A Vision of a Better World in 2200

A video talk by Peter Alcorn

You are going to watch a 4-minute video of a man named Peter Alcorn, who talks optimistically about the future. As you watch the video the first time, your objective should be to understand the general message of the video; don’t worry too much about details during this first viewing.

Video link: http://www.ted.com/talks/pete_alcorn_s_vision_of_a_better_world.html

After watching the video once, you should complete the following series of tasks, which will help you to understand the video in greater detail and to improve your English communication skills.

1. Listening Comprehension: Understanding the TEDTalk

During the talk, Peter Alcorn expresses his theory of how fluctuations in the world’s population will have positive consequences. Watch the video again and answer the following questions about the talk.

1. How long does Peter Alcorn predict it will take for a new Enlightenment?

2. What does the UN predict the world’s population will be by the year 2100?

3. What does Peter Alcorn predict will happen to the world’s population after 2100?

4. What are the two beneficial effects of a declining population according to Peter Alcorn?

5. How does Peter Alcorn see the world in 150 years’ time?
2. Express Yourself
Peter Alcorn’s view of the future is a very positive one. How do you see the future? What predictions would you make about the world in the future? Look at the following categories and make your own predictions for some of them, giving reasons for your predictions.

- The world’s population
- The poor
- Employment
- Politics
- Third world countries
- Land and property
- Business
- Technological innovation
- Family
- Social communities

3. Language Practice
3.1. Read the following sentences, which summarize some of Alcorn’s ideas, and fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the verb in parentheses in order from first conditional sentences.

1. If the population ___________ (decline), it ___________ (have) positive effects on global economies.
2. If we ___________ (take) away land speculation, the price of land ___________ (drop).
3. If labor ___________ (decrease), wages ___________ (rise).
4. If we ___________ (have) a positive view about the future, we ___________ (can) make wise decisions to prepare for a better future.

3.2. Complete the following sentences to make your own predictions about the future.

1. If many people die due to a natural disaster like a famine or a major war, ___________ 
2. If the population continues to grow, ___________ 

4. Writing

Changes are inevitable as globalization continues to extend relentlessly like a tidal wave throughout the eastern and western worlds. However, the divide between the eastern and western worlds is an ongoing issue and a key factor in socio-economical terms. What is your opinion about the globalization process? How long do you think it will take for the gap between the east and the west to close and globalization is complete?
Answer Key

1. **Listening Comprehension**
   1. It will take 150 years.
   2. It will be a bit less than 10 billion.
   3. He predicts that the world’s population will begin to decline.
   4. There will be a fall in land speculation and a rise in wages.
   5. People will be planning for the future and starting to build the 22nd century Enlightenment.

2. **Express Yourself**
   **Sample answer:**
   In the future, I think that the rich will become richer and the poor will become poorer. Many people will be living below the poverty threshold and social communities will be replaced by ghettos and tribes. Water and natural resources will become scarce as the planet continues to degenerate and people will have to fight to survive. Many more people will die from diseases due to a lack of hospital services and resources to fund any form of social services. On the other hand, if you are lucky enough to be above the poverty threshold, you will have access to high technology and you will have more leisure time to enjoy the developments in technology and luxuries. Inflation will be high, but you will have the means to pay if you belong to the right social economic class. It really will be a world for the survival of the fittest.

3. **Language Practice**
   3.1.
   1. If the population declines, it will have positive effects on global economies.
   2. If we take away land speculation, the price of land will drop.
   3. If labor decreases, wages will rise.
   4. If we have a positive view about the future, we will be able to make wise decisions and plan a better future.

   3.2.
   **Sample answers:**
   1. If many people die due to a natural disaster like a famine or a major war, there will be a decline in the population and this could have a beneficial effect on global economies.
   2. If the population continues to grow, food and land will become scarcer and more expensive to achieve, and the world’s economies will suffer as inflation rises and the poor become poorer.

4. **Writing**
   **Sample answer:**
   Some people say that the divide between the west and the east is a natural divide and that in time the divide will become narrower. We are already seeing this happen as China becomes a rapidly increasing economic force, although major differences still exist and will continue to exist for a few generations. Revolutions and uprisings in the Arab world could also stimulate important changes and a new level of democracy if they are confronted in a beneficial way for the citizens of those countries. To sum up, I think it will take a few generations for the world to see a better balance in socio-economic terms and I can’t imagine globalization to ever be complete.

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