



The Terracotta Army



Reading Test

Copyright: These materials are photocopyable but please leave all logos and web addresses on handouts. Please don't post these materials onto the web. Thank you

Teacher's Notes

Lesson Contents	
1.	Instructions
2.	Text 1 without reference words underlined.
3.	Text 2 with reference words underlined.
4.	Reading test questions.
5.	Reading test answer key.

Instructions

Option 1 [Medium] *** [B2/C1]**

1. Distribute **text 1 (without reference words underlined)** a week before the test. Students read, check vocabulary and meanings.
2. Test day. Distribute **text 2 (with reference words underlined)** and the **questions** (no dictionaries or notes allowed).
3. Set **ONE** hour to read the text and answer the questions.
4. Take in & correct or go through answers in class (**pass mark is 70%**).

Option 2 [More challenging] *** [C1]**

1. Test day. Distribute **text 2 (with reference words underlined)** & the **questions** (no dictionaries allowed).
2. Set **ONE** hour to read the text and answer the questions.
3. Take in and correct or go through answers in class (**pass mark is 70%**).

Extension Task

1. Students take a set of notes and write a *summary (add 60 minutes to the test or complete as a standalone task).
⇒ Note: the summary lesson also contains additional critical thinking questions as an extension task.

Link for Additional Material

Summary writing	www.academic-englishuk.com/summary
-----------------	--

The Terracotta Army: Guardians of an Emperor's Legacy (Text 1)

By A. Watson (2025)

The Terracotta Army is one of the most extraordinary archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century. It was found in 1974 near Xi'an, in Shaanxi Province, and it continues to fascinate both scholars and tourists. The site contains thousands of life-sized clay soldiers, horses, and chariots that were buried more than two thousand years ago. It forms part of the vast mausoleum complex of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of a unified China, and it demonstrates the enormous resources invested in his burial (Portal, 2007). The discovery is not only remarkable for its size but also for the insight it gives into the scale of state power and organisation in the third century BCE. The project required huge planning, labour and resources, all of which show how seriously the emperor viewed his passage into the afterlife.

Qin Shi Huang ruled from 221 to 210 BCE after conquering the warring states and creating China's first centralised empire. He was determined to consolidate his authority and to project his power beyond death. Ancient texts describe the construction of his tomb as a monumental task involving hundreds of thousands of workers. The mausoleum was designed to reproduce the world of the living underground, complete with palaces, rivers of mercury, and a protective army (Yuan, 2014). It reflected both political ambition and deep beliefs about the afterlife. The author argues that by replicating his empire below ground, the emperor hoped to continue ruling eternally, surrounded by symbols of wealth, authority, and cosmic order.

In 1974, local farmers accidentally uncovered pottery fragments while digging a well. This chance discovery led to systematic excavations by archaeologists, who revealed an enormous underground army. To their surprise, there had been no surviving historical records of such a force. Since then, three main pits have been excavated, containing more than 2,000 figures, though it is estimated that over 6,000 remain buried (Ledderose, 2001). The scale of the find stunned the world and provided unprecedented insight into Qin dynasty society. It also highlighted how archaeological evidence can complement or even challenge historical texts, since the written record alone gave no hint of the army's existence.

The figures were created using sophisticated methods that suggest large-scale workshop production. They were made from local clay, shaped in separate sections such as heads, torsos, arms, and legs, which were then fired and assembled. Workshop marks carved into the statues show that different teams of artisans collaborated, reflecting an early form of mass production (Quinn, 2017). Once assembled, the figures were painted with bright mineral pigments, though most of this colour disappeared quickly after excavation (Portal, 2007). The technology and organisation required for such work demonstrate the advanced capabilities of the Qin state. The combination of individuality and uniformity in the army illustrates both artistic skill and strict state control.

