

## READING AND SPEAKING

### The man who planted trees

Work in small groups.

- 1 Read the following quotation. What does it mean?  
*'Only when the last tree has died and the last river has been poisoned and the last fish has been caught will we realize that we can't eat money.'*
- 2 Who do you think said it? (Your teacher will give you the correct answer.)
  - 1 A political leader.
  - 2 An African fisherman.
  - 3 A French farmer.
  - 4 An ancient Greek philosopher.
  - 5 A native American.
- 3 You are going to read extracts from a story called *The man who planted trees* by the French writer Jean Giono (1895–1971). In the story, Giono describes his meetings with a solitary shepherd who plants trees while the rest of the world is at war.  
Read and listen to the extracts and answer the questions after each one.



# The man

## T 9.6 Extract 1

About forty years ago, I was taking a long trip on foot over mountain heights unknown to tourists. All around was barren and colourless land. Nothing grew there but wild lavender.

After five hours' walking, I had still not found water. All about me was the same dryness, the same coarse grasses. I thought I saw in the distance a small black silhouette. It was a shepherd. Thirty sheep were lying about him on the baking earth. He gave me a drink and took me to his cottage on the plain.

I felt peace in the presence of this man. I asked if I might rest here for a day. He found it quite natural – he gave me the impression that nothing could surprise him. I didn't actually need to rest, but I was interested and wished to know more about him.

- 1 Jean Giono wrote the story in 1953. In which year does the actual story begin? What was he doing when he met the shepherd?
- 2 The story takes place in France. Which part of France do you think it is? Why? What is the countryside like?
- 3 Why do you think the writer is interested in the shepherd? What do you think he likes about the man and his lifestyle?

*Before going to bed the shepherd puts a large sack onto the table. From it he carefully removes a hundred perfect acorns. The writer is curious. The next day when he goes out with the shepherd into the hills he discovers what the acorns are for. What do you think the acorns are for?*

## T 9.7 Extract 2

I noticed that he carried for a stick an iron rod as thick as my thumb and about a metre and a half long. He began thrusting his iron rod into the earth, making a hole in which he planted an acorn; then he refilled the hole. He was planting oak trees.

- 5 I suppose I must have been fairly insistent in my questioning, for he answered me. For three years he had been planting trees in this wilderness. He had planted one hundred thousand. Of the hundred thousand, twenty thousand had sprouted. Of the twenty thousand, he still expected to lose half. There remained ten thousand oak trees to grow where nothing had grown before.
- 0 That was when I began to wonder about the age of this man. He was obviously over fifty. Fifty-five he told me. His name was Elzéard Bouffier. I told him that in thirty years his ten thousand oaks would be magnificent. The next day we parted.

- 4 What did Elzéard do with the acorns? What did he use as a tool?
- 5 How many had he already planted? How many were growing?
- 6 How old was Elzéard at the time? How old do you think the writer was?
- 7 What do you think Elzéard's ambition is? What is his vision of the future?
- 8 Draw a sketch of the landscape round his home at the time of Extracts 1 and 2. Draw a sketch of how you think it will look in thirty years' time.

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