LONESOME GEORGE

"Only one tortoise remains to tell the story of the existence of its subspecies on the tiny isolated island of Pinta," Tony Harper reports.

Sometimes the road to romance is long. "Lonesome George", a giant Galapagos tortoise, is the last of his subspecies and thus profoundly alone. Living far out in the Pacific on the island of Pinta in the Galapagos Islands, he is officially the rarest living creature on Earth.

No animal better captures the history and mysterious beauty of the Galapagos Islands than the giant tortoise. There used to be thousands of them roaming over these islands, including the volcanic slopes of Pinta. Observations of them by Charles Darwin, who visited the islands in 1835, even formed part of his world-changing theory of evolution.

Sadly, however, mostly as a result of centuries of passing sailors hunting the giant tortoises for food, there are now only an estimated fifteen thousand left in the Galapagos Islands. Of the fifteen known subspecies, four are already thought to be extinct, as was the Pinta giant tortoise until Lonesome George was discovered in 1971. This came as a pleasant surprise to scientists since no other Pinta tortoises had been found on Pinta Island since 1906.

In the decades since George was discovered, he has become the star attraction at the Charles Darwin Research Station where conservationists have been hoping to rescue some of his genes by mating him with another tortoise. Two females from the nearby island of Isabela, the most closely related to the Pinta subspecies that could be found, were put into his enclosure with him in 1992, but he failed to take the hint.

Then, Professor Jeffrey Powell, an evolutionary biologist from Yale University, came up with a possible reason why Lonesome George was not finding true romance with the ladies from Isabela. Perhaps, he suggested, they were simply too different to him to be a suitable match. Sailors often carried the tortoises from one island to another, he pointed out. His question, therefore, was: "How do we know these tortoises are Lonesome George's closest relatives?" In other words, there could be a perfect Pinta match for George alive and well on Isabela or even on some more distant island.

To begin testing his theory, Professor Powell, together with a team of researchers, analysed DNA from seven Pinta tortoises – six from deceased museum specimens and one from George himself – and compared it with blood samples from twenty-seven giant tortoises living on the side of a volcano on the northern tip of Isabela. Among these samples, they found one tortoise, about thirty years old, with clear signs of Pinta ancestry. Sadly, however, the newly discovered tortoise

GIA SƯ CHUNG CƯ
Chuyên cung cấp giáo viên gia sư ngoại ngữ chất lượng
Mọi ngôn ngữ - Mọi lứa tuổi - Mọi trình độ
Zalo: 0866500969/Hotline: 086969480

was not a suitable romantic partner for George: he was male. He was not pure-bred, either. While his father was originally from Pinta Island, his mother came from Wolf Volcano on Isabela. Powell sees this as a breakthrough, however, because it proves that in the recent past, a Pinta male was breeding on the island. "If that's the case, it is possible there are other Pinta individuals out there, maybe even a female."

Powell also notes that there are about eight thousand giant tortoises living on Isabela, and their study looked at only a small random sample. His team of researchers intends to return to the island and take blood from more than two thousand tortoises. If they do indeed find a Pinta female, they hope to take her to George's enclosure and attempt to breed the pair.

The possibility remains, then, that Lonesome George may one day not be so lonely after all. When asked how great George's chances of reproducing really are, however, Dr Henry Nicholls, an evolutionary ecologist and author of the book "Lonesome George", still feels that **his prospects are bleak**. "As far as his status as a conservation icon is concerned, though," he says, "his prospects have never been better. George really is an amazing ambassador for the conservation cause in Galapagos and even beyond."

1. The writer mentions Charles Darwin in order to emphasise _____
   A. his importance as a scientist.
   B. his strong connection to the Galapagos Islands.
   C. the large numbers of tortoises on the Galapagos Islands.
   D. the significance of giant tortoises.
2. According to the third paragraph, scientists were pleased that _____
   A. there was a larger number of tortoises on the islands than previously believed.
   B. one subspecies of giant tortoise was not extinct, as previously thought.
   C. a new subspecies of giant tortoise had been discovered.
   D. they had been the ones to make a particular discovery.
3. The writer uses the phrase "**he failed to take the hint**" (paragraph 4) to show that Lonesome George _____
   A. didn't behave in the way the conservationists were hoping.
   B. didn't seem to get on with the tortoises from Isabela.
   C. behaved differently to the tortoises from Isabela.
   D. wasn't used to the company of other tortoises.

GIA SƯ CHUNG CƯ
Chuyên cung cấp giáo viên gia sư ngoại ngữ chất lượng
Mọi ngôn ngữ - Mọi lứa tuổi - Mọi trình độ
Zalo: 0866500969/Hotline: 086969480

4. What does the writer suggest about Pinta tortoises in the fifth paragraph?
   A. They could have originally come from Isabela Island.
   B. They may be found on islands other than Pinta Island.
   C. Most of them were taken by sailors to Isabela Island.
   D. Sailors used to hunt them more than other subspecies.
5. After carrying out his research on Isabela Island, Professor Powell _____
   A. became more uncertain about his theory.
   B. was confused about Lonesome George's ancestry.
   C. felt hopeful of a future discovery.
   D. was disappointed with his findings.
6. When Powell continues his research, he will test _____
   A. as many female tortoises as he can find.
   B. the tortoises from the previous study again.
   C. all the tortoises on Isabela Island.
   D. a much larger sample of tortoises than before.
7. When the writer uses the phrase "his prospects are bleak" (last paragraph), he is referring to Lonesome George's _____
   A. bright future.
   B. role in conservation.
   C. poor chances.
   D. worsened situation.
8. Which of the following best describes the writer's tone?
   A. cautiously hopeful
   B. extremely pessimistic
   C. sympathetic
   D. relieved

GIA SƯ CHUNG CƯ
Chuyên cung cấp giáo viên gia sư ngoại ngữ chất lượng
Mọi ngôn ngữ - Mọi lứa tuổi - Mọi trình độ
Zalo: 0866500969/Hotline: 086969480