The Terracotta Army was intended to serve as guardians of the emperor in the afterlife. It represented his belief that the social and military order he established on earth would continue after death. The soldiers also symbolised authority and control, reminding both contemporaries and future generations of the emperor's absolute power. Many scholars argue that the army was not only a funerary provision but also a form of political propaganda that reinforced the legitimacy of the Qin dynasty (Yuan, 2014). This dual role, both spiritual and political, explains why such immense resources were dedicated to its creation.

Excavation of the site has revealed major conservation challenges. These are especially evident in the rapid deterioration of pigments on the figures, which can flake away within minutes of exposure to air. Archaeologists have therefore slowed the pace of excavation, preferring to leave some pits

untouched until better preservation techniques are available. Chemical stabilisation methods and careful environmental controls have been introduced, but conservation remains a constant concern (Portal, 2007). The Terracotta Army highlights the difficulty of balancing discovery with protection. At the same time, conservation work has advanced scientific understanding of ancient pigments and materials, influencing methods in other fields of archaeology.

Today the mausoleum complex is one of China's most important cultural sites. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987 and has since attracted millions of visitors from around the world (UNESCO, 1987). Exhibitions of the Terracotta Warriors have toured internationally, raising global awareness of China's ancient history. Beyond tourism, the site has become a symbol of cultural identity and national pride. For scholars, it provides invaluable evidence about early imperial China, while for the public it continues to inspire awe and imagination (Portal, 2007). The Terracotta Army thus stands not only as a relic of the past but also as a living bridge between ancient heritage and modern global culture.

Reference List

Ledderose, L. (2001) *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Portal, J. (ed.) (2007) *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army*. London: The British Museum Press.

Quinn, P. (2017) 'Building the Terracotta Army: Ceramic craft technology and organisation of production at Qin Shi Huang's mausoleum complex', *Antiquity*, 91(360), pp. 966–979. doi:10.15184/aqy.2017.95.

UNESCO (1987) *Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor*. World Heritage List. Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/441/> (Accessed: 28 August 2025).

Yuan, Z. (2014) *Terracotta Warriors and the First Emperor of China*. New York: Abbeville Press.

The Terracotta Army: Guardians of an Emperor's Legacy (Text 2)

By A. Watson (2025)

1. The Terracotta Army is one of the most extraordinary archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century. It was found in 1974 near Xi'an, in Shaanxi Province, and *it* continues to fascinate both scholars and tourists. The site contains thousands of life-sized clay soldiers, horses, and chariots that were buried more than two thousand years ago. It forms part of the vast mausoleum complex of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of a unified China, and it demonstrates the enormous resources invested in his burial (Portal, 2007). The discovery is not only remarkable for its size but also for the insight it gives into the scale of state power and organisation in the third century BCE. The project required huge planning, labour and resources, all of which show how seriously the emperor viewed his passage into the afterlife.

2. Qin Shi Huang ruled from 221 to 210 BCE after conquering the warring states and creating China's first centralised empire. He was determined to consolidate his authority and to project his power beyond death. Ancient texts describe the construction of his tomb as a monumental task involving hundreds of thousands of workers. The mausoleum was designed to reproduce the world of the living underground, complete with palaces, rivers of mercury, and a protective army (Yuan, 2014). It reflected both political ambition and deep beliefs about the afterlife. The author argues that by replicating *his* empire below ground, the emperor hoped to continue ruling eternally, surrounded by symbols of wealth, authority, and cosmic order.

3. In 1974, local farmers accidentally uncovered pottery fragments while digging a well. This chance discovery led to systematic excavations by archaeologists, who revealed an enormous underground army. To *their* surprise, there had been no surviving historical records of such a force. Since then, three main pits have been excavated, containing more than 2,000 figures, though it is estimated that over 6,000 remain buried (Ledderose, 2001). The scale of the find stunned the world and provided unprecedented insight into Qin dynasty society. It also highlighted how archaeological evidence can complement or even challenge historical texts, since the written record alone gave no hint of the army's existence.

