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Missing Australian PM mystery solved

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4 September, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Missing Australian PM mystery solved

BNE: A political mystery that has been talked about for four decades in Australia has finally been solved. The Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt vanished in 1967 while swimming off the coast of the state of Victoria. His body was never recovered. Dozens of wild and strange theories about his disappearance quickly developed. Some people believed he committed suicide or faked suicide to live in Switzerland with his lover. Other rumors included a shark attack, a Chinese submarine kidnapping him and a CIA assassination plot.

Australian authorities have finally said that Harold Holt accidentally drowned in heavy surf. It has taken so long to reach a conclusion because the law has only just changed. Coroners can now make a decision on death even when there is no body. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is sad that, over the years, all of these...unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should...overshadow his life and require an explanation." He also said this case should have been cleared up many years ago.

WARM-UPS

1. CONSPIRACY THEORIES: Talk about the following conspiracy theories with your partner(s):

- a. John F. Kennedy was assassinated by the CIA.
- b. Dutch flower growers assassinated Princess Diana to increase flower sales.
- c. Israelis organized the World Trade Center attack in 2001.
- d. Elvis Presley faked his death and is still alive.
- e. Eurabia – the idea that the Islamic world is taking over Europe.
- f. The AIDS epidemic is a CIA conspiracy.
- g. The Apollo moon landing was a hoax.

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

Political mystery / Australia / 1967 / conspiracy theories / Switzerland / lovers / shark attacks / Chinese submarines / CIA / surf

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

3. MAKE A STORY: Use the words in the “Chat” activity above to make your own predictions about the story in the article.

4. MYSTERY: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “mystery”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. RUMORS: The following people have suddenly disappeared. Despite a worldwide hunt to find them, they cannot be found. Discuss what might have happened with your partner(s). Change partners and share your ideas.

- a. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez
- b. Michael Jackson
- c. US President George W. Bush
- d. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe
- e. Rock singer and charity organizer Sir Bob Geldoff
- f. Your country’s leader
- g. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan
- h. Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Australia's Prime Minister John Howard went missing for a week. | T / F |
| b. An Australian Prime Minister vanished while he was swimming. | T / F |
| c. The body of the Prime Minister was recovered last week. | T / F |
| d. Some people believe the Prime Minister was a Chinese spy. | T / F |
| e. The Prime Minister was murdered by his opponents. | T / F |
| f. The coroner cannot decide on the cause of death without a body. | T / F |
| g. The coroner said it was sad so many rumors spread. | T / F |
| h. The coroner said this case should have finished many years ago. | T / F |

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

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| a. mystery | incident |
| b. finally | found |
| c. vanished | plan |
| d. recovered | at last |
| e. plot | ruling |
| f. reach | puzzle |
| g. decision | cloud |
| h. overshadow | resolved |
| i. case | disappeared |
| j. cleared up | come to |

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

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. A political | quickly developed |
| b. finally | an explanation |
| c. theories about his disappearance | plot |
| d. he committed | conclusion |
| e. a CIA assassination | cleared up many years ago |
| f. Harold Holt accidentally | mystery |
| g. reach a | suicide |
| h. overshadow | his life |
| i. require | been solved |
| j. this case should have been | drowned in heavy surf |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Missing Australian PM mystery solved

BNE: A political _____ that has been talked about for four _____ in Australia has finally been solved. The Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt _____ in 1967 while swimming off the _____ of the state of Victoria. His body was never _____. Dozens of wild and strange theories about his disappearance quickly developed. Some people believed he _____ suicide or faked suicide to live in Switzerland with his lover. Other rumors _____ a shark attack, a Chinese submarine kidnapping him and a CIA assassination _____.

Australian authorities have _____ said that Harold Holt accidentally drowned in heavy _____. It has taken so long to _____ a conclusion because the law has only just changed. Coroners can now make a _____ on death even when there is no _____. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is _____ that, over the years, all of these...unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should..._____ his life and require an explanation." He also said this case should have been _____ up many years ago.

decades
committed
plot
coast
mystery
vanished
included
recovered
decision
overshadow
finally
cleared
reach
body
sad
surf

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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 gap fill. 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 "MYSTERY" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about mysteries and conspiracy theories.

