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Comprehension(35 minutes) Passage One Questions 21 to 25 are based on the following passage: Once upon a time, the United States seemed to have plenty of land to go around. Plenty of rivers to dam and plenty of rural valleys left over. Plenty of space for parks and for cities. Plenty of forests to cut and grasslands to plow. But that was once upon a time. The days of unused land are over. Now the land has been spoken for, fenced off, carved up into cities and farms and industrial parks, put to use. At the same time, the population keeps growing. People need places to work and place to play. So we need more sites for more industries, more beaches for more sunbathers, and more clean rivers for more fishes. And it isn't just a matter of population growth. Our modern technology has needs that must be met too: We need more coal for energy, and we need more power plants. cars must have highways and parking lots, and jets must have airports. Each of these lands uses swallows up precious space.

Highways and expressways alone take some 2,000,000 acres each years. And urban sprawl the spreading out of cities is expected to gobble up vast areas of land by the year 2000. But there is only so much land to go around. How do you decide what to do with a piece of land? It depends upon the land, and it depend upon the needs of the people and their values. It is always hard to decide. Take, for example, a forest. A forest can be a timber supply. It can provide a

home for wildlife. It is scenery and a recreation area for man. It is soil and watershed protection. These last two take some explaining. A forest creates its own soil. Leaves and other litter on the forest floor are constantly turned and moved by worms and burrowing animals. Enriched by animal wastes, the litter becomes humus a rich and spongy mix of organic material. The soil feeds forest plants. The plants in turn protect the soil roots hold it in place, branches slow rainfall so that it will drop gently to earth. Water slowly trickles through the humus and is purified. Water travels downstream and out to sea. When a forest is cut down, there is nothing left to create or protect the soil. Heavy rains beat and wash away spongy humus. Little soil is left to absorb water. Then rain waters can rush unchecked to the valley below, flooding low-lying areas. If a forest is to supply timber, watershed protection, recreation, and a home for wildlife, it has to be cut carefully. And it must be replanted. In short, land is fragile. Without proper care it can be ruined forever. In the debates about how a particular piece of land is to be used, the priorities often conflict. What should you do, for example, if you find out that under the fertile fields of a farming community there is a thick bed of coal which can be strip-mined? Strip mining rips up topsoil and vegetation. But mining may create jobs, bring money to the town's businesses. Those who approve of strip mining say that the coal is needed, and they point out that it is quicker and cheaper to get coal from the surface than to go deep into the earth to get it by standard mining techniques. On the other hand, it takes nature 500 years to create an inch of topsoil. As the countryside fills up, people

are becoming more aware of the need for open space. Nearly every proposal for a new power plant, highway, or airport draws fierce opposition. Everyone wants the big, land-eating “ uglies ” to be in someone else ’ s backyard. Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, having been debating about the site of a future airport for years. Yet if a new airport is needed, it will have to go somewhere. How do we find our way out of the land-use problem? One way might be to reexamine our values, to think in new directions. Does everyone have to have a car-with its need for highways and parking lots? What about developing mass transit systems that use less land? Do suburbs have to sprawl? Can they be designed so they use less space? Do we have to have more energy? If we do, do we really have to strip-mine coal to provide it? 100Test 下载频道开通，各类考试题目直接下载。详细请访问 [www.100test.com](http://www.100test.com)