4. The figures were created using sophisticated methods that suggest large-scale workshop production. They were made from local clay, shaped in separate sections such as heads, torsos, arms, and legs, which were then fired and assembled. Workshop marks carved into the statues show that different teams of artisans collaborated, reflecting an early form of mass production (Quinn, 2017). Once assembled, the figures were painted with bright mineral pigments, though most of this colour disappeared quickly after excavation (Portal, 2007). The technology and organisation required for *such* work demonstrate the advanced capabilities of the Qin state. The combination of individuality and uniformity in the army illustrates both artistic skill and strict state control.

5. The Terracotta Army was intended to serve as guardians of the emperor in the afterlife. It represented his belief that the social and military order he established on earth would continue after death. The soldiers also symbolised authority and control, reminding both contemporaries and future generations of the emperor's absolute power. Many scholars argue that the army was not only a funerary provision but also a form of political propaganda that reinforced the legitimacy of the Qin dynasty (Yuan, 2014). *This* dual role, both spiritual and political, explains why such immense resources were dedicated to its creation.

6. Excavation of the site has revealed major conservation challenges. *These* are especially evident in the rapid deterioration of pigments on the figures, which can flake away within minutes of exposure to air. Archaeologists have therefore slowed the pace of excavation, preferring to leave some pits untouched until better preservation techniques are available. Chemical stabilisation methods and careful environmental controls have been introduced, but conservation remains a constant concern.

(Portal, 2007). The Terracotta Army highlights the difficulty of balancing discovery with protection. At the same time, conservation work has advanced scientific understanding of ancient pigments and materials, influencing methods in other fields of archaeology.

7. Today the mausoleum complex is one of China's most important cultural sites. *It* was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987 and has since attracted millions of visitors from around the world (UNESCO, 1987). Exhibitions of the Terracotta Warriors have toured internationally, raising global awareness of China's ancient history. Beyond tourism, the site has become a symbol of cultural identity and national pride. For scholars, it provides invaluable evidence about early imperial China, while for the public it continues to inspire awe and imagination (Portal, 2007). The Terracotta Army thus stands not only as a relic of the past but also as a living bridge between ancient heritage and modern global culture.

Reference List

Ledderose, L. (2001) *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Portal, J. (ed.) (2007) *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army*. London: The British Museum Press.

Quinn, P. (2017) 'Building the Terracotta Army: Ceramic craft technology and organisation of production at Qin Shi Huang's mausoleum complex', *Antiquity*, 91(360), pp. 966–979. doi:10.15184/aqy.2017.95.

UNESCO (1987) *Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor*. World Heritage List. Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/441/> (Accessed: 28 August 2025).

Yuan, Z. (2014) *Terracotta Warriors and the First Emperor of China*. New York: Abbeville Press.

Comprehension Questions

1. Headings: Choose **ONE** subheading for each paragraph (P). One title is NOT needed.

P1.	A	An army built to last beyond death
P2.	B	How the site was revealed to the modern world
P3.	C	Advanced methods of organisation and production
P4.	D	Protecting fragile remains from further loss
P5.	E	A cultural treasure with worldwide significance
P6.	F	The emperor's ambition to unify and rule
P7.	G	Introducing one of the world's great discoveries
	H	A puzzle of paint, power, and propaganda

