

When a River Returns

B2 | Adults / Teens | Reading + Vocabulary + Discussion | 50-60 minutes

BEFORE YOU READ

Talk with a partner. Would you support removing a road or car park to create more green space and water in a city? Why or why not?

1. Match the words (1-6) with the definitions (A-F).

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|---|
| 1. channel | _____ | A. water covering land that is normally dry |
| 2. restore | _____ | B. bring something back to an earlier condition |
| 3. flooding | _____ | C. an agreement in which each side gives up something |
| 4. habitat | _____ | D. a narrow route made for water to flow through |
| 5. concrete | _____ | E. the natural home of an animal or plant |
| 6. compromise | _____ | F. a hard building material made from cement |

2. Read the article. The bold words are the vocabulary from Activity 1.

1. In many cities, small rivers were once hidden beneath roads and buildings. Engineers placed them in underground pipes or straight **channels** to create more land for traffic and construction. The result was often practical in the short term, but it removed water, plants and wildlife from daily view.
2. Today, some cities are choosing to **restore** parts of these rivers. The process may involve removing sections of road, opening an underground stream and creating parks along the water. Supporters say the project can make an area more attractive and give residents a calmer place to walk, sit and meet.
3. The strongest argument is often safety. During heavy rain, a narrow underground channel can fill quickly. Water then has nowhere to go, increasing the risk of **flooding**. A wider, open river with nearby green space can hold more water for a short time. Trees and soil also absorb water that would otherwise run directly onto streets.
4. Restored rivers can create a new **habitat** for birds, insects and fish. Yet the projects are not simple. Removing **concrete** is expensive, and local businesses may worry about years of construction work. Drivers may also object if a road becomes narrower or disappears completely.
5. For this reason, successful projects usually need a **compromise**. Planners must listen to residents, explain the long-term benefits and reduce disruption where possible. A restored river cannot solve every environmental problem, but it can show that a city does not have to choose between useful public space and natural systems.

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UNDERSTAND, DISCUSS AND WRITE

3. Comprehension. Answer in complete sentences. Use the article to help you.

1. Why were many small rivers hidden in the past?

2. How can an open river reduce flooding risk?

3. What environmental benefit can restoration create?

4. Why might local businesses oppose a project?

5. What does the article say successful projects need?

4. Discuss. Talk in small groups. Give reasons and examples.

- Should cities prioritise cars or green space?
- What unused space could be improved in your town?
- Is a costly environmental project worth it if benefits take years?
- How should planners involve local residents?

5. Homework: Write an opinion paragraph.

Write 140-170 words proposing one change that would make your town more environmentally friendly. Explain benefits, costs and one compromise.

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ANSWER KEY AND TEACHING NOTE

Vocabulary matching

1. channel - D
2. restore - B
3. flooding - A
4. habitat - E
5. concrete - F
6. compromise - C

Comprehension answers

1. Why were many small rivers hidden in the past?

They were hidden to create more land for roads and construction and to control water.

2. How can an open river reduce flooding risk?

It can hold more water, while nearby soil and trees absorb water.

3. What environmental benefit can restoration create?

It can create a habitat for birds, insects and fish.

4. Why might local businesses oppose a project?

They may worry about the cost and disruption caused by long construction work.

5. What does the article say successful projects need?

They need compromise, communication with residents and efforts to reduce disruption.

Teaching note

Compare vocabulary answers before reading. Help learners plan an environmental change: benefits, costs and a compromise. Accept accurate comprehension paraphrases and supported personal responses.