Before you read

Answer these questions.

1. What are some famous religious buildings around the world?
2. What is the largest building in your country?
3. What are some of the most famous historical places around the world?
Angkor Wat is the biggest religious building in the world. It is bigger than any other temple in Asia, the Great Pyramid in Egypt, or St. Peter’s in Rome, and it is only one of a thousand temples in the Angkor region. Its design is so remarkable that some people regard it as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Angkor Wat is located in present-day Cambodia, in Southeast Asia.

Angkor was long covered by dense jungle and was a forgotten place for many centuries. Wandering Buddhist monks sometimes passed by the temples on their way through the jungle. They didn’t know how these magnificent temples had been built, so they made up stories about them. They said the temples had been built by gods in an ancient time. Some people said they had been built by giants. These legends eventually reached other places. Some Asians went in search of this mysterious city of the gods. Eventually some European adventurers heard the stories about the lost city of the jungle, but most people didn’t believe them.

In 1860, Henri Mahout, a Frenchman, became the first European to see Angkor. Mahout was in the Cambodian jungle looking for plant species that were unknown in France. Soon, local people told him about “temples built by giants in the jungle.” Mahout was curious, so he hired local guides and started to look for the temples. Other explorers before him had searched but had never found anything. Mahout was lucky. He found the city and its magnificent temple. He spent three weeks drawing the temple. It is now called Angkor Wat, which means “city temple.” We do not know what its builders called it. Unfortunately, Mahout died of fever in the jungle at age 35. His diaries and drawings were taken to France where people began to be curious about this place. Soon visitors came to see it. Among them was Anna Leonowens, the British governess to the king of Siam. Her life story later became the feature of the musical, The King and I. Other people came to steal artifacts. Historians and archeologists came to find out more about this ancient city and its temples. They still continue to do so today.

The archeologists and historians were lucky because the walls of the temple were covered with inscriptions to tell us the story. These inscriptions were written in Sanskrit, an ancient language that greatly influenced Cambodian. They tell us that the builders of Angkor Wat were the ancestors of today’s Cambodians. One thousand years ago, Angkor was the capital of an empire that covered parts of present-day Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. About a million people lived in the city of Angkor at one time. The city was founded in the ninth century and was abandoned by the fifteenth.

Angkor Wat was built in the twelfth century at the peak of the empire’s wealth and power. It was built for King Suryavarman II as his royal temple and dedicated to the Hindu gods. The temple includes a series of towers, the highest of which is 213 feet (65 meters) high. It is the largest and most beautiful temple of all the
buildings of Angkor. It is built in the style of Khmer architecture. It was made of sandstone blocks that were carried about 23 miles (40 km) to the site. The stones were fitted together with extreme accuracy and skill, with no cement being used. For example, there is a 660-foot-long (201 meters) corridor with measurements accurate to a fraction of an inch. The building took 37 years to build, but one modern engineer has said that it would take 300 years to build Angkor Wat today. All of its surfaces have carvings that show gods, men, and animals, as well as armies and battles. The walls also tell us about the lives of the ancient people of Angkor. They grew rice and fished. They needed a lot of rice for the 1 million residents of the city and for the empire’s armies. They grew rice by making a system of waterways for their huge rice fields.

We do not know why Angkor was deserted. Some people think there was a famine. Some say that the Khmer people were so distracted with building that their enemies came and took over the city. Whatever the reason, around 1430, the Thai people attacked Angkor and took away its people as slaves.

The city was abandoned, but the temple remained. Although originally built as a Hindu temple, it later became a Buddhist temple. For 400 years, Buddhist monks lived there and stopped the jungle from taking over the temple. Although they cleared the thick brush around the roofs, walls, and courtyards, they could not take away the trees that were centuries old. To this day the trees’ enormous roots and trunks are breaking apart the ancient stones.

In the 1990s, art historian Dr. Eleanor Mannikka looked into the mysteries of Angkor Wat. She measured the temple’s structure in detail and used the same unit of measure as the Khmer builders, which was the hat. This equaled the distance from a person’s elbow to the tip of the middle finger. According to Mannikka, the measurements formed a code recording the cycles of the sun and moon and important dates in the history of the Khmer. She also noticed that the temple was designed so as to make use of the sun’s rays falling on important carvings. The sun’s rays would fall on an important carving on important religious days. Mannikka believes that the designs of the temple were very special and were meant to protect its people, although many specialists do not believe her theories. There are other theories, too. Perhaps one day we will know.

Today Angkor Wat has become a symbol of Cambodia. It is rare for a flag to have an image of a building, but Angkor Wat appears on Cambodia’s national flag. It is also the main attraction for tourists visiting the country. Angkor Wat was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1992, which means that it has outstanding cultural or natural importance to the entire world and that it should be protected for all time.
MEANING

Circle the letter of the answer that is closest in meaning to the underlined word.

