COVID-19 and the Environment

Pre reading discussion:

- What examples can you share of the positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown on the environment and nature? Think of local and international examples.
- Did these stories/reports give you a sense of hope that the pandemic might bring about some positive changes? What kind of changes
- Do you feel leaders/governments have learnt anything from the lockdowns in relation to the environment?
- Have there been any positive changes since the first lockdown began in your city/region/country?
- Have you made any changes to your lifestyle either out of choice or necessity?

Why COVID-19 will end up harming the environment
Even though the air has been cleaner as a result of the global lockdowns, a more polluted future has been brewing while we weren't looking.

BY BETH GARDINER   National Geographic JUNE 18, 2020

THE POPULAR NOTION that the COVID-19 pandemic has been "good for the environment"— that nature is recovering while humanity stays at home— appeals to many people grasping for some **upside** to the global tragedy. Reality, though, may not cooperate with such hopes.

The benefits many found **heartening** early on—from cleaner air to birdsong newly audible as cars and planes went quiet—were always likely to be temporary. And with lockdowns **easing**, they have already begun to **dissipate**. Now, some experts fear that the world risks a future with more traffic, more pollution, and climate change that worsens faster than ever. It's too soon to know whether that **gloomy** scenario will play out, but concerning signs seem to be growing all around the world.

In early April, with shutdowns **widespread**, daily global carbon emissions were down by 17 percent compared to last year. But as of June 11, new data show that they are only about 5 percent lower than at the same point in 2019, even though normal activity has not yet fully restarted.

"We still have the same cars, the same roads, the same industries, same houses," says Corinne Le Quéré, professor of climate change at the University of East Anglia in Britain. "So as soon as the restrictions are released, we go right back to where we were."
Now, "the risk is very high" that carbon output could **surge** past pre-pandemic levels, she says, "especially since we've done it in the past, not very long ago." During the 2007-08 financial crisis, emissions dropped but then bounced back.

Hints of a dirty recovery in China

As the first country to shut down when the virus hit, and one of the earliest to start reopening, China's experience offers a preview of what could **be in store** elsewhere. The dramatic air quality improvements seen as manufacturing and transportation largely **came to a halt** in February and March have now vanished. As factories pushed to make up for lost time, pollution returned in early May to pre-coronavirus levels, and in some places **surpassed** them for a short time, although it's fallen back a bit since.

The text is an extract from a longer article on the National Geographic's website which you can find here:
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/06/why-covid-19-will-end-up-harming-the-environment/

Vocabulary

Match the words **in bold** from the text with these synonyms:

prevalent _____

lie ahead, await _____

positive aspect _____

exceeded, bettered _____

rush, increase rapidly _____

encouraging _____

lessen, soften _____

stop _____

scatter _____

unhappy, dark _____

Discussion

As well as discussing the increased operation of factories in China, the article also goes on to talk about the fossil fuel industries in the US which are demanding financial aid following the pandemic, increases in traffic as people are less inclined to use public transport, and the mass deforestation in Brazil encouraged by President Bolsonaro.

- What other recent news stories are you aware of which are related to the environment

- What are the biggest challenges we face in terms of our environment and the climate crisis?

- How do you think governments should be responding to the combined crises of COVID-19 and the Environment?

- What changes to your way of life have you had to make due to the pandemic? Do you feel any of them have a positive impact on the environment? Why?