

Read the text about an archaeological discovery. Answer the questions (1-5) using a maximum of 4 words. Write your answers in the spaces provided on the answer sheet. The first one (0) has been done for you.



## An emperor's dream

The Chinese Emperor had done all he could to become immortal, but in vain. His physicians had prepared herbal and alchemical elixirs, but none could stave off his decline. He had sent a minister on a voyage far over the eastern seas in search of a mythical potion of eternal life. But that expedition never returned, and now the quest seemed hopeless. So Qin Shi Huangdi, the First Emperor of a unified China in the third century BC, had begun preparations for the next best thing to an endless life on Earth. He would continue his cosmic rule from the spirit world, and his underground tomb would be a palace for the afterlife, complete with its own army of life-size clay soldiers.

Those terracotta warriors lay hidden for two thousand years beneath several metres of sandy soil a mile from the First Emperor's burial mound at Mount Li, to the northeast of the city of Xi'an in Shaanxi province of north-central China. They were rediscovered in 1974 by farmers digging a well, and Chinese archaeologists were astonished to find over the next decade that there were at least 8,000 of them, once brightly painted and equipped with clay horses and wooden chariots. As further excavation revealed the extent of the Emperor's mausoleum, with offices, stables and halls, along with clay figures of officials, acrobats and labourers and life-size bronze animals, it became clear that the Han dynasty historian Sima Qian, writing in the second century BC, hadn't been exaggerating after all. He claimed that 700,000 men had worked on the Emperor's tomb, constructing entire palaces, towers and scenic landscapes through which the Emperor's spirit might roam.

No one knows what other wonders the mausoleum might house, for the main burial chamber – a football-pitch-sized hall beneath a great mound of earth – remains sealed. Most enticing of all is a detail relayed by Qian: 'Mercury was used to fashion the hundred rivers, the Yellow River and the Yangtze River, and the seas in such a way that they flowed'. This idea that the main

chamber contains a kind of microcosm of all of China (as it was then recognised) with rivers, lakes and seas of shimmering mercury had long seemed too fantastic for modern historians to grant it credence. But if Qian had not been inventing stories about other elaborate features of the mausoleum site, might his account of the tomb chamber be reliable too?

In the 1980s, Chinese researchers found that the soil in the burial mound above the tomb contains mercury concentrations way above those elsewhere in the vicinity. Now some archaeologists working on the site believe that the body of the First Emperor may indeed lie amidst vast puddles of the liquid metal.

Yet it seems unlikely that anyone will gaze on such a sight in the foreseeable future. 'We have no current plan to open the chambers,' explains archaeologist Qingbo Duan of Northwest University in Xi'an, who led the mausoleum excavations from 1998 to 2008. 'We have no mature technologies and effective measures to protect the relics,' he says. So can we ever know the truth about Qin Shi Huangdi's rivers of mercury?

0	Who failed to produce a substance that would save the Emperor's life?
1	What future function would the Emperor's tomb serve for him?
2	What had the terracotta warriors been given? (Give <u>one</u> answer.)
3	How big is the most important part of the tomb?
4	What was believed to be recreated as a whole in the most important part of the tomb?
5	What did scientists discover was unusually high in the area around the tomb?

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0	<i>his physicians</i>
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Von der  
Lehrperson  
auszufüllen

richtig falsch

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