

Reading Comprehension Homework Task (28.09.22)

This is Thomas Telford.



Here is his Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Can you imagine being in a narrowboat on top of it?



Now read this biography about him.

Thomas Telford

Thomas Telford was born in Scotland, a long way from industry, yet he went on to become one of the most famous and successful civil engineers of all time.

Early life and career

Thomas Telford was born in the Scottish Borders in 1757. His father was a shepherd and died when Telford was very young.

Telford had a personality that was driven to succeed and he had ambitions to change the world for the better.

First he became a stonemason and worked locally, building simple bridges. After working in London for a time, he moved to Shropshire, a county at the heart of the Industrial Revolution. This was a time when new ideas were giving birth to new industries, greater production and trade.

Iron was being used in new ways. Telford saw that it could be used to build bridges. In Shropshire, he also worked on canals which were the great cargo transport system of that time.

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct

With William Jessop, another civil engineer, Telford designed the great aqueduct called Pontcysyllte (Welsh for 'Cysyllte Bridge'). It opened in 1805. This masterpiece of engineering is a pioneering example of iron construction. It crosses the Dee Valley on 19 cast iron spans at a height of 38.4 metres. Since 2009, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and canal have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of only three in Wales.

Caledonian Canal

Telford went to northern Scotland where there were few roads and little industry. He was responsible for over one thousand miles of new or improved roads across the Highlands. He also built the Caledonian Canal, connecting Inverness in the east with Corpach in the west – a distance of some sixty miles. It is now a Scheduled Monument, which means it has been designated as a historic asset of national importance.

Pontifex Maximus

Telford was a great leader and a great partner to other engineers. He believed in working hard and because of his many achievements, his expertise was always in high demand. He was much admired during his own lifetime. Robert Southey, Poet Laureate of that time, called him 'Pontifex Maximus' ('greatest priest').

In 1820, Telford was invited to become the first President of The Institution of Civil Engineers. When he died in 1834 he left more than £3000 to the Institution so that it could continue to support future engineers.

Now complete Challenge 1 and 2. Just writing the answers neatly in your homework books is fine - you don't need to print these sheets out.

Challenge 1

- 1 Look at the section 'Early life and career'. Find and copy a word that means 'how someone behaves, feel and thinks'. _____

☐
1 mark

- 2 What is the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct made of? _____

☐
1 mark

- 3 Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement about the Caledonian Canal is true or false.

	True	False
a) It is about 60 miles long.		
b) It no longer exists.		
c) It is in Shropshire.		

☐
1 mark

Challenge 2

- 1 Number the following sentences to show the order in which they happened. The first one has been done for you.

Pontcysyllte Aqueduct opened.	
Thomas Telford was born.	1
Telford worked as a stonemason.	
Pontcysyllte Aqueduct was made a World Heritage Site.	
Telford became President of the Institution of Civil Engineers.	

☐
1 mark

- 2 Find and copy the name that Robert Southey gave to Telford.

☐
1 mark

- 3 Which of the following would be the most suitable summary of the whole text? Tick one.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain ☐

Famous Canals and Aqueducts ☐

Achievements of Thomas Telford ☐

☐
1 mark

- 4 Find evidence from the text that shows that Telford's achievements are still considered important today.

☐
1 mark

Total: _____ / 7 marks