

I. Listening comprehension (3 points)

ULURU: EXPLORING THE HEART AND SPIRIT OF AUSTRALIA

Journalist: Welcome to our program! Today we're joined by Dr. Cris Wood, a geologist and expert on Uluru, one of Australia's most iconic landmarks. Thank you for being here, Dr. Wood.

Dr. Wood: Thank you for having me. It's great to share the story of such an incredible place.

Journalist: Uluru is famous worldwide for its striking appearance, but why is it considered so special by the Aboriginal people?

Dr. Wood: Uluru is a sacred site for the Anangu people, the traditional custodians of the land. To them, it's more than a natural formation; it's deeply tied to their Tjukurpa, which is their system of beliefs and laws. Tjukurpa includes the creation of stories that explain how the land and its features came to be. Many parts of Uluru, including its caves and waterholes, are connected to these stories. The Anangu see themselves as caretakers of Uluru, and they ask visitors to respect their traditions when visiting.

Journalist: One of those traditions includes discouraging people from climbing the rock, which surprises many visitors. Why is climbing considered disrespectful?

Dr. Wood: For the Anangu, Uluru is a place of spiritual significance. They believe that climbing it disrespects its sacred nature. Traditionally, they don't climb it themselves. Instead, they encourage visitors to explore the base, visit waterholes, and learn about their culture at the cultural center. Climbing used to be popular, but now many people understand the importance of respecting indigenous beliefs and choose not to climb.

Journalist: Uluru is also a geological marvel. Could you tell us more about how it was formed?

Dr. Wood: Certainly! Uluru's story began about 550 million years ago. Back then, it was part of a massive mountain range called the Petermann Ranges, which were similar in size to the Himalayas. Over time, the mountains eroded, and rivers carried sand and gravel to the base. This material eventually formed two iconic landmarks: Uluru and Kata Tjuta. Uluru is made of arkose sandstone, which is rich in feldspar crystals. It's incredibly durable because the sand wasn't transported far, so it didn't undergo much erosion. Over millions of years, geological forces tilted the rock layers vertically, which is why we see those striking lines on Uluru's surface today.

Journalist: The red color of Uluru is so distinctive. What causes it?

Dr. Wood: The red colour comes from oxidation, or rusting, of the iron minerals in the rock. When the sandstone is exposed to the air, the iron reacts with oxygen, giving it that beautiful red hue. Interestingly, the rock underneath, which hasn't been exposed to the atmosphere, is actually grey.

Journalist: The Red Centre is known for its harsh conditions. What's the best way for visitors to explore Uluru and its surroundings?

Dr. Wood: The best way is by car. You can hire a vehicle at Ayers Rock Airport and drive around the area, including Uluru, Kata Tjuta, and the nearby town of Yulara. Driving gives you the freedom to explore at your own pace. While there is a shuttle bus in Yulara township, it doesn't operate within the national park. Beyond Uluru, many of the Northern Territory's attractions are accessible by well-maintained roads, whether you're in a regular car, campervan, or a four-by-four.

Journalist: Speaking of visiting, when is the best time of year to see Uluru?

Dr. Wood: Winter, from June to August, is the most popular time. The days are crisp and cool, making it perfect for outdoor activities. Summer, from December to February, is far too hot, with daytime temperatures often exceeding 40°C. Spring and autumn are much better with warm days and cooler evenings, so they're also great for visiting. No matter the season, it's essential to plan for the desert climate, which can have extreme temperature changes between day and night.

Journalist: Are there any safety tips you'd recommend for visitors?

Dr. Wood: Absolutely. Stay hydrated, as the desert air is very dry, and always carry water when walking or driving. Protect yourself from the sun with a hat, sunscreen, and lightweight clothing. It's also important to check the weather before heading out, as conditions can change quickly. Stick to marked paths, respect wildlife, and pay attention to park signals. Luckily, the area around Uluru and Yulara is well-equipped with facilities, rangers, and maps to help visitors stay safe.

Journalist: What do you recommend for visitors who want to learn more about the Anangu culture?

Dr. Wood: The cultural centre near Uluru is an excellent place to start. You cannot stay there overnight, but it offers displays, videos, and artworks that explain the Anangu way of life and their connection to the land. Visitors can also join guided tours led by local guides who share stories and traditions. These experiences help people understand why Uluru is so much more than a tourist attraction—it's a living, spiritual landscape.

Journalist: What's something people often don't expect about visiting Uluru?

Dr. Wood: Many are surprised by the variety of things to see and do around the rock. For instance, Uluru has many caves and waterholes, which are beautiful and have cultural significance. The base walk, which is about 10 kilometers long, lets visitors see the rock

up close, including its unique patterns, plants, and wildlife. It's also a great way to experience the changing colors of Uluru at sunrise or sunset. These colors are breathtaking and truly unforgettable.

Journalist: Finally, why do you think Uluru leaves such a lasting impression on people?

Dr. Wood: Uluru is a place where natural beauty meets deep cultural history. Its size and color are striking, but it's the stories and significance behind it that make it truly special. Many visitors say they feel a strong connection to the land when they visit. Whether it's the spirituality, the geology, or the quiet majesty of the desert, Uluru has a way of staying with you long after you've left.

Journalist: Thank you, Dr. Wood, for sharing your insights. Uluru sounds like a destination that offers both natural wonder and cultural depth.

Dr. Wood: It really is. Thank you for having me!

Adapted from:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9t6kYpYnX4>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-06-27/how-did-uluru-and-kata-tjuta-form/8572068>

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Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is correct.

[3 points: 0.375 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.125 points (check the grid above). There is no penalty for unanswered questions].

1.

It holds deep connections to their Tjukurpa, or belief system.

2.

They think it violates the sacred meaning of the site.

3.

Through the erosion of a mountain range.

4.

The sandstone oxidizes when in contact to the air.

5.

December to February

6.

Drinking water and using sun protection

7.

Insights into Anangu culture.

8.

The many caves, waterholes, and wildlife.

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