

B1 TEENS

Unsolved Mysteries

Speculating about the unknown using modals of deduction

B1 Intermediate | Grammar | Reading | 40 min

★ Lesson Objectives

- ✓ Read about real unsolved mysteries from around the world
- ✓ Learn vocabulary for mystery, investigation and speculation
- ✓ Use modals of deduction: must, might, could, may, can't
- ✓ Express different levels of certainty about present and past situations
- ✓ Discuss theories and evaluate evidence
- ✓ Write speculative explanations using modals

1 Before You Read

- ▶ Do you believe in things that science can't explain?
- ▶ What is the most mysterious place you have ever heard of?
- ▶ If you found a strange object buried in your garden, what might it be?

2 Reading: Things We Still Can't Explain

Things We Still Can't Explain

The world is full of mysteries that have puzzled scientists, historians and ordinary people for centuries. Despite modern technology and decades of research, some questions remain completely unanswered. Here are three of the most fascinating unsolved mysteries in the world today.

The Bermuda Triangle

The Bermuda Triangle is a region in the western Atlantic Ocean where ships and aircraft have mysteriously disappeared over the past century. The area stretches between Miami, Bermuda and Puerto Rico, covering roughly 500,000 square miles. Since the early 1900s, dozens of ships and planes have vanished without a trace, often in good weather with experienced crews. In 1945, five US Navy planes known as Flight 19 took off from Florida on a routine training mission and never returned. A rescue plane sent to

find them also disappeared. No wreckage was ever found. Some say the disappearances could be caused by unusual weather patterns. Others believe the area might have strong underwater currents. Sceptics argue it might just be coincidence. "There must be something about this area that we don't understand yet," says marine researcher Dr. Elena Voss. "The pattern of disappearances can't be purely random."

The Nazca Lines

In the desert of southern Peru, enormous drawings stretch across the dry landscape. These are the Nazca Lines -- geoglyphs created between 500 BC and 500 AD. The drawings include animals like hummingbirds, spiders and monkeys, as well as geometric shapes extending for kilometres. Some are over 300 metres long and can only be seen properly from the air. How could ancient people design images they could never fully see? "The Nazca people must have been incredibly skilled mathematicians," says archaeologist Dr. Marco Reyes. Some researchers think the lines might have been part of religious ceremonies. Others believe they could have been an astronomical calendar. The mystery of why these enormous images were created for an audience that could not see them remains unsolved.

The Dyatlov Pass Incident

In February 1959, nine experienced hikers set out on a skiing expedition in the Ural Mountains of Russia. They never came back. Their tent had been torn open from the inside. The hikers' bodies were found scattered across the mountainside, some partially undressed despite minus thirty degrees. Two had serious injuries but there were no signs of a struggle. Soviet investigators concluded that an "unknown compelling force" had caused the deaths. The hikers might have been caught in an avalanche. They could have been frightened by infrasound -- low-frequency sound waves that cause panic and disorientation. In 2020, investigators blamed an avalanche, but many experts disagree. "An avalanche can't explain all the evidence," says mountaineer Yuri Volkov. "The full truth might never be known."

3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
mystery	something impossible to explain	"Remains a mystery."
unsolved	not yet explained	"Many unsolved crimes."
vanish	to disappear suddenly	"Vanished without a trace."
wreckage	broken parts of destroyed vehicle	"No wreckage found."
theory	unproved idea/explanation	"Many theories."
evidence	facts that help prove something	"No solid evidence."
sceptic	person who doubts claims	"Sceptics say coincidence."
coincidence	things happening by chance	"Might be a coincidence."

Word	Definition	Example
geoglyph	large design on the ground	"Nazca Lines are geoglyphs."
expedition	organised journey with purpose	"A hiking expedition."
investigate	to find out the truth	"Police investigated."
propose	to suggest an explanation	"Proposed explanations."
scattered	spread over a wide area	"Bodies scattered in snow."
disorientation	confusion about location	"Causes disorientation."
controversial	causing disagreement	"Controversial theories."
remains (n)	things left after everything else	"Mystery remains unsolved."

Useful Collocations: unsolved mystery • without a trace • propose a theory • solid evidence • remain unsolved • rule out • come to a conclusion • beyond explanation

4 Grammar: Modals of Deduction

must = almost sure true: "There must be something we don't understand."

might/may = possible: "The lines might have been religious ceremonies."

could = one option: "Disappearances could be caused by weather."

can't = almost sure NOT true: "An avalanche can't explain all evidence."

