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Map shows Chinese discovered America

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17 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Map shows Chinese discovered America

Mapmakers are currently discussing the authenticity of a map that might prove a Chinese sailor, admiral Zhu Di, was the first person to discover America. Gavin Menzies, a British amateur historian, wrote a book called *1421 – The Year China Discovered the World*. In it, he writes that Zhu Di sailed around the world in the fifteenth century and discovered new lands. His claims are now supported by the recent discovery of an ancient map in Shanghai. The map dates back to 1418, seventy years before Columbus stepped foot on American shores. Scientists are currently testing the age of the map.

Mr. Menzies makes further claims about Zhu Di that turn our knowledge of history upside down. He states that the Chinese sailor sailed around the globe a century before Magellan, discovered Antarctica and reached Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook. Menzies says the admiral's maps were never used by his country's navy, as China had little interest in the world beyond its borders. Until now, Chinese experts have said there is little truth in Mr. Menzies' book. However, the new map clearly shows America, Africa and Europe. It was bought for \$500 in a Shanghai antiques shop.

WARM-UPS

1. HISTORY: In pairs / groups, tell each other about the early history of your country. Did someone discover it? Did another country invade and conquer it? How did it get its name? Change partners and share your findings.

2. WHAT DO YOU KNOW? Ask other students, "What do you know about the discovery of America and Christopher Columbus?" Return to your partner / group and share your findings. Walk around the class again, this time telling classmates about the discovery of America and Christopher Columbus: "Did you know (that)...?" (Do this for your own country).

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Mapmakers / maps / sailors / Shanghai / historians / best selling books / the globe / discoveries / Shanghai / turning things upside down / truth / antiques shops

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. DISCOVERY OPINIONS: Talk about these opinions with your partner(s).

- a. If the map is real, all school history books will need to change.
- b. The next Space Shuttle should be called the Zhu Di.
- c. The city of Columbus, Ohio should be renamed Zhu Di, Ohio.
- d. America should be renamed the United States of Zhu.
- e. Americans won't want to change names to reflect the new discovery.
- f. The map must be a fake.
- g. The map will help America and China come closer together.
- h. It's too strange that the book and map suddenly appeared.

5. MAP: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "map". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. MAPMAKER: You are a mapmaker. With your mapmaking partners, discuss the changes you would like to make to the map of the world. Which borders would you like to create or erase? Which new countries would you like to create? Which countries would you make smaller or larger? Would you rename any countries? Change partners and share your ideas.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Chinese mapmakers are redesigning a map of America. | T / F |
| b. A professional historian said a Chinese sailor discovered America. | T / F |
| c. A Chinese map showing America is said to date back to 70 AD. | T / F |
| d. Researchers are checking the age of the map. | T / F |
| e. The historian's book turns our knowledge of history upside down. | T / F |
| f. China had little interest in the world beyond its borders. | T / F |
| g. Chinese experts have always said a Chinese sailor founded America. | T / F |
| h. The map was bought in an antiques shop for \$500. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. authenticity | backed up |
| b. prove | purchased |
| c. discovered | old |
| d. supported | outside |
| e. ancient | found |
| f. further | plainly |
| g. globe | genuineness |
| h. beyond | planet |
| i. clearly | more |
| j. bought | confirm |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. discussing the authenticity | foot on American shores |
| b. sailed around the world | world beyond its borders |
| c. The map dates | upside down |
| d. years before Columbus stepped | in the fifteenth century |
| e. Scientists are currently testing | of a map |
| f. turn our knowledge of history | truth in Mr. Menzies' book |
| g. the admiral's maps were never | back to 1418 |
| h. China had little interest in the | in a Shanghai antiques shop |
| i. experts have said there is little | used by his country's navy |
| j. It was bought for \$500 | the age of the map |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Map shows Chinese discovered America

Mapmakers are _____ discussing the authenticity of a map that might _____ a Chinese sailor, admiral Zhu Di, was the first person to discover America. Gavin Menzies, a British _____ historian, wrote a book called *1421 – The Year China Discovered the World*. In it, he writes that Zhu Di sailed _____ the world in the fifteenth century and discovered new _____. His claims are now supported by the recent _____ of an ancient map in Shanghai. The map _____ back to 1418, seventy years before Columbus _____ foot on American shores. Scientists are currently testing the age of the map.