- 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:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| • political | • surf |
| • vanished | • reach |
| • recovered | • law |
| • faked | • body |
| • lover | • overshadow |
| • plot | • cleared up |

DISCUSSION

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

- a. What did you think when you first read this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What were your feelings after you read the article?
- d. Did you know anything about this story before you read the article?
- e. What do you think happened to Harold Holt?
- f. Are there any mysteries surrounding the leaders in your country?
- g. Have you heard any strange rumors recently?
- h. What's the latest gossip about your country's leaders?

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. Are there any unanswered questions about your country's government?
- d. Should it have taken so long for Australia to say Harold Holt drowned?
- e. What do you think Australia should now do to remember Mr. Holt?
- f. How possible is it that an Australian Prime Minister could be a Chinese spy?
- g. How possible is it that America's CIA might assassinate an Australian Prime Minister (or another country's leader)?
- h. Did you like this discussion?

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

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

MYSTERY: In pairs / groups, create a mystery story about a famous person. Use the ideas in the left column to help you:

Who is the famous person?	
What happened?	
How?	
What mysterious object was left at the scene?	
What did the police say?	
What reasons might the person have for disappearing?	
What conspiracy theories are there?	
Other	

Change partners and tell each other your stories. Try to help each other make your stories more interesting.

Return to your original partners and talk about how your story has changed.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Missing Australian PM mystery solved

BNE: A political mystery that has been _____ for four decades in Australia has finally been _____. The Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt vanished in 1967 while swimming off _____ the state of Victoria. His body was never recovered. Dozens of wild and strange _____ about his disappearance quickly developed. Some people believed he committed suicide or _____ suicide to live in Switzerland with his lover. Other rumors included a shark attack, a Chinese submarine kidnapping him and a CIA assassination _____.

Australian authorities have finally said that Harold Holt accidentally _____ in heavy surf. It has taken so _____ a conclusion because the law has only just changed. Coroners can now make a decision on death even when there is no _____. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is sad that, over the years, all of these...unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should...overshadow his life and _____ an explanation." He also said this case should have been _____ many years ago.

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 Harold Holt. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. NEWS REPORT: Write a news report about someone who has mysteriously disappeared. Read your report to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. CONSPIRACY THEORY: Find a conspiracy theory and make a poster on it. Show the poster to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| a. mystery | puzzle |
| b. finally | at last |
| c. vanished | disappeared |
| d. recovered | found |
| e. plot | plan |
| f. reach | come to |
| g. decision | ruling |
| h. overshadow | cloud |
| i. case | incident |
| j. cleared up | resolved |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. A political | mystery |
| b. finally | been solved |
| c. theories about his disappearance | quickly developed |
| d. he committed | suicide |
| e. a CIA assassination | plot |
| f. Harold Holt accidentally | drowned in heavy surf |
| g. reach a | conclusion |
| h. overshadow | his life |
| i. require | an explanation |
| j. this case should have been | cleared up many years ago |

GAP FILL:

Missing Australian PM mystery solved

BNE: A political **mystery** that has been talked about for four **decades** in Australia has finally been solved. The Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt **vanished** in 1967 while swimming off the **coast** of the state of Victoria. His body was never **recovered**. Dozens of wild and strange theories about his disappearance quickly developed. Some people believed he **committed** suicide or faked suicide to live in Switzerland with his lover. Other rumors **included** a shark attack, a Chinese submarine kidnapping him and a CIA assassination **plot**.

Australian authorities have **finally** said that Harold Holt accidentally drowned in heavy **surf**. It has taken so long to **reach** a conclusion because the law has only just changed. Coroners can now make a **decision** on death even when there is no **body**. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is **sad** that, over the years, all of these...unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should...**overshadow** his life and require an explanation." He also said this case should have been **cleared** up many years ago.