

Studio in the West Country



David Lea, an architect educated at Cambridge and presently living in Gwynedd, is deeply dedicated to buildings as extensions of their contexts, and favours important physical and psychological interactions between the natural environment and the way people relate to all the various components of a building. Driven by a philosophy that “architecture cannot be divorced from nature,” he describes it as a means to recreate a corner of paradise.” By paradise I mean the place where people may experience the fullest possible sense of well-being. The key to paradise is a harmonious relationship between man and nature.” This viewpoint sounds almost naive in its earnest simplicity. However, **his** observations are fully supported by psychologist Theodore Roszak and a growing number of his colleagues, who have concluded that nature deprivation is a **major cause** of mental maladjustment. Lea’s convictions are profoundly felt and right on target, given the fact that at least 90 percent of practising architects in the world today could not care less about humanity’s connections to nature and seem intent on maintaining this pleasant state of detachment.

Although David Lea’s central practice has produced impressive housing and educational buildings in North Wales, one of his most intriguing projects is a small rural cottage he built for a London painter with very limited resources. Entitled *Studio in the West Country*, this **tiny thatched-roof structure** seems to recall the Arts and Crafts Movement, harkens back to Ruskin’s and Morris’ rejection of the industrial revolution, and resurrect a lost set of values concerning how to live in harmony with the immediate environment. Constructed for a mere £3,300, his house looks like a hybrid cross between a tender for Noah’s Ark and an aboriginal mud hut. On closer inspection, however, one understands the brilliant use of minimal technology, the ingenious fusion of materials (bent saplings, chicken wire, cement reinforced with cow hair, straw insulation and reflective ceramic tiles), and the final aesthetic triumphs of the ensemble.

The dwelling was built by the combined talents of David Lea and his artist client. He worked with **her** for several weeks on the site, established the basic structural systems of bent wood armature, and then returned periodically to see how she was progressing with the final details. The *Studio* is a mini-triumph of primitive construction and site orientation. It also creates an image that seems to successfully evoke the combination of an ancient Celtic earthwork and a primordial habitat. Every inch of the modest structure leaves the visitor with a peculiar sense of witnessing a prophetic vision for an intelligent alternative to a *Mad Max* future – meaning **one** ravaged by environmental plunder. *Studio West* is the alternative to a time when all of the fossil fuels have been exhausted, the rapacious industries have been reduced to archeological wastelands of twisted steel, humanity has returned to foraging for food in the wilderness, and vengeful forests have reclaimed the world’s major cities.

A. Answer the following questions using the text.

1. According to the text, how many people were involved in the building of *Studio West* and who were they?
2. Why was it important to limit the cost of *Studio West*?
3. What materials were used in its construction?
4. Where have most of David Lea's projects been built?
5. Which two nineteenth century artists are named in connection with their rejection of the Industrial Revolution?
6. What is David Lea's philosophy according to the text?
7. What does the psychologist Theodore Roszak consider as one of the causes of mental maladjustment?
8. Give David Lea's definition of paradise.
9. What are the two ideas evoked by *Studio West*?
10. What is a *Mad Max* future?

B) Write True or False next to each of the following statements:

- 1) David Lea thinks that architecture should be completely separate from nature.
- 2) The cost of the structure is more than £3,300.
- 3) The architect worked on the site for many years.
- 4) The text states that 10% of practising artists do not care about humanity's links with nature.
- 5) The last paragraph evokes a future when man could be obliged to return to a primitive condition.

C) What or who do the following words refer to?

1. "his" in line 8 _____
2. "one" in line 29 _____
3. "her" in line 24 _____
4. "major cause" lines 9/10 _____
5. "tiny thatched-roof structure" _____

D) Find a word or words in the text with similar meaning.

1. keeping _____ (1)
2. last _____ (1)
3. not much money _____ (2)
4. perfectly correct _____ (3)
5. parts _____ (1)

Choose the best answer a), b), c) or d).

1. David Lea, _____ production includes houses and educational buildings, lives in Wales.
a) which b) who c) whom d) whose
2. I'm sorry but I _____ to come with you on holiday this summer. I'll have to study.
a) wouldn't be able b) won't be able c) can't d) couldn't
3. When _____ the road _____? In 1997.
a) was...built b) has built c) were... builded d) was ... builded
4. _____ to the exhibition without me! I'd like to see it with you after the exams.
a) Not go b) Mustn't go c) Don't go d) Not going
5. *Studio West* is one of the _____ buildings in the area.
a) more attractive b) attractiver c) most attractive d) attractivest
6. _____ have you been studying architecture? _____ nearly three years.
a) How much time...For b) How long time...For c) How long...Since d) How long...For
7. I _____ along the river when I saw a tiny thatched-roof cottage.
a) were walking b) walked c) was walking d) will walk
8. They _____ a number of plans before they decided to use my design.
a) examine b) are examining c) had examined d) have examined
9. The houses aren't _____ the church.
a) more old than b) as old than c) as older as d) as old as
10. It's nearly time for the written exam to start. I _____ go.
a) 'd better b) 'd must c) ought d) should to
11. If you _____ me a copy of the plans, I _____ another architect.
a) not give...will find b) don't give...will find c) didn't give...will find d) haven't given...find
12. It was very quiet near the studio. I didn't see _____ in the vicinity.
a) someone b) anyone c) no one d) everyone
13. You _____ park here. There's a no-parking sign over there.
a) don't have to b) mustn't c) don't need to d) haven't to
14. I _____ television last night. I was too tired.
a) haven't watched b) didn't watch c) watched not d) don't watch

Grammar (cont) 2

Name.....?

Surname.....

Corso di Laurea.....

15. . I remembered to bring my identity card this time. Did you bring _____?
a) yourself b) your c) yours d) your's
16. If you _____ along this road and turn right by those trees, you _____ to *Studio West*.
a) walk....'ll come b) walked...'ll come c) walking....'d come d) walk... 'd come
17. The artist, _____ worked on the *Studio West* site, was very pleased with the result.
a) which b) whom c) whose d) who
18. The local council _____ planning permission yet, so we can't start work.
a) didn't give b) is giving c) haven't given d) hasn't given
18. Planning permission _____ obtained before work can begin.
a) must to be b) ought to c) might d) must be
19. We left by plane, but my mother didn't want to come with _____.
a) our b) we c) us d) ours
20. I'm afraid you can't speak to the professor. He _____ a conference in Milan at the moment.
a) is attending b) attends c) has attended d) does attend
22. Next summer my sister _____ stay with her boyfriend in Finland.
a) am going to b) will going to c) is going to d) will going
23. How _____ tiles will you need to repair the roof?
a) much b) more c) many d) often
24. My aunt will make us a packed lunch. You _____ make sandwiches.
a) mustn't b) haven't c) mustn't to d) don't have to
25. I didn't do very well at the written exam. At the oral I hope to do _____.
a) best b) better c) worse d) weller