



SÈRIE 2

I. Listening comprehension (3 points)

THE WORLD OF CENOTES

In this podcast you are going to hear some new words. Read and listen to them. Make sure you know what they mean.

limestone: pedra calcària/caliza

coral reef: escull de coral/arrecife de coral

jade: jade/jade

manatee: manatí/manatí

Ready? Now read the questions on the following page. Read them carefully before listening to the podcast. [Now listen to the interview.]

Journalist: Ms. Zicari, thank you for joining us today. You're known as one of the top experts on cenotes. To begin, could you explain to our listeners what a cenote actually is?

Alison Zicari: Thank you for having me. A cenote is a natural hole in the ground. It forms when the roof of an underground cave collapses and allows us to see the water inside. The word "cenote" usually describes an underground chamber filled with permanent water.

Journalist: Where can people find these cenotes?

AZ: You can find cenotes in several parts of the world, but the best-known and largest concentration is in Mexico, especially on the Yucatán Peninsula. This whole peninsula is made from **limestone**, which used to be a huge **coral reef** millions of years ago. When the sea level dropped, the reef was exposed, and over time, it became full of caves, tunnels, and holes. Today, the land's almost completely flat, but underneath it's a giant network of underground rivers filled with rainwater that travels through cracks in the limestone filling caves which sometimes collapse creating cenotes. Scientists estimate that there're more than 7,000 cenotes in the Yucatán.



Journalist: That number is incredible. Can you tell us more about the cave systems connected to cenotes?

AZ: Yes, the Yucatán is home to some of the world's longest underwater cave systems. One of the most famous is Sistema Sac Actun, located in the Riviera Maya. It stretches about 350 kilometers and reaches a depth of around 119 meters. Explorers and archaeologists have found many important remains inside these caves, including 9,000-year-old human bones and the bones of animals that lived during the ice age. These discoveries tell us that humans have been exploring or using these caves for thousands of years.

Journalist: Speaking of humans, cenotes played a very important role in the Maya civilization, didn't they?

AZ: They certainly did. For the Maya, cenotes were not just a source of fresh water, though that alone made them extremely valuable. They also believed cenotes were the entrance to the underworld. According to Maya beliefs, spirits and gods visited cenotes, especially Chaac, the god of rain, thunder, and lightning. Because of this, the Maya built many of their temples and villages near cenotes. In fact, new research shows that some important Maya cities—such as Chichén Itzá—were actually built directly on top of cenotes.

Journalist: Were these cenotes used for ceremonies?

AZ: Yes. Some cenotes became sacred places for rituals and offerings. Archaeologists have found items such as jade, gold, silver, and incense at the bottom of these cenotes. They have also discovered human remains. At places like the Sacred Cenote at Chichén Itzá, many of the bodies show wounds that suggest human sacrifice. However, other cenotes contain human remains without signs of violence, so these may have been peaceful burials, perhaps to prepare people for the next life.

Journalist: And today, people visit cenotes for very different reasons, right?

AZ: That's right. Today cenotes are still important for water, but they're also major tourist attractions. Millions of visitors come every year to swim, dive, snorkel, and explore. Some cenotes offer cultural experiences where visitors can watch modern Maya ceremonies. These ceremonies aren't dangerous—of course, no one's sacrificed—but they still include symbolic offerings like resin, cacao, seeds, corn, flower petals, and sugar.

Journalist: There's also a surprising connection between cenotes and the asteroid that killed the dinosaurs. Can you explain that?

AZ: Yes, it's a fascinating story. About 66 million years ago, an asteroid about 10 to 15 kilometers wide crashed on the Yucatán Peninsula. The explosion released as much energy as 100 trillion tons of TNT. This event caused huge fires, tsunamis, and climate changes that led to the extinction of many species, including the dinosaurs. The impact also changed the structure of the limestone underground. It made the rock weaker and



easier to erode. Over millions of years, groundwater moved in special patterns around the edge of the impact crater. This process created the “Ring of Cenotes.” The crater itself is buried under layers of ground and ocean, so we cannot see it with our eyes, but the ring of cenotes is still visible from space. The city of Mérida is right in the middle of this ancient crater.

Journalist: Besides history and geology, cenotes also have interesting wildlife. Can you tell us about that?

AZ: Yes, cenotes are important habitats for many animals. Because they're protected from the open ocean, they offer calm, safe spaces. Manatees, for example, sometimes travel from the Caribbean Sea into cenotes through underwater caves. They rest there and even nurse their young. Crocodiles also live in some cenotes. They're part of the natural ecosystem, and tourists need to keep a respectful distance. They're usually calm, but like all wild animals, they should never be disturbed.

Journalist: All of this makes cenotes sound like truly remarkable places. Any final thoughts for our audience?

AZ: Yes. I think cenotes are some of the most unique natural wonders in the world. They combine geology, history, culture, wildlife, and adventure in one place. They've been important for thousands of years—from the time of the Maya to the present day—and they're still full of discoveries waiting to be made. Anyone who visits the Yucatán should explore at least one cenote. It's an experience you'll never forget.

Adapted from:

https://cenotefinder.com/what-are-cenotes/#google_vignette

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20240628-the-hidden-wonders-of-mexicos-sacred-underwater-world>

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. There is no penalty for unanswered questions].

1. A cave ceiling collapses and reveals hidden water
2. It used to be a coral formation that became exposed.
3. water traveling through rock beneath the Surface
4. Evidence of ancient life, both human and animal
5. Cenotes provided water and were seen as spiritual gateways
6. They valued precious items for religious ceremonies
7. Water flows around the impact crater made a circular chain of cenotes.
8. They look for protection and need a quiet shelter



II. Reading Comprehension (3 points)

YOU MIGHT BE A LATE BLOOMER

Answer the questions below using complete sentences. Each question is worth 0.5 points with a total of 3 points. Up to 0.3 points might be deducted from the total mark for lack of intelligibility in the answers provided. You may use fragments from the text unless specified not to do so.

1.

There are 3 options (**ONLY ONE IS NEEDED** and any of the 3 is fine):

- Our school system sorts people by the time they are 18.
- Many models of success became successful when they were young.
- Magazines publish lists of young superstars.

(If they mention more than one, 0.25)

2.

They are all people who became successful late in life.

3.

Late bloomers accomplish success/live their lives/succeed in life/make progress (...) in ways that are different from the usual ones.

4.

Second-mountain people conquer their career mountain first/succeed early in life but find their success unsatisfying and they leave their careers to serve humanity.

5.

They have distinct characteristics that are not considered/seen/taken into account/encouraged by the present-day education authorities/laws.

(among other options)

6.

Any **TWO** of the following:

- Late bloomers do not plan ahead.
- They regard their lives as experiments.
- They focus on the process of learning.
- They enjoy the process of learning.
- They live their lives as a long period of trial and error.
- They are slow at the start but fast as they age.

(If they mention one, 0.25. If they mention more than two, 0.25).



III. Writing (4 points)

Choose ONE topic. Your answer should be 125-150 words in length. There is no specific penalty for exceeding 150 words in length. Extra points are not given for exceeding 150 words.

Including a title is optional.