







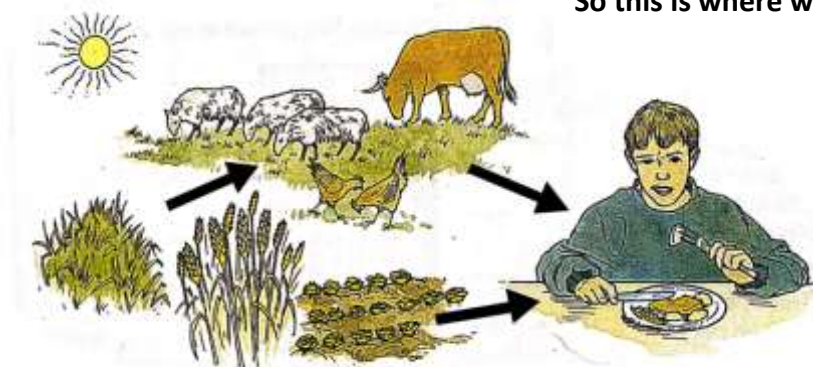
Where do humans fit in?

The earth is the largest ecosystem of all, and we humans are part of it. But we are not like the other animals. We try to **control** and **manage** what's around us.

Once upon a time

		
<p>At first, our ancestors lived by hunting, and eating seeds, nuts, berries and insects. Just like other animals. They moved around ...</p>	<p>... in search of food. But then, one day, they made a great discovery. Where they dropped seeds, new plants grew. Amazing!</p>	<p>From then on, their lives began to change. They became farmers. They sowed seeds to get crops, and kept live animals as a food store.</p>
		
<p>They had started to manage their ecosystems. Now they didn't need to move around searching for food. They could settle in one place.</p>	<p>Then along came another smart idea. If they produced more food than they needed, they could swap it for other things.</p>	<p>Today, our farmers still produce food – and swap it for money. Most of it gets frozen or cooked or packaged before you buy it.</p>

So this is where we fit in the food chain.



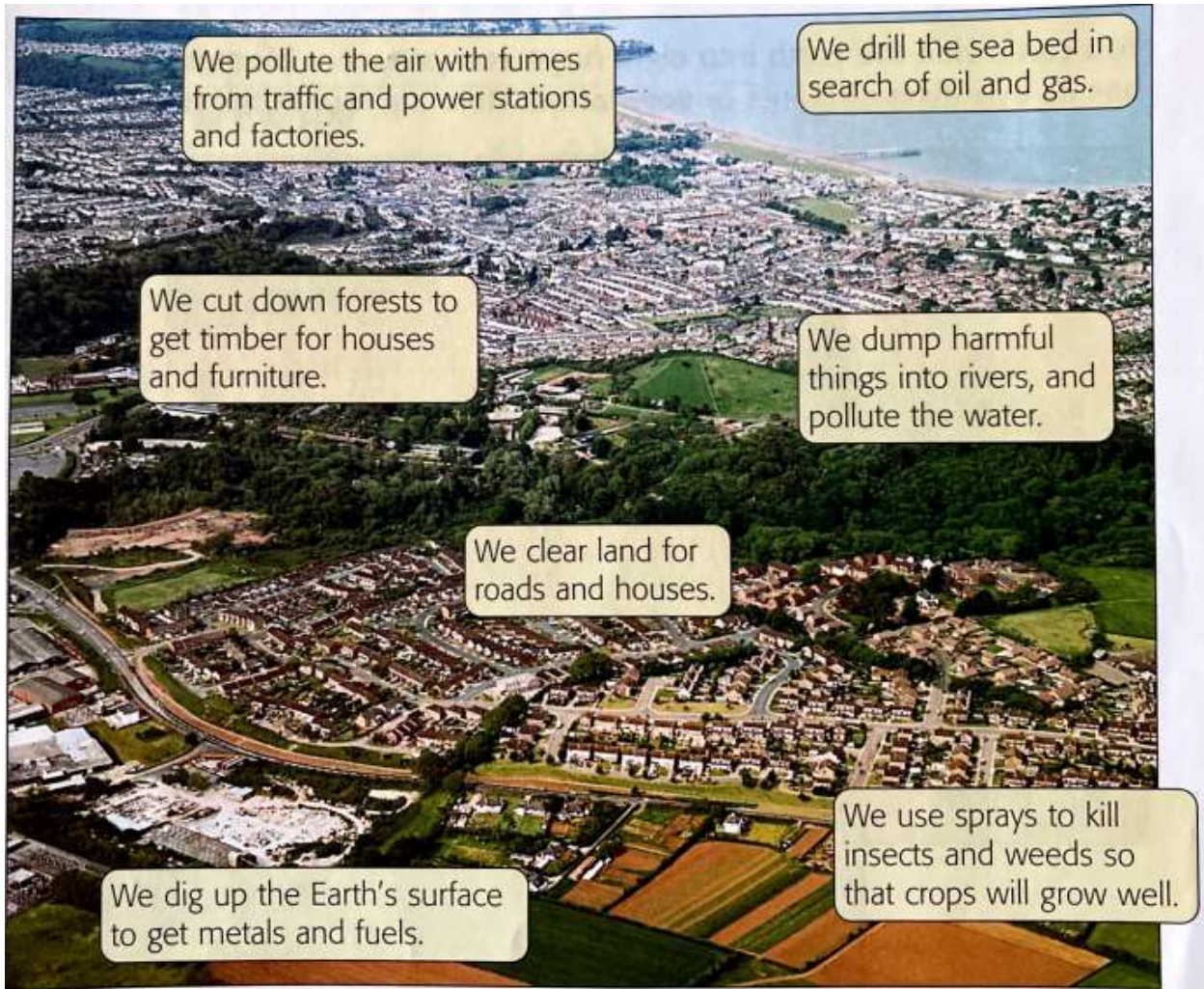
Did you know?

Our ancestors ate termites and other insects. They dug the termites from their mounds using bones.

How we affect the Earth's ecosystems

10 000 years ago there were about 4 million humans on the Earth. Today there are nearly 8000 million of us (8 billion) and we have spread over most of the Earth. We are clever and inventive, and always looking for ways to improve our standard of living. But at the same time, we damage many ecosystems, as this photo shows.

We kill off plants and animals when we destroy their environments. Every year, thousands of different **species** (kinds) of plants and animals disappear forever. They become **extinct**. And when one species goes, the rest of the **food web** suffers.



It does not have to be like this ...

We need houses and roads and fuel and food. But we can get what we need *without* destroying other species, or wasting things. This is called sustainable living. You will learn about this when you go to secondary school.