



## ANSWER KEY

### Exercise: 1

**Instructions:** Forests are very important for a number of reasons, which include supporting wildlife, preventing erosion, production of oxygen, and many other human needs. Fortunately, Idaho has many forested areas that give us the materials and recreational materials we desire. Unfortunately, we have not always been wise stewards of these resources and human over harvest and misuse have taken their toll. This activity will give students a brief overview of the history and status of Idaho forests.

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1. Why are forests so important? How do they benefit our environment?

Trees harness energy from the sun for photosynthesis, a process from which almost all of life on earth depends. Forests support wildlife, prevent erosion, make oxygen, store snow and water, and are used as a natural resource by humans.

2. Which species of tree in Idaho is of the most economic value? What is this species used for? Why has it declined so dramatically?

The western white pine is the most valuable to humans. These trees are used for lumber because they have a very clear straight grain.

3. How has lumbering influenced the landscape? Why is clear-cutting so harmful?

Earlier lumbering practices did scar the landscape and took a toll on the forests. Clear cut areas lose all trees and erosion increases. Rampant erosion removes topsoil reducing the fertility of our soil and reducing the long term productivity of our forests.

4. What was the worst forest fire in the history of North America?

The worst fire was in northern Idaho and western Montana in 1910. It burned nearly 3 million acres of forest and took with it four towns and many mines and mills.

5. Are forest fires always bad for forests? Why or why not?

Forests fires are not always bad. They are a natural process that can help the overall health of a forest in the long run. They make the forests consist of trees of various ages and can stimulate the production of new trees.

6. What is selective cutting? How can it help protect our forests?

Selective cutting refers to the process by which only large or dead trees are cut. This practice is much better for our forests when compared with clear cutting.

7. Why should we protect our forests?

Answers can vary to a large degree, be open to all suggestions. We should save our forests for many reasons. For reasons mentioned in question #1, our forests should be conserved.