



LEVEL 2

PENGUIN ACTIVE READING

# Wonders of the World

Vicky Shipton



# Ancient Wonders

*How can we say that one building is more “important” than another from a different time and place?*

In **Ancient** Greece, about 2,500 years **ago**, the writer Herodotus made a famous **list** of seven great places. Five of these places were Greek. (Herodotus was Greek!) But Herodotus called his list the “Seven **Wonders** of the World.” Many people at that time wanted to see the famous places on the list.

Today only one thing on Herodotus’s list is standing—the Great Pyramid in Egypt—but many people today discuss the “wonders of the world.” Often they list only seven new wonders because there were seven things on the first list. But of course there are many important, interesting, and beautiful places in the world. So which seven places go on the list? This is a very difficult question. Do buildings go on the list because they are the biggest—or the most important? And how can we say that one building is more “important” than another from a different time and place?

Some of the wonders of the world are old and some are new. Some are buildings and some are **natural** wonders. In this book, you can read about all kinds of wonderful places.

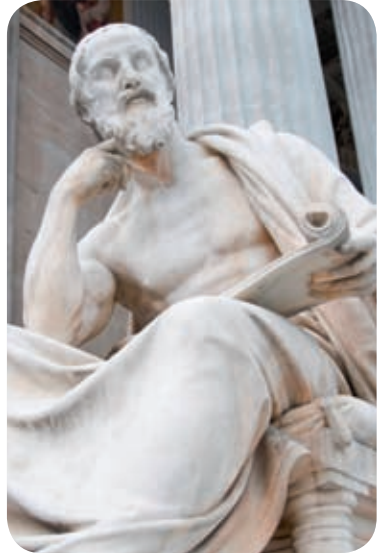
**ancient** /'eɪnʃənt/ (adj) An *ancient* building is very, very old.

**ago** /ə'gəʊ/ (adv) Herodotus lived a long time *ago*.

**list** /lɪst/ (n/v) Before they go to a supermarket, many people write a *list*. They only buy things from their list.

**wonder** /'wʌndə/ (n) A *wonder* is a great or beautiful thing.

**natural** /'nætʃərəl/ (adj) Trees, rivers, and mountains are all *natural* things.



## Pyramids

Some of the most famous—and the strangest—ancient buildings are pyramids.

### The Great Pyramid

The Great Pyramid at Giza, near Cairo in Egypt, was on Herodotus's list of Seven Wonders, and it is very famous today, too. This pyramid is 4,500 years old and 150 meters tall. People think that there are about 2.3 **million** big **stones** in it. Each stone is very heavy—more than 2,000 kilos. So how did the Egyptians build the pyramid with these big, heavy stones? There are a lot of ideas, but we do not really know.

We do know the answer to another question—*why* did the Egyptians build the pyramids? For the ancient Egyptians, the end of life in our world was the start of another life. The pyramids were for the country's dead **rulers**. The dead rulers—and many of their things—went into the pyramid. The rulers were rich when they were dead, too!

Khufu built the Great Pyramid. It took about twenty years. Inside the pyramid there are three big rooms.

Today Giza is one of the most famous places in the world. The Great Pyramid and the other two pyramids there are a bridge to the ancient world.



**million** /'mɪljən/ (n) One *million* is 1,000,000.

**stone** /stəʊn/ (n) *Stone* is very hard ground. We often build walls with *stone*.

**ruler** /'ru:lə/ (n) The *ruler* is the head of a country.

## Chichen Itza



The Egyptian pyramids are not the only pyramids in the world. You can also see pyramids in **parts** of Mexico.

Chichen Itza was an important city of the Mayan people in the Yucatan **area** of Mexico. The Mayans started to build it in the sixth **century**, but the city was at its biggest and most important hundreds of years later. At one time there were hundreds of buildings in the city.

