

BBC Learning English  
6 Minute English  
29 November, 2012  
*Missing Island*



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**Alice:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English: we'll be talking about a story in the news and learning some vocabulary along the way. I'm Alice and joining me today is Neil. Welcome, Neil.

**Neil:** Hi there Alice.

**Alice:** Now, Neil are you good with maps?

**Neil:** Good with maps? You mean – am I good at **reading maps**?

**Alice:** Yes. Can you find your way to a place you want to go to just by looking at a map.

**Neil:** Well, actually I need a map. Because I used to think I had a great sense of direction but now I have to admit I have a terrible sense of direction. I almost always walk in the wrong direction automatically, so I need a map.

**Alice:** You need a map. Well I like to think I'm a fairly good **navigator** – that's someone who finds or plots the way. But what if the map is wrong? I once walked around a town for a whole hour using a map I'd downloaded from the internet, and then I realised the map I was using was completely wrong.

**Neil:** Oh dear, it does happen.

**Alice:** Yes it does. And in 6 Minute English today, we'll be hearing about an island that has appeared on maps for several years, but which people now realise has never existed at all!

**Neil:** Aha, this is the famous Sandy Island near Australia.

**Alice:** Yes, it's all very **suspicious**! And, Neil, as we're talking about islands, my question for you today is about a legendary island which is supposed to have sunk into the ocean thousands of years ago. Was it called:

- a) Pacifica
- b) Atlantis, or
- c) Oceana

**Neil:** Well, I will have a think about that and tell you at the end of the programme.

**Alice:** OK, as usual we'll find out what the answer is at the end. Now let's hear more about Sandy Island – the island that never was! Maria Seton from the University of Sydney in Australia was on an **expedition** in the sea between Australia and New Caledonia.

**Scientist Maria Seton:**

*We were actually out in the Eastern Coral Sea conducting a scientific research expedition and when we were approaching the area of this supposed island, we saw that our scientific maps showed there was an island there, and yet the navigation charts on board the vessel showed that we had a water depth of 1,400 metres. So that's where we started getting suspicious.*

**Alice:** Maria Seton and her research team were looking at their scientific maps which showed an island. But they became **suspicious** – they questioned what they saw. Why?

**Neil:** Because when they got to the area where the island was supposed to be, the navigation charts on board the vessel – the ship – showed that all that was there was 1,400 metres of water.

**Alice:** So, the island wasn't there. Could it have **sunk**? Here's BBC Correspondent Duncan Kennedy in Australia:

**BBC Correspondent, Duncan Kennedy**

*It hasn't sunk – no it was never there. The Australian Naval Maps department – the department that makes naval maps – said it could simply be human error repeated down through the years.*

**Neil:** Did you hear what did the department that makes naval maps in Australia said about Sandy Island appearing on its maps?

**Alice:** They said it could be **human error** repeated through the years. That means one person made a mistake and put the island on the map and then other people just copied their map over and over again.

**Neil:** Interesting. But how could all maps make the same mistake? The island appeared on standard maps, nautical maps – that's maps of the ocean - and even Google Earth, which is largely made up of photos from space?

**Alice:** Well, people who make maps use a variety of sources they say – lots of different reference materials – so maybe it wasn't worth taking thousands of photos of the sea, but easier to copy someone else's map. Here's what the BBC's Duncan Kennedy says about the mistake:

**BBC Correspondent Duncan Kennedy:**

*Sandy Island appears on standard maps, nautical maps and it even appears on Google Earth and a spokesman for Google Earth Maps Australia said they use a variety of sources to compile their maps but that things change. They're advising people to tell them if they spot similar mistakes could they let them know.*

**Alice:** The BBC's Duncan Kennedy, who says map makers like Google Earth have advised people to tell them if they spot similar mistakes on any of their maps.

**Neil:** Yes, things change! Even islands disappear sometimes – which brings me to the answer to your question at the beginning of 6 Minute English Alice. I think I know the name of that legendary island you were talking about.

**Alice:** Ah yes, I asked you if it was called: a. Pacifica, b. Atlantis or c. Oceana.

**Neil:** And I thought it was a trick question but I'm going to go with what I first thought, which is Atlantis.

**Alice:** And you're right. Atlantis was the name given to a legendary island which was supposed to have been somewhere between Africa and Europe before it sunk. It was talked about by Plato in the fourth century BC.

And, Neil, I hope you'll share some of the words we've heard in today's programme:

**Neil:** Yes, of course. Here they are:

Reading maps, navigator, expedition, suspicious, human error, nautical, variety of sources

**Alice:** Thanks so much, Neil. And please join us again soon for more 6 Minute English from [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com).

**Neil:** And don't forget to find us on Facebook and Twitter. We really do exist there. Honestly.

**Alice:** Bye for now.

**Neil:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>reading maps</b>	understanding and finding your way using a map
<b>navigator</b>	person who plots the direction or location
<b>expedition</b>	research trip
<b>suspicious</b>	not trusting or believing
<b>human error</b>	mistake made by a person
<b>nautical</b>	related to the sea and oceans
<b>variety of sources</b>	selection of reference material

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