Listening & Reading Comprehension Practice

Get some listening or reading comprehension practice with these talks about solving environmental problems. Michael Pawlyn, in (http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_pawlyn_using_nature_s_genius_in_architecture), proposes using nature's design strategies to develop sustainable human systems. Jennifer Granholm suggests a better way to create 'clean' energy (and jobs) in the U.S.: encourage competition between states rather than forcing one national energy policy on the whole nation.
(http://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer_granholm_a_clean_energy_proposal_race_to_the_top)

These TED talks suggest a lot of ways to produce or save energy, and resolve other pressing environmental problems. Before watching them, think for a moment about the strategies you expect them to mention.

- What are some problems with our current situation?
- What solutions have you already heard?
- Which do you think will work best?

Choose the best answer for each question:

1. Which of these are the three big changes Michael Pawlyn says people need to make?
    A. Use resources more efficiently.
    B. Base our economy on solar energy rather than fossil fuels like gasoline and coal.
    C. Make good jobs for more people.
    D. Recycle and reuse rather than just disposing of industry wastes.
    E. Use natural designs to make buildings more beautiful.

2. Pawlyn calls the Eden Project an example of how bio-mimicry can allow "radical increases in resource efficiency." 'Radical' can have several meanings.Here it means:
    A. from the roots
    B. basic
    C. extreme left-wing-- the opposite of conservative
    D. big enough to change the whole nature of the activity

3. The Cardboard to Caviar Project is NOT an example of
    A. waste recycling
    B. a linear system
    C. a closed-loop system
    D. making a profit from materials that would usually be thrown away in landfills.

4. Pawlyn says that when Julius Caesar went to North Africa,
    A. he admired the cedar trees on the coast.
    B. he cut down trees and made the Sahara a desert.
    C. he found forests in areas that are now desert.
    D. he planted trees in the Sahara.

5. There is a beetle in Namibia that survives in the desert by drinking water that condenses on its shell at night.
    A. True
    B. False

6. Pawlyn discusses some ways to use the salts that would crystallize out of the seawater that they use in the Sahara Forests project. Which of these uses does he NOT suggest:
> A. sodium chloride for building blocks
> B. sodium chloride to add flavor to the maintenance crew's meals
> C. lithium for batteries
> D. phosphates for fertilizers

7. Jennifer Granholm calls herself a (political) scientist. She shared " empirical data from my lab." What is her lab?
> A. The Electrolux Lab in Greenville
> B. The Center for Science in Michigan
> C. the political processes of democracy
> D. the National Institute of Health

8. What do you think 'empirical' in the question above means? (Use the context if you don't already have an idea.)
> A. job-related
> B. current or recent
> C. practical, usable
> D. theoretical

9. Why did Electrolux refuse the governor's offer?
> A. She didn't offer enough incentives.
> B. They could pay much lower wages in Mexico than in Michigan.
> C. Union officials would not cooperate with them.
> D. They wanted to stop making refrigerators.

10. Why does Granholm say the "Race to the Top" for education might be a good model for creating more clean energy jobs? Mark all the answers she gives.
> A. It's a good example of federalism. (Each state choosing its own best way to meet the common goal, instead of all the decisions being made by the national government and imposed on all the states.)
> B. The financial incentives will appeal to state legislators enough that they will try to work together.
> C. Everyone loves a competition; state legislators will be motivated to beat other states.
> D. Each state can choose the specialization that suits its own area and needs.
> E. Both education and clean-energy jobs are popular issues that almost everyone supports.
> F. Democrats disagree with Republicans on almost every issue.

[Ans: c & f are not hers]
11. What does Granholm mean by "Republican and Democratic governors love to cut ribbons"?
> A. There's a big political advantage in being the first to make the cuts.
> B. They want to be seen as winners, like the first runner that breaks the ribbon at the finish line of a race.
> C. They love to be seen providing new jobs. (The ribbon-cutting refers to an American custom of having public officials participate in the opening of new factories, etc.)

12. What does Granholm mean by asking people at TED to "go around Congress"?
> A. Go around Congress explaining to Congressmen what a great idea a Clean Energy Race would be.
> B. Congress is just going around in circles anyway.
> C. Bypass Congress by bringing state governors together to agree on a Clean Energy Race to the Top.
> D. Offer the states private incentive money for a Clean Energy Race to the Top, without waiting for Congress to act.

Answers

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