Now visitors can see about thirty buildings. The biggest is the Temple of Kukulcan in the center of the city. Inside the pyramid there is a second, older temple with stairs down to a room with a ruler's chair and a statue.

Near the pyramid is a big place for a Mayan ball game. How dangerous was this game? A picture in stone on one of the walls gives the answer. It shows some ball players, and one of them has no head!



**part** /part/ (n) A *part* is some, but not all of something.

**area** /'eɪrɪə/ (n) An *area* is a big part of a country.

**century** /'sentʃəri/ (n) A *century* is 100 years.

## The Great Wall of China

Which is the most famous wall in the world? For many people, there is only one answer to this question—the Great Wall of China. Its name in Chinese means “long wall.” This is a good name because at one time the wall was about 6,400 kilometers long.

The Chinese first built a long wall about 2,500 years ago (at about the time of Herodotus in Greece). It **protected** the country in the north. They built a second wall—today’s Great Wall of China—about five hundred years ago. It was more than a wall; they put towers in high places on it. At one time more than one million men worked on the wall and protected their country.

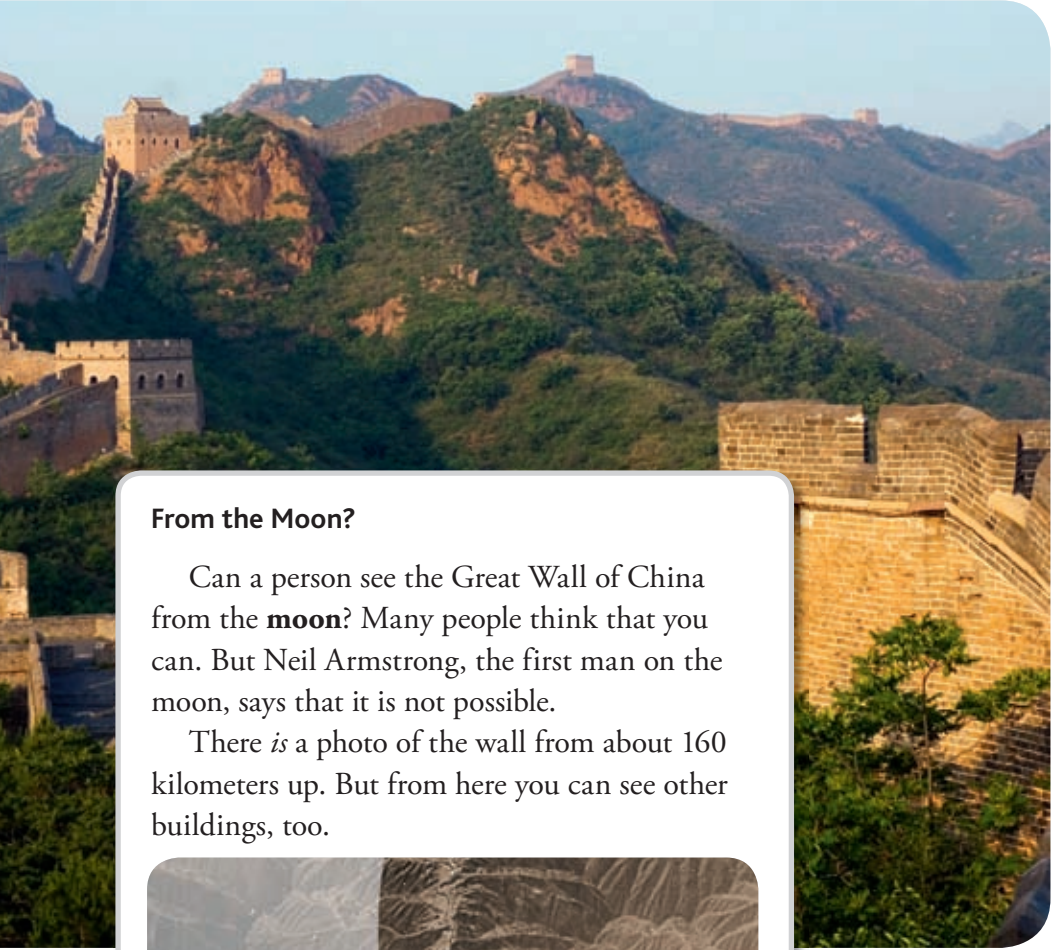
Today many people visit the Great Wall every year. Some parts are more famous than other parts. Visitors often go to a part of the wall

