**Seven Wonders of the Ancient World - Transcript**

Hi, good morning, everybody. Thanks for coming today. Today, I want to try and talk to you for 10 minutes about the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. I’m going to try to. I'm afraid I have something in my right eye, so if I squint at you a little bit too much, I'm very sorry. I'm not winking. All right, 10 minutes about the ancient world.

Don't forget if you click on the link below here, and so many people don't do this, if you click on the link below here you can find the transcript for this talk, you can find questions, essay type, multiple choice type, you can find sample answers. You can also download the MP3. If you try the questions, it will help you understand the talk and it will help your English improve. Try the essay questions too, they’re useful. You could even speak them and that would help your speaking as well.

Okay, 10 minutes on the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Here we go. 3 2 1 go. Okay. I'm sure most of you have heard of the expression the seven wonders of the ancient world, but maybe you can't name them all. The Seven Wonders, most of them have been around for a long time. The oldest of them has been around for three … four … five thousand years. However, the title the seven wonders of the ancient world was thought up not that … well ... about two … 3,000 years ago during the Greek Empire. The Greek Empire started with Greece and spread out till it covered most of southern Europe and most of North Africa and into the Middle East a little bit. The Greek Empire existed from about 1100 BC until 146 BC when basically the Roman Empire took it over and then the Romans governed Greece until about 324 AD when it became a different Empire and different Empire and it carried on until it became Greece as we have it today.

Greece at that time had a wealthy class, a merchant class and they were also heavily into education. Maybe not as much as we are today. I mean a lot of people were still slaves and still didn't have the opportunity to learn, but those people with money, with wealth were able to learn and once people started to learn they learnt about the history of the world and they wanted to go and see these things.

Now there's one guy called ... I don't know how to pronounce this. I'm going to try. Here we go ... Diodorus Siculus in 100 BC, he wrote his famous book: Diodori Siculi Bibliothecae Historicae. Which basically means the history book. Now what this was it was a history of the world, but more than that. It became a guide book. He is the person that put together this list of seven things everybody should see. Now, I'm going to try and explain them to you.

Okay, the first one, the one that most people can probably remember: The Great Pyramids at Giza. Well, the main pyramid basically. Those pyramids were built about 2584 BC. How were they built? Why were they built? That's a story for another talk. They were built for the Pharaoh Khufu … King Khufu, and they're basically his tomb. The temple … temple … the pyramids as you see them today, and I'm sure you've seen pictures, are a dirty yellow color, but originally they were covered in a shiny very bright limestone and they would have shone beautifully white. Those limestones were stolen as the years went by and they were used in other buildings in that area. In fact, you can see some of those limestones in some of the buildings around them. The pyramid was actually the highest building in the world until the Lincoln cathedral was built in England in 1311. So, it was a highest building in the world … tallest building in the world for three … four thousand years. I can't … I’m not very good at math.

So, number one the Great Pyramids of Giza. Number two, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Babylon is basically where Iraq is now, kind of, in the Middle East and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon were famous because the king of the area had managed to pump water up into his gardens and he had rivers and cascades and canals and waterfalls and lots and lots of river ornamentation and this of course is in the middle of the desert. So, it was very very special. However, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon is the only one of these Seven Wonders that there is no historical evidence for. There are no ruins. There are no plans. There is not really much evidence that it existed other than this book and maybe one or two other references, but we think it did.

Number three the Temple of Artemis. This was built in 550 BC. It was a temple that is in modern-day Turkey. It was 115m high 30m long. It was a beautifully tall, white building. It was built to worship the goddess Artemis. Now this building was around for a long time, but it fell down. It broke three times. It was rebuilt three times, then finally it was closed down by the Christians. Of course, the Christian religion was spreading through the world, through Europe at that time and it was pulled down possibly in the 5th Century AD. There are still ruins of that building around. You can go and see those.

