

# Reading Comprehension — The Giant's Causeway

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## The Giant's Causeway

On the north coast of Northern Ireland lies one of the strangest sights in the British Isles: thousands of giant stone columns, most with six sides, packed together like a honeycomb and marching down into the sea. This is the Giant's Causeway. For hundreds of years, people told an extraordinary story to explain it.

According to the legend, the columns were built by an Irish giant named Finn McCool. Finn wished to fight a rival giant who lived across the sea in Scotland, so he tore great chunks of rock from the coast and laid them down to build a causeway — a stone path — across the water. When Finn saw how enormous his Scottish rival truly was, he fled home, and the causeway was smashed apart, leaving only the rocks we see today.

It is a wonderful story — but the true explanation is just as remarkable. Around sixty million years ago, this coast was a place of fiery volcanoes. Hot, runny lava poured out across the land. As the thick lava cooled slowly, it shrank and cracked, much as mud cracks as it dries in the sun. These cracks spread down through the rock in regular shapes, forming the famous six-sided columns.

So both a giant and a volcano are linked to the Giant's Causeway — one in legend, one in science. Today, visitors from all over the world come to walk on the columns and to wonder at how such an astonishing place came to be.

## Questions

1. Where is the Giant's Causeway? (1 mark)
2. What shape are most of the stone columns? (1 mark)
3. According to the legend, why did Finn McCool build the causeway? (2 marks)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 1 meaning "unusual or amazing." (1 mark)
5. What is the real, scientific explanation for the columns? (2 marks)
6. Why does the writer compare the cooling lava to "mud cracking as it dries in the sun"? (2 marks)
7. Give the myth explanation and the science explanation in your own words. (2 marks)
8. Summarise how the columns formed, according to science, in order. (3 marks)

## Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. On the north coast of Northern Ireland.
2. Six-sided (hexagonal).
3. To cross the sea and fight a rival giant in Scotland.

4. "extraordinary" (accept "strangest" / "astonishing").
5. Lava cooled, shrank and cracked into regular six-sided columns around sixty million years ago.
6. It helps the reader picture how cooling lava cracks, using something familiar they have seen.
7. Myth: a giant, Finn McCool, built it to fight a Scottish giant. Science: cooling volcanic lava cracked into columns.
8. Volcanoes erupted; hot lava poured out; the lava cooled slowly; it shrank and cracked into six-sided columns.