

## PART A

Read Text 1 and answer questions 1-25 on pages 1-4 of the Question-Answer Book for Part A.

### Text 1

## TERRA-COTTA WARRIORS IN COLOR



- [1] It was a dazzling spectacle: a life-size army of painted clay soldiers buried to guard an emperor's tomb. Now archaeologists and artists, armed with the latest tools and techniques, are bringing that ancient vision back to life.
- [2] In an earthen pit in central China, under what used to be their village's persimmon orchard, three middle-aged women are hunched over an ancient jigsaw puzzle. Yang Rongrong, a cheerful 57-year-old turns over a jagged piece in her callused hands and fits it into the perfect spot. The other women laugh as if enjoying an afternoon amusement in their village near the city of Xian. What Yang and her friends are doing, in fact, is piecing together the 2,200-year-old mystery of the terra-cotta army, part of the celebrated (and still dimly understood) burial complex of China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang Di.
- [3] It usually takes Yang and her co-workers many days to transform a heap of clay fragments into a full-size warrior, but today they are lucky, accomplishing the task in a matter of hours. Yang has been solving such puzzles since 1974, when farmers from her village of Xiyang first unearthed pottery and a sculpted head while digging a well for their orchard. Having helped reassemble an army of a thousand warriors, Yang examines a clay head sheathed in protective plastic. Visible through the wrap are flashes of pink and red, brilliant hues that hint at the original glory of the terra-cotta warriors.
- [4] The monochrome figures that visitors to Xian's terra-cotta army museum see today actually began as the multicolored fantasy of a ruler whose grandiose ambitions extended beyond the mortal realm. The first emperor to unify China under a single dynasty, Qin Shi Huang Di packed a lot into his earthly reign, from 221 to 210 B.C. Aside from building the first lengths of the Great Wall, the tyrannical reformer standardized the nation's writing system, currency, and measurements, and provided the source for the English word we now use for China (Qin is pronounced Chin).
- [5] All the while, the emperor prepared for the afterlife, commanding the construction of the burial complex that covers 35 square miles. Qin's army of clay soldiers and horses was not a somber procession but a supernatural display of bold colors: red and green, purple and yellow. Sadly, most of the colors did not survive the crucible of time – or the exposure to air that comes with discovery and excavation. In earlier digs, archaeologists often watched helplessly as the warriors' colors disintegrated in the dry Xian air. One study showed that once exposed, the lacquer underneath the paint begins to curl after 15 seconds and flake off in just four minutes – vibrant pieces of history lost in the time it takes to boil an egg.

65 [6] Now a combination of serendipity and  
new preservation techniques is revealing the  
terra-cotta army's true colors. A three-year  
excavation in Xian's most famous site, known  
as Pit 1, has yielded more than a hundred  
soldiers, some still adorned with painted  
features, including black hair, pink faces, and  
black or brown eyes. The best-preserved  
70 specimens were found at the bottom of the pit,  
where a layer of mud created by flooding acted  
as a sort of 2,000-year-long spa treatment.

75 [7] Almost thirty years ago, Chinese  
researchers started working with experts from  
the Conservation Office in Germany to develop  
a preservative known as PEG to help save the  
warriors' colors. During a recent excavation, the  
moment a painted artifact was unearthed,  
workers sprayed any bit of exposed color with  
80 the solution, then wrapped it in plastic to keep in  
the protective moisture. The most colorful  
pieces (and the earth surrounding them) have  
been removed to an on-site laboratory for  
further treatment. To everyone's delight, the  
85 modern techniques for preserving ancient colors  
seem to be working.

90 [8] In a narrow trench on the north side of Pit  
1, archaeologist Shen Maosheng leads me past  
what look like terra-cotta backpacks strewn  
across the reddish soil. They are, in fact, clay  
quivers still bristling with bronze arrows. Shen  
and I skirt the remnants of a freshly excavated  
chariot, then stop beside a plastic sheet. 'Want  
to see a real find?' he asks.

95 [9] Lifting the sheet, Shen unveils a jagged,  
three-foot-long shield. The wood has rotted  
away, but the shield's delicate design and  
brilliant reds, greens, and whites are imprinted  
on the earth. A few steps away is an intact  
100 military drum whose leather surface has left  
another glorious pattern on the dirt, its crimson  
lines as fine as human hair. Together with the  
imprints of finely woven silk and linen textiles  
also found here, these artifacts offer clues about  
105 the distinctive artistry that flourished under the  
Qin dynasty and the vibrant palette that infused  
it.

110 [10] With so much color and artistry  
imprinted on the soil – the ancient paint, alas,  
adheres to dirt more readily than to lacquer –  
Chinese preservationists are now trying to  
preserve the earth itself. 'We are treating the  
earth as an artifact,' says Rong Bo, the  
museum's head chemist, who helped develop a  
115 binding agent that holds the soil together so the  
color won't be lost. The next challenge, Rong  
says, will be to find an acceptable method for  
reapplying this color to the warriors.

120 [11] With less than one percent of the vast  
tomb complex excavated so far, it may take  
centuries to uncover all that remains hidden. But  
the pace of discovery is quickening. In 2011 the  
museum launched two long-term excavation  
projects on the flanks of the 250-foot-high  
125 central burial mound. Exploratory digs in this  
area a decade ago uncovered a group of terra-  
cotta acrobats and strong men. More extensive  
excavations will yield 'mind-boggling  
discoveries' which will amaze everyone,  
130 predicts Wu Yongqi, the museum's director.

[12] Down in Pit 1, Yang tightens the straps  
that hold her reconstructed warrior together. His  
head, still wrapped in plastic, is beaded with  
moisture. His lifelike pigment has been  
135 preserved, and his body will go on display at the  
museum with all of the cracks and fissures he  
received during his 2,200 years underground.

140 [13] In the early days of the Xian excavations,  
the fractures and imperfections of the terra-cotta  
warriors were plastered over. Now, reflecting  
the evolution of the museum's views on  
historical accuracy, a new army is forming on  
the pit's west end, cracks and all. In every statue  
Yang's handiwork is plainly visible. 'It's  
145 nothing special,' she says with a modest smile.  
And with that, she and her village friends get  
back to work, piecing together the puzzle  
beneath the roots of their old persimmon trees.

### END OF READING PASSAGE

Sources of materials used in this paper will be acknowledged in the *Examination Report* and *Question Papers* published by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority at a later stage.