. **That knowledge** may have driven Nauru to its most extraordinary money-making scheme yet: to hire itself out as a detention camp for would-be immigrants to Australia. The original announcement, in September 2001, that Nauru would take in 283 refugees intercepted off Australia while their claims for asylum were assessed, made sense for both countries. The Australian government, which did not want these people, was able to preserve its policy that only "genuine" refugees could land on its shores, while Nauru earned A\$20m.

18. The refugees, however, were less than delighted to end up on a barren rock in the middle of the Pacific, several thousand miles from their intended destination. Many refused to leave the Australian naval vessel that had brought them to Nauru. [Citizens were angry] when their government accepted a second boatload of 237 refugees, and then a third of 262.

19. Meanwhile, evidence of Nauru's decay grows more and more alarming. The government has been forced to ration electricity and water between visits of the ship that brings fuel for the island's desalination and power plant. The petrol supply regularly runs out. Several times this year, the Australian aviation authority, which regulates Air Nauru, grounded its one and only plane for fear of the frequent power and communications blackouts at Nauru's airport.

20. The citizens of Nauru, to their credit, have not taken **all this** lying down. A disgruntled populace has forced no fewer than ten changes of government since 1995. It is a melancholy sign of the islanders' desperation that the idea of simply buying another island and starting afresh is once again under discussion. But who in his right mind would let the Nauruans get their hands on another island?

21. The most popular pastime seems to be driving round the island, drinking beer and tossing the empty cans out of the window.

Part 3: Text structure and text referents

Task 1

A. Work through the first sentence of each paragraph only. Highlight any words or phrases in these first sentences that relate to time.

Which of the major steps in Nauru's chronological history do these highlighted time phrases signal?

What information is in the other paragraphs between these?

B. Draw a timeline of the history of Nauru as given in this text.

Task 2

What do each of the underlined phrases in the text refer to?

Part 4: Interpreting the text

Complete the activities on Canvas



Wk 8 Reading 2: Why societies collapse

Lesson Objectives

- Practise taking and organising notes
- Prepare a verbal summary of notes

You will find the activities associated with this text on Canvas



Diamond, J. (2003). *Why societies collapse*. Retrieved from the ABC Science website:

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2003/07/17/2858655.htm>

Why societies collapse

Throughout human history societies have prospered and collapsed leaving behind tantalizing glimpses of their magnificence in crumbling temples, ruins and statues. Why did these ancient civilisations fall apart? Why did some collapse and not others? And what lessons do they have for our civilisation?

The collapse of ancient societies poses a very complicated problem. One can also think of places in the world where societies have gone on for thousands of years without any signs of collapse, such as Japan, Java, Tonga and Tikopea. What is it then that made some societies weaken and other societies robust? It's also a complicated problem because the collapses usually prove to be multi-factorial. What is it then that makes some societies more vulnerable than others?

Environmental factors clearly play a role, but in trying to understand the collapses of ancient societies, it's not enough to look at the inadvertent impact of humans on their environment. It's usually more complicated. Instead I've arrived at a checklist of five things that I look at to understand the collapses of societies, and in some cases all five of these things are operating. Usually several of them are.

1. Environmental Damage

Environmental damage involves inadvertent damage to the environment through means such as deforestation, soil erosion, salinisation, over-hunting etc.

2. Climate Change

People can hammer away at their environment and get away with it as long as the climate is benign, warm, wet, and the people are likely to get in trouble when the climate turns against them, getting colder or drier. So climate change and human environmental impact interact, not surprisingly.

3. Hostile Neighbours

Most societies have chronic hostile relations with some of their neighbours and societies may succeed in fending off those hostile neighbours for a long time. They're most likely to fail to hold off the hostile neighbours when the society itself gets weakened for environmental or any other reasons, and that's given rise for example, to the long-standing debate about the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Was the conquest by Barbarians really a fundamental cause, or was it just that Barbarians were at the frontiers of the Roman Empire for many centuries? Rome succeeded in holding them off as long as Rome was strong, and then when Rome got weakened by other things, Rome failed, and

fell to the Barbarians. Similarly, we know that there were military factors in the fall of Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

4. Friendly neighbours — Trade

Similarly, relations with friendly neighbours is also relevant. Almost all societies depend in part upon trade with neighbouring friendly societies, and if one of those friendly societies itself runs into environmental problems and collapses for environmental reasons, that collapse may then drag down their trade partners. It's something that interests us today, given that we are dependent for oil upon imports from countries that have some political stability in a fragile environment.

5. Cultural Response

Why is it that people failed to perceive the problems developing around them, or if they perceived them, why did they fail to solve the problems that would eventually do them in? Why did some peoples perceive and recognise their problems and others not?

Easter Island

Easter Island is the simplest case we've got of a collapsed society. It's the closest approximation to a collapse resulting purely from human environmental damage. Easter is the most remote habitable scrap of land in the world; it's an island in the Pacific, 2,000 miles west of the coast of Chile, and something 1300 miles from the nearest Polynesian island. It was settled by other Polynesians coming from the west, sometime around AD800 and it was so remote that after Polynesians arrived at Easter Island, nobody else arrived there. Nobody left Easter as far as we know, and so the Easter story is uncomplicated by relations with external hostiles or friendlies. There weren't any. Easter Islanders rose and fell by themselves.

Easter is a relatively fragile environment, dry with 40 inches of rain per year. It's most famous because of the giant stone statues — those big statues weighing up to 80 tons — stone statues that were carved in a volcanic quarry and then dragged up over the lip of the quarry and then 13 miles down to the coast and then raised up vertically onto platforms, all this accomplished by people without any draught animals, without pulleys, without machines. These 80 ton statues were dragged and erected under human muscle power alone. And yet when Europeans arrived at Easter in 1722 the islanders were in the process of throwing down their own statues. Easter Island society was in a state of collapse. How, why and who erected the statues, and why were they thrown down? Well the how, why and who has been settled in the last several decades by archaeological discoveries. Easter Islanders were typical Polynesians, and the cause of the collapse became clear from archaeological work in the last 15 years, particularly from paleo-botanical work and identification of animal bones in archaeological sites.

Today Easter Island is barren. It's a grassland, there are no native trees whatsoever on Easter Island, not a likely setting for the development of a great civilisation, and yet paleo-botanical studies (identifying pollen grains) and lake cores show that when the Polynesians arrived at Easter Island, it was covered by a tropical forest that included the world's largest palm tree and dandelions of tree height. And there were land birds, at least six species of land birds and 37 species of breeding sea-birds, the largest collection of breeding sea-birds anywhere in the Pacific.

Polynesians settled Easter, they began to clear the forest for their gardens, for firewood, for using as rollers and levers to raise the giant statues, and then to build canoes with which to go out into the

ocean and catch porpoises and tuna. They ate the land birds, they ate the sea-birds, they ate the fruits of the palm trees. The population of Easter grew to an estimated 10,000 people, until by the year 1600 all of the trees and all of the land birds and all but one of the sea-birds on Easter Island itself were extinct. Some of the sea-birds were confined to breeding on offshore stacks.

The deforestation and the elimination of the birds had consequences for people. Without trees, they could no longer transport and erect the statues, so they stopped carving statues. Without trees they also had no firewood. They suffered from soil erosion and hence agricultural yields decreased. They couldn't build canoes, so they couldn't go out to the ocean to catch porpoises and there were only a few sea-birds left.

The largest animal left to eat were humans and Polynesian society then collapsed in an epidemic of cannibalism. The spear points from that final phase still litter the ground of Easter Island today. The population crashed from about 10,000 to an estimated 2,000 with no possibility of rebuilding the original society because the trees, most of the birds and some of the soil were gone.

I think one of the reasons that the collapse of Easter Island so grabs people is that it looks like a metaphor for us today. Easter Island, isolated in the middle of the Pacific Island, nobody to turn to for help, nowhere to flee once Easter Island itself collapsed. In the same way today, one can look at Planet Earth in the middle of the galaxy and if we too get into trouble, there's no way that we can flee, and no people to whom we can turn for help out there in the galaxy.

I can't help wondering what the Islander who chopped down the last palm tree said as he or she did it. Was he saying, 'What about our jobs? Do we care more for trees than for the jobs of us loggers?' Or maybe he was saying, 'What about my private property rights? Get the big government of the chiefs off my back.' Or maybe he was saying, 'You're predicting environmental disaster, but your environmental models are untested, we need more research before we can take action.' Or perhaps he was saying, 'Don't worry, technology will solve all our problems.'

Norse Greenland

The Vikings settled in Greenland in AD 984, where they established a Norwegian pastoral economy, based particularly on sheep, goats and cattle for producing dairy products, and then they also hunted caribou and seal. Trade was important. The Vikings in Greenland hunted walrus to trade walrus ivory to Norway because walrus ivory was in demand in Europe for carving, since at that time with the Arab conquest, elephant ivory was no longer available in Europe.

