

**Scuola Superiore Universitaria
di Toppo Wassermann
a.a. 2024/25**

Classe umanistica

Seconda prova: tema per la prova opzionale di Inglese. Il candidato/la candidata risponda alle domande seguenti.

TEST

PART 1. READING COMPREHENSION

The most unusual tourist attractions

A. Island of Dolls, Mexico

Deep in the verdant waterways of Xochimilco near Mexico City lies a small island with a history that chills to the bone. The Island of Dolls is a place where countless dolls, in varying states of decay, hang ominously from trees. These dolls, weathered by the elements, are said to be an offering by a grieving caretaker to soothe the restless spirit of a young girl who drowned in the canal nearby. Visitors describe an intense atmosphere, where the silence is broken only by the whispering leaves and the unblinking gazes of plastic figures. It's an attraction that blends folklore, sadness, and the supernatural.

B. Temple of Rats, Deshnok, India

At the Karni Mata Temple in the small town of Deshnok, Rajasthan, thousands of rats scurry underfoot, revered as sacred. Locals and travellers alike tread carefully so as not to disturb these holy creatures, believed to be the reincarnated kin of the goddess Karni Mata. The air is filled with the musky scent of incense and the quiet chitter of rodents. Offerings of milk and grain are left for them, and it's considered particularly auspicious to spot the rare white rat among the throng.

C. The Gum Wall, Seattle

Adjacent to the box office for Seattle's Market Theater, this colourful wall covered with used chewing gum is a quirky testament to spontaneous urban art. Starting in the early 1990s as a peculiar habit by theatregoers, it has transformed into a picturesque collage. Despite several cleanings of the walls, the gum-sticking prevailed, and the authorities eventually reversed course and embraced the eccentric tradition.

D. Baldwin Street, Dunedin, New Zealand

Dunedin's claim to fame is Baldwin Street, recognised by the Guinness World Records as the world's steepest street. Visitors huff up the 35% grade slope, where the footpath is practically vertical, and houses sit at gravity-defying angles. This quirky urban wonder is a hub for novelty events, including the annual Jaffa Race, where thousands of spherical candies roll down to the amusement of spectators, turning this steep street into a spectacle of community and celebration.

E. California's Life-Sized Dinosaurs

Driving through the arid landscape of Cabazon, California, travellers are greeted by the sight of enormous prehistoric beasts. These life-sized concrete dinosaurs, remnants of a prehistoric-themed park, loom large against the desert sky. Visitors can clamber up the

stairs into the belly of 'Dinny the Dinosaur' for a whimsical view or browse the accompanying gift shop nestled within 'Mr. Rex.' It's a playful homage to the giants of the past, attracting those with a taste for kitsch and nostalgia.

F. Catacombs, France

Major public health problems led the Parisians in the late 18th century to evacuate the bones from their largest cemetery, the Saints-Innocents, which had accumulated over approximately 1,000 years. Today, twenty meters beneath the bustling and romantic streets of Paris, the Catacombs represent a dark and introspective journey into the city's history. This subterranean maze of tunnels is a stark reminder of the finite nature of life, where the bones of over six million people are meticulously arranged, creating a silent and sombre tableau. Visitors descend into this realm of darkness, walking through corridors lined with the remains of past Parisians, a poignant and reflective experience that's as humbling as it is macabre

Exercise no. 1 – choose the correct answer

Which place might you stumble across on your way to see a performance and why? (write two or three lines)

- A. Island of Dolls
- B. Temple of Rats
- C. The Gum Wall
- D. Baldwin Street
- E. California's Life-Sized Dinosaurs
- F. Catacombs

Where might you be inclined to search for something that uniquely distinguishes itself from the rest? Why? (write two or three lines)

- A. Island of Dolls
- B. Temple of Rats
- C. The Gum Wall
- D. Baldwin Street
- E. California's Life-Sized Dinosaurs
- F. Catacombs

Where will you be more likely to struggle to find your way back? Why? (write two or three lines)

- A. Island of Dolls
- B. Temple of Rats
- C. The Gum Wall
- D. Baldwin Street
- E. California's Life-Sized Dinosaurs
- F. Catacombs

Which attraction is a testament to remarkable persistence? Why? (write two or three lines)

- A. Island of Dolls
- B. Temple of Rats
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Which place was created to appease an afflicted soul? Why? (write two or three lines)

- A. Island of Dolls
- B. Temple of Rats
- C. The Gum Wall
- D. Baldwin Street
- E. California's Life-Sized Dinosaurs
- F. Catacombs

Exercise No. 2. Look at the previous text again and find a word having the meaning of:

- green:
- numerous:
- very near:
- carefully:
- very dry:

PART 2. Lexis

Exercise No. 1. Read the text on an excursion to a museum. Use the words in brackets to form a new word that fits into each blank.

Last week, we went on a fantastic trip to the Museum of _____ (NATURE) History, which is _____ (LOCATE) only a few blocks away from our school. On _____ (ARRIVE) our guide was waiting for us and told us what we were going to see.

The most exciting part of the museum was the section on _____ (HISTORY) animals. We stared in _____ (AMAZE) at all the skeletons of species that became extinct millions of years ago.

There was a special _____ (EXHIBIT) on dinosaurs, creatures that have fascinated us for a long time. The guide gave us some interesting facts about these _____ (GIANT) creatures. The Tyrannosaurus Rex, for example, reached a _____ (HIGH) of over 6 metres. The Seismosaurus was probably the longest dinosaur with an estimated _____ (LENGTHEN) of up to 40 metres.

The only _____ (ADVANTAGE) of the trip was that there was not enough time to see all the interesting things the museum offered. Towards the end it got very _____ (CROWD) and our guide informed us that it would be better if we came during the morning hours.

At the end of the tour, she thanked us for our _____ (PATIENT) and attention and asked for feedback. She gave us a sheet of paper on which we could write down (SUGGEST) and _____ (IMPROVE) for future school groups. After two hours in one of the most incredible buildings I have ever seen we went back to school.

Exercise No. 2. Read the text on Artificial Intelligence and complete the missing words

Predicting the future isn't easy. In 1943, Thomas Watson, chairman (1) _____ the company IBM, said, "I think there's a world market for about five computers." Even in the 1970s, many experts (2) _____ saying, "Nobody will want a computer in their home." But today, computer technology is everywhere. "You (3) _____ have several computers in your kitchen," says Dr Rodney Brooks of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pointing to the computer chips in our coffee makers, fridges, washing (4) _____ and ovens. It's almost impossible to imagine a world (5) _____ computers. Dr Brooks is director of MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. He says that computers are not (6) _____ becoming more common, they're (7) _____ smarter too. They're starting to think. Scientists at AI Research are developing their own thinking robot, (8) _____ Hal. Child expert Anat TreisterGoren is teaching Hal to speak. She talks to him and reads (9) _____ children's stories. Baby Hal is growing up fast, and his language level is improving quickly. Soon, if (10) _____ speak to him, you might even think he's human! AI experts (11) _____ optimistic. They hope that, (12) _____ day, intelligent machines will be all around us. Perhaps everyone will have a Hal - their own personal assistant. If you've got a question, Hal will know the (13) _____. If you want to go on a trip, Hal will be able to (14) _____ all the arrangements. He'll never get tired, he'll never be ill and he'll never (15) _____ angry. The technology is almost here. Think about it. Wouldn't you like to (16) _____ your own "Hal"?