Number four, the statue of Zeus at Olympia. Zeus, of course is the Roman god, the king of the gods, the head of the gods, the father of the gods. The statue of him was built in 435 BC and it was a 13m tall statue. It was at the end of a long, huge hall and it was a large golden statue. Very impressive. Very amazing. This statue also broke. It fell down. It was moved and then it was lost. It was lost again in about the fifth century AD. Possibly Christians, no idea. There is no evidence of that statue itself. However, there is evidence that it was made because they found the quarry and the workshop where these stone statues were created. They were created by a man called … again, I don't how to pronounce this … Phideas, and they found Phidias’ stone workshop. So, there is evidence that it was built, although there is no evidence of what happened to it.

Okay number five, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. Now, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus is a tomb. It's a mausoleum. “Mausoleum” means tomb. It was built in 350 BC. Who is it the tomb for? Who is it the mausoleum for? Well, it's the mausoleum for Mausolus. He was the governor. He was a governor in the Persian Empire in the area. He died and they built this tomb for him. They built this Mausoleum for him. The word we have in English, “mausoleum”, of course comes from this man Mausolus. His tomb, Mausolus’ tomb became a mausoleum, which became the word we use for tomb. This building actually lasted for very long time. It survived until the 15th century AD … sorry … 16th century AD, when it was knocked down by an earthquake. So, that lasted for almost 2000 years … 1900 years. Very long time. Again, you can go and see the ruins of that as well. They still exist

Number six, the Colossus of Rhodes. This was built in 280 BC. It was a 33m tall statue whose legs stretched either side of the harbor at Rhodes. Rhodes is near where Greece is. And this statue stood across the harbor at Greece. It held a light in one hand and basically welcomed the boats into Greece. Now, this statue was the model for the Empire State building … oh! The Empire State Building! … Sorry … this statue was the model for the Statue of Liberty in America in New York, of course. If you watch my talk on the Statue of Liberty, I talk about that. The people that built that statue they looked closely at this and they didn't copy it, but they basically emulated its style. This statue fell down … was knocked down, 226 BC by an earthquake. Lots of earthquakes in these areas. The ruins of it are … some of them still exist in the harbor at Rhodes. There are a few pieces still around.

Number seven, the last one on the list, the Lighthouse at Alexandria. This was built in 305 BC. It was a 100m tall stone lighthouse. Obviously, you know what lighthouses are. They have a light to stop ships sailing into rocks, or sailing into a harbor, or sailing into some kind of obstacle. This lighthouse had a fire at the top and basically warned ships. This statue … statue! … this lighthouse stood for a long time until 1323, when it was knocked down by an earthquake. So, again, this statue survives … I keep saying statue. I'm sorry … this lighthouse survived for about 1700 years. Pieces of this lighthouse still … can still be found in the harbor down there and the government are thinking of making an underwater museum so people can go down and see these ruins. There was talk about bringing them up and trying to recreate the lighthouse, but if you bring them up, I mean they've been under the water for so long, that if you bring them up they’ll probably just fall apart. So, the current idea is to keep them down there and have some kind of Underwater Museum. Would be pretty amazing.

So, those are the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The Great Pyramids at Giza of course are the only ones that are still standing. They’re not quite in their original form, but they are still very very impressive. The rest of the seven have all disappeared.

Some people have tried to create a modern Seven Wonders of the Ancient World … a modern Seven Wonders of the World. Many ideas ... There are many buildings that could go on this list: the Taj Mahal, different buildings. The trouble is, these days architecture and technology increases so quickly that buildings are superseded extremely fast. So, right now, the tallest building in the world, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, I think it's Dubai, will not be the longest building for very long. There are plans to build even taller buildings. Plans to build buildings that go over a kilometer or even 2km. So, buildings get superseded extremely quickly.

So, some people say that the wonders of the modern world should not be physical, but more technological: the internet, for example. The internet is a wonder of our world. 3D printing, where you can print organs, could be a wonder of the modern world. So, there are many different things that we could praise there are many different things that we could put on the list of the modern world. What do you think? If you can think of anything that should go on a list of Wonders of the Modern World, put them in the comments down below?

