

11.1 Environmental ethics: make the value judgement explicit

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 10 marks

KEY WORDS intrinsic value • environmental justice

Objective

Environmental ethics: make the value judgement explicit. Supported HL concept preparation; original classroom practice, not an official IB paper or assessed learner work.

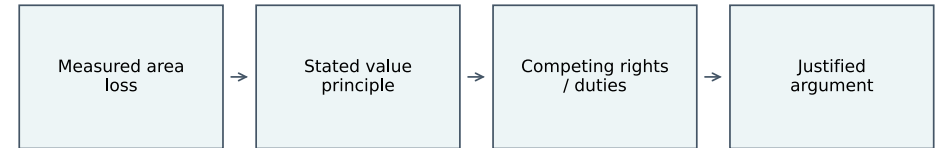
1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ What would explain this observation?

- People may agree on the measured loss of a wetland but disagree on whether a development is acceptable. The disagreement can concern values as well as scientific uncertainty.
- Start with a prediction. State the quantities or features you would compare, then decide what evidence could distinguish two explanations.

■ Build the model

- Environmental ethics examines reasons for responsibilities toward people, other organisms and ecological systems. Anthropocentric reasoning emphasizes human interests; biocentric reasoning recognizes moral standing of living organisms; ecocentric reasoning emphasizes ecological wholes. These positions are lenses for analysing arguments, and real individuals can combine them.
- **intrinsic value** : Value considered independent of usefulness to another party; **environmental justice** : Fair treatment in environmental burdens, benefits and decision-making.



■ Choose evidence that can test it

- Separate descriptive claims from normative claims. A species count is evidence about the sampled community; deciding that every species has intrinsic value is a value position. Compare consequences, rights, duties and fairness across generations. A defensible argument states its values, uses accurate evidence and acknowledges competing claims rather than disguising a value choice as a calculation.
- Use a fictional planning dispute or an attributed historical case. Build an argument table: stakeholder, factual claim, evidence, value principle and possible response. Include affected communities and future generations without pretending to speak for them. Use voluntary anonymous classroom positions; assess the reasoning rather than agreement with a preferred worldview.

■ Work from known quantities

- State the known values and their units. Choose the relation because its assumptions fit this case, then rearrange before substitution.
- Known: a wetland proposal affects 12 hectares of a 60-hectare site, or 20%. This quantifies the stated area change. An anthropocentric argument might examine flood protection and livelihoods; a biocentric argument might consider affected organisms; an ecocentric argument might consider hydrological connections. The 20% figure cannot alone decide which ethical argument is strongest.

Example:

A project affects 9 hectares within a 45-hectare site. Calculate the percentage of area affected. Use the same sequence: known quantities → model → relation → substitution → unit and interpretation.

■ Check the conclusion and its limits

- Worldview labels are analytical aids, not fixed stereotypes of cultures or people. Neither a stakeholder majority nor a numerical index automatically resolves a rights-based or intergenerational objection.
- Return to the original observation. Explain what the result supports, which conditions it assumes, and one way to test a competing explanation.

Warn:

A percentage of habitat lost alone settles the ethical acceptability of a development. This claim is false: Worldview labels are analytical aids, not fixed stereotypes of cultures or people. Neither a stakeholder majority nor a numerical index automatically resolves a rights-based or intergenerational objection.

Key:

Environmental ethics: make the value judgement explicit: Separate descriptive claims from normative claims. A species count is evidence about the sampled community; deciding that every species has intrinsic value is a value position. Compare consequences, rights, duties and fairness across generations. A defensible argument states its values, uses accurate evidence and acknowledges competing claims rather than disguising a value choice as a calculation.

2 Practice

2.1 Which statement is a value judgement rather than a measured observation? Choose one answer.

- **A** Future generations ought to have access to this ecosystem
- **B** The sampled site contains 12 recorded species
- **C** The surveyed area is 60 hectares

[1]

2.2 A project affects 9 hectares within a 45-hectare site. Calculate the percentage of area affected. Show the relation, substitution and units.

[2]

2.3 Decide whether this claim is true and justify: A percentage of habitat lost alone settles the ethical acceptability of a development.

[2]

2.4 Value considered independent of usefulness to another party: write the technical term.

[1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A fictional road removes 4 ha of a 20 ha wetland. Contrast anthropocentric and ecocentric evaluations using this number. What evidence is needed?

[4]