to the north of the city of Beijing. One place here is 7.8 meters high and 5 meters wide. Some of the most famous and beautiful parts of the wall climb through the mountains. The highest tower is at 980 meters.

Of course, some parts of the wall are not there now. In some places, a long way from cities, people used the stones for other buildings. In one place wind and rain are making the wall smaller and smaller. Years ago the wall was 5 meters high there; now it is only about 2 meters.



**protect** /prə'tekt/ (v) Parents *protect* their children from dangerous things.  
A building can give *protection* from very bad weather.



### From the Moon?

Can a person see the Great Wall of China from the **moon**? Many people think that you can. But Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, says that it is not possible.

There *is* a photo of the wall from about 160 kilometers up. But from here you can see other buildings, too.



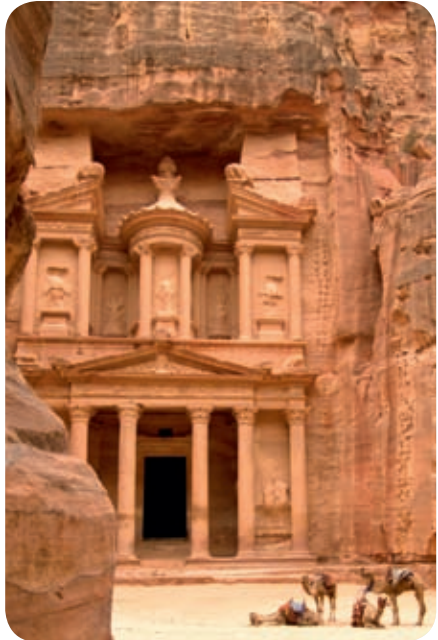
**moon** /mun/ (n) The *moon* goes around our world every month.

## Around the Ancient World

Today it is not possible to visit six of the seven ancient wonders on Herodotus's list. But you can see other great, old places around the world.

### Petra

Many movie lovers know the ancient city of Petra, in Jordan, because one of its temples is in the third Indiana Jones movie. The city of Petra is more than 2,500 years old. The people of Petra cut many of the city's buildings into the red **rock** of the mountains in the area. Petra was an important center in the area for centuries. But the city's best years were almost at an end when the Romans arrived in the area. For centuries nobody lived there and nobody outside the area knew about the city.



### The Colosseum

People liked sports in Ancient Rome, and the Colosseum was an important place for them. But these games were very different from sports today. At one time, 50,000 Romans sat in the Colosseum in Rome and watched fight after fight. Sometimes men fought men; sometimes they fought wild animals. (The Romans brought animals from Africa to Rome for the games.) When the Colosseum opened, 11,000 animals died in the first hundred days.



**rock** /rək/ (n) When you *cut* into a mountain, you find rock.

## Machu Picchu

Like Petra, nobody knew about Machu Picchu for a long time. The Inca people built this city high in the mountains of Peru, 80 kilometers from the city of Cuzco, in about 1460. Why did they build a city up there? Some people think that it was for the protection of the Inca people. Other people say that Inca rulers in Cuzco enjoyed summers there. Today visitors to the city can take a train from Cuzco, or they can walk there. This can take about a week!



The world is full of beautiful and interesting ancient buildings and places. You can visit the Parthenon in Athens, Stonehenge in Britain, the Old City of Jerusalem . . . But more and more visitors are going to these ancient places, so we have to protect these wonders carefully.