A
The kauri tree is a massive forest tree native to New Zealand. Kauri once formed vast forests over much of the north of the country. Whereas now it is the wood of the kauri which is an important natural resource, in the past it was the tree’s sap (the thick liquid which flows inside a tree) which, when hardened into gum, played an important role in New Zealand’s early history.

After running from rips or tears in the bark of trees, the sap hardens to form the lumps of gum which eventually fall to the ground and are buried under layers of forest litter. The bark often splits where branches fork from the trunk, and gum accumulates there also.

The early European settlers in New Zealand collected and sold the gum. Gum fresh from the tree was soft and of low value but most of the gum which was harvested had been buried for thousands of years. This gum came in a bewildering variety of colours, degree of transparency and hardness, depending on the length and location of burial, as well as the health of the original tree and the area of the bleeding. Highest quality gum was hard and bright and was usually found at shallow depth on the hills. Lowest quality gum was soft, black or chalky and sugary and was usually found buried in swamps, where it had been in contact with water for a long time. Long periods in the sun or bush fires could transform dull cloudy lumps into higher quality transparent gum.

B
Virtually all kauri gum was found in the regions of New Zealand where kauri forests grow today - from the middle of the North Island northwards. In Maori and early European times up until 1850, most gum collected was simply picked up from the ground, but, after that, the majority was recovered by digging.

C
The original inhabitants of New Zealand, the Maori, had experimented with kauri gum well before Europeans arrived at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They called it kapia and found it of considerable use.

Fresh gum from trees was prized for its chewing quality, as was buried gum when softened in water and mixed with the juice of a local plant. A piece of gum was often passed around from mouth to mouth when people gathered together until it was all gone, or when they tried of chewing, it was laid aside for future use.

Kauri gum burns readily and was used by Maori people to light fires. Sometimes it was bound in grass, ignited and used as a torch by night fishermen to attract fish.

D
The first kauri gum to be exported from New Zealand was part of a cargo taken back to Australia and England by two early expeditions in 1814 and 1815. By the 1860s, kauri gum’s reputation was well established in the overseas markets and European immigrants were joining the Maoris in collecting gum on the hills of northern New Zealand. As the surface gum became more scarce, spades were used to dig up the buried ‘treasure’. The increasing number of diggers resulted in rapid growth of the kauri gum exports from 1000 tons in 1860 to a maximum of over 10,000 tons in 1900.
For fifty years from about 1870 to 1920, the kauri gum industry was a major source of income for settlers in northern New Zealand. As these would-be farmers struggled to break in the land, many turned to gum-digging to earn enough money to support their families and pay for improvements to their farms until better times arrived. By the 1890s, there were 20,000 people engaged in gum-digging. Although many of these, such as farmers, women and children, were only part-time diggers, nearly 7000 were full-timers. During times of economic difficulty, gum-digging was the only job available where the unemployed from many walks of life could earn a living, if they were prepared to work.

E

The first major commercial use of kauri gum was in the manufacture of high-grade furniture varnish, a kind of clear paint used to treat wood. The best and purest gum that was exported prior to 1910 was used in this way. Kauri gum was used in 70% of the oil varnishes being manufactured in England in the 1890s. It was favoured ahead of other gums because it was easier to process at lower temperatures. The cooler the process could be kept the better, as it meant a paler varnish could be produced.

About 1910, kauri gum was found to be a very suitable ingredient in the production of some kinds of floor coverings such as linoleum. In this way, a use was found for the vast quantities of poorer quality and less pure gum, that had up till then been discarded as waste. Kauri gum’s importance in manufacture of varnish and linoleum was displaced by synthetic alternatives in the 1930s.

F

Fossil kauri gum is rather soft and can be carved easily with a knife or polished with fine sandpaper. In the time of Queen Victoria of England (1837 - 1901) some pieces were made into fashionable amber beads that women wore around their necks. The occasional lump that contained preserved insects was prized for use in necklaces and bracelet. Many of the gum-diggers enjoyed the occasional spell of carving and produced a wide variety of small sculptured pieces. Many of these carvings can be seen today in local museums.

Over the years, kauri gum as also been used in a number of minor products, such as an ingredient in marine glue and candles. In the last decades, it has had a very limited use in the manufacture of extremely high-grade varnish for violins, but the gum of the magnificent tree remains an important part of New Zealand’s history.

Questions 28 - 33

The text has six sections, A - F

Which section contains the following information?

NB You may use any letter more than once.

28 an example of a domestic product made of high-quality gum.
29 factors affecting gum quality.
30 how kauri gum is formed
31 how gum was gathered
32 the main industrial uses of the gum
33 recent uses of kauri gum
Questions 34 - 39

Look at the following events in the history of kauri gum in New Zealand and the list of time periods below.

Match each event with the correct time period, A - I

34 Kauri gum was first used in New Zealand
35 The amount of kauri gum sent overseas peaked.
36 The collections of kauri gum supplemented farmers’ incomes.
37 Kauri gum was made into jewellery.
38 Kauri gum was used in the production of string instruments.
39 Most of the kauri gum was found underground.