Okay. Thank you. I hope you understood that. I made a few mistakes as I was racing through it. I finished inside 10 minutes. Yay. Stop. Okay, thank you. As always don't forget … I said it at the start of the talk ... I'll say it again ... If you click on the link down here, you can find the transcript for this talk. You can find questions. You can find answers. You can find the MP3. Please have a look. It will help you. If you liked this talk click “like”. If you want to share it, “share” it. If you want to subscribe, you can get these talks every week when I make them. I'm trying to do them every week. It's been difficult recently, but I'm trying. I will do it every week. Okay. Thanks so much for stopping by. Have a great week. Talk to you later. Bye.

**Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – Questions**

1. What happened to the Greek Empire in 145 BC?

A: It spread through Africa.

B: It covered parts of southern Europe.

C: It became a series of successively smaller empires.

D: It was taken over by the Romans.

2. What was the Diodori Siculi Bibliothecae Historicae?

A: A history of the world.

B: A list of places around the world to see.

C: A history of Egypt.

D: A list of ways to create wealth.

3. How was the original Great Pyramid different to the one we see today?

A: It was much smaller.

B: It was covered in shiny, white limestone.

C: It was located much farther to the north.

D: It had a system of pumping water out of the desert.

4. What makes the Hanging Gardens of Babylon special among the seven wonders?

A: They found a way to channel water.

B: It was built by a king.

C: It was destroyed by an earthquake.

D: It is the only one there is no evidence of.

5. What group of people were responsible for the destruction of the Temple of Artemis?

A: The Romans

B: The Christians

C: The Greeks

D: The Europeans

6. What connection did Phideas have to the Statue of Zeus?

A: He mined the stone.

B: He bought it.

C: He lost it.

D: He built it.

7. When talking about the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, Steven says, “Again, you can go and see the ruins of that as well.” Which of these words is closest in meaning to “ruins”?

A: Scaffold

B: Relics

C: Edifice

D: Invention

8. What was modelled on the Colossus of Rhodes?

A: The Empire State Building

B: The Lighthouse at Alexandria

C: The Taj Mahal

D: The Statue of Liberty

9. What does the Egyptian government propose to do with the remains of the Lighthouse at Alexandria.

A: Make an underwater museum.

B: Bring then up and rebuild the lighthouse.

C: Have them shipped to America.

D: Find a way of preserving them.

10. Why would it be difficult to choose a list of seven impressive buildings these days?

A: Because modern buildings are not as impressive.

B: Because modern buildings are not strong enough to survive that long.

C: Because modern buildings outdo each other so quickly.

D: Because nobody can decide which buildings to choose.

11. The Greek Empire lasted for almost two thousand years. Do you think the days of empires have passed?

12. Do you think guide books are a useful tool?

13. Describe a building in your country that you think could be on a Seven Wonders of the Modern World list.

14. It is difficult to find a balance between preserving the ancient world and building the modern world. What do you think?

15. Given the speed that technology advances, can we have seven wonders of the technological world?

**Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – Answers**

1. D 2. A 3. B 4. D 5. B 6. D 7. B 8. D 9. A 10. C

11. The Greek Empire lasted for almost two thousand years. Do you think the days of empires have passed?

I think empires that are solely based on might are over, but modern empires of culture, finance and technology exist.

Throughout history, countries have always tried to invade, capture and colonize other countries. This has been human nature since the beginning of time. Politicians or royalty in country A decided that they wanted the resources of country B, so they took it. The ease with which they took it surprised them. Over time country B became a part of country A, or a vassal state. The new conglomerate of country AB turns its eyes on country C. They attack. The new combined forces of A and B are no match for C and the empire starts to grow. After a few more countries, the empire is so large that it starts to take countries easily and it grows. It grows until it reaches the maximum extent that its armies can reach and then it fails. It falls almost as quickly as it grew. And it is replaced by a new empire. This has been the pattern for all of time, up until World War 2. The British Empire was the largest empire the world had ever known, but, after the two wars that savaged the World in the 20th century, it became impossible to control an empire, militarily and financially, so the empire was dissolved. And now, the world has no empires. At least on paper.

