

FLEYDO ENGLISH SCHOOL

A1 Reading Challenge

The Houses Under the Ground

In Australia, there is a small town. The people live under the ground. Why?

Level	A1 (Beginner)
Age Group	Teens (11-16)
Topic	True Stories
Duration	~10 minutes
Vocabulary	12 words
Quiz	5 questions

Article

Most people live in houses on the **ground**. They have walls, windows, and a roof. They can see the sky from their door. But in one special town in Australia, people live in a different way. They live **underground**. Their houses, shops, and churches are all under the rocks! This town is called Coober Pedy. About 2,500 people live there. Why do they live like this? Let's find out.

A Town in the Desert

Coober Pedy is in the middle of Australia. It is a long way from any big city. All around the town, there is a big **desert**. The **desert** is brown and red. There are no trees. There is very little water. There are no rivers and no lakes. The summer is very, very **hot**. The temperature can go up to 45 degrees Celsius! That is too **hot**. People cannot work outside. Animals hide in the shade. Even cars get hot. Above the **ground**, life is very hard. So the people had a great idea. They went under the **ground**!

A Cool Place to Live

Under the **ground**, the air is different. It is not very **hot** in summer. It is not very cold in winter. The temperature stays about 22 degrees Celsius all year. It is always **cool** and nice. People do not need air conditioning. They do not need heaters. The thick **rock** keeps the houses **cool**. The **cave** homes are quiet too. There is no noise from cars or wind. People sleep very well at night. They feel safe in their **underground** homes.

How Did the Town Start?

The story of Coober Pedy started in 1915. A young boy was looking for water in the **desert**. His father was looking for gold. They did not find water or gold. But they found something else. They found opals! Opals are beautiful stones. They have many colours — blue, green, red, and pink. They look like rainbows in your hand. People love opals. They use them to make rings and necklaces. After this, many people came to Coober Pedy. They wanted to find opals too. They started to **dig** in the **ground**. They became miners.

Living in a Mine

The first miners were soldiers from the First World War. They came back home in 1918. The summers were very **hot**. They did not have nice houses. They needed a place to live. They had a clever idea. They lived in their old mines! The mines were already **cool** inside. So the miners brought beds, tables, and chairs. They put pictures on the **rock** walls. Some miners made the holes bigger. Soon, they had little homes under the **ground**. Other people saw this and thought it was a great idea. More and more people made **underground** homes. The town of Coober Pedy was born.

What Are the Houses Like?

Today, the **underground** houses are very nice. They have many rooms. There is a kitchen, a living room, and bedrooms. Some have three or four bedrooms. The walls are made of **rock**. They are smooth and white. Some people paint the rocks. Others leave them natural. The floors have carpets. The rooms have beds, sofas, and TVs. There are lights in every room. Some houses are very, very big. They have swimming pools and game rooms. Most houses do not have windows. But people put bright lamps everywhere. The houses are not dark. They are warm and nice.

An Underground Town

It is not just the houses. Almost everything in Coober Pedy is **underground**! There are **underground** hotels. Tourists come from many countries to stay in them. There is an underground bookshop. There are underground restaurants. People eat dinner inside a **cave**. There are underground churches too. The biggest is called the Catholic Church of St Peter and St Paul. It has beautiful walls of white **rock**. People come there to pray on Sundays. There is even an underground museum. You can see old photos and tools from the first miners. The people of Coober Pedy are very proud of their town.

The People of Coober Pedy

The people in Coober Pedy come from many different countries. There are people from Greece, Italy, Croatia, Germany, Poland, and many other places. They all came to find opals. They worked hard. Some of them found a lot of opals and became rich. Many stayed and made a home in the town. Today, you can hear many languages in Coober Pedy. The town has shops, schools, and a small hospital. There is even a golf course! But it is in the **desert**, so there is no grass. The golf course is just sand and rocks. It is the most unusual golf course in the world.

Visiting Coober Pedy

Many tourists visit Coober Pedy every year. They come to see the **underground** houses. They come to look for opals. They come to see the strange, red **desert**. Some famous films were made here too. The **desert** around the town looks like the planet Mars. Coober Pedy is one of the most unusual towns in the world. The name "Coober Pedy" comes from old Aboriginal words. It means "white man's hole in the **ground**." It is a perfect name. Above the **ground**, there is a **hot**, empty desert. But below the ground, there is a happy little town full of people, colour, and life. Sometimes the best way is not the normal way. The people of Coober Pedy show us that. When life is too **hot**, you can simply go down.

Vocabulary

Word	Meaning
ground	the surface of the Earth that we walk on
underground	below the surface of the ground
hot	with a high temperature
cool	a little cold; not hot
desert	a big dry place with sand and very few plants
dig	to make a hole in the ground
cave	a big hole in a rock or under the ground
rock	a hard piece of stone in the ground
mine	a big hole where people get stones, gold, or coal from the ground
opal	a beautiful stone with many colours, used in rings and necklaces
miner	a person who works in a mine
tourist	a person who visits a place for fun

Comprehension Quiz

1. Where is Coober Pedy?

- A) In England
- B) In Australia
- C) In Egypt
- D) In America

2. Why do people live underground in Coober Pedy?

- A) Because they are afraid of birds
- B) Because there are many trees
- C) Because the summer is very hot
- D) Because they like the dark

3. What do the miners look for in Coober Pedy?

- A) Gold
- B) Coal
- C) Opals
- D) Diamonds

4. What is the temperature like inside the underground houses?

- A) Always very hot
- B) Always very cold
- C) The same all year
- D) Different every day

5. About how many people live in Coober Pedy today?

- A) About 200
- B) About 2,500
- C) About 25,000
- D) About 100,000

Answer Key

#	Answer	Question
1	B	1. Where is Coober Pedy?
2	C	2. Why do people live underground in Coober Pedy?
3	C	3. What do the miners look for in Coober Pedy?
4	C	4. What is the temperature like inside the underground houses?
5	B	5. About how many people live in Coober Pedy today?