

18.1 Photosynthesis and limiting factors

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 10 marks

KEY WORDS photosynthesis • limiting factor

Objective

Photosynthesis and limiting factors. Supported SL concept preparation; original classroom practice, not an official IB paper or assessed learner work.

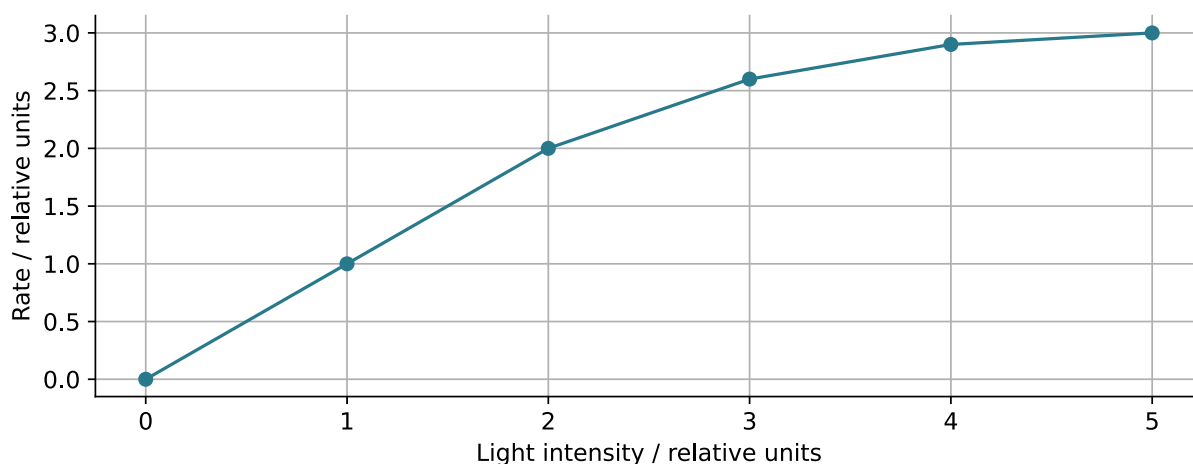
1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ What would explain this observation?

- A brighter lamp does not always produce more oxygen from pondweed. Another factor may limit the process when light is already sufficient.
- Start with a prediction. State the quantities or features you would compare, then decide what evidence could distinguish two explanations.

■ Build the model

- **Photosynthesis** transfers energy from light into chemical stores. Carbon dioxide and water form carbohydrate, releasing oxygen. Chlorophyll absorbs light; light intensity, temperature and carbon dioxide supply can affect rate.
- **limiting factor** : A factor whose shortage restricts rate; photosynthesis: Light-driven formation of carbohydrate.



■ Choose evidence that can test it

- Change only one factor when testing a limiting factor. At low light, extra light may increase rate. At a plateau, the changed factor is no longer the main limit in that range; the graph alone does not identify which other factor is limiting.
- Measure collected gas volume over a fixed time instead of assuming all bubbles have the same volume. Control temperature, plant size and carbon dioxide supply. Allow the plant to adjust before each reading and repeat.

■ Work from known quantities

- State the known values and their units. Choose the relation because its assumptions fit this case, then rearrange before substitution.
- Known: 6.0 cubic centimetres of gas are collected in 3.0 minutes. Use $\text{rate} = \text{volume}/\text{time}$. $\text{Rate} = 6.0/3.0 = 2.0$ cubic centimetres per minute. Bubble counts can be a rough proxy, but bubbles of different size make comparisons less reliable.

Example:

9.0 cubic centimetres of gas are collected in 3.0 minutes. Find the rate. Use the same sequence: known quantities → model → relation → substitution → unit and interpretation.

■ Check the conclusion and its limits

- Moving a lamp changes light and may also change temperature. A photosynthesis experiment needs control of heating, not just a ruler.
- Return to the original observation. Explain what the result supports, which conditions it assumes, and one way to test a competing explanation.

Warn:

All oxygen bubbles have exactly the same volume. This claim is false: Moving a lamp changes light and may also change temperature. A photosynthesis experiment needs control of heating, not just a ruler.

Key:

Photosynthesis and limiting factors: Change only one factor when testing a limiting factor. At low light, extra light may increase rate. At a plateau, the changed factor is no longer the main limit in that range; the graph alone does not identify which other factor is limiting.

2 Practice

2.1 A rate-light graph reaches a plateau. What follows? Choose one answer.

- **A** Light is still certainly the only limit
- **B** Another factor may now limit the rate
- **C** Photosynthesis has stopped

[1]

2.2 9.0 cubic centimetres of gas are collected in 3.0 minutes. Find the rate. Show the relation, substitution and units.

[2]

2.3 Decide whether this claim is true and justify: All oxygen bubbles have exactly the same volume.

[2]

2.4 A factor whose shortage restricts rate: write the technical term.

[1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A fictional plant produces 8 cm^3 in 4 min at low light and 12 cm^3 in 4 min at high light. Explain the change, and why an unchanged rate after a further light increase would not identify the next limiting factor. [4]