1. Angkor Wat was covered by **dense** jungle.
   a. dark
   b. thick
   c. tall
   d. old

2. His **diaries** and drawings were taken to France.
   a. records of a person’s life
   b. writings about the history of places
   c. stories about things that did not really happen
   d. poems about great heroes

3. Other people came to steal **artifacts**.
   a. writings left by others who came before
   b. remains of plants and animals from long ago
   c. objects made by humans in an earlier time
   d. anything in nature, either present or past

4. The walls of the temple were covered with **inscriptions**.
   a. objects that tell a story
   b. pictures made on cloth
   c. writings made on a surface
   d. marks left by nature

5. The builders of Angkor Wat were the **ancestors** of today’s Cambodians.
   a. family members, such as aunts and uncles
   b. citizens of the same country
   c. people who live far away
   d. relatives who lived long ago
6. The city was founded in the ninth century and _abandoned_ by the fifteenth.
   - a. left completely
   - b. passed by
   - c. filled up
   - d. made famous

7. The stones were fitted together with extreme _accuracy_.
   - a. exactly correct
   - b. in a unique way
   - c. with some errors
   - d. in a normal way

8. The measurements were accurate to a _fraction_ of an inch.
   - a. a complete whole
   - b. almost an entire piece
   - c. a very small part
   - d. a combination of two things

9. Some people think there was a _famine_.
   - a. a time when there are floods
   - b. a time when there is no rain
   - c. a time when there is no leadership
   - d. a time when there is no food

10. Some say that the Khmer people were so _distracted_ that their enemies took over the city.
    - a. thinking about what one is doing
    - b. thinking about the future
    - c. thinking about what is important
    - d. thinking about something else
WORDS THAT GO TOGETHER

A. Find words in the reading that go together with the words below to make phrases.

1. feature ________________
2. dedicated ________________
3. ________________ use ________________
4. at ________________ peak ________________
5. made ________________
6. ________________ image ________________
7. ________________ detail

B. Complete the sentences with the phrases from Part A.

1. Something you created or invented is something you ________________.
2. When you employ something for a purpose you ________________ it.
3. The ________________ your party, show, or event would be the most special part of it.
4. If you looked at every single part of something, you looked at it ________________.
5. When something is done for a cause, purpose, or person, it is ________________ it.
6. To be ________________ something means to be at the highest point or level.
7. ________________ something is a picture of it or an object made to represent it.

C. Now use the phrases in your own sentences.

EXAMPLE: The artist was at the peak of her career.

USE

Work with a partner to answer the questions. Use complete sentences.

1. What can be one of the reasons for a famine?
2. What are you able to accomplish with accuracy?
3. What are some places in the world that have dense forests?
4. What kinds of things do people write in a diary?
5. What do you have that once belonged to your ancestors?
6. What is a kind of artifact that we see in museums?
7. What is another ancient place where inscriptions have been found?
8. What is something that makes you distracted when you are trying to do work?

COMPREHENSION

UNDERSTANDING MAIN IDEAS

Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. Paragraph 2 is mainly about ______.
   a. where Angkor Wat was built  
   b. the legends about Angkor Wat  
   c. who went in search of Angkor Wat  
   d. the Buddhist monks who passed by Angkor Wat

2. The main idea of paragraph 3 is that ______.
   a. local people believed Angkor Wat had been built by giants  
   b. many explorers tried to find Angkor Wat  
   c. a famous woman went to see Angkor Wat  
   d. Henry Mahout found Angkor Wat and left records of it

3. The main idea of paragraph 5 is that Angkor Wat was ______.
   a. dedicated to the Hindu gods  
   b. made with sandstone blocks accurately put together  
   c. covered with beautiful stone carvings  
   d. an amazing structure built with great skill

4. Paragraph 8 is mainly about Dr. Eleanor Mannikka’s ______.
   a. detailed measurements of the temple  
   b. knowledge of the history of the Khmer people  
   c. theories about the design of the temple  
   d. study of important carvings
REMEMBERING DETAILS
Reread the passage and circle the letter of the best answer.