Modal	Certainty	Example
must	Almost certain IS true (90%+)	He must be busy.
might/may	Possible (50%)	She might be in traffic.
could	Possible, one of many (40%)	That could be the cat.
can't	Almost certain NOT true (90%+)	He can't be 80!

Present vs Past Deductions

NOW: "He must be tired." | **PAST:** "He must have been tired."

NOW: "She might be at home." | **PAST:** "She might have been at home."

⚠ Common Mistakes

~~He must to be tired.~~ → He must be tired.

~~She can be the thief.~~ → She could/might be the thief.

~~They mustn't be home.~~ → They can't be home. (can't=deduction)

5 Match the Halves

#	Situation	Deduction
1	She's been studying all day.	She must be exhausted.
2	Lights are off in their house.	They can't be home.
3	He's wearing a suit.	He might have an interview.
4	No food in the fridge.	Someone must have eaten it.
5	She speaks perfect Japanese.	She could have lived in Japan.
6	The window is broken.	A ball might have hit it.
7	He got 100% on the test.	He must have studied hard.
8	She's only 12.	She can't be a university student.
9	He looks surprised.	He might not have expected this.
10	Streets are completely wet.	It must have rained.

6 Comprehension Quiz

1. What happened to Flight 19?

Answer: Disappeared, no wreckage found

2. Why are the Nazca Lines remarkable?

Answer: So large, only visible from the air

3. What happened to the Dyatlov tent?

Answer: Torn open from the inside

4. Soviet investigators said...

Answer: 'Unknown compelling force'

5. 'She must be tired' means...

Answer: I'm almost certain she is tired

6. 'It can't be true' means...

Answer: I'm almost certain it is NOT true

7. Which expresses POSSIBILITY?

Answer: He might be at home.

8. Which is WRONG for deduction?

Answer: She mustn't be home.

7 Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: must | might | could | can't | must have | might have | could have | can't have

1. He's been running for an hour. He _____ be very tired.

2. She's not answering. She _____ be in a meeting.

3. He started Spanish last month. He _____ be fluent already.

4. The door is open. Someone _____ forgotten to lock it.

5. I can't find my keys. I _____ left them at the restaurant.

6. She got the best grade. She _____ studied very hard.

7. The ancient builders _____ used simple tools.

8. He was with us all evening. He _____ committed the crime.

Answers: 1. must | 2. might | 3. can't | 4. must have | 5. could have | 6. must have | 7. might have | 8. can't have

8 Speaking & Writing

◆ Discussion Questions

Which mystery do you find most fascinating?

What do you think happened at Dyatlov Pass?

Why are people interested in unsolved mysteries?

Will science eventually explain everything?

Your teacher is 30 min late. What might have happened?

◆ Example Dialogue

A: What do you think happened in the Bermuda Triangle?

B: It could be unusual weather. Storms might have pulled the ships under.

A: But some ships disappeared in perfect weather. It can't just be storms.

B: There might be something about the ocean currents.

A: I think the disappearances must have a scientific explanation.

B: Or maybe some mysteries are meant to stay unsolved!

Writing Task

Write 80-120 words. Use at least 4 modals of deduction:

Option A: Choose one mystery. Write your own theory.

Option B: You arrive at school and find your classroom empty. What might have happened?

9 Mystery Detective -- The Game

Interactive game available online. Read 10 clues and choose the best deduction!

#	Clue	Best Deduction
1	Red eyes, keeps yawning.	He must be tired.
2	Wet footprints in, nobody inside.	Must have come in and left.
3	She's 14, says she's a doctor.	She can't be telling the truth.
4	American accent, never been to US.	Must have learned from media.
5	Cake gone, dog looks guilty.	Dog might have eaten it.
6	All lights off at 2 AM.	Everyone must have gone home.
7	Expensive dress, sports car.	She must be quite wealthy.
8	Said was home, shoes are muddy.	Can't have stayed home.
9	Pyramids built without machines.	Must have been skilled engineers.
10	Phone dead but wasn't used.	App must have been running.

10 Review Checklist

- ✓ I can understand texts about unsolved mysteries
- ✓ I can use vocabulary for mystery and investigation
- ✓ I can use must, might, could, can't for deductions
- ✓ I can use must have, might have, could have, can't have for past
- ✓ I can express different levels of certainty
- ✓ I can write speculative explanations using modals

Congratulations!

You have completed this lesson: Unsolved Mysteries