Pete the corpse flower set to bloom

LEVEL A2/B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What is the biggest plant or tree you have seen?
2. Have you ever smelled a very strong plant or food? What was it like?
3. Would you travel to see a special flower? Why or why not?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

bloom
To open fully, as a flower does.

unfurl
To open or spread out from a rolled or closed shape.

scent
A smell, especially a strong or special one.

rotting
Decaying or breaking down, like old food or a dead animal.

pollinator
An insect that carries pollen between flowers to help them make seeds.

endangered
At risk of dying out because very few are left.

native
Originally from a place; growing or living there naturally.

donate
To give something for free to help a person or group.

III. READING

Geelong Botanic Gardens in Victoria is getting ready for a rare show: Pete, a corpse flower, is about to bloom. Pete is 178cm tall and 13 years old. It is nearly twice the size of Betsy, which bloomed at the gardens in 2024. The flower is expected to unfurl soon and will stay open for only 24 to 48 hours.

When it blooms, the scent is famous for smelling like rotting flesh or possum urine. This smell is not a joke. It helps attract pollinators quickly, because the plant has little time. The big spike in the centre works like a chimney to spread the smell.

Pete and Betsy were grown from cuttings at the Botanic Gardens of South Australia. Matt Coulter cared for them for years and later helped donate them to Geelong. Corpse flowers are native to Sumatra in Indonesia and are endangered. Visitors can also follow a live stream of Pete if they cannot come to the gardens.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "'We're assuming it's going to be a lot...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is Pete growing?
2. How tall is Pete?
3. How long will the flower stay open after it blooms?
4. Why does the flower make a strong rotting scent?
5. Where are corpse flowers native to?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Would you visit a flower with a bad smell? Why or why not?
2. How can gardens manage big crowds for a short event?
3. What makes a plant or tree famous in your country?
4. Do live streams replace visiting in person? Why or why not?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

How questions

Use How to ask about manner, amount or degree. Forms: How + do/does/did + subject + base verb? For be: How + am/is/are/was/were + subject? For degree, put the adjective or adverb straight after How: How tall is ...? With quantities: How much/many + noun ...?

*"**How does Pete smell** when it blooms?"*

*"**How tall is** Pete?"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. (How long does / How long do) it stay open? _____
2. (How much / How many) visitors are watching online? _____
3. (How far is / How is far) Sumatra from Geelong? _____
4. (How many / How much) time do visitors have to see Pete? _____
5. (How do / How does) staff members share updates? _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: corpse flower, bloom, unfurl, scent, rotting, centimetres; show a photo if possible to anchor meaning.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist first, then scan for names, places and numbers. The smell descriptions are vivid; invite students to comment about the news rather than personal experiences if they prefer.
- For discussion, start in pairs then open to whole class. Keep focus on plants, events and crowds; do not tease classmates about reactions to strong smells.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick show of hands, then ask each side for one clear reason or condition.
2. In pairs, list three crowd ideas (queues, signs, time slots), then compare and rank them.
3. Ask for examples (old trees, rare blooms, TV stories) and what features make them famous.
4. Form two groups to list pros and cons of live streams, then swap one idea each.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 60-word visitor notice for bloom day, with hours and a smell warning.

Role-play: One student is garden staff and one a visitor; ask and answer about when, how long, smell and the live stream in a 2-minute exchange.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: How questions

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is Pete growing?
   At Geelong Botanic Gardens in Victoria.
2. How tall is Pete?
   178cm tall.
3. How long will the flower stay open after it blooms?
   For 24 to 48 hours.
4. Why does the flower make a strong rotting scent?
   To attract pollinators quickly.
5. Where are corpse flowers native to?
   Sumatra in Indonesia.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. (How long does / How long do) it stay open? **How long does**
2. (How much / How many) visitors are watching online? **How many**
3. (How far is / How is far) Sumatra from Geelong? **How far is**
4. (How many / How much) time do visitors have to see Pete? **How much**
5. (How do / How does) staff members share updates? **How do**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use How to ask about manner, amount or degree. Forms: How + do/does/did + subject + base verb? For be: How + am/is/are/was/were + subject? For degree, put the adjective or adverb straight after How: How tall is ...? With quantities: How much/many + noun ...? (Examples constructed.)

> *"**How does Pete smell** when it blooms?"*
> *"**How tall is** Pete?"*