

ZIMBABWE SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

O Level English Language - Comprehension Exercise

The Mighty Baobab Tree

■ Words: 179 | ■■ Reading time: ~2 minutes | ■ Student: Test Student

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the passage carefully, then answer ALL questions based on your understanding.

PASSAGE

The baobab tree, known as the "Tree of Life," is one of Africa's most iconic symbols. In Zimbabwe, these magnificent trees have stood for thousands of years, witnessing the rise and fall of great civilizations.

The baobab is remarkable not only for its enormous trunk, which can store thousands of liters of water, but also for its unique appearance. During the dry season, when the tree sheds its leaves, it looks as if it has been planted upside down with its roots reaching toward the sky.

Local communities have long depended on the baobab for survival. Its fruit is rich in Vitamin C and provides essential nutrition. The bark can be used to make rope and cloth, while the leaves are used in traditional medicine. Even the hollow trunks serve as natural shelters and water storage tanks.

In Zimbabwean folklore, the baobab is considered sacred. Many believe that spirits live within these ancient trees, and it is customary to ask for permission before taking anything from them. This deep respect has helped preserve these magnificent trees for future generations.

QUESTIONS

Answer ALL questions. Write your answers on a separate sheet.

1. Why is the baobab tree called the "Tree of Life"? **[2 marks]**
2. Describe the appearance of the baobab tree during the dry season. **[2 marks]**
3. List THREE ways local communities use the baobab tree. **[3 marks]**
4. How do Zimbabwean traditions help protect baobab trees? **[3 marks]**

5. What can be inferred about the age of baobab trees from the passage? **[2 marks]**
6. Explain how the baobab tree is adapted to survive in dry conditions. **[2 marks]**
7. What is the significance of the baobab in Zimbabwean folklore? **[2 marks]**
8. In your own words, explain why the baobab tree appears "upside down". **[2 marks]**
9. What role do hollow baobab trunks play in community life? **[2 marks]**
10. Why might it be important to preserve baobab trees for future generations? **[3 marks]**