

Reading

Answer Awareness

 **Learning Targets**

1. Use the structure of the answer choices to avoid unnecessary precision or consideration.
2. Identify clues in the answer choices to save time and increase focus.

Instructions

Use Answer Awareness to answer the question.

Answer Awareness

The ACT is a multiple-choice test, so all of your options are right there on the page. The answers are often more important than the question and help you focus on key information in the passage. It's usually much quicker to consider specific answers rather than try to invent your own.

Passage II

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from the article “Grassroots Forest Conservation in Mexico” by Hector R. Cadenas (©2015 by MasteryPrep).

In the southern tail of Mexico, bordered by the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean, a small mountain community is making a global impact. Ixtlán de Juárez, Oaxaca, has received a “gold star” from the United Nations as a leader in environmental conservation and natural resource management. All of its commercial timber is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, an international body that guarantees the wood is harvested legally and in an environmentally conscious method.

“This forest belongs to the Zapotec people,” says Pedro de Val, a member of the indigenous community in Ixtlán. “This land has been ours for nearly 600 years, and we intend that our children’s grandchildren also enjoy our inheritance and cultivate it.”

The forest enterprise in Ixtlán is distinct in that it is operated entirely by the local community. No aspect of the enterprise—administration, financial planning and profit distribution, marketing, oversight—is contracted out to private companies.

However, this was not always the case. Half a century ago, the Mexican government prioritized industrialization for its rural states. In Ixtlán, this translated into 25-year contracts in which the government “rented” its forests to a national newspaper manufacturing plant. Promises that industrialization would bring much-needed upgrades instead resulted in paved roads that only led to the logging camp, a rapidly “balding” mountainside, few jobs, and a crumbling infrastructure.

When the contract expired in the early 1980s and the government made to renew at another astounding long term, the people of Ixtlán revolted. Worker strikes, logging road blockades, protests throughout the state of Oaxaca, and political pressure on the national government resulted

in a victory for the local people. They now legally own the pine-oak forest.

At the time, they had very little else: inadequate training and no experience managing forests, operating a large-scale business, or sourcing and storing funds for future growth. In order to survive, Ixtlán joined nine other communities in Oaxaca in the same situation. Together, they sought international help and learned how to operate an environmentally conscious, successful forest enterprise.

“I can’t believe I’m able to return home,” testified Alejandro Garcia Corral. Corral, like many residents of Oaxaca, had left to find work in the United States. With the improved economy, the wave of migration is changing course back to Oaxaca.

“If you look at the global scale, what these people have accomplished is remarkable,” said Helen Mauer, spokesperson for the Forest Stewardship Council. “In the face of rampant deforestation, there’s Ixtlán de Juárez. This community has bridged the capitalist motive with the benefits only a joint community can provide. It’s why we chose to recognize them specifically.”

This “joint community” is a traditional practice as ancient as the Zapotec people. According to custom, no property is owned and therefore cannot be purchased or sold. People live in communes, or *ejidos*, and share all things in common. Some community members raise cattle, others grow crops, and now, more are able to participate in the forest management enterprise. All business decisions are decided by assembly vote.

“Assemblies are notorious for taking several hours,” chuckles Guillermo León, a community member. “But it is the safest way. The last time we ceded the right to decide what was best for our community, we nearly lost everything.” It also creates an incentive to preserve Ixtlán’s business model: any member who helps illegal logging, a multi-million dollar industry ravenous for such

prized resources, faces strict discipline from the *ejido*.
“He loses all rights to the community profits,” explains
León. “Anyone who would take from his brothers to give
to a private company does not deserve the privilege of
75 participating in the *ejido*.”

In contrast, there is much incentive to remain with
the *ejido* and its somewhat laborious assembly rule. Jobs
with decent wages abound. The profit from the forest
enterprise returns to Ixtlán in the form of new schools,
80 paved roads, electricity, and clean drinking water.
There is the opportunity to learn business management,
financial accounting, and, of course, the highly valued
skill of producing handmade furniture.

Thanks to the endorsement from the Forest
85 Stewardship Council, all furniture produced by Ixtlán
is labeled as “certified wood,” meaning it was harvested
ecologically, without illegal interferences. This stamp
makes the furniture highly valued by national and
international consumers, including the Oaxacan state
90 government, either seeking to avoid international
sanctions for illegal trading or to support a more
environmentally conscious enterprise.

Of course, not every endangered locale can copy
Ixtlán’s model. “If your natural resource is, say, diamonds
95 or coal, you may not have the same means or organizational
protection on your side,” admits Howard McAlister, chair
of the U.N. committee that awarded the forest enterprise
a gold star. “But it’s a start. If we can execute protections for
a major natural resource such as lumber, we can then set our
100 sights on the smaller and more vulnerable resources.”

6. It can be most reasonably inferred from the passage that
regarding Ixtlán, the author feels:
- F. skeptical of the enterprise’s aims.
 - G. disheartened by the enterprise’s partial reliance on
government aid.
 - H. supportive of the enterprise’s goals.
 - J. confident that the enterprise could be replicated in
other areas.