1. Wandering Buddhist monks ______.
   a. helped to build Angkor Wat    c. created stories about Angkor Wat
   b. knew who built Angkor Wat    d. forgot about Angkor Wat

2. Angkor Wat means ______.
   a. temple built by giants        c. city temple
   b. temple in the jungle          d. hidden temple

3. Henri Mahout found Angkor Wat ______.
   a. with the help of local people c. after other explorers told him where it was
   b. while he was looking for another place d. after searching for three weeks

4. In the fifteenth century, Angkor Wat ______.
   a. was in the process of being built c. was at its height of success
   b. had a population of 1 million people d. was already empty of people

5. The temple of Angkor Wat is built with a series of ______.
   a. stone blocks                    c. circles
   b. towers                         d. Hindu gods

6. From the wall writings, we know the Khmer people ______.
   a. suffered from a lack of food    c. didn’t know how to measure accurately
   b. grew rice and fished            d. had very little water

7. While Buddhist monks lived at Angkor Wat, they ______.
   a. allowed the temple to be taken over c. planted new trees
   the by jungle                           d. protected the temple from the jungle
   b. built new roofs, walls, and courtyards

8. Dr. Mannikka believed the Khmer made use of the sun’s rays to ______.
   a. shine light on important carvings c. protect the people
   b. record the cycles of the moon      d. create a unit of measurement
MAKING INFERENCES

The answers to these questions are not directly stated in the article. Write complete sentences.

1. What can be inferred about the monks who said the temples had been built by the gods?
2. What did Mahout’s diaries and drawings do for other adventurers?
3. What can you infer from the statement that “the archeologists and historians were lucky because the walls of the temple were covered with inscriptions”?
4. What can you conclude about the builders of Angkor Wat?
5. From the carvings on the walls, what can you conclude about the religious beliefs of the Khmer people?
6. What can you infer about the Buddhist monks who lived in Angkor Wat?
7. What can you infer from the statement “There are other theories, too”?
8. How do you suppose the people of Cambodia feel about Angkor Wat?

DISCUSSION

Discuss the answers to these questions with your classmates.

1. What are some places in your country that have historical importance? What is being done to protect them? Do you like to visit historical places? Why or why not?
2. What are some places in the world that have engineering wonders of both ancient and modern times? Are any of these places in your country?
3. Who were the earliest people to live in your country? What was their religion? Where did they live? What were their houses like? What did they wear and eat? Were they farmers, nomads, or merchants? Do you have an interest in learning about your family’s ancestors? Why or why not?
4. Many people have stolen artifacts from Angkor Wat and other historical places around the world. Why do people steal artifacts? Who helps to create a market for them? How can the theft of artifacts be prevented?

CRITICAL THINKING

Work with a partner. Ask each other the following questions. Discuss your answers.

1. Mahout died of fever in the jungle. Many explorers died during their expeditions. Why do you think people have always wanted to explore other places? What

(continued)
characteristics do explorers have? Why do they risk their lives trying to find places where no one else has gone before? What hardships do you think Mahout experienced in the jungle? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being an explorer? Do you like to travel and explore places you have never seen? Why or why not?

2. So many tourists visit Angkor Wat that it is suffering new damage. How can tourists help to protect culturally important places? What are some ways in which governments, organizations, and individuals can each contribute to the protection of important historical or natural places? Do you think the problem should be a global effort, or should it be the responsibility of the local government? Explain.

**WRITING**

On separate paper, write a paragraph or an essay about one of the following topics.

1. Write a biography of a famous explorer
2. Write an argument for or against this idea: Artifacts in famous museums stolen from historical sites should be returned to where they came from.

**GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION**

**SEMICOLONS**

1. When there is no coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet) between independent clauses in a sentence and the relationship is clear, we use a semicolon (;) to separate them.
   
   The city was founded in the ninth century; it was abandoned by the fifteenth.

2. If the relationship between the independent clauses is not clear with a semicolon alone, we can use a transitional expression as well.
   
   The temple was built as a Hindu temple; however, it later became a Buddhist temple.

Add semicolons to the following sentences where necessary.

1. Some people came to see it because they were curious others came to steal artifacts.
2. Historians were lucky the walls of the temple were covered with inscriptions.
3. The carvings show gods, men and animals, and battles in addition, they tell us about the lives of the people.
4. Her theory was that the temple was designed to protect its people however, others do not believe this theory.
5. The city was founded in the ninth century it was abandoned by the fifteenth.

6. A lot of rice was grown therefore, a system of waterways was developed for their rice fields.

7. Angkor was the capital of an empire about a million people lived there at one time.

8. The monks cleared the thick brush as much as they could they could not take away the trees that were centuries old.

9. The temple is 213 feet (65 meters) high it is the largest and most beautiful temple of all the buildings of Angkor.

10. Mahout wanted others to believe what he had discovered he made detailed descriptions and drawings of his find.

Go to page 169 for the Internet Activity.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- The Khmer, a Hindu people, built their wealth on rice.
- About 90 percent of Cambodians today are of Khmer descent, and Angkor Wat has become a symbol of their ancient culture.
- Over a million tourists visit Angkor Wat each year.