Then in the 1400s the Vikings vanished from Greenland. Of their two settlements; one of them disappeared around 1360 and the other sometime probably a little after 1440. Everybody ended up dead. The vanishing of Viking Greenland is instructive because it involves all five of the factors that I mentioned, and also because there's a detailed, written record from Norway, a bit from Iceland and just a few fragments from Greenland: a written record describing what people were doing and describing what they were thinking. So we know something about their motivation, which we don't know for the Anasazi and the Easter Islanders.

Of the five factors, first of all there was ecological damage due to deforestation in this cold climate with a short growing season. The deforestation was especially expensive to the Norse Greenlanders because they required charcoal in order to smelt iron to extract iron from bogs. Without iron, except

for what they could import in small quantities from Norway, there were problems in getting iron tools like sickles. It became a big problem when the Inuit, who had initially been absent in Greenland, colonised Greenland and came into conflict with the Norse. The Norse then had no military advantage over the Inuit. It was not guns, germs and steel. The Norse of Greenland had no guns, very little steel, and they didn't have the nasty germs. They were fighting with the Inuit on terms of equality, one people with stone and wooden weapons against another.

The second factor was climate change. The climate in Greenland got colder in the late 1300s and early 1400s as part of what's called the Little Ice Age. Hay production was a problem. Greenland was already marginal because of its high latitude short growing season, and as it got colder, the growing season got even shorter, hay production got less, and hay was the basis of Norse sustenance.

Thirdly, the Norse had military problems with their neighbours the Inuit. The only detailed example we have of an Inuit attack on the Norse is in the Icelandic annals of the years 1379 which says 'In this year the scralings (which is an old Norse word meaning wretches, the Norse did not have a good attitude towards the Inuit) attacked the Greenlanders and killed 18 men and captured a couple of young men and women as slaves.' Eighteen men doesn't seem like a big deal but when you consider the population of Norse Greenland at the time, probably about 4,000 people, 18 adult men stands in the same proportion to the Norse population then as if some outsiders were to come into the United States today and in one raid kill 1,700,000 adult male Americans. So that single raid by the Inuit did make a big deal to the Norse, and that's just the only raid that we know about.

Fourthly, there was the cut-off of trade with Europe because of increasing sea-ice, with a cold climate in the North Atlantic. The ships from Norway gradually stopped coming. Also as the Mediterranean reopened Europeans got access again to elephant ivory, and they became less interested in the walrus ivory, so fewer ships came to Greenland.

Finally, cultural factors — the Norse were derived from a Norwegian society that was identified with pastoralism, and particularly valued calves. In Greenland it's easier to feed and take care of sheep and goats than calves, but calves were prized in Greenland, so the Norse chiefs and bishops were heavily invested in the status symbol of calves. The Norse, because of their bad attitude towards the Inuit, refused to learn from the Inuit and refused to modify their own economy in a way that would have permitted them to survive. They did not adopt useful Inuit technology, such as harpoons, hence they couldn't eat whales like the Inuit. They didn't fish, incredibly, while the Inuit were fishing. They didn't have dog sleighs, they didn't have skin boats, they didn't learn from the Inuit how to kill seals at breeding holes in the winter. The Norse were conservative.

They also invested heavily in their churches, in importing stained-glass windows and bronze bells for the churches, when they could have been importing more iron to trade to the Inuit, to get seals and whale meat in exchange for the iron. The result was that after 1440 the Norse were all dead, and the Inuit survived. This example is particularly instructive in showing us that collapse due to environmental reasons isn't inevitable. It depends upon what you do. Here are two peoples and one did things that let them survive, and the other did things that did not permit them to survive.

There are a series of factors that make people more or less likely to perceive environmental problems growing up around them. One is misreading previous experience. The Vikings came from

Norway where there's a relatively long growing season, so the Greenland Vikings didn't realise, based on their previous experience, how fragile Greenland woodlands were going to be. They also had the difficulty of extracting a trend from noisy fluctuations. We now know that there was a long-term cooling trend, but climate fluctuates wildly up and down in Greenland from year to year; cold, cold, warm, cold, so it was difficult for a long time perceive that there was any long-term trend. That's similar to the problems we have today with recognising global warming. It's only within the last few years that even scientists have been able to convince themselves that there is a global long-term warming trend. And while scientists are convinced, the evidence is not yet enough to convince many of our politicians.

The Vikings short time scale of experience in Greenland was a disadvantage. In the Anasazi area, droughts come back every 50 years, in Greenland it gets cold every 500 years or so; those rare events are impossible to perceive for humans with a life span of 40, 50, 70 years. They're perceptible today but we may not internalise them. The Norse were also disadvantaged by inappropriate cultural values. They valued cows too highly just as modern Australians value cows and sheep to a degree appropriate to Scotland but inappropriate to modern Australia. Australians now are seriously considering whether to abandon sheep farming completely as inappropriate to the Australian environment.

See the problem, take no action

Why would people perceive problems but still not solve their own problems? A theme that emerges from Norse Greenland as well as from other places, is insulation of the decision-making elite from the consequences of their actions. That is to say, in societies where the elites do not suffer from the consequences of their decisions, but can insulate themselves, the elite are more likely to pursue their short-term interests, even though that may be bad for the long-term interests of the society, including the children of the elite themselves.

In the case of Norse Greenland, the chiefs and bishops were eating beef from cows and venison and the lower classes were left to eating seals. The elite were also heavily invested in the walrus ivory trade. In the long run, what was good for the chiefs in the short run was bad for society. We can see those differing insulations of the elite in the modern world today. Holland is the country with the highest level of environmental awareness, a higher percentage of people belong to environmental organisations than anywhere else in the world. The Dutch are also a very democratic people. There are something like 42 political parties but none of them ever come remotely close to a majority, which means that the Dutch are very good at reaching decisions. In Holland everybody lives in the Polders, whether you're rich or poor. It's not the case that the rich people are living high up on the dykes and the poor people are living down in the Polders. So when the dyke is breached or there's a flood, rich and poor people die alike. In particular in the North Sea floods in Holland in the late '40s and '50s, when the North Sea was swept by winds and tides flooded 50 to 100 miles inland, all Dutch in the path of the floods died. In Holland, rich people cannot insulate themselves from the consequences of their actions, whereas in much of the rest of the world, rich people live in gated communities and drink bottled water. That's increasingly the case in Los Angeles where I come from. Wealthy people in much of the world are insulated from the consequences of their actions.

Challenges to modern civilisation

There are obvious differences between the environmental problems in the past and the ones that we face today. Some of those differences make the situation for us today scarier than it was in the past. Today there are far more people alive, packing far more potent per capita destructive technology. Today there are 6 billion people chopping down the forests with chains and bulldozers, whereas on Easter Island there were 10,000 people with stone axes. Today, countries like the Solomon Islands - wet, relatively robust environments, where people lived without being able to deforest the islands for 32,000 years — are undergoing rapid change. Within the past 15 years the Solomon Islands have been almost totally deforested, leading to a civil war and collapse of government within the last year or two.

Globalisation

Another big difference between today and the past is globalisation. In the past, you could get solitary collapses. When Easter Island society collapsed, nobody anywhere else in the world knew about it, nobody was affected by it. The Easter Islanders themselves, as they were collapsing, had no way of knowing that the Anasazi had collapsed for similar reasons a few centuries before, and that the Mycenaean Greeks had collapsed a couple of thousand years before and that the dry areas of Hawaii were going downhill at the same time.

But today we turn on the television set and we see the ecological damage in Somalia and Afghanistan, or Haiti, and we pick up a book and we read about the ecological damage caused in the past. So we have knowledge both in space and time, that ancient peoples did not. Today we are not immune to anybody's problems. A collapse of a society anywhere is a global issue, and conversely, anybody anywhere in the world now has ways of reaching us.

We used to think of globalisation as a way to get out our good things, like the Internet. Particularly since September 11th we've realised that globalisation also means that they can send us their bad things like terrorists, cholera and uncontrollable immigration. So those are things that are against us. But globalisation also means the exchange of information and that includes information about the past, so we are the only society in world history that has the ability to learn from all the experiments being carried out elsewhere in the world today, and all the experiments that have succeeded and failed in the past. And so at least we have the choice of what we want to do about it.

Wk 8 Reading 3: Baja's beleaguered beaches

Lesson Objectives

- Practise DEC 10 reading test question types

You will find the activities associated with this text on Canvas 

Baja's beleaguered beaches: will an ill-considered mega-tourism development plan end a traditional way of life?

