

UNIT 11 REVIEW TEST LISTENING SCRIPT

- Shen:** Carmela, I can't believe how quickly different species of animals and plants are disappearing from the planet!
- Carmela:** I know. It's quite alarming, isn't it, Shen? Just yesterday I read about the black rhinoceros – its population has decreased by almost 98 percent over the last 40 years or so. And most of it is due to poaching. Apparently, some groups of people believe that the horn of these animals has healing effects. But, that's no reason to kill off an entire species!
- Shen:** Yea, but some people claim that that's part of the people's culture.
- Carmela:** Oh, come on, Shen! There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that there are any health benefits from that sort of practice. And even if you could justify killing animals for religious, spiritual, or cultural reasons, the fact that this killing is a destructive behavior should be grounds for banning it.
- Shen:** Well, that's a good point, but I think these so called "poachers" also distribute the meat for food in villages close to the black rhino's habitat. So, it's not exactly poaching. National governments sell permits—often for hundreds of thousands of dollars—that allow people to hunt big game animals like these. The governments can then use that money to protect other species of plant and wildlife.
- Carmela:** Well, they should make an effort to do so more sustainably. And I'm not sure how much of that money from the permits actually goes towards the protection of other species.
- Shen:** Yea, you're probably right about that. But I'm actually more worried about losing plant species to environmental disturbances. There are so many plants that are used to treat illnesses, amongst other uses, and I'm sure there's plenty that we don't know about that might help us cure the most deadly of diseases. Take the Arizona agave plant, for instance. It is used for a number of reasons, one of them being the treatment of digestion problems. Arizona agave nearly went extinct in the 1980s as a result of humans overharvesting it. Thanks to preservation efforts around that time, their population has started to rebuild itself. In this case, people noticed that human action was destroying a species, and they were able to change their views on how to harvest

the plant and the plant was able to recover. I hope the same happens in other parts of the world.

Carmela: Wow! It certainly sounds like you know your stuff. Any other important plants you know about?

Shen: I was hoping you were going to ask me more; I love talking about this stuff! So, yea, the Chinese and Pacific yew, two tree species that grow in the western United States, are used in the production of some cancer drugs. But, they have come up against some threats such as overharvesting and environmental degradation, both not surprisingly human-related.

Carmela: Interesting, Shen. You are quite the environmentalist.

Shen: I guess you could say that. I'm certainly interested in preserving all sorts of diversity, and I think careful planning supported by empirical research is the best means we have to deal with the problems. Let's not let "cultural habits" get in the way of preservation and progress. Humans have the ability to adapt their thoughts more quickly than plants have the ability to change their DNA.

Carmela: Well, maybe. But maybe our desire to destroy the planet is in our DNA.

Shen: Oh no, don't get me started...