When chanced upon unexpectedly the tips of their vast blades appear to pierce the horizon, as if these were the parts of a strange machine arranged seriatim and devised to sew the land to the sky.

**Passage 2**

**Read the passage below and attempt question 9. While reading, you may wish to make notes on the main ideas and/or highlight key points in the passage.**

**In the second passage, Will Self considers views towards wind turbines and how landscapes change over time.**

Curious they may be, the wind turbines, and to those of us who remember the landscape before their erection they may always seem a little outlandish. But no-one could reasonably claim they are objectively ugly, any more than they could say the vista of coal-fired power stations that clusters around the Humber estuary is ugly.

Indeed, viewed from across the flat striping of harvested wheat fields, the cooling towers of power stations resemble the fat-bellied trunks of baobab trees, their pale concrete bark dappled with the dark shadows cast by the steam clouds belching from their own mouths. Even the nuclear power station Sizewell B, on the Suffolk coast - which I lived close to for a couple of years - has a strange if minatory loveliness, what with its dully-gleaming white dome, that like the compound eye of Moloch sits atop its iridescent blue plinth.

No, the power stations are not ugly and nor are the great pylons that stride away from them across Britain, their steely forms linked by crackling cables.

The pylons have an irrefutable majesty, and with their heads in the clouds and their feet in the grass, it's impossible not to anthropomorphise them. These giant humanoid figures are clearly the handiwork of smaller humanoid figures, yet this does not make them strangers to our countryside. On the contrary, this is what tells you that they belong here.

The vista the wind turbine revolves within, whether it be the fens of East Anglia or the bens of the Scots Highlands, is a man-made one. However, that doesn't in and of itself mean that it is unnatural, for we are by no means the only animal on this green Earth to adapt its environment. You might as well describe beavers' dams or termites' mounds as "unnatural".

Indeed, the very idea of wilderness is itself a perverse human invention. A massive category error imposed by the British colonists in North America on a landscape of dispersed woodland and glade that they assumed to be "natural", but which was in fact the result of centuries of concerted Native management.

Coming from their own immemorial associations of field, coppiced woodland, dew pond and commons, the British were unable to see the contours of the careful footprint that the Aboriginals' firing of the bush to encourage crops had left, any more than they could appreciate the cultural richness and diversity of this 40,000-year-old oral culture, replete with magic and mysticism. And besides, the British weren't altogether minded to see the Aboriginals as human at all.

But before you shake your head at the hopelessly bigoted attitudes of the remote past, it's worth considering that we have here today, in Surrey and Shropshire and Somerset, colonists of our own who are every bit as blinkered. Yes, blinkered because they cannot understand that the preservation of our countryside demands not a rose-tinted vision of it, but a steely determination to utilise it effectively.

It would seem to me that most of those who energetically campaign against the planting of wind farms do so not out of a profound appreciation of the dew-jewelled web of life, but merely as spectators who wish the show that they've paid admission for to go as advertised. After all, hardly anyone really lives in the country any more and a mere fraction of the population work on the land. For the rest, they look upon it from their terraces and their decking, they stroll a few hundred yards across it, and then they get in their off-road vehicles to drive on the road to the nearest town or city, where they sit in an office staring at a computer screen.

Perhaps when the entire landmass has been so subdivided that there remains not a single portion that cannot be identified as someone or other's backyard, then, and only then, will the property owners be able to acknowledge after all that there's something really rather beautiful about a wind turbine. Unfortunately, by then it will be too late because there won't be white blades whirring at the end of the garden, but black clouds belching from the chimneys necessary to power all that rural idiocy.