Reading Comprehension — The Power of Niagara Falls

The Power of Niagara Falls

On the border between Canada and the United States lies one of the most spectacular sights in North America: Niagara Falls. Every single second, an astonishing amount of water — enough to fill thousands of bathtubs — thunders over the edge and crashes into the river far below.

Niagara is not the tallest waterfall in the world, but it is one of the most powerful. The falls are fed by the Great Lakes, a chain of five enormous freshwater lakes. All that water funnels into the Niagara River and pours over a curved cliff shaped like a horseshoe. In fact, the largest of the falls is called the Horseshoe Falls.

For hundreds of years, people have been drawn to Niagara. Visitors come from all over the world to feel the spray on their faces and hear the roar of the water. Brave boat passengers sail right up to the foot of the falls, wrapped in raincoats against the mist.

But Niagara is not only beautiful — it is useful too. The huge force of the falling water is used to make electricity, called hydroelectric power. This clean energy lights up homes and cities on both sides of the border.

Slowly, over thousands of years, the rushing water has worn away the rock, and the falls have crept backwards upstream. Scientists work to slow this down, so that Niagara Falls will keep thundering for visitors far into the future.

Questions

1. Where are Niagara Falls located? (1 mark)
2. What are the falls fed by? (1 mark)
3. What is the largest of the falls called? (1 mark)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 1 meaning "amazing or surprising." (1 mark)
5. Why do you think visitors wear raincoats near the falls? (2 marks)
6. What is hydroelectric power, according to the text? (2 marks)
7. Why does the writer say Niagara is "not only beautiful"? (2 marks)
8. Why are the falls slowly moving backwards? (2 marks)
9. Summarise three facts about Niagara Falls from the text. (3 marks)

Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. On the border between Canada and the United States.
2. The Great Lakes.
3. The Horseshoe Falls.

4. "astonishing."

5. Because of the spray and mist thrown up by the crashing water, which would soak them.

6. Electricity made from the force of the falling water.

7. Because as well as being beautiful, it is useful — its water is used to make electricity.

8. The rushing water slowly wears away the rock, so the falls creep backwards upstream.

9. Any three: on the Canada–US border; very powerful; fed by the Great Lakes; horseshoe-shaped; used for hydroelectric power; slowly moving backwards.