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PETRA — a wonder of the world

(Grades 10–11)

1. What wonders of the world do you know? Where are they located?
2. Have you ever seen any wonders of the world? Tell about your impressions.
3. What are the most unusual places where people can live?

There are several wonders of the world. One of them is the ancient city of Petra which is considered to be the main attraction of Jordan.

If you remember the film in which Indiana Jones sought for the Grail, you will recall a huge temple carved out of rock. This temple was not part of the set. These episodes were filmed in Petra.

Petra was inhabited since prehistoric time. It is situated between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, in a great rift valley east of Wadi Araba in Jordan about 80 kilometres south of the Dead Sea.

The ancient city of Petra was half-built and half-carved into the rock about 4 thousand years ago (according to other sources — 2 thousand) by the Nabateans, ancient people of North Arabia. But not only Nabateans took part in building it. All buildings of Petra were built in three periods: the Edomites (XVIII–II century BC), the Nabataeans (II century BC — 106 BC) and Romans (106–395 BC). In the XII century the ancient city was owned by Knights Crusaders of the Teutonic Order. Monuments, which were built here after the VI century BC, are mostly destroyed.

Petra became the capital of the kingdom and gained enormous influence and fame. The emergence of the city in such a remote place was possible due to the ability of the inhabitants to control the flow of water, because in fact Petra is an artificial oasis. In this area there are frequent floods, and the Nabataeans successfully controlled them using dams, cisterns and aqueducts that allowed them not only to survive during long periods of drought, but also to successfully trade water.

During Hellenistic and Roman times the rock-cut capital city of the Nabateans became a major caravan centre for the silks of China, the incense of Arabia, a crossroad between Egypt, Arabia and Syria-Phoenicia.

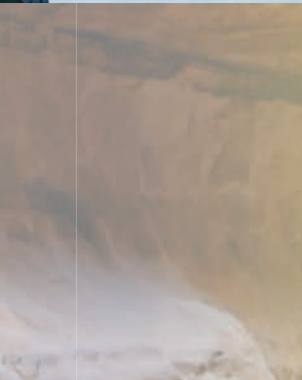
The Nabateans traded silk, ivory, different spices, precious metals, gems, perfume and medicine through this trading network.

Due to the length of the trading network, the Nabatean culture was influenced by ancient Greece, Rome, Arabia and Assyria. Unlike in other societies of their time, there was no slavery and every member of the society took part in the daily work.

At present the area of Petra has been explored only for 15 %, so it is possible that soon the mysteries of the ancient city can affect the whole world! These 15 % include about 800 various historical sites on the territory of Petra! According to an Arab legend Petra is the place where Moses struck the rock with his staff and water flowed from it.

After the Nabataean civilisation declined, Petra was forgotten by the West until 1812 when it was rediscovered by the Anglo-Swiss explorer Johann Burckhardt, who travelled there in Arab disguise.

Since 1985 Petra has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site. And in 2007 Petra was named among the new seven wonders of the world.



CATALHOYUK — *the first city in the world*

(Grades 8–9)

1. What materials did ancient people build their houses of?
2. What famous ancient buildings do you know?
3. Why do you think some ancient people made their door in the roof?



Archaeologists believe that Catalhoyuk, located in a remote part of southern Turkey, could be the first city in the world. It was built more than 9000 years ago. So far researchers have discovered only some hidden secrets of the city's ruins, and there are more to come. The results of the discovery changed the idea of the earliest civilizations. In 1958 scientists found the ruins of an ancient city. They called it Catalhoyuk. Catalhoyuk dates from about 7200 year BC — more than 9000 years ago.

At least 6,000 people lived there. Among them were skilled craftsmen, builders, weavers and potters.

Catalhoyuk was built on the site of a dry lake, where the soil was good for growing crops. In the mountains, located about 80 kilometres from the city, there were forests where people could get wood for the city. Around there were places for hunting. In many ways Catalhoyuk looked like other ancient cities. The buildings were made of bricks with strong wooden structure. The bricks were made of mud. But Catalhoyuk was very different from the cities that we know today. It was a city without streets, houses were built like a honeycomb.

The houses had flat roofs with plaster gutters for rainwater. The main difference of Catalhoyuk from other cities is that the buildings had no doors on the ground level. People came in and out of their houses using a hatch in the roof.

Oddly enough, the people of the city walked over the rooftops. The buildings were connected with each other and there were no streets or any open spaces on the ground where people could meet. If the buildings were of different heights, they were connected by wooden stairs. Since there were no doors on the ground level, there was no need to build a wall to protect people from wild animals or enemies. If you remove the stairs connecting the house, the houses become

good shelters. Unlike most other ancient cities, it looks like Catalhoyuk was never attacked or conquered.

Another mystery about Catalhoyuk is how long this civilization existed. Although excavations were made only in a small part of the city, fourteen layers of buildings were discovered. Each of them was built on the foundation of the previous level.

The people of Catalhoyuk did not have written language, so there is no written evidence of how they lived. Archaeologists have collected and carefully analyzed everything they found on the site. But still there are many unsolved secrets. Why was the city built in such a remote area? Why did the people make doors in the roofs of the buildings? Why were so many houses decorated with pictures of bulls? Who lived in Catalhoyuk and what was their everyday life like?

If you are interested in the ongoing excavations at Catalhoyuk you can learn more at <http://www.smm.org/catal/introduction/> or come to Turkey and see them yourself.



Glossary:

Catalhoyuk — Чатал-Хююк (поселение эпохи керамического неолита и энеолита в Южной Анатолии)

researchers — исследователи

honeycomb — пчелиные соты

hatch — люк