Many people would argue that the United States of America is the head of a new type of empire. They have the world’s most powerful military, but they don’t take countries by might, they take them by stealth. The push of globalization is the new form of empire. One country whose culture is significant enough can spread through the world, capturing the minds of the people in other countries, creating a link of like-minded countries, or, in other words, an empire. If enough people want the same things, they will become one.

The US has also created a financial empire. Enough countries are dependent on the wealth of the US that they will heed its bidding. To go against the will of the US can be financial suicide for a smaller country. An empire by another name.

And, lastly, our new empires might not be country based. The Google Empire? The Facebook Empire? Unlikely? They have the control over the minds of billions of people. They can manipulate, control and persuade in ways that no country could do. Are they the new form of empire? I believe so.

12. Do you think guide books are a useful tool?

Guide books are both a useful tool and a terrible arm of destruction.

Without guidebooks, people who visited countries around the world would have no knowledge of what to see or why. They would travel armed only with word of mouth, and they would see the most prominent landmarks and return to their countries. The big guidebook companies employ armies of travelers who roam the world and collate data on everything useful about a country. Armed with a modern guidebook you can find hotels, food and see all of the important sites in that country.

However, the guidebook has brought swarms of tourists to ancient, sometimes delicate, sites. To be listed in a guidebook can bring riches to the people in the area, but thousands, sometimes millions of people descending on a site has its downside too. Destruction, trash, overcrowding, pollution, rapidly rising prices that price the locals out of the area and globalization.

Guidebooks are good for the tourist and not necessarily good for the destination.

13. Describe a building in your country that you think could be on a Seven Wonders of the Modern World list.

I’m from the UK, although I live in Japan, so I am going to discuss a building in the UK. My first reaction was to say Stonehenge, but the question says “modern world” and Stonehenge is almost as ancient as the pyramids. Instead, I am going to take a slight liberty with the definition of “modern” and say the Bodleian Library in Oxford, which was built in 1602. Compared to the pyramids, only 400 years old is modern.

The Bodleian Library began as a small collection of books, but has grown, over the years, until it now houses 12 million items and is the main research library for Oxford University. The architecture of the building is stunning and fits the classical outlook of the city. Not only that, the books are protected through high tech, temperature and climate controlled rooms. Amongst the library’s 12 million books are some rare, one of a kind volumes, such as a Gutenberg Bible and Shakespeare’s First Folio. If any building from the UK was to be included in a list of wonders, this would be it.

14. It is difficult to find a balance between preserving the ancient world and building the modern world. What do you think?

I would say that it was difficult in the past, it isn’t at the moment, but it might be again in the future. That needs to be explained.

In the past, people had neither the education nor the resources to be able to afford to appreciate ancient structures. The pyramids are a good example. Once the outer layers were loosened by an earthquake, the locals had no qualms about reusing the materials. In fact, if you look at any ancient castle, once they fall out of use, they are cannibalized. With our current societal rules, our knowledge of the past and our prediction of the future, we would never allow such an act, but times were different. We cannot judge the actions of past people with modern norms because they were behaving according to their society. So, in the past, preserving the ancient world was not so much difficult, as something not even considered.

In the modern world, we conserve the past as much as we feasibly can. Unless things are destroyed in wars, or through accidents, we do our best to look after them. We have learned that we are who we are because of the past and we want to celebrate that fact.

In the future, there may not be enough space on the planet to allow for the romanticism of the past. All of the available space may be needed for the enormous population. Or, as the sea levels rise, the amount of available living land could have shrunk to such a small area that we must use all land to grow food on.

In our modern world we have the luxury of looking after the past, but that hasn’t always been the case and very well may not be the case in the future.

15. Given the speed that technology advances, can we have seven wonders of the technological world?

No, we cannot. Technology is unpredictable in that there is no way of knowing what kind of technological advances might come in the next decade, let alone the next century. Any list of technological wonders would have to be rewritten almost daily.

Unless, the list is changed to refer to the main discoveries that have made our modern technological world possible. For example, the discovery of electricity, the telephone, the microchip, the first computer, etc. A list like that would be an excellent map of our path of discovery.