



Year Level: Year 6/7
Genre: Historical Report

Dead Sea Scrolls

In the Spring of 1947, while watching over their herd of goats, a Bedouin boy and his cousins became anxious as several strays wandered too high up the cliff face. He decided to climb the cliff and bring them back. Little did he know that those straying goats would involve him in the greatest discovery of the twentieth century.

He noticed a small opening in one of the thousands of caves that dot the barren cliffs which overlook the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. He threw a rock into one of the openings and heard a cracking sound which meant only one thing to him. Treasure! He made his way into the cave and found that the floor was covered with debris, including broken pottery and narrow covered jars, but no gold was to be found. Instead what he discovered were a few bundles wrapped in cloth and green with age. He returned home, and related the sad news that there was no treasure.

No treasure indeed! The scrolls he removed from that dark cave were the first seven manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Written in Hebrew and Aramaic, the Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of leather, papyrus (an ancient type of paper), and copper scrolls which contain extracts from the books of the Old Testament.

For hundreds of years there had been rumours of their existence. Many scholars thought that they were part of a myth. Others were convinced they were real and searched the biblical lands of the Middle East. The unexpected discovery made by the goat herder commenced the recovery of about 600 scrolls, each numbered according to the cave they were found in. The scrolls were not found to be intact, but were discovered in fragments and in an extremely fragile condition.

The scrolls identified rules, songs and parts from the bible. They have significance because they provide a window into the past and expose an ancient culture.

The scrolls are approximately 2,000 years old and many scholars believe that they were originally hidden to stop the Roman soldiers from destroying them. Due to their age and fragility, the scrolls are now stored in a temperature controlled room.

Scholars are working hard to decipher the old texts, while other scholars and scientists have the painstaking task of fitting the pieces together. One could say this task is a bit like completing a jig-saw puzzle, but instead of using images this one uses letters.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have enhanced our knowledge of both Jewish and Christian religions and have been called the evolutionary link between the two.

QUESTIONS:

Main Idea (MI)

1) What is the main idea of Paragraph 1?

- The greatest manuscript discovery in the twentieth century had been found unexpectedly.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls had identified lost rules, songs and parts of the bible.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in a different language.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls enhanced our knowledge of a different religion.

Predicting (P)

2) Which text type would you expect this article to have come from?

- a) historical biography
- b) novel
- c) information report
- d) documentary script

Author's Purpose (AP)

3) Who is the intended audience?

- a) people with an interest in exploration
- b) young children
- c) people interested in history and ancient relics
- d) teenagers who like adventure

Conclusions and Inferences (CI)

4) You could conclude that the Dead Sea Scrolls...

- a) were very old; as a result they were found fragmented.
- b) have been a cause of speculation and myth.
- c) were written by hand over many years.
- d) provided an important link between two religions; therefore it was a significant discovery.

Words in Context (WC)

5) The word 'fragility' has been used in the text. This means...

- a) rarity.
- b) easily damaged.
- c) value.
- d) precious.

Fact and Opinion (FO)

6) Which statement is not a fact?

- a) Finding the scrolls has been the greatest find of modern times.
- b) The scrolls identifies rules, songs and parts from the bible.
- c) There were about 600 scrolls.
- d) They were located in caves.

Sequencing (S)

7) What was the feeling at the discovery site after the last scroll had been uncovered?

- a) defeat and misery
- b) jubilation and triumph
- c) bewilderment and confusion
- d) excitement and exhaustion

Comparing and Contrasting (CC)

8) How is papyrus and paper similar?

- a) Both are made from the same material.
- b) Both are a type of writing tool.
- c) Both are found in the same regions of the world.
- d) Both are a material which is used for writing.

Figurative Language (FL)

9) The author uses the phrase 'no treasure indeed' but what was he really trying to say?

- a) There was really no treasure and the boy was disappointed.
- b) There was treasure, but it wasn't discovered by the boy.
- c) There really was treasure, but not the expected kind.
- d) There was so little treasure it wasn't worth mentioning.

Cause and Effect (CE)

10) The scrolls needed to be stored carefully so that...

- a) they would not perish further.
- b) they could be researched further.
- c) they couldn't be stolen.
- d) they couldn't be damaged.

Fact and Details (FD)

11) Where were the Dead Sea Scrolls eventually located?

- a) On the hills dotted throughout the Middle East.
- b) On the cliffs overlooking the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea.
- c) In caves along the Black Sea.
- d) In bundles wrapped in cloth under boulders.

Summarising (SM)

12) The best summary for this article would be:

- a) scrolls were found and kept in storage because of their great value.
- b) a myth was exposed to be true, and a discovery provided detail about an era in history.
- c) goat herders are excellent at tracking down historical artefacts.
- d) it took many men and many hours to piece together the fragments which were uncovered.