

The Bermuda Triangle

Name _____

The Bermuda Triangle, a region of the Atlantic Ocean defined roughly as the area between Florida, Puerto Rico, and Bermuda, is a hotspot of legend and mystery for navigators and writers alike. Countless airplane and ship disappearances have been credited to the ominous forces of the Bermuda Triangle. Long before the Triangle even had a name, William Shakespeare was inspired by the stories of this Caribbean mystery when he wrote one of his most famous plays, "The Tempest". Despite the long history of wrecks and disappearances in this patch of ocean, story and myth persist around the reason why the Bermuda Triangle claims so many tragedies. Few can decide which tale to believe.

One rather explosive theory points to the geochemical action of methane gas on the seafloor. When soils on the seafloor shift, methane gas that was trapped underneath can erupt in a flurry of bubbles. Some theorize that the "bubbly" ocean water from such a release could decrease the density of the water, making it harder for a passing ship to stay afloat. If the highly flammable methane gas could rise into the atmosphere, some believe that a passing plane could explode from the interaction of the plane engines with the methane. This theory would explain why so many ships and airplanes seem to disappear without a trace in the Bermuda Triangle. Unfortunately, the enormous distances the methane gas would have to travel from seafloor to atmosphere cast doubt on the feasibility of this theory.

Some blame the Bermuda Triangle's turbulent history on the perilous Sargasso Sea that lies within the Triangle's boundaries. This sea is unique in that its borders are defined not by land, but by the powerful currents that surround it. In the middle of these currents, the still, nearly windless waters harbor dense mats of floating seaweed. It's no wonder that even today, abandoned ships are found trapped by coiling plants. With no winds to move ships safely onwards, the Sargasso Sea has long posed a danger to ships that rely on the power of the winds for propulsion and steering. While the Sargasso Sea may explain some of the dangers ships face when navigating the Bermuda Triangle, it fails to account for the dozens of planes and ships that have disappeared without a trace.

Skeptics claim that the disappearances of the Bermuda Triangle are unremarkable when the physical and weather-based challenges travelers face in this portion of the ocean are considered. The Triangle is prone to storms and hurricanes that can confuse navigators and cause equipment to malfunction. Some parts of the Triangle are full of sharp coral that can rip holes in ships and cause them to sink. Deep pockets and trenches in the ocean floor may hide the remains of wreckages that are commonly believed to have disappeared without a trace. Whatever the true cause of the Bermuda Triangle tragedies, this area will indisputably be a source of lore and intrigue for years to come.

1. Why was William Shakespeare inspired by the Bermuda Triangle?

- a.) The Bermuda Triangle was mysterious
- b.) The Bermuda Triangle was a large area of the ocean
- c.) The Bermuda Triangle had just been discovered
- d.) His ship disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle

2. Based on the following sentence, what could be the best definition of the word “geochemical”?

One rather explosive theory points to the geochemical action of methane gas on the seafloor

- a.) Having to do with the chemistry of water
- b.) Having to do with the chemistry of rocks and soils
- c.) Having to do with explosions
- d.) Having to do with a theory or idea

3. According to the methane gas theory, why would a ship sink after a release of methane gas from the seafloor?

- a.) The ship’s engine would explode
- b.) An explosion in the base of the ship would cause it to sink
- c.) The density of the water would decrease
- d.) The density of the ship would decrease

4. Which heading would be most appropriate for the second paragraph?

- a.) “Deadly Dangers of Methane Gas”
- b.) “Region of Danger for Ships and Airplanes”
- c.) “Doubt Cast on Methane Gas Theory”
- d.) “One Theory for Plane Disappearances”

5. Which of the following is not a feature of the Sargasso Sea?

- a.) Thick coiling mats of seaweed
- b.) Borders defined by currents rather than by land
- c.) Dangerously shallow waters
- d.) A lack of strong winds

6. What do the skeptics described in the final paragraph believe about the Bermuda Triangle?

- a.) The mystery of the Bermuda Triangle will never be solved
- b.) The tragedies of the Bermuda Triangle can be attributed to mysterious forces
- c.) Trenches in the ocean floor cause many of the Bermuda Triangle shipwrecks
- d.) The events of the Bermuda Triangle are caused only by the dangerous weather and challenging physical features of the Triangle

7. Which of the following best describes the conclusions drawn from the Bermuda Triangle?

- a.) There are few theories that explain the dangers of the Bermuda Triangle
- b.) Although there are theories explaining the dangers of the Bermuda Triangle, there remains a lack of consensus.
- c.) Methane gas is likely the culprit behind the dangers of the Bermuda Triangle
- d.) In reality, very few ships or planes have disappeared passing through the Bermuda Triangle.