Tony Moats. 2004 Earth Island Institute

1. Pancho Verdugo has an eye for spotting whales. I am perched at the bow of his 15-foot panga (a small flat-bottomed boat), scanning the horizon, when he suddenly yells, "Ballena!" I barely catch sight of the whale's misty breath far in the distance. Minutes later, Pancho has us strategically placed when a 50-foot fin whale erupts from the depths, barely a boat-length away.
2. Like many fishermen in the Baja California fishing village of Bahia de los Angeles, Pancho increasingly relies on ecotourists like me to support his family. But stories from the nearby town of Santa Rosalillita have him worried. There, a partly constructed highway and marina are the focus of a denuncia (legal complaint) filed by a coalition of Mexican and US conservation groups. The denuncia asserts that environmental laws are being ignored during initial construction of the ambitious Escalera Nautica (Nautical Ladder) project.
3. Conservationists say the highway and marina at Santa Rosalillita offer a sobering glimpse of Baja's future if FONATUR, Mexico's National Tourism Fund--a powerful tourism development agency--builds the \$1.8-billion Escalera Nautica over the next 24 years. The master plan calls for constructing 22 marinas, with hotels, golf courses, and airports, up and down the coasts of Baja and mainland Mexico.
4. Grassroots environmental organizations, such as the California-based Wildcoast International Conservation Team and Mexico's Pro Esteros, have a different vision of the future. http://0-web6.infotrac.galegroup.com.opac.library.usyd.edu.au/itw/infomark/281/763/43174287w6/4!full_blob_DQ753227_ZI-2549-2004-WIN00-IDS1-17-1_600"That type of mega-development is not appropriate for ecological treasures like Bahia de los Angeles and other sensitive areas," says Pro Esteros co-director Patricia Martinez Rios. Pro Esteros is not wholly opposed to Escalera Nautica, but the group urges a cautious approach to development. "We just want them to do it right. Start small, then study the impact. And leave the pristine sites like Bahia de los Angeles alone."
5. Serge Dedina of Wildcoast agrees, favoring Escalera Ecologico, an alternative being offered by a coalition of Mexican and US NGOs. "There's already an established tourism infrastructure in places like La Paz and Cabo San Lucas. Upgrade those facilities, and leave sensitive areas like Kino Bay and Bahia de los Angeles to more small-scale ecotourism."

6. Local people are a critical part of the conservation equation as well. Many of the more effective organizations like Pro Esteros and Wildcoast emerged from Baja's conservation controversy--the seven-year effort to preserve the grey whale calving grounds of San Ignacio Lagoon--with a fresh focus on community development efforts.
7. As Dedina puts it, "It's really hard for environmental groups to keep saying 'no' to everything." Martinez Rios adds, "We know we can't just bring environmental projects to communities. We need to help people earn basic necessities. Then they will be ready to protect the environment."
8. Helping people earn "basic necessities" through ecotourism or other ecologically friendly enterprises is easier said than done. But as I discover over the course of several trips to Bahia de los Angeles--a place wealthy in wildlife but pitifully short on economic opportunities--there's reason to hope that healthy ecosystems and economic development can go hand in hand.
9. One sultry evening, I attend a gathering of the recently formed Marine Park Committee. There, local fishermen talk about the need for unified action to save their community. Commercial fishing has taken a toll on the once seemingly limitless fishery. Now, with catches declining and the wholesale price for fish at 25 to 50 cents per pound, local people realize they need economic alternatives.
10. Many in attendance become quite animated when the conversation turns to the proposed national marine park. The park is the centrepiece of conservationists' efforts to promote ecologically sustainable development in Bahia de los Angeles. "It's given the town a roadmap for the future," says Dedina. "It will not only help commercial fishermen but will be good for ecotourism."
11. As the meeting winds down, I realize that many of these fishermen are facing an economic transition familiar to blue-collar Americans--to an economy increasingly tied to the service industry rather than resource extraction. After spending a day with Pancho searching for whales, I find it easier to envision him as an ecoguide than as a waiter in an Escalera Nautica hotel.
12. On the other hand, many in the Mexican government believe the centrally planned, capital-intensive developments of FONATUR are a much better hope for Baja's economic future than locally controlled ecotourism and other small-scale enterprises. FONATUR hopes to provide a much-needed boost to the region's struggling economy by modeling the Escalera Nautica after its well-known success stories of Cancun and Cabo San Lucas, which have maintained their beauty and yet attract many tourists who appreciate the natural environment. There, selling land franchises to private investors was the primary mode of economic stimulus.

Reading 3 Questions

1. *Circle the best answer (1 mark)*

Reading the first two paragraphs, the function of the first paragraph is to:

- a. Describe a whale-watching event
- b. Introduce Pancho and his skills
- c. Provide an example of eco-tourism
- d. Show Pancho's unhappiness about his work

2 – 7. *Fill in the box with the correct letter (1 mark per question)*

Match each of the following individuals or groups with their point of view as expressed in the reading. There is one additional point of view sentence.

Individual or group	Point of view
2. Pancho Verdugo	[]
3. Patricia Martinez Rios	[]
4. Serge Dedina	[]
5. Local fishermen	[]
6. Fonatur	[]
7. Conservationists	[]

Point of View

- a. Consider that centrally-planned capital-intensive projects are more effective than small-scale ecotourism.
- b. Believes local people can only support environmental protection if their basic needs are met.
- c. Have a different view of the future than the official one.
- d. Feel united action is needed to save the local style of living.
- e. States that ecotourism is the only possible solution to the threat to local people's lifestyles.
- f. Feels concerned about recent developments because his livelihood will be affected.
- g. Favours the alternative offered by a variety of NGOs.

8. *Identify vocabulary from the text (1 mark)*

What idiomatic expression in the text connected with “basic necessities” (paragraph 8) suggests that ecotourism is actually more difficult to achieve than might be thought in discussion?

9. *Complete the following sentence with information from the text (1 mark)*

Commercial fishermen feel the need for unified action because _____

10. *Write as a complete sentence (1 mark)*

Describe the connection between local fishermen and blue-collar Americans.

Listening

Wk 8 Why societies collapse

Lesson Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Predict text structure and organisation• Practice showing text organisation in notes• Deliver a verbal summary synthesising information

Part 1: Homework review

Complete the activities on Canvas 

Part 2: Before you listen

Complete the activities on Canvas 

Part 3: Listening and note-taking

Now listen to the recording and take notes.
Then use your notes to answer the questions.

Space for note taking

Space for note taking

Part 4: Using your notes

Using your notes, answer the following questions:

Questions 1 – 2 *Write answers as complete questions.*

What two important questions does the speaker ask at the beginning of the lecture?

Question 3 *Circle the correct answer.*

Evidence suggests that the mystery collapses of societies were caused by:

- a. external factors
- b. the environment
- c. the societies themselves
- d. time

Questions 4 – 8 *Write an answer for each number.*

The speaker gives five reasons why societies have collapsed. These are:

4. First Reason: _____

5. Second Reason: _____

6. Third Reason: _____

7. Fourth Reason: _____

8. Fifth Reason: _____

Question 9 Circle the correct answer.

Which of the following tables contains the correct information about the location of Easter Island?

a

Distance from Chile	2,500 kms
Distance from next Polynesian island	3,500 kms
Which year?	800 A.D.

b

Distance from Chile	3,500 kms
Distance from next Polynesian island	2,500 kms
Which year?	800 A.D.

c

Distance from Chile	4,500 kms
Distance from next Polynesian island	3,000 kms
Which year?	900 A.D.

d

Distance from Chile	2,500 kms
Distance from next Polynesian island	3,500 kms
Which year?	1200 A.D.

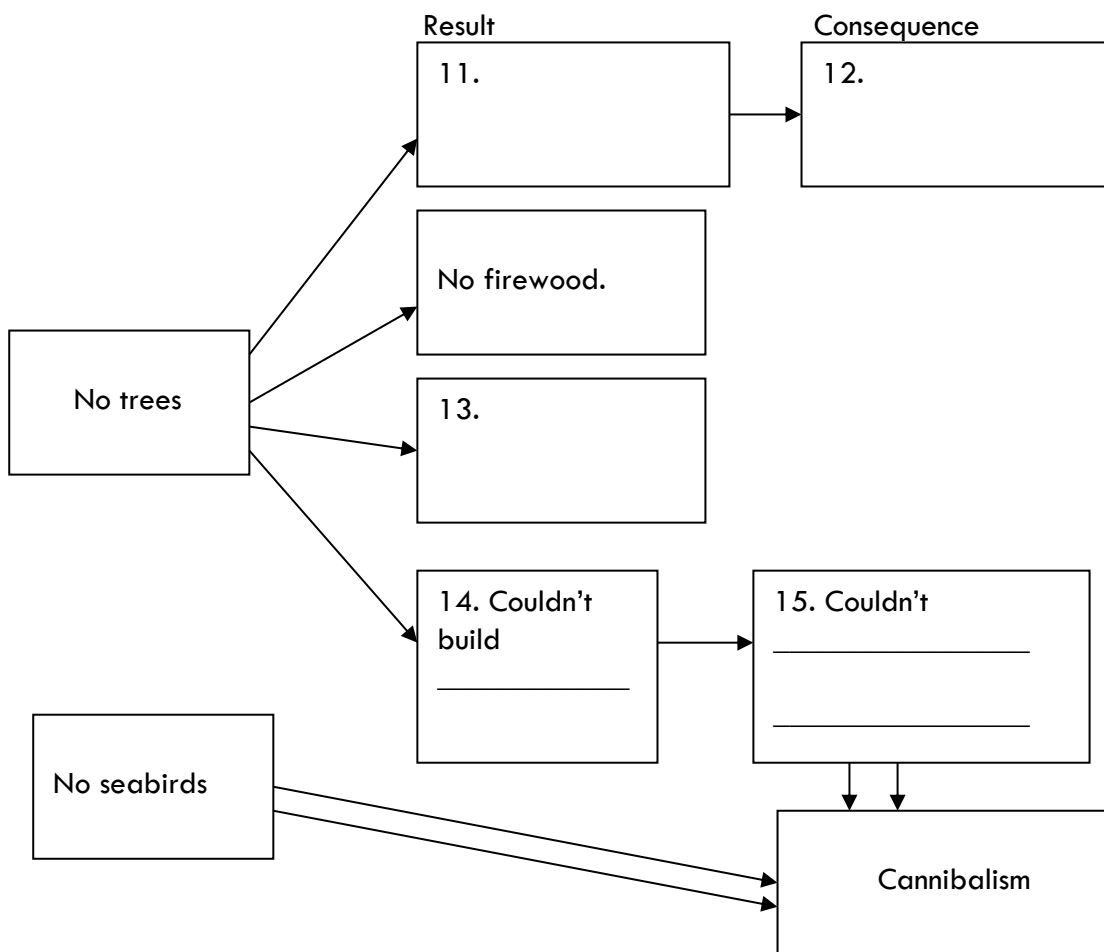
Question 10 Circle the correct answer.

