Multiple Choice & Scanning

Before looking at a longer reading, we'll have a practice with two paragraphs. It is the first part of the full reading you will do.

Identify the key word in the question first of all. Then scan the text to find it.

When you have done this, read the sentences around this key word and see what information best matches the three choices you have.

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Australian Agricultural Innovations:
1850 – 1900

During this period, there was a wide spread expansion of agriculture in Australia. The selection system was begun, whereby small sections of land were parceled out by lot. Particularly in New South Wales, this led to conflicts between small holders and the emerging squatter class, whose abuse of the system often allowed them to take vast tracts of fertile land.

There were also many positive advances in farming technology as the farmers adapted agricultural methods to the harsh Australian conditions. One of the most important was "dry farming". This was the discovery that repeated ploughing of fallow, unproductive land could preserve nitrates and moisture, allowing the land to eventually be cultivated. This, along with the extension of the railways allowed the development of what are now great inland wheat lands.

To answer this question you should have highlighted the word **dry farming**.

You should then have been able to scan the two paragraphs to quickly find this word.

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The inland areas of Australia are less fertile than most other wheat producing countries and yields per acre are lower. This slowed their development, but also led to the development of several labour saving devices. In 1843 John Ridley, a South Australian farmer, invented "the stripper", a basic harvesting machine. By the 1860s its use was widespread. H. V. McKay, then only nineteen, modified the machine so that it was a complete harvester: cutting, collecting and sorting. McKay developed this early innovation into a large harvester manufacturing industry centred near Melbourne and exporting worldwide. Robert Bowyer Smith invented the "stump jump plough", which let a farmer plough land which still had tree stumps on it. It did this by replacing the traditional plough shear with a set of wheels that could go over stumps, if necessary.

The developments in farm machinery were supported by scientific research. During the late 19th century, South Australian wheat yields were going down. An agricultural scientist at the colony's agricultural college, John Custance, found that this was due to a lack of phosphates and advised the use of soluble superphosphate fertilizer. The implementation of this scheme revitalised the industry.

From early days it had been obvious that English and European sheep breeds had to be adapted to Australian conditions, but only near the end of the century was the same applied to crops. Prior to this, English and South African strains had been use, with varying degrees of success. William Farrer, from Cambridge University, was the first to develop new wheat varieties that were better able to withstand dry Australian conditions. By 1914, Australia was no longer thought of as a land suitable only for sheep, but as a wheat growing nation.

422 words

"I think these eBooks are FANTASTIC!!! I know that's not academic language, but it's the truth!"

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