____/7

2. Multiple Choice: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

P1.	What does the Terracotta Army mainly represent?	a.	A training ground for Qin's soldiers.
		b.	A funerary army to protect the emperor.
		c.	A work of art for public display.
		d.	A military museum in Xi'an.
P2.	What was Qin Shi Huang's vision for his tomb?	a.	To create a space for religious festivals.
		b.	To represent lasting power and universal order.
		c.	To provide an archive of Chinese history.
		d.	To train future rulers.
P3.	What did the 1974 discovery demonstrate about archaeology?	a.	That archaeology can confirm or dispute history.
		b.	That texts always provide more evidence.
		c.	That excavations are rarely reliable.
		d.	That farmers usually damage historical sites.
P4.	What do the figures reveal about their production?	a.	They were carved from single blocks of stone.
		b.	They were made in separate local workshops.
		c.	They were sculpted from wet clay without firing.
		d.	They balanced artistry with central power.
P5.	What belief does the army reflect?	a.	That spirits return to live among humans.
		b.	That protection was needed in the afterlife.
		c.	That ordinary citizens should be honoured equally.
		d.	That enemies were buried with the emperor.
P6.	What is the greatest conservation challenge?	a.	Protecting horses from collapse.
		b.	Reassembling broken chariots.
		c.	Preserving original paint pigments.
		d.	Preventing tourists from entering Pit 1.
P7.	Why is the Terracotta Army important internationally?	a.	It is recognised internationally as a cultural site.
		b.	It shows the development of Western art styles.
		c.	It provides evidence of trade with Rome.
		d.	It proves that Qin Shi Huang invented pottery.

____/7

End of page 1

3. True / False: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

		T / F
P1.	The Terracotta Army was designed to protect Qin Shi Huang in the afterlife.	
P2.	Qin Shi Huang is remembered mainly for his interest in Buddhist teachings.	
P3.	The army was first discovered during official government excavations.	
P4.	The soldiers were created using primitive large-scale production.	
P5.	The figures signified power and military order beyond life.	
P6.	The paint on the soldiers has mostly survived in excellent condition.	
P7.	The warriors have only ever been displayed in China.	

___/7

3. Reference Words: Choose what the underlined word in each paragraph (P) refers to.

	Word	Connection
P1.	it	
P2.	His	
P3.	Their	
P4.	Such	
P5.	This	
P6.	These	
P7.	It	

4. Key language: Search for the word in the paragraph (P) that means:

	Explanation	Word
P1.	A burial place built to honour the dead.	
P2.	Universal balance of the world and heavens.	
P3.	Material remains used to support knowledge.	
P4.	The quality of being the same or consistent.	
P5.	Ideas spread to influence opinion.	
P6.	The act of protecting something from damage.	
P7.	To make something officially recognised worldwide.	

___/7

5. Citations: Match the source with the point they make about the Terracotta Army

	Source		Point
i.	Portal (2007)	a.	The tomb complex symbolised eternal rule supported by wealth and cosmic order.
ii.	Ledderose (2001)	b.	The site achieved international heritage status in the late 1980s.
iii.	Quinn (2017)	c.	Thousands of clay figures remain buried despite major excavations.
iv.	Yuan (2014)	d.	The statues reveal organised workshop production using modular techniques.
v.	UNESCO (1987)	e.	The painted surfaces of the warriors deteriorated rapidly when exposed.

i.	ii.	iii.	iv.	v.
----	-----	------	-----	----

___/5

Overall Total: ___ / 40

That is the end of the reading test.

Comprehension Questions KEY

1. Headings: Choose **ONE** subheading for each paragraph (P). One title is NOT needed.

P1	G	A	An army built to last beyond death
P2	F	B	How the site was revealed to the modern world
P3	B	C	Advanced methods of organisation and production
P4	C	D	Protecting fragile remains from further loss
P5	A	E	A cultural treasure with worldwide significance
P6	D	F	The emperor's ambition to unify and rule
P7	E	G	Introducing one of the world's great discoveries
		H	A puzzle of paint, power, and propaganda

