

READING SUCCESS

Second Edition

6

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⁵ **uninhabited** with no people living there

⁶ **isolated** far away from other places

²¹ **related** being connected; being of the same family

²⁴ **archeologist** a person who studies old buildings, tools, and bones to learn about ancient cultures

²⁷ **trading post** a station in a far-away place, set up to buy and sell things

³⁷ **ethnic** relating to people who come from the same culture

Madagascar



Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world. Its area is 587,000 square kilometers, which makes it slightly larger than France but smaller than the Ukraine. It is almost exactly the same size as Botswana. It's in the Indian Ocean, off the south-eastern coast of Africa, and was **uninhabited** and **isolated** for millions of years. This means that many of the plants and animals on Madagascar evolved differently from those in the rest of the world.

There are about 9,000 types of plants on Madagascar that are not found in the rest of the world. There are also many unique species of birds and animals. A more common sight in Madagascar is the giant jumping rat, which is the size of a rabbit. Large birds called elephant birds lived on Madagascar but have been extinct for hundreds of years. Many of the other rare animals on the island, such as lemurs and chameleons, are also under the threat of extinction due to the clearing of native vegetation. Since the arrival of humans about 2,000 years ago, 90 percent of the original forest, where lemurs live, has been destroyed.

Lemurs are Madagascar's most famous animals. They are primates; although they are similar to monkeys and apes in some ways, they are not really **related** to them. There are almost 100 different species of lemur, the smallest of which weigh just thirty grams, while others are up to nine kilograms.

Archeologists have found evidence that people lived on Madagascar as early as 300 BCE, but the first written records are of Muslim traders visiting the island around 700 CE. They established **trading posts** along the northwest coast. During the Middle Ages, the rulers of Madagascar grew rich and powerful by trading with Arab, Persian, and Somali merchants. In 1500 Portuguese traders found Madagascar, and the French soon followed. They began to trade in coffee, vanilla, cocoa, rice, beans, bananas, and peanuts—all of which were easily grown in Madagascar. The island also became a hiding place for many pirates.

Madagascar became a French colony in 1890 and gained independence in 1960. The population of the island grew from just over 2 million in 1900 to 21 million in 2010. The people come from a wide variety of **ethnic** backgrounds. Sailors sometimes called Madagascar the Island of the Moon because it was so strange. Today it is still a very interesting place to visit.



Vocabulary Review

■ Fill in the blanks.

extinct

isolated

uninhabited

1. Explorers were surprised to see buildings on the island because they had thought it was _____.
2. The island was so _____ that few people had ever visited it.
3. The scientists were surprised to see the tracks of an animal they had thought was _____.

Reading Comprehension

■ Choose the best answer.

1. Which is true about Madagascar?
 - a. Many animals have gone extinct on Madagascar.
 - b. Madagascar is a good place for growing crops.
 - c. Most of the animals on Madagascar can be seen in other places in the world.
 - d. There are about two million people presently living on Madagascar.
2. How many islands in the world are as large as or larger than Madagascar?
 - a. Two
 - b. Three
 - c. Four
 - d. None
3. Which animals of Madagascar are NOT extinct or under the threat of extinction?
 - a. Giant jumping rats
 - b. Chameleons
 - c. Elephant birds
 - d. Lemurs
4. Archeologists research _____.
 - a. ancient cultures
 - b. animals
 - c. ancient lemurs
 - d. uninhabited islands

Summary

■ Fill in each blank with the correct word.

century

largest

habitats

due

unique

Madagascar is the fourth 1_____ island in the world and is situated in the Indian Ocean off the eastern coast of Africa. It has many 2_____ plants and animals although many of them are under threat of extinction 3_____ to the destruction of their natural 4_____. France ruled Madagascar for about a 5_____ before it became an independent country.