

Zealandia – The eighth continent?

19th February, 2017



We were taught at school that there were nine planets, but now there are eight (scientists said Pluto is not a planet). Now we may have to change our thinking about how many continents there are. We are taught there are seven continents - Asia,

Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe, and Australia. Geologists (people who study the land and the earth) now say there is an eighth continent - Zealandia. This is a huge, largely underwater landmass in the southern Pacific Ocean. Six per cent of this landmass is above water and is what we know as New Zealand and New Caledonia. Around 94 per cent of it is under the ocean. In total, it measures five million square kilometres, which scientists say is big enough to be a continent.

Geologists explained why they think Zealandia is a continent. They wrote a research paper and published it in the Geological Society of America's Journal. They argue that the land does not have to be above water for it to be a continent. They said four different points make Zealandia a continent. It is a lot higher than the surrounding area, it has a unique geology, it is easy to find the shape of the continent, and it is a lot thicker than the ocean floor. Nick Mortimer, a geologist at GNS Science in New Zealand, said it would be easy to understand that Zealandia is a continent, "if you could pull the plug on the world's oceans" and let the water out. However, it may take some time before scientists agree that there are eight continents.

Sources: bbc.com / tvnz.co.nz / nature.com

Writing

Teachers should now teach there are eight continents. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

taught / school / planet / continent / land / earth / underwater / ocean / scientists / geologists / research / paper / higher / shape / floor / unique / plug / let the water out

True / False

- People at school were taught there were nine planets. T / F
- Scientists said there is a planet called Pluto. T / F
- Over 99 per cent of Zealandia is under water. T / F
- Zealandia is over fifty million square kilometres in size. T / F
- Geologists said a continent can be below water and still be a continent. T / F
- Geologists said a continent needs a unique geology to be a continent. T / F
- A geologist said if the oceans had less water, we could see Zealandia. T / F
- The article said scientists will agree quickly that Zealandia is a continent. T / F

Synonym Match

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

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. taught | a. ideas |
| 2. thinking | b. encircling |
| 3. huge | c. mainly |
| 4. largely | d. see |
| 5. under | e. remove |
| 6. published | f. educated |
| 7. surrounding | g. special |
| 8. unique | h. beneath |
| 9. understand | i. printed |
| 10. pull | j. enormous |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you know about the continents?
- What do you know about the continent on which you live?
- Which is the best continent, and why?
- What do you think of Zealandia becoming a continent?
- What do geologists do every day?
- What is a continent?
- What would you like to know about Zealandia?
- What do you know about New Zealand?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. We were taught at school that | a. is above water |
| 2. we may have to | b. to be a continent |
| 3. This is a huge, largely | c. than the ocean floor |
| 4. Six per cent of this landmass | d. before scientists agree |
| 5. big enough | e. let the water out |
| 6. They wrote a research paper | f. there were nine planets |
| 7. it has a unique | g. and published it |
| 8. a lot thicker | h. change our thinking |
| 9. pull the plug on the world's oceans and | i. geology |
| 10. it may take some time | j. underwater landmass |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What do you like about the geology of the Earth?
- Asia and Europe are connected, so are they one continent?
- What do you think of the name, 'Zealandia'?
- Would you like to be a geologist?
- What would happen if you pulled the plug on the world's oceans?
- Why might it take time for scientists to agree Zealandia is a continent?
- What questions would you like to ask the geologists?

Spelling

- there were nine netlsap
- eiggstsolo (people who study the land)
- ygrlael underwater
- under the naceo
- it aseurms five million square kilometres
- ... which scientists say is big unheog
- wrote a hscreare paper and published it
- They uerga that the land...
- four etieffrnd points
- higher than the gnrdouiusnr area
- it has a uieqnu geology
- scientists ragee

Answers – Synonym Match

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

Role Play

Role A – Africa

You think Africa is the best continent. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their continents. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): Asia, Europe or South America.

Role B – Asia

You think Asia is the best continent. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their continents. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): Africa, Europe or South America.

Role C – Europe

You think Europe is the best continent. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their continents. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): Asia, Africa or South America.

Role D – South America

You think South America is the best continent. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their continents. Also, tell the others which is the least interesting of these (and why): Asia, Europe or Africa.

Speaking – Best Continent

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

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| • Europe | • Africa |
| • North America | • Antarctica |
| • South America | • Asia |
| • Zealandia | • Australia |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	F	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.