____ / 7

2. Multiple Choice: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

P1.	What does the Terracotta Army mainly represent?	a. A training ground for Qin's soldiers. b. A funerary army to protect the emperor. c. A work of art for public display. d. A military museum in Xi'an.
P2.	What was Qin Shi Huang's vision for his tomb?	a. To create a space for religious festivals. b. To represent lasting power and universal order. c. To provide an archive of Chinese history. d. To train future rulers.
P3.	What did the 1974 discovery demonstrate about archaeology?	a. That archaeology can confirm or dispute history. b. That texts always provide more evidence. c. That excavations are rarely reliable. d. That farmers usually damage historical sites.
P4.	What do the figures reveal about their production?	a. They were carved from single blocks of stone. b. They were made in separate local workshops. c. They were sculpted from wet clay without firing. d. They balanced artistry with central power.
P5.	What belief does the army reflect?	a. That spirits return to live among humans. b. That protection was needed in the afterlife. c. That ordinary citizens should be honoured equally. d. That enemies were buried with the emperor.
P6.	What is the greatest conservation challenge?	a. Protecting horses from collapse. b. Reassembling broken chariots. c. Preserving original paint pigments. d. Preventing tourists from entering Pit 1.
P7.	Why is the Terracotta Army important internationally?	a. It is recognised internationally as a cultural site. b. It shows the development of Western art styles. c. It provides evidence of trade with Rome. d. It proves that Qin Shi Huang invented pottery.

____ / 7

3. True / False: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

		T / F
P1.	The Terracotta Army was designed to protect Qin Shi Huang in the afterlife. <i>[all of which show how seriously the emperor viewed his passage into the afterlife]</i>	True
P2.	Qin Shi Huang is remembered mainly for his interest in Buddhist teachings. <i>[the text suggests other beliefs (afterlife, cosmic order), not Buddhism].</i>	False

P3.	The army was first discovered during official government excavations. <i>[local farmers accidentally uncovered pottery fragments while digging a well].</i>	False
P4.	The soldiers were created using primitive large-scale production. <i>[reflecting an early form of mass production].</i>	True
P5.	The figures signified power and military order beyond life. <i>[the army was not only a funerary provision but also a form of political propaganda].</i>	True
P6.	The paint on the soldiers has mostly survived in excellent condition. <i>[the rapid deterioration of pigments on the figures].</i>	False
P7.	The warriors have only ever been displayed in China. <i>[Exhibitions of the Terracotta Warriors have toured internationally].</i>	False

____ / 7

3. Reference Words: Choose what the underlined word in each paragraph (P) refers to.

	Word	Connection
P1.	it	<i>The Terracotta Army</i>
P2.	His	<i>Qin Shi Huang</i>
P3.	Their	<i>Archaeologists</i>
P4.	Such	<i>Large-scale workshop production / mass production</i>
P5.	This	<i>The dual spiritual-political function of the Terracotta Army</i>
P6.	These	<i>Conservation challenges</i>
P7.	It	<i>The mausoleum complex</i>

____ / 7

4. Key language: Search for the word in the paragraph (P) that means:

	Explanation	Word
P1.	A burial place built to honour the dead.	<i>Mausoleum</i>
P2.	Universal balance of the world and heavens.	<i>Cosmic order</i>
P3.	Material remains used to support knowledge.	<i>Archaeological evidence</i>
P4.	The quality of being the same or consistent.	<i>Uniformity</i>
P5.	Ideas spread to influence opinion.	<i>Propaganda</i>
P6.	The act of protecting something from damage.	<i>Conservation / preservation</i>
P7.	To make something officially recognised worldwide.	<i>Designate</i>

____ / 7

5. Citations: Match the source with the point they make about the Terracotta Army

	Source		Point
i.	Portal (2007)	a.	The tomb complex symbolised eternal rule supported by wealth and cosmic order.
ii.	Ledderose (2001)	b.	The site achieved international heritage status in the late 1980s.
iii.	Quinn (2017)	c.	Thousands of clay figures remain buried despite major excavations.
iv.	Yuan (2014)	d.	The statues reveal organised workshop production using modular techniques.
v.	UNESCO (1987)	e.	The painted surfaces of the warriors deteriorated rapidly when exposed.

i.	<i>e</i>	ii.	<i>c</i>	iii.	<i>d</i>	iv.	<i>a</i>	v.	<i>b</i>
----	----------	-----	----------	------	----------	-----	----------	----	----------

____ / 5

Overall Total: ____ / 40

That is the end of the reading test.