

WARM UP

1 Decide if the statements below about social sustainability are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 New housing communities should be designed to last for only a few years. _____
- 2 The lack of social sustainability in cities is a problem only in Europe. _____
- 3 Government officials and architects often don't understand what people need. _____
- 4 A place should stay the same year after year to maintain stability. _____
- 5 Good neighbours play an important role in making a place socially sustainable. _____
- 6 The risk of riots falls when people feel at home where they live. _____
- 7 Dealing with community problems is usually left to the locals. _____

GLOSSARY

disease: *malattia*
to spread: *diffondere*
weed: *erbaccia*
a score: *20 (in questo testo)*
wholesome: *sano*
breeding: *allevamento*
clumsy: *goffo*
drift: *deriva*
eddies: *vortici*
to suit: *adattarsi, soddisfare*
toil: *fatica*
gnat: *moscerino*
slightness: *esilità*

The Time Machine by H. G. Wells

The following passage, from chapter 4, describes the encounter between the protagonist and the Elois who, after reaching the apex of social progress and complete control over nature, live in a state of mental laziness and intellectual fragility.

After all, the sanitation and the agriculture of today are still in the rudimentary stage. The science of our time has attacked but a little department of the field of human disease, but even so, it spreads its operations very steadily and persistently. Our agriculture and horticulture destroy a weed just here and there and cultivate perhaps a score or so of wholesome plants, leaving the greater number to fight out a balance as they can. We improve our favourite plants and animals – and how few they are – gradually by selective breeding; now a new and better peach, now a seedless grape, now a sweeter and larger flower, now a more convenient breed of cattle. We improve them gradually, because our ideals are vague and tentative, and our knowledge is very limited; because Nature, too, is shy and slow in our clumsy hands. Some day all this will be better organized, and still better. That is the drift of the current in spite of the eddies. The whole world will be intelligent, educated, and cooperating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and carefully we shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs.

This adjustment, I say, must have been done, and done well; done indeed for all Time, in the space of Time across which my machine had leaped. The air was free from gnats, the earth from weeds or fungi; everywhere were fruits and sweet and delightful flowers; brilliant butterflies flew hither and thither. The ideal of preventive medicine was attained. Diseases had been stamped out. I saw no evidence of any contagious diseases during all my stay.

And I shall have to tell you later that even the processes of putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected by these changes.

Social triumphs, too, had been effected. I saw mankind housed in splendid shelters, gloriously clothed, and as yet I had found them engaged in no toil. There were no signs of struggle, neither social nor economical struggle.

The shop, the advertisement, traffic, all that commerce which constitutes the body of our world, was gone. It was natural on that golden evening that I should jump at the idea of a social paradise. The difficulty of increasing population had been met, I guessed, and population had ceased to increase. 'But with this change in condition comes inevitably adaptations to the change. What, unless biological science is a mass of errors, is the cause of human intelligence and vigour?

I thought of the physical slightness of the people, their lack of intelligence, and those big abundant ruins, and it strengthened my belief in a perfect conquest of Nature. For after the battle comes Quiet. Humanity had been strong, energetic, and intelligent, and had used all its abundant vitality to alter the conditions under which it lived. And now came the reaction of the altered conditions.

From *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the passage and fill in the table. What does the writer say about these topics?

19 th Century	The Future
Agriculture: <i>progress in agriculture was very slow and selective because people were not sure of what they wanted but they were moving steadily ahead.</i>	Description of nature: _____ _____
Description of nature: _____ _____	Illnesses: _____ _____
	People's work: _____ _____

3 Read the last paragraph again, what is the narrator's conclusion? Do you think that the idea of development is pessimistic or optimistic? Justify your choice.

EXAM PRACTICE – WRITTEN EXAM

4 **A** Write a short essay (150-200 words) describing how your area has changed over the last few years and the consequences of these developments. Include the following information.

- The houses and buildings
- The people
- The streets, shops and open spaces

MORE ABOUT...

The Time Machine is a science fiction novel by the British author H.G. Wells, published in 1895. The novel attempts to understand what will become of human beings in the distant future. The central character is a time traveller who can transport himself back and forth in time with the aid of a machine he invented. Wells looks at several themes including class inequality and the relationship between science and society.