Choose the sentence which best describes the journey of the stone statues?

- a. They were carved at the top of a quarry and dragged 30 kms by animals to the coast.
- b. They were carved at the bottom of a quarry, dragged over the top and then rolled to the coast 30 kms away.
- c. They were carved on the coast and then raised vertically using levers and rollers.
- d. They were carved beside a quarry and then rolled 40 kms to the coast and raised onto platforms.

Questions 11 – 15 Write answers in the boxes.

Fill in the following flowchart with the correct information about the results of deforestation for the Easter Island people:



Questions 16 – 17 Write one or two sentences.

Why does the story of Easter Island affect us today?

Questions 18 – 21 Write T, F, or NG

Are the following statements true, false or not given?

- a. The Norse community arrived in Greenland late in the 10th century.
- b. They prized sheep more than cattle
- c. The two settlements there ended 80 years apart.
- d. The Norse community is an example of a society that collapsed for environmental reasons.

Question 22 Circle the correct answer

Which of the following statements is not true?

- a. It is better to adopt appropriate new ideas than stick to old customs.
- b. Attitudes determine whether a society will survive.
- c. The Norse colonised the Inuit on Greenland.
- d. The Norse were victims of all five problems of society collapses.

Question 23 – 24 Write one or two complete sentences.

What connection is the speaker making in relation to the Norse, the people of California and Holland?

Questions 25 – 29 Write either E, N or I next to the statements below. There may be more than one for each statement.

Which of the following groups – Easter Islanders (E), The Norse Greenlanders (N) and Inuit (I):

- a. Lived in a sustainable way
- b. Valued an inappropriate animal
- c. Built or created inappropriate structures
- d. Traded overseas
- e. Used animal products to build boats

Question 30 Circle the correct answer.

The speaker believes:

- a. We can learn from the past.
- b. We share exactly the same problems as collapsed societies.
- c. Remote, poor countries have no impact on the developed world.
- d. It is possible to be protected from environmental problems.

Question 31 – 38 Fill in each of the gaps in the sentences with **one or two** words in each.

Summary

The speaker believes that once-lively **31.** _____ such as Angkor Wat, The Indus Valley and Easter Island have something to teach us about how we on earth today face our own future.

However, the situation today is different than in the past for a number of reasons, one of which is that there are more people damaging the **32.** _____ and another is

33. _____. As a result of the latter, all nations are now **34.** _____.

Even very poor countries can create **35.** _____ for the richer nations. The United States, for example, may believe it can export such products as **36.** _____ to other countries, but they are now realising that they can receive bad things, for example, **37.** _____ and **38.** _____.

Part 5: Identify signals of organisation

Complete the activities on Canvas



Part 6: Restructuring

Complete the activities on Canvas



Transcript

Adapted from a lecture given by Jared Diamond at Princeton University and broadcast on ABC Radio National January 2003

Think about once-vibrant societies such as the ones that built Angkor Wat, the Mayan civilisation, Easter Island, Greater Zimbabwe, and the Indus Valley. Now there's nothing left but ruins.

Why did these ancient civilisations abandon their cities after building them with such great effort? Why these ancient collapses? This question isn't just a romantic mystery. It's also a challenging intellectual problem. Why is it that some societies collapsed while others did not? And why is it important for us?

That's what I'm going to talk about in this lecture. I'll look at why it's relevant to us that some societies have disappeared quite suddenly – what are the reasons for this, and I'll give five reasons. Then I'm going to look in some detail at two ancient societies and see what happened to them, at the reasons why there's nothing left of them but statues or buildings, and why where they lived is no longer occupied by their descendants. And I'll link this with the situation today. Why, for instance, are the Dutch so interested in the environment and why are there so many parts of the United States, cities in Arizona and even Los Angeles for example, which don't seem to care. They're overusing water on golf courses for the rich, treating the environment as if there are no problems. Finally, I'll look at what the past has to teach us.

The question of why some civilisations have disappeared is relevant to the environmental problems that we face today; problems such as deforestation, the impending loss of the tropical rainforests, over-fishing, soil erosion, soil salinisation, global warming, fresh water supplies and many other problems. These problems threaten **our** existence over the coming decades. In fact, there's overwhelming recent evidence that mystery collapses were caused by the societies themselves. They've resulting from accidental human impacts on the environment, impacts similar to those causing the problems that we face today.

After all, not all societies have disintegrated. Many societies have gone on for thousands of years without any signs of collapse, such as Japan and Java. What is it then that has made some societies weaken and other societies stay strong? It's also a complicated issue because the collapses have multiple causes.

In trying to understand the fall of ancient societies, I quickly realised that it's not enough to look at the inadvertent or accidental impact of humans on their environment. It's usually more complicated. Instead I've arrived at a checklist of five things to explain the collapses of societies, and in some cases all five of these things are operating. Usually several of them are.

The first of these factors is environmental damage, inadvertent damage to the environment through means such as deforestation, soil erosion, salinisation, over-hunting etc.

The second is climate change, such as increased cooling or dryness. People can over-exploit their environment and get away with it as long as the climate is warm and wet, but the people are likely

to get in trouble when the climate turns against them, getting colder or drier. So, not surprisingly, climate change and the human environment interact.

Still a third consideration is that one has to look at a society's relations with hostile neighbours. Most societies have chronic hostile relations with some of their neighbours and societies may succeed in fending them off for a long time. But they won't be able to hold off enemies when the society itself gets weakened for environmental or any other reasons. That's probably what happened to the Roman Empire and Angkor Wat.

A fourth reason relates to friendly neighbours. Almost all societies depend in part upon trade with neighbouring friendly societies, and if one of those friendly societies itself runs into environmental problems and collapses for environmental reasons, that collapse may then drag down their trade partners. Think about that today and the way we need oil.

And finally in addition to those four factors on the checklist, one always has to ask about people's cultural response. Why don't people notice the problems around them? Why do some societies notice and others don't?

Now, I'll give you two examples of these past societies that collapsed.

One is Easter Island, a very isolated island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, thousands of miles from anywhere. I'll discuss it first because Easter is the simplest case we've got, the closest approximation to a collapse resulting purely from human environmental damage.

The second I'll talk about are the Greenland Norse – Norwegian Christians who all ended up dead because of a combination of all five of these factors.

So let's take then the first of these examples, the collapse of Easter Island society. Easter is the most remote habitable scrap of land in the world; it's an island in the Pacific, three and a half thousand kms west of the coast of Chile, and about two and a half thousand kms. from the nearest Polynesian island. It was settled by other Polynesians coming from the west, sometime around AD800 and it was so remote that after Polynesians arrived at Easter Island, nobody else arrived there. Nobody left Easter as far as we know, and so the Easter story is uncomplicated by relations with external hostiles or friendlies. There weren't any. Easter Islanders rose and fell by themselves.

Easter is a relatively fragile environment, dry, with 40 inches of rain per year. It's most famous because of the giant stone statues - these big statues weighing up to 80 tons - stone statues that were carved in a volcanic quarry and then dragged up over the top of the quarry and then 30 kilometres down to the coast and then raised up vertically onto platforms, all this accomplished by people without any animals or machines. And yet when Europeans arrived at Easter in 1722, the statues that the islanders themselves had erected at such great personal effort, the islanders were in the process of pushing over their own statues; Easter Island society was in a state of collapse. How, why and who erected the statues, and why were they thrown down?

Today Easter Island is barren. It's a grassland; there are no native trees whatsoever. And yet we know it was originally covered by a tropical forest that included the world's largest palm tree. And there were at least six species of land birds, 37 species of breeding sea-birds - the largest collection of breeding sea-birds anywhere in the Pacific.