List of Time Periods

A before the 1800s
B in 1900
C in 1910
D between the late 1800s and the early 1900s
E between the 1830s and 1900
F in 1814 and 1815
G after 1850
H in the 1930s
I in recent times

Question 40

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

40. What was most likely to reduce the quality of kauri gum?

A how long it was buried
B exposure to water
C how deep it was buried
D exposure to heat

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ANSWERS Questions 28 - 33

28 an example of a domestic product made of high-quality gum E

The first major commercial use of kauri gum was in the manufacture of high-grade furniture varnish, a kind of clear paint used to treat wood. The best and purest gum that was exported prior to 1910 was used in this way.

29 factors affecting gum quality A

Gum fresh from the tree was soft and of low value but most of the gum which was harvested had been buried for thousands of years. This gum came in a bewildering variety of colours, degree of transparency and hardness, depending on the length and location of burial, as well as the health of the original tree and the area of the bleeding. Highest quality gum was hard and bright and was usually found at shallow depth on the hills. Lowest quality gum was soft, black or chalky and sugary and was usually found buried in swamps, where it had been in contact with water for a long time. Long periods in the sun or bush fires could transform dull cloudy lumps into higher quality transparent gum.

30 how kauri gum is formed A

...it was the tree’s sap (the thick liquid which flows inside a tree) which, when hardened into gum...

After running from rips or tears in the bark of trees, the sap hardens to form the lumps of gum which eventually fall to the ground and are buried under layers of forest litter. The bark often splits where branches fork from the trunk, and gum accumulates there also.

(the Present Simple Active and Passive tenses here show us that this is a PROCESS - the sap hardens... which eventually fall.... and are buried.... the bark splits.... gum accumulates.....)

31 how gum was gathered B

In Maori and early European times up until 1850, most gum collected was simply picked up from the ground, but, after that, the majority was recovered by digging.

32 the main industrial uses of the gum E

The first major commercial use of kauri gum was in the manufacture of high-grade furniture varnish, a kind of clear paint used to treat wood.

33 recent uses of kauri gum F

In the last decades, it has had a very limited use in the manufacture of extremely high-grade varnish for violins, but the gum of the magnificent tree remains an important part of New Zealand’s history.
Answers Questions 34 - 39

34 Kauri gum was **first** used in New Zealand.
**A before the 1800s**
**(Para C)** The **original** inhabitants of New Zealand, the Maori, had experimented with kauri gum well **before** Europeans arrived **at the beginning of the nineteenth century**.

35 The amount of kauri gum sent overseas **peaked**.
**B in 1900**
**(Para D)** The increasing number of diggers resulted in rapid growth of the kauri gum exports from 1000 tons in 1860 to a maximum of over 10,000 tons in 1900.

36 The **collections** of kauri gum **supplemented** farmers’ incomes.
**D between the late 1800s and the early 1900s**
**(Para D)** By the 1890s, there were 20,000 people engaged in gum-digging. Although many of these, such as farmers, women and children, were only part-time diggers, nearly 7,000 were full-timers.

37 Kauri gum was made into **jewellery**.
**E between the 1830s and 1900**
**(Para F)** In the **time of Queen Victoria of England (1837 - 1901)** some pieces were made into fashionable **amber beads** that women wore around their necks. The occasional lump that contained preserved insects was prized for use in **necklaces and bracelets**.

38 Kauri gum was used in the production of **string instruments**.
**I in recent times**
**(Para F)** In the **last decades**, it has had a very limited use in the manufacture of extremely high-grade varnish for **violins**...

39 Most of the kauri gum was **found underground**.
**G after 1850**
**(Para B)** In Maori and early European times up until 1850, most gum collected was simply picked up from the ground, but, after that, the majority was recovered by **digging**.

**Answer Question 40**

40. What was most likely to **reduce the quality** of kauri gum?

A how long it was buried
**B exposure to water**
C how deep it was buried
D exposure to heat
**(Para A)** **Lowest quality** gum was soft, black or chalky and sugary and was usually found buried in **swamps**, where it had been **in contact with water for a long time**.
IELTS Exam Training Courses
GT Reading Test 10 Section 3
KAURI GUM - a piece of New Zealand’s history

Key Vocab for IELTS - learn 12 words a day.

Guess these words first from context (look at the sentences that surround them) and then check in a dictionary:

1) Kauri once formed vast forests.
2) Early European settlers collected the gum.
3) The gum was harvested by hand.
4) It had been buried for many years.
5) The quality depended on the location of their burial.
6) The original inhabitants of New Zealand were the Maori.
7) Sometimes the gum was ignited.
8) Exports peaked in 1900.
9) Gum-digging was a way to earn a living.
10) Poor quality gum was discarded as waste.
11) It was displaced by synthetic alternatives in the 1930s.
12) In the last decades it has had limited use.

To know a word, you need to know:

1) The meaning (synonyms, opposites, connotation etc)
2) The pronunciation
3) The spelling
4) The different forms (verb, noun, adjective, adverb)
5) The grammar (how to use it in a sentence, past tense etc).
6) Some common collocations (which words usually go with it)

e.g.
‘To bury something’

1) To put something underground.
2) /beri /
3) Bury - buried (past tense)
4) Burial (noun) buried (adjective)
5) The gum was buried (Passive) under the tree
6) A burial site, buried treasure, buried at sea.

Good luck!

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