Lesson D Reading

Giants on a Small Island

Rapa Nui, or Easter Island, is a small island in the Pacific Ocean. This little island is famous for some very old and very large statues. These statues, called *moai*, are hundreds of years old. They are enormous. The largest is 33 feet tall and weighs 80 tons. Even the smallest statue is big—it's 4 feet tall.

About a thousand years ago, people sailed from Polynesia to Rapa Nui. They settled on the island and made the statues from volcanic rock. They made eyes from white coral and used a black or red stone for the **pupil**. Some statues have headpieces, which could be hair or hats, made from red volcanic rock.

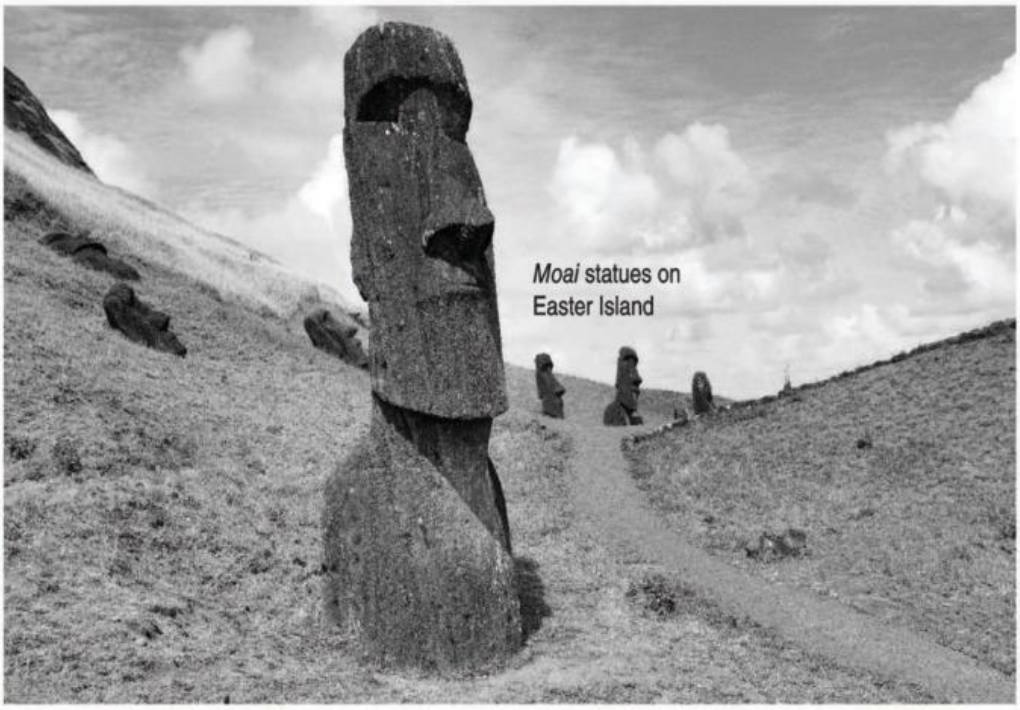
Researchers say the statues probably honor the **ancestors** of the Polynesian settlers. Rapanui legend says the statues have their ancestors' spirits inside them. There are many different ideas about how the statues came to be standing up.

The statues are located all over the island, usually close to the water. The rock used to make the statues came from miles away from where they stand. How did people move huge, heavy statues hundreds of years ago? Rapanui legend says they walked, and that the spirits of powerful ancestors inside the statues made it happen.

▲ The black figures show the locations of the statues.

Researchers have different ideas about how the statues moved. Some think that people rolled the statues using cut wood. Other researchers think that people pulled and rolled the statues on to their rounded front sides. In fact, research teams have tried to recreate moving artificial statues to test their ideas. They were able to move the statues, but they were exhausted from the hard work.

pupil the dark circle in the middle of the eye
ancestor a person in your family who lived a long time ago



Moai statues on Easter Island

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