When Polynesians settled Easter, they began to clear the forest for their gardens, for firewood, for using as rollers and levers to raise the giant statues, and then to build canoes with which to go out into the ocean and catch porpoises and tuna. They ate the land birds, they ate the sea-birds, they ate the fruits of the palm trees. The population of Easter grew to an estimated 10,000 people, until by the year 1600 all of the trees and all of the land birds and all but one of the sea-birds on Easter Island were extinct.

The deforestation and the elimination of the birds had consequences for people. First without trees, they could no longer transport and erect the statues, so they stopped carving statues. Secondly, without trees they had no firewood. Thirdly, without trees to cover the ground, they suffered from soil erosion. And fourthly, without trees they couldn't build canoes, so they couldn't go out to the ocean to catch porpoises. There were only a few sea-birds left and then the society collapsed in an epidemic of cannibalism. We know this from the number of spear heads lying around. The population crashed from about 10,000 to an estimated 2,000 with no possibility of rebuilding the original society because the trees, most of the birds and some of the soil were gone.

I think one of the reasons that the collapse of Easter Island grabs people is that it is something that could happen to us on earth. Easter Island, isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, with nobody to turn to to get help, nowhere to flee once Easter Island itself collapsed. In the same way today, one can look at Planet Earth in the middle of the galaxy and forget that if we too get into trouble, there's nowhere that we can flee, and no people to whom we can turn for help out there in the universe.

Right, now my next example involves Norse Greenland, that is, the Norwegian or Viking settlement there on that large icy island of Greenland which existed from 984 AD. They arrived and established an economy based on sheep, goats and especially cattle, which they prized greatly, and they used these for producing dairy products and meat, and they also hunted local animals and seals. Trade with Europe was important. But after about 400 years, these people vanished - in the 1400s. There were two settlements; one of them disappeared around 1360 and the other sometime probably a little after 1440. Everybody ended up dead.

The vanishing of Viking Greenland is instructive because it involves all five of the factors that I mentioned, and also because there's a detailed, written record from Norway. Of the five factors, first of all there was ecological damage due to deforestation in this cold climate with a short growing season, and soil erosion. The Norse cut down all the trees because they used fire to make iron weapons.

OK so problem No.1 was ecological damage, and problem No.2 was climate change. The climate in Greenland became very cold in the late 1300s and early 1400s as part of what's called the Little Ice Age. Hay production, that is, dry food for their animals was a problem and so was growing food for themselves.

Now the third big problem occurred when the Inuit people colonised Greenland and came into conflict with the Norse. These were Eskimo people, people from the cold north who wore furs and lived in ice houses called igloos and who hunted whales and seals in the ocean. Now, the Norse had military problems with their neighbours the Inuit. The Norse thought the Inuit were primitive savages, and the Inuit constantly attacked and killed the Norse.

Fourthly, they were cut-off from trade with Norway and the rest of Europe because of increasing sea-ice. The ships from Norway gradually stopped coming so the Norse couldn't trade with anyone. They had no contact with friendly neighbours

OK so, during this very cold period, they continued to prize their cows, but there was no food for their animals and they couldn't grow food for themselves. And the Norse, because of their bad attitude towards the Inuit, didn't adopt useful Inuit technology, so the Norse never adopted harpoons, the weapons used for killing sea animals such as whales, hence they couldn't eat whales like the Inuit. They didn't fish, incredibly, while the Inuit did fish. They didn't have dog sleighs, they didn't have skin boats, they didn't learn from the Inuit how to kill seals in ice in the winter. Instead they built elaborate churches and a very large cathedral with stained glass windows, which are still there 700 years later. But they didn't trade with the Inuit or learn from them, otherwise they might have survived.

And the result then was that after 1440 the Norse were all dead, and the Inuit survived. This example is important in showing us that collapse due to environmental reasons isn't inevitable. It depends upon what you do. Here are two peoples and one did things that let them survive, and the other things did not permit them to survive. So it's an attitude problem.

So what problems didn't the Norse perceive? Well, firstly, they came to a new environment and they thought it was like their old one. They didn't adjust or learn. Secondly, they didn't notice long-term trends showing it was getting colder. It's the same problem of us not noticing global warming today. Thirdly, there was the short time scale. In Greenland there is a mini-ice age every 500 years but people then only lived 40 or so years. So, climate changes took longer than the memories of a few generations. And fourthly, they had inappropriate cultural values. They valued their cows too highly, which didn't suite the environment, and they didn't change their customs to adjust to the changing climate. As well, they looked down on their hostile neighbours as being poor and primitive, with nothing to learn from them. And they lost their only connection to their own civilisation when the sea froze and ships couldn't sail.

Now here's a really important point to make about the Norse that has relevance today. It's what happens when the elite or rich are protected from the consequences of their actions. Let's compare two unlikely places, California and Holland, which both have a combination of rich and poor people. In Holland today, the environment is of great concern to everyone. That's because it's a low, flat country and if it floods, if the ocean comes over the walls, everyone will drown, rich and poor alike. Everyone is aware that they will be affected by adverse environmental issues. But in California, in cities such as Los Angeles, and in Arizona as well, the rich, with their swimming pools, golf courses, air-conditioning and their over-use of electricity - they live apart from the problems - they are protected from the consequences of their own actions - and as long as that happens, there will be exploitation of the environment, and other problems.

OK so we've talked about the past. What about the situation today? There are obvious differences. Today there are 6 billion people and everywhere societies and international companies are chopping down trees and damaging the environment so it's happening much more quickly.

Another enormous difference is globalisation. In the past, each society didn't know about other collapsing societies. The Easter Islanders and Greenland Norse didn't know about each other even though they were on earth at about the same time. But we see collapsing societies on television -

Somalia, Afghanistan or Haiti, and we read about them. They affect us. A study a few years ago decided that the two most irrelevant, the most unimportant, countries in the world to the United States were Somalia and Afghanistan, because they were so poor and so remote – and yet they are two countries that have caused enormous problems recently for America, countries where the American foreign policy and the military have become involved.

A collapse now is a global issue and any country can affect us. Americans used to think of globalisation as a way of sending their good things to the rest of the world such as the internet and Coca Cola, but they've realised now that bad things can come back to them – terrorism and uncontrolled immigration and diseases. Every country is interconnected.

So what are the lessons to us? Well, globalisation also means the exchange of information, and today we are the only societies in world history that have the ability to learn from all the experiments that have succeeded and failed in the past. And so we have a choice about what to do about it. If we make the wrong choice, we have examples from the past to show us what can happen. Thank you.

Transcript (optional activity)

Ancient Maya – Why the collapse?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeMzuRETKmA>

Warfare could be a simple answer to the collapse of the Maya but is warfare the only possible reason that the Maya would abandon their city-states? Is it even possible for us to find the one answer to the huge mystery of why the Maya collapsed? Why did the Maya collapse? How long did it take? Is collapse even the right word?

00:40

The collapse was not an overnight disappearance of an entire civilization as previously imagined but it was more of a gradual unpinning of the system that the Maya relied on.

00:51

Maya is like a people like you like me like everybody. Intelligence but also with political problems, ambitions... many all the problems of humans right now, it's the same for them.

01:12

There was an occurrence of a series of droughts in the Maya region during the classic period. The worst of these droughts and in fact the worst in the last seven thousand years began in 760 AD peaking around 800 AD. During the 700s, the Usumacinta River, a 1000 kilometer waterway through the majority of the southern lowlands dried out to the point that the Maya could simply wade through to get across it. A reliable source of water used for drinking and for transportation became more and more questionable. The Mayan people desperately needed water but their area was not providing enough of it. The lack of water not only created a tough agricultural situation but also had a large impact on the overpopulation of the area and the health of the Maya.

01:57

And if you don't have rain, you don't have food, you don't have food, you die and the first that start dying are your children and your grandparents then you do all the ceremonies you follow instructions from your priests and the rain doesn't come, that means you priests have lost contact with the gods.

02:14

The Maya believed that there was rain God named Chaac that controlled the rainfall. When droughts became more common closer to 800 AD the Mayans began to doubt their rulers and shamans. They believed that they had lost their divine connection to the gods.

02:34

The climate and agricultural land limited the amount of food that could be produced to support the population in the southern lowlands where the collapse was centred. There was a seasonal tropical forest with a rainy season from May to October and a dry season from January through April. The Maya had a small amount of agricultural land available but that is only because they wasted the capability of their land.

02:58

Take Copan for example. Copan's flatland amounted to ten square miles but the Maya only used five square miles for farming. This is because they had a tendency of creating their structures and stelae

on the fertile land. That forced them to use the mountains to farm for corn and when they would farm they would cut down all the trees which caused a lot of the deforestation and with deforestation comes the loss of the nutrients in the soil.

03:26

Soil is about fifteen to twenty centimetres organic. The moment you cut the trees that is holding the soil in place it washes down, so every time it rains you can see [unclear] tomorrow all brown. All the good soil is going down to the water, going down to the ocean [unclear].

03:44

The soil of the Maya realm became a larger problem when the stressed farmers would not respect the fallow periods.

03:52

The land in the hills was acid soil so you can grow pines but not corn so suddenly they were very successful as a city but they wouldn't have food close enough to them.