Mr. Menzies makes _____ claims about Zhu Di that turn our knowledge of history _____ down. He states that the Chinese sailor sailed around the _____ a century before Magellan, discovered Antarctica and reached Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook. Menzies says the admiral's _____ were never used by his country's navy, as China had little interest in the world _____ its borders. Until now, Chinese _____ have said there is little _____ in Mr. Menzies' book. However, the new map _____ shows America, Africa and Europe. It was bought for \$500 in a Shanghai antiques shop.

lands
amateur
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experts
globe
clearly
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maps
upside

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Map shows Chinese discovered America

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Mr. Menzies makes _____ claims about Zhu Di that turn our knowledge of history upside down. He states that the Chinese sailor sailed around the _____ a century before Magellan, _____ Antarctica and reached Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook. Menzies says the admiral's maps were never used by his country's navy, as China had little _____ in the world beyond its _____. Until now, Chinese experts have said there is little truth in Mr. Menzies' book. However, the new map _____ shows America, Africa and Europe. It was bought for \$500 in a Shanghai antiques shop.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'ancient' and 'map'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "DISCOVERY" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about the notion of a Chinese sailor discovering America.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| • currently | • further |
| • discover | • Magellan |
| • amateur | • never |
| • century | • interest |
| • recent | • truth |
| • age | • clearly |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What adjectives describe your feelings about the article?
- c. What do you know about Christopher Columbus?
- d. What do you know about Chinese sailors?
- e. What do you think will change if the map is real?
- f. How do you think Americans would feel at having to change their history?
- g. How do you think Chinese people would feel knowing a Chinese sailor discovered America?
- h. Do you think there might be a Space Shuttle Zhu Di?
- i. Do you think it is too strange that both the book and map came within three years of one another?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you hope the map is real or a fake?
- d. Do you think it'd possible that a huge fleet of ships sailed around the world 600 years ago?
- e. How do you think the map survived for so long?
- f. Do you think Chinese experts would know more about Zhu Di than an amateur British historian?
- g. Would you like to read the book?
- h. Have you ever bought anything in an antiques shop?
- i. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

MAPMAKERS: You are a mapmaker. It is your job to remap the world - you may need an atlas or globe to help you. In pairs / groups, agree on the most important changes that need to be made in the areas below. Write down the possible problems of your remapping. Who will be happy? Who will be angry? How will it change the region or the world?

AREA	HAPPY / ANGRY	CHANGED REGION / WORLD
South America		
Europe		
Middle East		
Africa		
Asia		

Change partners and talk about your remapping. Advise each other on the dangers of your changes.

Return to your original partners and discuss what you found out from the other "remappers".

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on this story. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. TOP REMAP: Write an essay describing the most important change you think needs to be made to the map of the world and why. Read your essay to your partner(s) in your next class. Did you all write about similar things?

4. A DAY IN THE LIFE: You are an admiral sailing the seven seas looking for new continents. Write an account of one day in your life. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone have similar days?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. authenticity | genuineness |
| b. prove | confirm |
| c. discovered | found |
| d. supported | backed up |
| e. ancient | old |
| f. further | more |
| g. globe | planet |
| h. beyond | outside |
| i. clearly | plainly |
| j. bought | purchased |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. discussing the authenticity | of a map |
| b. sailed around the world | in the fifteenth century |
| c. The map dates | back to 1418 |
| d. years before Columbus stepped | foot on American shores |
| e. Scientists are currently testing | the age of the map |
| f. turn our knowledge of history | upside down |
| g. the admiral's maps were never | used by his country's navy |
| h. China had little interest in the | world beyond its borders |
| i. experts have said there is little | truth in Mr. Menzies' book |
| j. It was bought for \$500 | in a Shanghai antiques shop |

GAP FILL:

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Mr. Menzies makes **further** claims about Zhu Di that turn our knowledge of history **upside** down. He states that the Chinese sailor sailed around the **globe** a century before Magellan, discovered Antarctica and reached Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook. Menzies says the admiral's **maps** were never used by his country's navy, as China had little interest in the world **beyond** its borders. Until now, Chinese **experts** have said there is little **truth** in Mr. Menzies' book. However, the new map **clearly** shows America, Africa and Europe. It was bought for \$500 in a Shanghai antiques shop.