

3e ENTRANCE TEST

Journey to the Centre of the Earth

5 *This text is an extract from a 19th-century fantasy story about explorers trying to reach the centre of the Earth. Axel, who is a scientist, and his uncle have just come out of a dark tunnel into a huge brightly lit space.*

10 At first I could hardly see anything. My eyes, unaccustomed to the light, quickly closed. When I was able to reopen them, I stood in amazement.

'The sea!' I cried.

'Yes,' my uncle replied, 'I will call it the Liedenbrock Sea - surely no-one would deny me the right to name it after myself as its first discoverer.'

15 A vast sheet of water, the start of a lake or an ocean, stretched beyond the range of sight. The fine golden sand of the shore was softly lapped by the waves, and scattered with small shells which had once been inhabited by the first created beings. The waves broke on the shore with a hollow echoing murmur.

20 Descending onto this gently sloping beach, about two hundred yards from the limit of the waves, were the foothills of vast rocky cliffs, which rose to unmeasurable heights. The massive vault that spanned the space above - the sky, if it could be called that - seemed to be made up of huge clouds of moving and changing vapours. The word 'cavern' does not convey any idea of this immense space: human language is inadequate when you venture into the deep abysses of the earth. I gazed upon these wonders in silence. I felt as if I had been transported to some distant planet. I gazed, I wondered, I admired, in astonishment mingled with a certain amount of fear.

25 My attention was drawn to another unexpected sight. At a distance of five hundred paces, appeared a high, tufted, dense forest. It was composed of trees of average height, but shaped like umbrellas. The breeze seemed to have no effect on them, and they stood unmoved and firm against the wind, as if they were made of stone. I hurried forward.

30 I could not give any name to these unique creations. Were these species of plants already known? No. When we arrived under their shade my surprise turned into admiration, and my uncle immediately named them. 'It's a forest of mushrooms!' he cried.

35 And he was right. Here were pale mushrooms, thirty to forty feet high, and crowned with a cap of equal diameter. There they stood in thousands. But the subterranean vegetation was not limited to these fungi. Further on rose groups of tall trees that were normally lowly shrubs, but here reached a giant size: ferns as tall as our fir-trees and lepidodendra bristling with rough hairs like monstrous cactus plants.

40 'Wonderful, magnificent, splendid!' cried my uncle. 'These are today's humble garden plants, which were tall trees in the early stages of the world. Look, Axel, and admire it all. It's a botanist's dream!'

'You are right, Uncle. Prehistoric plants have been preserved in this immense greenhouse.' 'Yes, it is a greenhouse, Axel, but you could also call it a wildlife reserve.'

'Wildlife?'

'Yes; no doubt of it. Look at that dust under your feet; see the bones scattered on the ground.'

45 'So there are!' I cried. 'Bones of extinct animals!'

Straightaway I began to put names to these gigantic bones: 'Here is the lower jaw of a Mastodon,' I said. 'These are the teeth of the Deinotherium; this thigh bone must have belonged to the greatest of those beasts, the Megatherium.'

50 Suddenly I stopped and said, 'If there have been dinosaurs in these underground regions in the past, who is to say one of these monsters isn't still wandering in these dark forests, or lurking behind these steep crags?' At this thought, I nervously inspected the horizon, but no living creature appeared on the shores.

55 Magnificent Desolation

These texts are extracts from interviews given 40 years after the first moon landing in 1969. Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon in the lunar module, while Michael Collins stayed in the command module orbiting the moon until the lunar module was ready to return.

60  **Buzz Aldrin**

What did Earth look like from the moon?

From the distance of the moon, Earth was four times the size of a full moon seen from Earth. It was a brilliant jewel in the black velvet sky.

Is the moon's surface different from that of Earth?

65 The surface of the moon is like nothing here on Earth! It's totally lacking any evidence of life. The surface is made up of lots of fine, talcum-powder-like dust mixed with a complete variety of pebbles, rocks, and boulders. If you examine it under a microscope, you can see it's made up of tiny droplets of vaporized rock. This is as a result of asteroids hitting the surface from outer space at high velocity over millions of years.

70 **Was being on the moon different from what you expected?**

I expected the unexpected and went with an open mind. I think the visual scene was described by my words on first landing — "magnificent desolation".

What was it like to be weightless?

75 The feeling of reduced gravity and the limitations of the space suit resulted in a slow-motion movement. Perhaps not too far from being on a trampoline, but without the springiness and instability.

What were your feelings about being on the moon?

80 I found it challenging and rewarding. I was exhilarated, but also guarded. There was nobody around for hundreds of thousands of miles. But there was a camera and a radio and many millions of people watching us. We were aware of that, and that causes you to focus your attention and make sure you aren't making mistakes. You're on stage, but it's a very unusual stage. People still come up to me to tell me where they were when we were on the moon. They were able to connect to that moment in their lives. We weren't able to

85 share that moment of excitement here on Earth. We were sort of out of town doing something else!



Michael Collins

How did you feel about having to stay in the command module?

90 As I was such a calm person, I was pigeonholed as a command module pilot. I lost my chance of walking on the moon, but in return for that I gained a chance to: one, fly to the moon, and two, be a part of the first crew to ever land on the moon.

I discovered later that I was described as the 'loneliest man ever in the universe' or something, which is a lot of baloney! I had Mission Control yakking in my ear half of the time. I actually rather enjoyed it.

95 **What did Earth look like from space?**

It looked peaceful and calm and quiet and serene and fragile. That was the overriding sensation I got - that little thing is so fragile out there!

What did the surface of the moon look like from the command module?

100 When the sun is shining on the surface at a very shallow angle, the craters cast long shadows and the moon's surface seems very inhospitable; forbidding almost. I did not sense any great invitation on the part of the moon for us to come into its domain. I sensed almost a scary place, a hostile place.

Were you ever afraid while you were in space?

105 It's not fear - it's worry and I think there's a legitimate distinction between the two. It's not a question that you're scared all the time, but you're mildly worried all the time - or at least I was. You're not sure that all these things are going to work properly and there are a lot of things coming in a very fragile daisy chain and you don't want any of those links in the daisy chain to break. So yes you are worried, you're concerned.

110 **What was it like to see the lunar module rejoin the command module?**

115 Man, it was beautiful! I saw them land in a little golden bug down there among the craters and as it came back it slowly got bigger and bigger. Finally they got back into the command module and I grabbed Buzz by both ears - I was going to kiss him on the forehead, I can remember that, but instead I clapped him on the back or something. You don't have time to sit around and chat because you've got to get ready to come home.