04:03

When the Mayan population increased, the farmers were forced to use other techniques to increase production from the land

04:08

Originally people flocked to the city states because there was opportunity to better their lives. In the Copan Valley, the Mayan population density is estimated to have been roughly 250 to 750 people per square mile and 1500 at the peak. This stress on the land combined with uncontrollable droughts led to the collapse

04:31

But in some cases people are stubborn and they don't want to leave the area like Copan. So you can see the traces of the lack of vitamins, the lack of food into the bones [unclear]

04:46

Not only was the Maya diet restricted by their surroundings but the Maya had no diversity of the food supply. 70% of what the Mayan farmers planted was corn and this caused biological repercussions that were huge. Eighty percent of the skeletons at Copán show anaemia, even the Royals that supposedly ate better than the common people show the effects in their skulls.

05:08

When you are lacking iron that you normally would get from these other things the body start looking for it for it, but you're not putting it into your mouth so it's oh I know where is some. So it starts sucking your iron that is concentrated in the back occipital section. So only the iron, not the calcium so you get, it looks like a coral reef, a miniature coral reef.

05:34

This deterioration is indicative of the other city-states in the southern lowlands that underwent the same stresses.

05:41

If you're lucky enough to go back in time, you're going to see that a hundred years before people were taller and their in, food intake keeps getting reduced and people, the size of people they're going to be smaller.

05:55

Also the immune system of the Maya became weaker and weaker after the decades of malnutrition these weak immune systems made the Maya more susceptible to disease.

06:05

Drought, failure of agriculture and malnutrition are one part of the story but other contributing factors may have led to the decline of the Mayan civilization. Our class explored other theories to better understand the collapse.

Speaking

Wk 8 Acting on feedback

Lesson Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and reflect on group discussions• Give feedback on group discussions• Identify key areas for improvement• Practice key areas for improvement

Part 1: Review group discussion recordings

Follow the instructions on Canvas 

	DEC 10 Tutorial Discussion Peer Feedback Sheet	Less than 60	60-64	65-69	70 and over
Content/Relevant	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance & strength of ideas • Development of ideas • Critical understanding of the topic • Use of evidence from the sources 	Ideas are sometimes relevant , and content lacks any critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are mostly relevant , but content demonstrates only occasional critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are relevant and content demonstrates some critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are highly relevant and demonstrate full critical understanding of the topic
Fluency/Coherent	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of ideas • Use of synonyms, paraphrases, referencing, repetition of key topic words and linkers to make ideas flow • Frequency of hesitations to think of vocabulary 	Ideas often lack clarity , are difficult to follow , with poor organisation Speech often lacks fluency	Ideas are generally clear and can be followed , but could be more logically organised Speech is sometimes fluent	Ideas are mostly clear, logically organised and easy to follow . Speech is mostly fluent	Ideas are clear, logically organised and can be easily followed with rare exceptions Speaks fluently almost consistently
Pronunciation	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fluency • Chunking & pausing • Stress • Intonation • sounds 	Speech often causes strain for the listener and the message is difficult to understand	Speech may cause some strain for the listener and the message is occasionally difficult to understand	Speech is mostly clear , but may cause occasional strain for the listener and the message is mostly easy to understand	Speech is clear , with very occasional lapses that do not interfere with the communication of the message
Communication	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language, including posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact • The extent to which contributions move the discussion forward • Active listening skills & responses to others • Active participation without dominating 	The speaker sometimes participates appropriately in the discussion, but contributions of others are rarely considered	The speaker usually participates appropriately in the discussion and sometimes considers the contributions of others	The speaker almost always participates appropriately in the discussion and often considers the contributions of others	The speaker actively participates in the discussion and carefully considers the contributions of others

		Instructions: Add comments related to the points on the left here
Content/Relev	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance & strength of ideas • Development of ideas • Critical understanding of the topic • Use of evidence from the sources • Appropriate language to refer to texts 	
Fluency/Coheren	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of ideas • Use of synonyms, paraphrases, referencing, repetition of key topic words and linkers to make ideas flow • Frequency of hesitations to think of vocabulary 	
Pronunciation	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fluency • Chunking & pausing • Stress • Intonation • sounds 	
Communication skills	Assess your peer based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language, including posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact • The extent to which contributions move the discussion forward • Active listening skills & responses to others • Active participation without dominating • Language of (dis)agreement 	

	DEC 10 Tutorial Discussion Self-evaluation Sheet	Less than 60	60-64	65-69	70 and over
Content/Relevant	Assess yourself based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance & strength of ideas • Development of ideas • Critical understanding of the topic • Use of evidence from the sources 	Ideas are sometimes relevant , and content lacks any critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are mostly relevant , but content demonstrates only occasional critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are relevant and content demonstrates some critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are highly relevant and demonstrate full critical understanding of the topic
Fluency/Coherent	Assess yourself based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of ideas • Use of synonyms, paraphrases, referencing, repetition of key topic words and linkers to make ideas flow • Frequency of hesitations to think of vocabulary 	Ideas often lack clarity , are difficult to follow , with poor organisation Speech often lacks fluency	Ideas are generally clear and can be followed , but could be more logically organised Speech is sometimes fluent	Ideas are mostly clear, logically organised and easy to follow . Speech is mostly fluent	Ideas are clear, logically organised and can be easily followed with rare exceptions Speaks fluently almost consistently
Pronunciation	Assess yourself based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fluency • Chunking & pausing • Stress • Intonation • sounds 	Speech often causes strain for the listener and the message is difficult to understand	Speech may cause some strain for the listener and the message is occasionally difficult to understand	Speech is mostly clear , but may cause occasional strain for the listener and the message is mostly easy to understand	Speech is clear , with very occasional lapses that do not interfere with the communication of the message
Communication	Assess yourself based on these aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language, including posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact • The extent to which contributions move the discussion forward • Active listening skills & responses to others • Active participation without dominating 	The speaker sometimes participates appropriately in the discussion, but contributions of others are rarely considered	The speaker usually participates appropriately in the discussion and sometimes considers the contributions of others	The speaker almost always participates appropriately in the discussion and often considers the contributions of others	The speaker actively participates in the discussion and carefully considers the contributions of others

		Instructions: Add comments related to the points on the left here
Content/Relevant	<p>Assess yourself based on these aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance & strength of ideas • Development of ideas • Critical understanding of the topic • Use of evidence from the sources • Appropriate language to refer to texts 	
Fluency/Coherence	<p>Assess yourself based on these aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of ideas • Use of synonyms, paraphrases, referencing, repetition of key topic words and linkers to make ideas flow • Frequency of hesitations to think of vocabulary 	
Pronunciation	<p>Assess yourself based on these aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fluency • Chunking & pausing • Stress • Intonation • sounds 	
Communication	<p>Assess yourself based on these aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language, including posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact • The extent to which contributions move the discussion forward • Active listening skills & responses to others • Active participation without dominating • Language of (dis)agreement 	

Part 2: Key concept

1. Divide the class into three groups so that each group is working with a different key concept text.
2. Discuss with your group what information is relevant in the text to our key concept question:

How far are societies themselves responsible for their own collapse / decline?

3. How would the author of the text answer the key concept question? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Review **Wk 6 Referring to texts in a discussion: Sample summaries** before you start.

Part 3: Discussion

Now work in groups of 3 with one group member for each of the 3 key concept texts.

Spend 10 minutes discussing the question:


**How far are societies themselves responsible for their own collapse / decline?
What evidence is there in the text you have focused on?**

Make sure you focus on your three key areas for improvement as you discuss the question.

Wk 8 Tutorial Discussion

Lesson Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilize pronunciation features to enhance communication• Practice participating in a tutorial discussion• Evaluate your own performance in a tutorial discussion

Part 1: Pronunciation

Follow the tasks on Canvas to develop and practise your pronunciation skills. 

Part 2: Tutorial Discussion

Task 1

Student A: Participate in a 10-15 minute discussion in a group of 3 answering the question:

Which is the more significant factor in societal collapse – environmental or internal political / cultural problems?

You should refer to the reading and listening material in the discussion where appropriate.

Student B: Sit behind your partner, listen carefully and evaluate their performance.

Complete the *Peer Feedback sheet* for your partner **in your partner's book**. Your teacher may ask you to focus on just one or two criteria.

Task 2

Student B: Participate in a 10-15 minute discussion in a group of 3 answering the question below.

Some people claim that our global society is on the verge of collapse. How likely is this? What evidence is there for this claim?

You should refer to the reading and listening material in the discussion where appropriate.

Student A: Sit behind your partner, listen carefully and evaluate their performance.

Complete the *Peer Feedback sheet* for your partner **in your partner's book**. Your teacher may ask you to focus on just one or two criteria.

You should refer to the reading material in the discussion where appropriate.

