





The Mystery of the Bermuda Triangle



*A view of the ocean off the coast of Bermuda Island.
Can there be something mysterious lying under these
peaceful waters?*

Do you get scared before you get on an airplane? You'll be glad to hear that airplane crashes are very rare. In fact, believe it or not, flying is much safer than driving! But if an airplane does crash, investigators check out the crash site to see what went wrong. Every aircraft is equipped with a **black box**.¹ This "box" is really a recording **device**,² and it's usually orange, not black. When investigators find the remains of the fallen airplane, they take out the black box and use it to figure out what went wrong.

But can a plane just...disappear? With today's modern technology, surely we can always find out what happened to an airplane, right?

The Mystery

Actually, it's not so simple! Somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Florida, is an area referred to as the Bermuda Triangle. True to its name, the shape of this area resembles a triangle. The Bermuda Triangle is famous for its history of mysterious disappearances. Many planes and ships simply vanished in this area, leaving no trace behind. When rescue teams came to search for the **wreckage**,³ they often couldn't find anything at all. How can giant airplanes and ships just disappear? What happened to them and all the people on board?

1 **black box** – an airplane's recording device that is used to find out what happened in an accident

2 **device** – tool or machine designed for a specific purpose

Supernatural Explanations

Many people struggle with this question, and all kinds of explanations are offered. Some of these may seem a bit far-fetched. For instance, some people think that the airplanes were captured by aliens or transported to another time zone! Others **speculate**⁴ that dangerous gas bubbles rose out of the water and sank the ships. Another explanation is that giant waves came and washed them away. Other people believe that a force in this area attracts metal and pulled the ships and airplanes down into the water.



The remains of an airplane after a crash

Natural Explanations

The truth is that the Bermuda Triangle is known for its extreme weather conditions. This area frequently has hurricanes and tropical storms. It's not surprising for airplanes to crash in such severe weather. Also, ships and planes often use a **compass**⁵ to figure out their location. This is always tricky, but it can be even more confusing in the Bermuda Triangle due to various factors.



An old-fashioned telegraph

Moreover, the deepest point in the Atlantic Ocean is located in the Bermuda Triangle. This point is called the Milwaukee Depth. Since the **ocean floor**⁶ is so low, it makes sense that downed planes and ships may sink to the bottom and never be discovered.

3 **wreckage** – the pieces that remain after something has been destroyed

4 **speculate** – guess

5 **compass** – a tool that always points to magnetic north and is used to figure out one's location

6 **ocean floor** – the ground underneath the ocean

Every day, airplanes and ships travel through the Bermuda Triangle without a problem. In fact, some experts insist that the Bermuda Triangle has not had more disappearances than any other similar part of the ocean.

Mysterious Stories

Nonetheless, the question of what happened to the missing ships and planes remains. Many of the stories are very strange indeed. Time after time, pretty much the same thing happened:

At some point after departure, the vessels lost contact with their base. These ships were never heard from again. At no point did they call for help or show any sign of trouble. They simply vanished! Many times, the wreckage was never discovered.

In some legends, boats were found floating around empty with all their passengers gone. In one story, a woman claimed to have seen a plane drop out of the sky into the ocean below!



A group of military planes went missing while flying over the Bermuda Triangle.

In 1945, shortly after the end of World War II, no less than six military planes disappeared in one day. The first five were all flying together for a practice bombing session. At some point during the mission, their compasses and radios stopped working properly. It soon became clear that they were lost, and search missions were sent out immediately. Strangely, they did not find any sign of the giant airplanes. Perhaps they ran out of fuel and crashed. But some people wonder if they flew off to Mars...or to some mysterious place under the ocean.

Stranger still, one of the airplanes sent out to search for them disappeared too! It took off with 13 men on board, and they were never heard from again. The only clue was an enormous fireball in the sky and an oily spill in the ocean. Perhaps the airplane exploded, but why? And how did the broken remains of all six airplanes simply disappear?

Not long afterward, the British South American Airways Star Tiger disappeared on its way to Bermuda. This was followed just a year later by another airplane from the very same airline, the Star Ariel. In the case of the Star Ariel, the plane seemed to be **functioning**⁷ perfectly. The weather was just right, and they were flying at a high altitude. An hour after takeoff, the pilot had an ordinary conversation with ground control and told them his location. That was the last time they heard from him. The time for Star Ariel's scheduled arrival came and went. The plane never landed. Rescue operations were sent out. But they couldn't find a clue as to what had happened to it. It seemed the plane had vanished along with all its passengers!

The Question Remains

Many other ships and planes were also lost in the Bermuda Triangle and never found. The mystery has never been solved. Some people assume that all the accidents must have had natural causes. Others insist that something strange is going on. Do you think there's something a little spooky about the Bermuda Triangle?



1. Circle the choice that has the same meaning as the following sentences from the lesson: *At no point did they call for help or show any sign of trouble. They simply vanished!*
 - A. They made a simple show in which they made a point disappear.
 - B. They made it a point to simplify the call for help.
 - C. The trouble was that when they were called in for help, they vanished.
 - D. They disappeared without ever signaling distress.

2. Circle the vocabulary word that best fits the sentence.
*My uncle invented a (**wreckage**, **device**) to cut cake into perfectly even slices.*

3. Place a check mark next to each statement that correctly describes the Bermuda Triangle.
 - ☐ The Bermuda Triangle often has tropical storms and hurricanes.
 - ☐ The Bermuda Triangle is at the deepest point of the Atlantic Ocean.
 - ☐ The Bermuda Triangle is the best place for pilots and captains to figure out their location with a compass.
 - ☐ The Bermuda Triangle is home to several large glaciers.

4. Number the following events in the order in which they took place.
 - ☐ Search missions were sent out.
 - ☐ Five military planes flew out for a practice bombing session.
 - ☐ People said they noticed a fireball in the sky and an oil spill on the ocean's surface.
 - ☐ One search plane disappeared.



Questions

5. Mark each statement as F (fact) or O (opinion).

- ___ Many planes and ships disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle.
- ___ Planes that pass through the Bermuda Triangle are getting captured by aliens.
- ___ The theory about the metal-attracting force makes the most sense.
- ___ Every day, planes and boats pass through the Bermuda Triangle safely.

6. Consider the natural and supernatural explanations of the disappearances in the Bermuda triangle. Which type of explanation is more likely to be correct?

7. How does the section titled “Mysterious Stories” help the author develop the lesson?

8. What do you think about the Bermuda Triangle? Should ships and planes avoid traveling there?
