



Ghost Towns and Forgotten Places

Reading and speaking practice, B1

Where is this place? What happened here? How does it make you feel? 



Pripyat, Ukraine

A city abandoned after the Chernobyl nuclear explosion. Empty buildings, a quiet Ferris wheel, and streets taken over by nature.



Where is this place? What happened here? How does it make you feel? 



Poveglia Island, Italy



A small island near Venice, once used for plague victims and later as a hospital. Now it's silent, overgrown, and believed to be haunted.



Where is this place? What happened here? How does it make you feel? 



Oradour-sur-Glane, France

A village left in ruins after World War II. Rusty cars, broken houses, and empty streets remind visitors of the tragedy that happened here.



Where is this place? What happened here? How does it make you feel? 



Kolmanskop, Namibia

A ghost town in the desert, once rich with diamonds. Sand now fills its houses, creating a strange and beautiful sea of dust.



Where is this place? What happened here? How does it make you feel?



Centralia, Pennsylvania, USA

A town slowly disappearing because of an underground fire that has been burning for more than 60 years. Smoke rises from cracks in the ground.



Warm-up

1. Have you ever seen an abandoned building or town? Where was it?
2. Would you like to explore an abandoned place? Why or why not?
3. What do you think makes these places so mysterious or beautiful?
4. Why do you think people leave their homes or whole towns behind?
5. Why are tourists and photographers so interested in visiting such places?
6. Do you believe some abandoned places might be haunted?
7. If you could visit one famous abandoned place, which would you choose — a ghost town, an old hospital, or an island?



Match the words to their meanings

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1.abandoned | a. very old and damaged, no longer bright or clear |
| 2.ruins | b. empty and without people, usually after they've left |
| 3.dusty | c. to speak very quietly |
| 4.overgrown | d. a place believed to have ghosts or spirits |
| 5.cracked | e. full of old buildings that are broken or destroyed |
| 6.faded | f. covered with plants, grass, or vines |
| 7.ghost town | g. covered with fine, dry dirt |
| 8.whisper | h. frightening in a quiet or mysterious way |
| 9.chilling | i. broken or split, usually because of age or heat |
| 10.haunted | j. an empty town where nobody lives anymore |

Complete the sentences

1. The windows were **c**_____ and the paint on the walls was **f**_____.
2. Nobody lives there anymore — it's a real **g**_____ **t**_____.
3. The guide told us to be quiet; he said the hospital might be **h**_____.
4. Grass and trees have **o**_____ the whole village.
5. A **c**_____ wind moved through the empty houses.
6. The old photos on the walls looked **d**_____ and grey.
7. We could hear the desert wind **w**_____ through the ruins.

The background of the entire image is a repeating pattern of human skulls. The skulls are rendered in a dark, textured style, appearing in shades of dark green and black. They are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some skulls slightly offset from others, creating a dense, macabre texture.

LET'S READ...



Pripyat, Ukraine

Once a happy Soviet city, Pripyat was home to thousands of families who worked at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. But in April 1986, an explosion changed everything. Within hours, the people were told to leave their homes, thinking they would return soon. They never did.

Today, the town is silent. Schools are full of dusty books, and toys still sit on classroom floors. A Ferris wheel stands in the amusement park that never opened. Nature has taken over the streets—trees grow through windows, and wild animals walk freely.

Visitors say the city feels like time has stopped. Some even claim to hear distant laughter or see shadows in the fog. Pripyat is not just an abandoned town—it's a frozen moment in history.

Pripyat, Ukraine

True or False

1. The people of Pripyat were told to leave their homes forever after the explosion.
2. The Ferris wheel in Pripyat was built after the nuclear accident.
3. Today, wild animals live freely in the empty city.

Discuss

1. What do you think it would feel like to visit Pripyat?
2. Why do you think people still want to go there?
3. Would you walk through an abandoned school or hospital? Why or why not?





Poveglia Island, Italy

Between Venice and Lido lies a small island that many Italians avoid. For centuries, Poveglia was a place of quarantine for people sick with the plague. Later, in the 20th century, it became a mental hospital.

Locals whisper that doctors performed strange experiments there, and some say the cries of patients can still be heard when the wind blows across the lagoon. Today, the buildings are in ruins, covered with ivy and silence.