DEC10 Tutorial discussion peer feedback form					
		Less than 60	60-64	65-69	70 and over
Content/ Relevance	<p>You will be assessed on these aspects of Content/Relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of ideas • Strength of ideas • Development of ideas • Critical understanding of the topic • Use of evidence from the sources 	Ideas are sometimes relevant , and content lacks any critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are mostly relevant , but content demonstrates only occasional critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are relevant and content demonstrates some critical understanding of the topic	Ideas are highly relevant and demonstrate full critical understanding of the topic
Fluency & Coherence	<p>You will be assessed on these aspects of Fluency & Coherence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of ideas • Use of synonyms, paraphrases, referencing, repetition of key topic words and linkers to make ideas flow • Frequency of hesitations to think of vocabulary 	<p>Ideas often lack clarity, are difficult to follow, with poor organisation</p> <p>Speech often lacks fluency</p>	<p>Ideas are generally clear and can be followed, but could be more logically organised</p> <p>Speech is sometimes fluent</p>	<p>Ideas are mostly clear, logically organised and easy to follow.</p> <p>Speech is mostly fluent</p>	<p>Ideas are clear, logically organised and can be easily followed with rare exceptions</p> <p>Speaks fluently almost consistently</p>
Pronunciation	<p>You will be assessed on these aspects of pronunciation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fluency • Chunking & pausing • Stress • Intonation • Sounds 	Speech often causes strain for the listener and the message is difficult to understand	Speech may cause some strain for the listener and the message is occasionally difficult to understand	Speech is mostly clear , but may cause occasional strain for the listener and the message is mostly easy to understand	Speech is clear , with very occasional lapses that do not interfere with the communication of the message

	Score	Less than 60	60-64	65-69	70 and over
Communication skills	<p>You will be assessed on these aspects of communication skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language, including posture, gestures, facial expressions and eye contact • The extent to which contributions move the discussion forward • Active listening skills • Responses to others • Active participation without dominating 	The speaker sometimes participates appropriately in the discussion, but contributions of others are rarely considered	The speaker usually participates appropriately in the discussion and sometimes considers the contributions of others	The speaker almost always participates appropriately in the discussion and often considers the contributions of others	The speaker actively participates in the discussion and carefully considers the contributions of others
Grammar & vocabulary	<p>You will be assessed on these aspects of grammar and vocabulary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of grammatical structures & vocabulary • Accuracy of grammar in both simple and complex structures • Vocabulary choice and precision • Academic style • Ability to convey message through grammar and vocabulary choices 	Vocabulary & grammar are sometimes academic, limited in range and are generally only correct in simple sentences	Vocabulary & grammar are mostly academic, with a range of structures used. Whilst simple structures are often correct, complex ones often contain errors	Vocabulary & grammar are academic, with a range of simple and complex structures, and are correct in the majority of sentences	Vocabulary & grammar are academic, wide-ranging and show only occasional error

After you have discussed your feedback with your partner, agree on two aspects of their performance they need to work on to improve and write them here:

- 1.
- 2.

Key concepts

Wk 8 Collapse of civilisations key concepts

Lesson Objectives

- Identify the key components of the writing question
- Understand the task given in the writing question
- Plan note-taking organisation and strategies

Part 1: Defining key terms

Complete the activities on Canvas 

Part 2: Analyse the question

This week's practice writing task will require you to answer the following question:

How far are societies themselves responsible for their own decline / collapse?

1. What are the key topic words in this question?
2. What is the question asking you to do?
3. What are the possibilities for answering this question?
4. What are the key functions that you will need to include in your answer?
5. As you work through this week's reading and listening material, make notes of any information you find that is relevant to answering this question. Not all the reading and listening texts will be useful

Spinney, L. (2018)	Nuwer, R. (2017)	Salinas, R.B. (2013)	Tainter (2010)

Spinney, L. (2018)	Nuwer, R. (2017)	Salinas, R.B. (2013)	Tainter (2010)

Part 3: Key concept texts

Text 1

End of days: is Western civilisation on the brink of collapse?

History tells us all cultures have their sell-by date. Do political strife, crippling inequality and climate change mean the West's time is now up

Edited extract from

Spinney, L. (. (2018). *End of days: is Western civilisation on the brink of collapse?* Retrieved from <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23731610-300-end-of-days-is-western-civilisation-on-the-brink-of-collapse/>

Joseph Tainter, an anthropologist at Utah State University, and author of *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, offers a bleak outlook on the future of Western civilisation. He sees the worst-case scenario as a complete collapse - rupture in fossil fuel availability, causing food and water supplies to fail and millions to die within a few weeks. That sounds disastrous. But not everyone agrees. There are armies of scientists and engineers working on solutions, and in theory we can avoid past societies' mistakes. Plus, many believe globalisation makes us robust.

What exactly, however, do we mean by collapse? A group of researchers at the University of Maryland defines historical societies according to strict geographical limits, so that if some people survived and migrated to find new natural resources they would constitute a new society. By this criterion, even very advanced societies have collapsed irreversibly and the West could too. But it wouldn't necessarily mean annihilation.

For that reason, many researchers avoid the word collapse, and talk instead about a rapid loss of complexity. When the Roman Empire broke up, new societies emerged, but their hierarchies, cultures and economies were less sophisticated, and people lived shorter, unhealthier lives. That kind of across-the-board loss of complexity is unlikely today, says Peter Turchin, an evolutionary anthropologist at the University of Connecticut, but he doesn't rule out milder versions of it -the break-up of the European Union, for example, or the US losing its empire in the form of NATO and close allies such as South Korea.

On the other hand, some people, such as Yaneer Bar-Yam of the New England Complex Systems Institute in Massachusetts, see this kind of global change as a shift up in complexity, with highly centralised structures such as national governments giving way to less centralised, overarching networks of control. "The world is becoming an integrated whole," says Bar-Yam.

Some scientists, Bar-Yam included, are even predicting a future where the nation state gives way to fuzzy borders and global networks of interlocking organisations, with our cultural identity split between our immediate locality and global regulatory bodies.

However things develop, almost nobody thinks the outlook for the West is good. "You've got to be very optimistic to think that the West's current difficulties are just a blip on the screen," says historian

Ian Morris of Stanford University in California, author of *Why the West Rules – For Now*. So, can we do anything to soften the blow?

Turchin says that by manipulating the forces that fuel the cycles, by, for example, introducing more progressive taxes to address income equality and the exploding public debt, it might be possible to avert disaster. And Motesharrei thinks we should rein in population growth to levels his model indicates are sustainable. These exact levels vary over time, depending on how many resources are left and how sustainably – or otherwise – we use them. The problem with these kinds of solutions, however, is that humans haven't proved themselves to be great at playing the long game. New psychology research may help to explain why that is the case.

Cognitive scientists recognise two broad modes of thought – a fast, automatic, relatively inflexible mode, and a slower, more analytical, flexible one. Each has its uses, depending on the context, and their relative frequency in a population has long been assumed to be stable. David Rand, a psychologist at Yale University, though, argues that populations might actually cycle between the two over time.

Say a society has a transportation problem. A small group of individuals thinks analytically and invents the car. The problem is solved, not only for them but for millions of others besides, and because a far larger number of people have been relieved of thinking analytically – at least in this one domain – there is a shift in the population towards automatic thinking.

This happens every time a new technology is invented that renders the environment more hospitable. Once large numbers of people use the technology without foresight, problems start to stack up. Climate change resulting from the excess use of fossil fuels is just one example. Others include overuse of antibiotics leading to microbial resistance, and failing to save for retirement.

Jonathan Cohen, a psychologist at Princeton University who developed the theory with Rand, says it could help solve a long-standing puzzle regarding societies heading for ruin: why did they keep up their self-destructive behaviour even though the more analytical people must have seen the danger ahead? “The train had left the station,” says Cohen, and the forward-thinking folk were not steering it.

This is the first time anyone has attempted to link the evolution of societies with human psychology, and the researchers admit their model is simple, for now. And while Rand and his colleagues make no attempt to guide policy, they do think their model suggests a general direction we might look in for remedies. “Education has got to be part of the answer,” says Cohen, adding that there could be more emphasis on analytical thinking in the classroom.

But Tainter says trying to instil more forethought might be a pipe dream. If behavioural economics has taught us anything, he says, it is that human beings are much more emotional than rational when it comes to decision-making. He thinks a more pressing issue to tackle is the dwindling rate of invention relative to investment in R & D, as the world's problems become harder to solve. “I foresee a pattern in the future where technological innovation is not going to be able to bail us out as it has in the past,” he says.

(927 words)

Text 2

How Western civilisation could collapse

Edited extract from:

Nuwer, R. (2017). How Western civilisation could collapse. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20170418-how-western-civilisation-could-collapse>

Safa Motesharrei, a systems scientist at the University of Maryland, uses computer models to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that can lead to local or global sustainability or collapse. According to findings that Motesharrei and his colleagues published in 2014, there are two factors that matter: ecological strain and economic stratification. The ecological category is the more widely understood and recognised path to potential doom, especially in terms of depletion of natural resources such as groundwater, soil, fisheries and forests – all of which could be worsened by climate change.

