

Farmer accidentally moves Belgium-France border

8th May, 2021



Governments, army leaders and diplomats spend months, years or even decades creating borders between countries. A farmer in Belgium did not need so long. It took him just a few minutes to change the border between Belgium and France. He

made Belgium about 1,000 square meters bigger and France about 1,000 square meters smaller. How? He moved a 150-kilogram boundary stone 2.29 metres inside France. A boundary stone shows where the border between two countries or areas lies. The stone the farmer relocated was laid down in 1819 to mark the French-Belgian border. The farmer did not move the stone for political reasons. He did it to make it easier to drive his tractor around his field.

Moving the border between two countries could easily create a major diplomatic incident or even lead to war. Luckily, diplomats in Belgium and France saw the funny side of this. They avoided an international crisis in a friendly manner. The mayor of the Belgian town said: "The stone was placed there in 1819 following the defeat of Napoleon. The situation should be resolved tomorrow. We will find the person who moved the stone so we can avoid any troubles. I still have to verify who the landowner is." The mayor added: "We know exactly where the stone was before. It was right next to a tree." The mayor of the town across the border in France said: "I fully trust my Belgian counterpart, who did what was necessary."

Sources: cnn.com / euronews.com / brusselstimes.com

Writing

The world would be a better place without borders. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

governments / diplomats / decades / change / minutes / stone / border / countries / major / incident / funny / defeat / tomorrow / troubles / mayor / verify / counterpart

True / False

- a) The article says people can spend decades creating borders. T / F
- b) The farmer made Belgium 1,000 square kilometres bigger. T / F
- c) The border stone the farmer moved was put there in 1918. T / F
- d) The farmer moved the border so he could drive his tractor. T / F
- e) The farmer moving the stone sparked a major diplomatic incident. T / F
- f) A mayor in Belgium said the situation would take months to put right. T / F
- g) The Belgian mayor knows who the farmer is. T / F
- h) The French mayor trusts the Belgian mayor. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. creating | a. drama |
| 2. just | b. indicate |
| 3. moved | c. after |
| 4. mark | d. purposes |
| 5. reasons | e. believe in |
| 6. incident | f. only |
| 7. luckily | g. confirm |
| 8. following | h. making |
| 9. verify | i. fortunately |
| 10. trust | j. relocated |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What borders does your country have?
- b) Are borders a good idea?
- c) How did people draw borders in the past?
- d) What are the world's most problematic borders?
- e) What do you think of the farmer moving the border?
- f) How secure are your country's borders?
- g) What do you think of border walls?
- h) Would the world be better without borders?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Governments, army leaders | a. between two countries |
| 2. It took him just | b. square meters bigger |
| 3. He made Belgium about 1,000 | c. counterpart |
| 4. The stone the farmer | d. incident |
| 5. drive his tractor | e. relocated |
| 6. Moving the border | f. and diplomats |
| 7. create a major diplomatic | g. the landowner is |
| 8. They avoided an international | h. around his field |
| 9. I still have to verify who | i. crisis |
| 10. I fully trust my Belgian | j. a few minutes |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why do countries have borders?
- How do you feel when you cross a border into another country?
- What international crises are there now because of border disputes?
- What is the most problematic border dispute today?
- Would you like to change your country's borders?
- Would you like to be a border guard?
- What questions would you like to ask the farmer?

Spelling

- army leaders and atmlsdiop
- months, years or even eescadd
- He moved a 150-kilogram rbayodnu stone
- The stone the farmer teocerald
- move the stone for iocapltli reasons
- drive his tcoatrr around his field
- They idodeva an international crisis
- in a friendly rneamn
- following the eedfat of Napoleon
- I still have to reyify who the landowner is
- The yamor of the town across the border
- did what was cearenyss

Answers – Synonym Match

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. h | 2. f | 3. j | 4. b | 5. d |
| 6. a | 7. i | 8. c | 9. g | 10. e |

Role Play

Role A – Wall

You think a wall is the best kind of border. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their borders. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a militarized zone, a hedge or a mountain range.

Role B – Militarized Zone

You think a militarized zone is the best kind of border. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their borders. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a wall, a hedge or a mountain range.

Role C – Hedge

You think a hedge is the best kind of border. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their borders. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a militarized zone, a wall or a mountain range.

Role D – Mountain Range

You think a mountain range is the best kind of border. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their borders. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): a militarized zone, a hedge or a wall.

Speaking – Borders

Rank these with your partner. Put the best borders at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • Road | • River |
| • Military zone | • Mountain range |
| • Sea | • Desert |
| • Hedge | • Wall |

Answers – True False

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

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.