

The Wall That Opened

PASSAGE · NON-FICTION

SKILLS TRAINED

Working memory

Delayed recall

Inference

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

About 18 minutes

- 1 Read the passage twice, slowly. Take about five minutes.
- 2 Turn to the next page and cover this one. No looking back.
- 3 Write what you remember, then mark it on the last page.

In the middle of Turkey lies a region called Cappadocia, where the ground is made of the wrong sort of rock. Volcanoes buried the plain in ash long ago, and the ash pressed down into a pale stone called tuff. Tuff is soft enough to cut with a hand tool while it is buried, and it hardens once the air gets at it.

That single fact changed how people lived there. Rather than build upwards, they cut downwards, hollowing rooms out of the hillsides and under their own floors.

In 1963, a man in the town of Derinkuyu was knocking a wall through in his house. The wall gave way into a dark space that smelled of cold earth. Behind it was a passage, and behind the passage was a staircase, and the staircase went down.

What he had found was a city. It reaches roughly eighty-five metres below the surface — deeper than a twenty-storey building is tall — and it is stacked in levels, eight of which visitors may now walk through. The name Derinkuyu means “deep well”, and nobody in the town had guessed how well it fitted.

The rooms are not grand. They are practical. There are stables with troughs cut into the wall at the height of a cow's head, cellars for grain, presses for oil and wine, a chapel with a curved ceiling, and a long room with benches that was almost certainly a school. Near the bottom sits a well, and more than fifty narrow shafts rise all the way to the surface to carry fresh air down.

The strangest things in the city are the doors. Each is a disc of stone, as tall as a child and weighing several hundred kilograms, set in a groove so that it can be rolled across a passage. Every one of them can be moved from the inside only. Each has a small hole bored through its middle.

Nobody lived underground all the time. Cappadocia sits on an old road between east and west, and armies used that road. When word came that soldiers were approaching, families drove their animals down the stairs, rolled the stone discs shut and waited,

sometimes for weeks, on the grain and oil and water stored below. The city could hold many thousands of people at once.

There are other underground towns nearby, and a tunnel several kilometres long is thought to join Derinkuyu to one of them.

The man with the hammer was not looking for any of this. He was looking for a bigger kitchen.

Cover the passage before you start.

Looking back turns this into a copying exercise. Getting it slightly wrong from memory is what makes it work.

PART A Tell it back

Write down everything you can remember about the underground city at Derinkuyu — what was in it, how it worked, and how it was found. Order does not matter. Keep writing until you run out.

PART B 5 questions

- 1 How deep is the underground city, and how was it discovered?

- 2 Name three different kinds of room found in the city.

- 3 The stone doors could be moved only from the inside. What does that tell you about who the city was built for?

- 4 Why were the fifty narrow shafts to the surface as important as the food stores?

- 5 The passage says the rooms “are not grand. They are practical.” What does practical mean here, and which detail shows it best?

PART C Mark your own work

Now go back to the passage. Tick every answer you got right. You do not need the same words as the answer below — if you wrote the same idea in your own words, it counts.

- ☐ 1 • About eighty-five metres deep. A man in Derinkuyu knocked through a wall of his house in 1963 and found a passage and a staircase leading down.
- ☐ 2 • Any three of: stables with troughs, grain cellars, oil or wine presses, a chapel with a curved ceiling, a schoolroom with benches. There was also a well.
- ☐ 3 • It was built as a hiding place for the people already down there, not as a fort to be held from outside. They could shut themselves in, and nobody above could roll the doors open.
- ☐ 4 • With the doors sealed and thousands of people and animals below, the air would have run out. The shafts brought fresh air down, so people could stay hidden for weeks.
- ☐ 5 • Practical means built for use rather than for show. Good examples: the troughs cut at the height of a cow's head, the grain cellars, or the air shafts.

FACTS RECALLED IN PART A

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QUESTIONS CORRECT

— / 5

DATE

THE STRATEGY Retrieve before you reread

When you reach the end of a page, do not go straight back to the top. Cover the page and say out loud, or write down, as much as you can dredge up — even the bits you are unsure of. Pulling a fact out of your head is a far stronger way of fixing it there than looking at it a second time, and the gaps you discover tell you exactly where to look when you do go back.

WHERE YOU ALREADY DO THIS

Think of a song you know all the words to. Did you learn it by reading the words over and over, or by trying to sing along before you were ready?

FOR THE PARENT OR TEACHER · This sheet trains delayed recall, not reading speed. Let your child read once, then cover the passage completely before Part A — no peeking back, and no prompting, because the struggle to retrieve a half-remembered fact is what builds the memory. At this level expect the inference answers to be worded loosely; reward the reasoning rather than the phrasing.