Name: _____ Date: _____

Why a Hillside Theater Carried a Whisper

Circle group

Long ago in Greece, people built big theaters outdoors. They had no microphones or speakers. Thousands of people sat to watch a play. Even those in the top rows could often hear the actors. How could that be?

The builders were clever about the shape of the land. Many theaters were cut into the side of a hill. The seats rose in curved rows, like the inside of a giant bowl. Every listener faced the stage. A famous one is at Epidaurus in Greece.

The slope helped in a few ways. Sound spreads out in all directions. On a flat field, much of it drifts away. On a hillside, the rows rise up. The voices of the actors travel up to each level. People in front do not block the sound. The curve also kept the crowd close to the stage.

The hard stone seats and the smooth floor sent some sound back to the crowd. Actors also learned to speak slowly and clearly. Each word then reached the back rows. Careful planning, not machines, made a quiet voice travel far.

Questions

1. Where were many Greek theaters built?

_____

_____

2. How were the seats set up?

_____

_____

3. Why did the slope help voices reach every level?

_____

_____

4. What did the stone seats and smooth floor do with sound?

_____

_____

5. What did actors do so words reached the back rows?

_____

_____

6. What made the theaters work, instead of machines?

_____

_____

Words to know

microphones: tools that make a voice louder
slope: ground that tilts up or down
clever: smart at solving problems

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Why a Hillside Theater Carried a Whisper

Triangle group

Long ago in Greece, people built large open-air theaters without microphones or speakers. Thousands of people sat together to watch a play, and even those in the top rows could often hear the actors. How was that possible?

The builders were clever about the shape of the land. Many of these theaters were cut into the side of a hill. The seats rose in curved rows, like the inside of a giant bowl, so every listener faced the stage. A famous example stands at Epidaurus in Greece.

The slope helped in several ways. Sound spreads out in all directions, and a flat field lets much of it drift away. On a hillside, the rows rise up toward the sky, so the actors' voices travel up to every level without being blocked by people sitting in front. The curve also kept the audience close to the stage instead of strung out in a long line.

The hard stone seats and the smooth floor in front of them bounced some sound back toward the crowd. Actors also learned to speak slowly and clearly, so each word reached the back rows. Careful planning, rather than machines, made a quiet voice travel far.

Questions

1. Where were many of the Greek theaters built?

_____

_____

2. How were the seats arranged?

_____

_____

3. Why did the slope help voices reach every level?

_____

_____

4. What did the stone seats and smooth floor do with sound?

_____

_____

5. What did actors do so that their words reached the back rows?

_____

_____

6. What made the theaters work instead of machines?

_____

_____

Words to know

microphones: tools that make a voice louder
slope: ground that tilts up or down
audience: the people who watch or listen to a show
bounced: hit something and sprang back
clever: smart at solving problems

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Why a Hillside Theater Carried a Whisper

Square group

Long ago in Greece, people constructed enormous open-air theaters that had neither microphones nor speakers. Thousands of spectators gathered to watch a play, and even those in the highest rows could often hear the actors without difficulty. How was that possible?

The builders were remarkably clever about the shape of the land. Many of these theaters were carved into the side of a hill, and the seats ascended in curved rows, like the inside of a giant bowl, so that every listener faced the stage. A famous example still stands at Epidaurus in Greece.

The slope helped in several important ways. Sound spreads outward in all directions, and across a flat field a great deal of it simply drifts away. On a hillside, however, the rows climb toward the sky, so the actors' voices travel upward to every level without being blocked by the people seated in front. The curve also kept the audience gathered near the stage instead of strung out in a long line.

The hard stone seats and the smooth floor in front of them bounced some of the sound back toward the crowd, and actors learned to speak slowly and clearly so that each word would reach the back rows. Careful planning, rather than machinery, allowed a quiet voice to travel a long way.

Questions

1. Where were many of the Greek theaters constructed?

_____

_____

2. How were the seats arranged?

_____

_____

3. Why did the slope help voices reach every level?

_____

_____

4. What did the stone seats and smooth floor do with sound?

_____

_____

5. What did actors do so that every word reached the back rows?

_____

_____

6. What allowed the theaters to work, rather than machinery?

_____

_____

Words to know

microphones: tools that make a voice louder
slope: ground that tilts up or down
audience: the people who watch or listen to a show
bounced: hit something and sprang back
clever: smart at solving problems

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Why a Hillside Theater Carried a Whisper

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Why a Hillside Theater Carried a Whisper

Easier · 181 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3

1. Into the side of a hill.
2. In curved rows that rose like the inside of a bowl.
3. The rows rose up, so the people in front did not block the sound.
4. They sent some of it back to the crowd.
5. They spoke slowly and clearly.
6. Careful planning of the land and the seats.

Triangle: Why a Hillside Theater Carried a Whisper

This passage · 200 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.9

1. Into the side of a hill.
2. In curved rows that rose like the inside of a bowl.
3. The rows rose up, so no one sat directly behind a crowd that blocked the sound.
4. They bounced some of it back toward the crowd.
5. They spoke slowly and clearly.
6. Careful planning of the shape of the land and the seats.

Square: Why a Hillside Theater Carried a Whisper

Harder · 219 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.5

1. Into the side of a hill.
2. In curved rows that ascended like the inside of a bowl.
3. The rows climbed upward, so the people seated in front did not block the sound.
4. They bounced some of it back toward the crowd.
5. They spoke slowly and clearly.
6. Careful planning of the shape of the land and the seats.