The Italian government has forbidden visitors from entering without permission, but brave explorers sometimes go secretly. They describe a heavy feeling in the air and strange voices echoing through the empty halls.

Some call Poveglia “the island of no return.” Whether you believe in ghosts or not, it’s one of the most haunted places in the world.

Poveglia Island, Italy

True or False

1. Poveglia was once used as a hospital for people with mental illnesses.
2. Tourists can visit the island freely without any permission.
3. Many people believe the island is haunted.

Discuss

1. Would you ever visit Poveglia Island?
2. Why do you think some people enjoy visiting haunted places?
3. Do you believe in ghosts or strange energies in old buildings?





Oradour-sur-Glane, France

This quiet French village looks like time stopped in 1944. During World War II, German soldiers destroyed Oradour-sur-Glane and killed almost all of its people. After the war, the French government decided not to rebuild it but to keep it exactly as it was.

Today, you can still walk along its empty streets. Rusty cars sit in garages, bicycles lie by walls, and signs from old shops still hang in the wind. The silence there feels deep and sad.

Visitors say it's impossible not to feel the presence of the past. The ruined village stands as a reminder of what war can do—and as a ghost town where memory itself seems alive.

Oradour-sur-Glane, France

True or False

1. Oradour-sur-Glane was destroyed during World War II.
2. After the war, the village was completely rebuilt.
3. Visitors can still see the old cars and bicycles in the village.

Discuss

1. Why do you think the French government decided not to rebuild this town?
2. How can abandoned places like this help people remember history?
3. Would you prefer to see such a place at night or during the day?





Kolmanskop, Namibia

In the middle of the Namib Desert lies Kolmanskop — a ghost town half-buried in golden sand. Over a hundred years ago, it was a rich diamond-mining town. German settlers built elegant houses, a hospital, even a theatre and a bowling alley. The people of Kolmanskop lived well — until the diamonds ran out.

By the 1950s, the town was empty. The desert winds began to blow through broken windows, filling the rooms with sand. Today, dunes rise inside old homes, covering staircases and furniture. It looks as if the desert has swallowed the whole town.

Tourists come from all over the world to walk through the sandy streets. The silence there feels heavy, and the light changes quickly, making strange shadows on the walls.

Kolmanskop is a place where time, money, and human ambition disappeared into the dust — a beautiful reminder that nature always wins in the end.

Kolmanskop, Namibia

True or False

1. Kolmanskop was famous for its diamond mines.
2. The town was abandoned because of a war.
3. Today, sand fills many of the old houses.

Discuss

1. What makes this place different from other ghost towns?
2. How does nature change places that people leave behind?
3. Would you like to take photos in Kolmanskop? Why?





Centralia, Pennsylvania, USA

Centralia looks like an ordinary small town—until you notice the smoke rising from the ground. In 1962, a coal mine under the town caught fire. The fire never went out. It still burns today, deep underground.

As the years passed, the fire destroyed roads and houses. The ground cracked open, and dangerous gases filled the air. People were forced to leave, one by one, until only a few stayed behind.

Now, Centralia is nearly empty. Signs warn visitors of “danger” and “toxic gas.” The streets are quiet, covered in graffiti messages from curious travelers. Some say the town feels alive, as if the earth itself is breathing.

With its burning heart underground, Centralia might be the closest thing to a real-life ghost town.