That economic stratification may lead to collapse on its own, on the other hand, came as more of a surprise to Motesharrei and his colleagues. Under this scenario, elites push society toward instability and eventual collapse by hoarding huge quantities of wealth and resources, and leaving little or none for commoners who vastly outnumber them yet support them with labour. Eventually, the working population crashes because the portion of wealth allocated to them is not enough, followed by collapse of the elites due to the absence of labour. The inequalities we see today both within and between countries already point to such disparities. For example, the top 10% of global income earners are responsible for almost as much total greenhouse gas emissions as the bottom 90% combined. Similarly, about half the world's population lives on less than \$3 per day.

For both scenarios, the models define a carrying capacity – a total population level that a given environment's resources can sustain over the long term. If the carrying capacity is overshoot by too much, collapse becomes inevitable. That fate is avoidable, however. "If we make rational choices to reduce factors such as inequality, explosive population growth, the rate at which we deplete natural resources and the rate of pollution – all perfectly doable things – then we can avoid collapse and stabilise onto a sustainable trajectory," Motesharrei said. "But we cannot wait forever to make those decisions."

Unfortunately, some experts believe such tough decisions exceed our political and psychological capabilities. "The world will not rise to the occasion of solving the climate problem during this century, simply because it is more expensive in the short term to solve the problem than it is to just keep acting as usual," says Jorgen Randers, a professor emeritus of climate strategy at the BI Norwegian Business School

The world's poorest will feel the effects of collapse first. Indeed, some nations are already serving as canaries in the coal mine for the issues that may eventually pull apart more affluent ones. Syria, for example, enjoyed exceptionally high fertility rates for a time, which fueled rapid population growth. A severe drought in the late 2000s, likely made worse by human-induced climate change, combined with groundwater shortages to cripple agricultural production. That crisis left large numbers of people – especially young men – unemployed, discontent and desperate. Many flooded into urban centres, overwhelming limited resources and services there. Pre-existing ethnic tensions increased, creating

fertile grounds for violence and conflict. On top of that, poor governance – including neoliberal policies that eliminated water subsidies in the middle of the drought – tipped the country into civil war in 2011 and sent it careening toward collapse. (530 words)

Text 3

The collapse of complex societies: review

Edited extract from

Salinas, R. B. (2013). *The Collapse of Complex Societies: review*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/ricardo-b-salinas/the-collapse-of-complex-s_b_2808360.html

In his book, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, Joseph Tainter seeks to explain what happened to Rome and many civilizations that declined after long periods of splendor. There is discussion of natural disasters, the depletion of natural resources, invasions, or government mismanagement as the causes of the decline of many outstanding civilizations. Theories on the collapse of the Mayan civilization come to mind, for example, in which a simple Google search provides us with multiple results.

Tainter explores how humanity has gone from living in simple societies, with little division of labor and ephemeral political leaders, to complex societies with a population that has many and quite varied occupations, a defined territory and a government that exercises a monopoly in the use of force to avoid internal conflicts.

In this evolution toward complexity, which in principle aims to solve the problems that are posed to humanity and improve the population's standard of living, a serious situation has emerged. It is increasingly necessary to invest more in activities that generate lower yields, and it is possible that this is where societies may collapse — that is, they become simpler again.

A complex society involves:

1. The processing of increasing amounts of information, which implies difficulties in handling data and a considerable quantity of interrelated and, at times, redundant information.
2. The consumption of a large amount of scarce natural resources, which are obtained with increasingly greater effort.
3. Having a greater number of bureaucrats to organize and regulate the varied amount of human activities, which, in turn, requires proportionately more taxes.

Thus, the economy has to divert increasing amounts of resources directly related to its very complexity. This translates into increasingly lower growth in the production of goods. A clear example of this in the United States, with huge expenditures on national security — fighting even in countries that are literally on the other side of the world — or strategies and programs to contain the financial crisis, without this enabling the population to improve its standard of living.

Today, Europe also provides us with a variety of clear examples of public finances totally out of control, from Greece to Italy, to Spain, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Some analysts believe that this situation will again lead the global economy into a recession. Another example is Mexico, where large bureaucratic structures have been created that ultimately slow economic activity and then require more taxes to sustain them.

(403 words)

Writing

Wk 8 Key concept note-taking

Lesson Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the critical response task• Identify similar and differing perspectives• Practice taking and organising notes relevant to a given question

Part 1: Review the question

Our question for your writing task this week is the following:

How far are societies themselves responsible for their own collapse / decline?

1. What are the key topic words in this question?
2. What is the question asking you to do?
3. What are the possibilities for answering this question?
4. What are the key functions that you will need to include in your answer?

Part 2: Making notes

Watch a short video called *The collapse of complex civilisations*



The speaker in this video is Joseph Tainter.

1. Just listen the first time. Discuss with a partner what you hear that is relevant to our key concept question.

Before you listen, focus your attention and plan.

- What are you listening for specifically?
- What else are you likely to hear?

2. Listen again and take notes.

Part 3: Review your notes

1. Compare the notes you have taken from the video with the notes you have taken from the reading assigned for this task. Can you identify common themes or views? Is there any conflicting information or views?
2. Reflect on the discussions you had about the Wk 7 Key concept texts in the lesson **Wk 8 Acting on feedback**. What further insights did you gain into the texts?
3. Review the texts for this task and add to or edit your notes. Think carefully about how to show in your notes common themes or views, or differing views.

Wk 8 Critical response sample 3

Lesson Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify text organisation• Understand language and organisation of comparison & contrast

Part 1: Deconstruction

1. Read the sample response to the question:

How far are societies themselves responsible for their own collapse / decline?

Write 500-700 words

2. Answer the questions:

- a. What is the writer's position?
- b. How is the answer organised? How is the organisation different to critical response samples 1 & 2?
- c. When you have finished reading the sample, create a text map showing the organisation of ideas.

3. Go through the answer and identify the language used to achieve the functions shown in each step of your text map.

Sample answer

There are many examples through history of the collapse of complex and powerful civilisations. The question of collapse invites renewed debate in the face of the environmental and climate problems of today which threaten global society with potential disruptions to food supply, conflict over scarce resources and uncontrolled migration. What seems clear from the literature is that environmental and socio-cultural reasons often work together as causes of social collapse. However, what is not so clear is why a society may do nothing to alter its course in the face of evidence of an impending crisis. It may be argued that it is this lack of action by the decision-making elite that makes the society itself responsible for its own downfall.

The reasons for historical social collapses are variously explained as a result of environmental factors, such as in the work of Jared Diamond, and are of course a key consideration in the longevity of any society. A society must draw resources from its environment and impacts such as resource depletion, soil erosion, deforestation and biodiversity loss are familiar. However, while these impacts threaten the sustainability of the society, they need not necessarily mean disaster. Policy choices to reduce natural resource depletion, population growth, pollution and rising inequality can avoid collapse and put society back on a sustainable path (Motescharrei, as cited in Nuwer, 2017; Turchin, as cited in Spinney, 2018). Unfortunately, however, humanity seems to be resistant to implementing policy choices for the longer term good.

This is explained by cognitive scientists as a result of a mode of automatic, inflexible thinking by the majority of individuals. Cohen (as cited in Spinney, 2018) argues that although the more analytical few may see and warn about impending problems, the many millions of others will continue inflexibly with the use of technologies or patterns of behaviours that make their lives easier or more comfortable despite

mounting problems as a result. Randers (as cited in Nuwer, 2017) similarly claims that because it is more expensive to solve ecological and climate problems than it is to do nothing, it is likely that little will be done to address these problems in the 21st century. Humanity, it seems, is not good at long term foresight and planning.

An alternative view is put forward by Tainter (2010) who describes social collapse as an inevitable result of the development of ever more complex institutions and complex systems of governance. This complexity, he argues, becomes increasingly expensive to maintain and more and more resources are diverted just to maintain the existing system. Maintaining existing systems of power and resource allocation is largely in the interest of the decision-making elites and it is their failure to act in the face of signs of impending disaster that may push society to collapse. Indeed, it is argued that the elites push society toward collapse by allocating an inadequate portion of wealth and resources to the mass of the population which eventually collapses and this then leads to a collapse of the elites who rely on their labour (Motesharrei, as cited in Nuwer, 2017).

In each of these explanations, it is inaction and self-interest that drive society to collapse. While environmental degradation due to population growth and overexploitation of resources are certainly contributing factors, these are factors that can be managed. It would seem that it is the choices made by a society in dealing with these problems that are the determining factor in the long-term survival or collapse of that society. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the decision-making elite who too often act to protect their own interests at the expense of the well-being of the people and social institutions that support them.

609 words

Use this space to create your text map


Part 2: Joint writing

1. Produce a text map or other plan identifying the key functions in your answer
2. Add sources to your text map where appropriate— check the source to find the original information and think carefully about how you will paraphrase it to include it in your text
3. Make sure you use old-new information connections to help you establish chains of cause and effect relationships where appropriate

Set up a google doc for this task and give your teacher access.

You may need to finish your writing for homework. If so, you can continue to work together on your google doc.

Wk 8 Joint writing: Evaluate your response

On Canvas, you will find the rubric that is used to assess your writing for this task. 

Use the rubric to evaluate your writing (or the writing of another group). Follow your teacher's instructions.

320b