**The city of Edinburgh**

The city of Edinburgh is renowned world-wide for its rich history, unique architecture, stunning scenery, and cultural attractions. The Scottish capital has a striking appearance, with winding cobbled streets sitting in the shadow of the magnificent Edinburgh Castle. Nearly 4 million tourists visit every year, to take in both the cultural buzz of today and the elaborate history of the city. The city is one of only two in Britain to be a World Heritage site, but what is so special about it?

1. **Old and New Towns**

Edinburgh's Old and New Towns form one of the most beautiful 'cityscapes”in the world and as a result, gained UNESCO World Heritage status in 1995. The medieval Old Town, with its winding narrow passageways and cobbled streets, blends seamlessly into the 18th century.

New Town displaying the best examples of Georgian architecture anywhere. Within this area, over 75% of buildings are listed, meaning they are officially protected due to historical significance; this is more than anywhere else in the UK.

The Old Town stretches from the striking Edinburgh Castle, through the noble old houses and right through to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the

most famous Royal estate in Scotland. Along the way, you can expect trademark narrow alleys and tall buildings, reminiscent of a bygone era and similar to Harry Potter. Interestingly, JK Rowling wrote most of the Harry Potter books in the city at the Elephant House café.

The New Town was built later on, by some of the finest architects of their time. lt is far more open and greener than the Old Town, with grander and more elaborate buildings to reflect Edinburgh's newfound ranking as part of the Age of Enlightenment.

1. **Academic and Cultural Excellence**

It was this new dawning of academic and cultural excellence that elevated Edinburgh to one of the most admired cities in Europe, so how did it happen?

Edinburgh established itself as the chief intellectual centre of the Scottish Enlightenment and this, as well as it being built on seven hills,

subsequently earned it the nickname‘Athens of the North'. The

Enlightenment brought fresh and radical approaches to science, politics philosophy, and artistry, much in the same way as the French Enlightenment.

Indeed, philosopher Voltaire said, 'We look to Scotland for all our ideas of civilization'. The brightest minds on Earth gathered in Edinburgh, such as economist Adam Smith, whose concept of the free market still makes up the economic systems in existence today. Indeed, local poet Tobias Smollet said of Edinburgh in the 1700s 'it is a hotbed of genius'

lt wasn't just ideas and concepts born in Edinburgh either, but innovations and life changing services. The first Encyclopaedia Britannica was published here, as well as the first ever fire service and first use of anaesthetics to give pain relief to patients. Huge strides towards the invention of the television and telephone were made in Edinburgh also, by John Logie Baird and Alexander Graham Bel.

In more recent years, Edinburgh has become the City of Literature with more libraries per person than anywhere else in the world. From Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, right through to JK Rowling's Harry Potter books, some of the most adored literary works have been written in and inspired by Edinburgh and its heritage. Indeed, it was at University that here that Conan Doyle found his inspiration for Sherlock, in his genius University professor.

**Questions:**

* What are the distinctive features of Edinburgh's Old Town and

New Town?

* In what ways did the Enlightenment contribute to Edinburgh's

reputation as an academic and cultural center? Provide at least

two examples from the text.

* How was Conan Doyle inspired by Edinburgh?