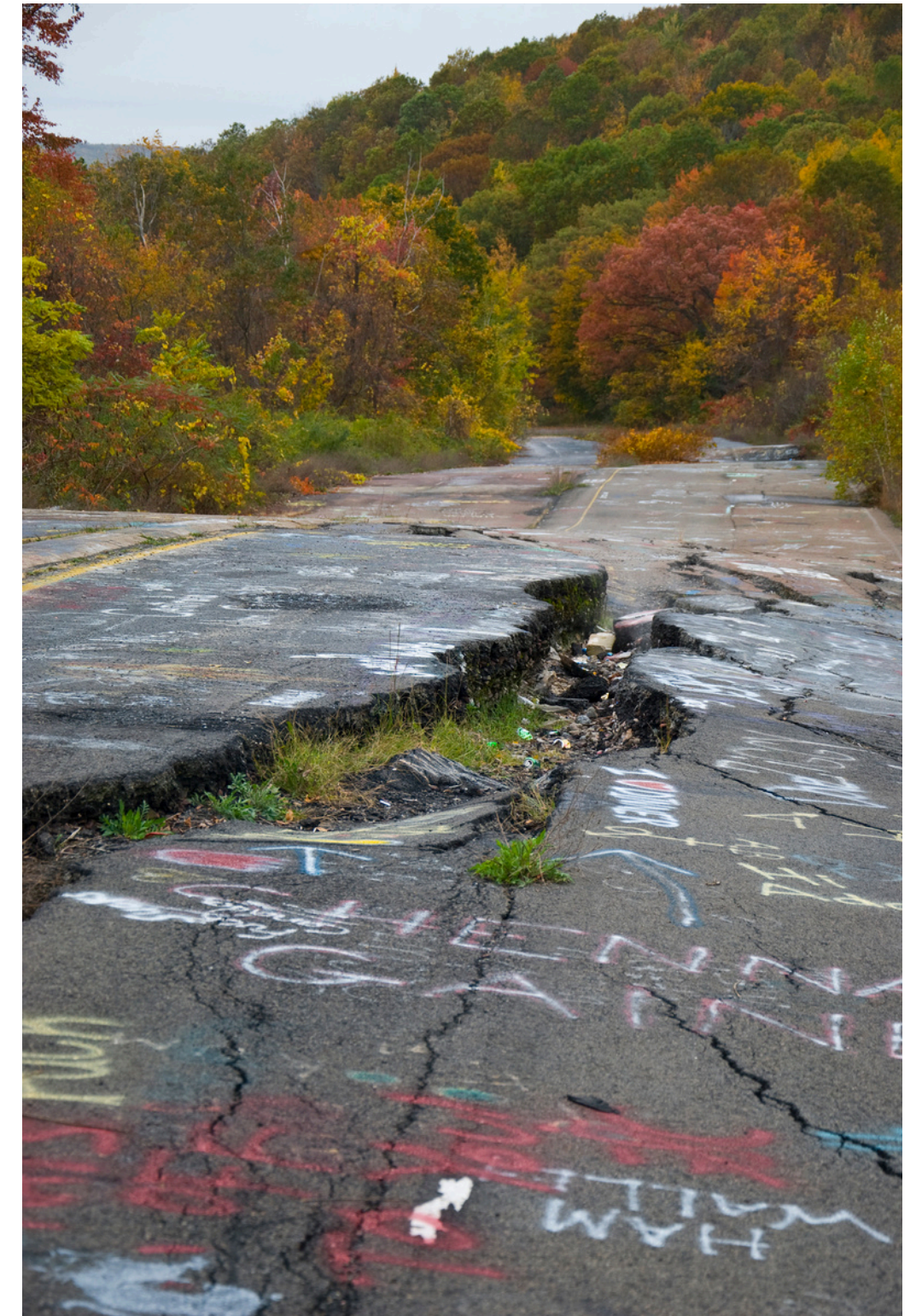
Centralia, Pennsylvania, USA

True or False

1. A fire in an underground mine caused people to leave Centralia.
2. The fire has stopped burning in recent years.
3. Some people still live near the area.

Discuss

1. How would you feel walking through a place with smoke coming from the ground?
2. Do you think people should be allowed to live near dangerous places like Centralia?
3. What makes Centralia more frightening — the fire, or the silence?



Describe!

Look at the photo. Take a moment to observe it, then describe what you see and how it makes you feel. Use the vocabulary from today's lesson:

abandoned, cracked, dusty, overgrown, haunted, chilling, silent, ghost town, faded, ruins, whisper...

Think about:

1. What kind of place is it? (a house, school, hospital, factory, town, etc.)
2. What happened there in the past? Why was it abandoned?
3. What can you see, hear, or feel in this picture?
4. What might happen if someone went inside now?



Describe!



Describe!



Describe!



Describe!



Describe!



Answer key

Vocabulary

1. cracked, faded.
2. ghost town.
3. haunted.
4. overgrown
5. chilling
6. dusty
7. whispering



Thank you!
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