Search team heads to Nikumaroro island

LEVEL A2/B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What famous mysteries do you know?
2. Have you ever visited an island? What was it like?
3. Do you enjoy stories about explorers? Why or why not?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

expedition
a planned journey with a goal, often for science or discovery

researcher
a person who studies a subject to find new information

remote
far away from towns and people

wreckage
the broken parts of something, like a crashed plane

satellite
a machine in space that takes photos of Earth

lagoon
a small, calm body of water by the sea

refuel
to fill a vehicle with more fuel

sceptical
not sure that something is true; doubting

III. READING

A US expedition from the Archaeological Legacy Institute and Purdue University is travelling to Nikumaroro, a remote island in Kiribati, to inspect possible wreckage from Amelia Earhart's plane. The team hopes to arrive by Monday.

They are looking for the Taraia Object, first seen in satellite images in 2020 and also visible in photos from 1938, sitting by a lagoon. The researchers left Kiribati's capital on the Marin Mainiku for a trip of nearly 1,000 miles. They must navigate a narrow gap in the reef, made by the British in 1963.

Earhart disappeared in 1937 while trying to reach Howland Island to refuel during her round-the-world flight, and no confirmed evidence has been found. Some experts are sceptical. Ric Gillespie says the object may be a fallen tree, not a plane.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Expedition hopes to find aviator Amelia...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is the team travelling to?
2. What object are they hoping to inspect?
3. How long is their journey from the capital?
4. In what year did Amelia Earhart disappear?
5. What does Ric Gillespie think the object might be?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Why do people still care about this mystery today?
2. Do you think the Taraia Object is a plane? Why or why not?
3. What tools are useful for searches like this?
4. Is it worth the cost to run expeditions like this? Why?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past continuous

Use was/were + verb-ing to show an action in progress at a time in the past, often with when/while for background. Form: was/were + verb-ing.

*"Earhart **was trying** to reach Howland when she disappeared."*

*"Researchers **were looking** at photos while the boat moved."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete with the past continuous (was/were + verb-ing).

1. The researchers (travel) ___ to Nikumaroro when the news broke. _____
2. The Taraia Object (sit) ___ by a lagoon when a satellite saw it. _____
3. We (watch) ___ a film about Earhart when the lights went out. _____
4. I (read) ___ about Amelia Earhart when my friend called. _____
5. Crew members (check) ___ maps while the captain steered. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes discussion (grammar can share time with reading/comprehension).
- Pre-teach place names aloud (Kiribati, Nikumaroro, Howland) and check the difference between island, lagoon and reef. Highlight expedition, wreckage, refuel and sceptical before reading.
- Run a first quick read for the main idea, then a second read to find numbers, dates and names. Sensitivity note: the story involves a historic disappearance and likely death; let students speak about the news rather than personal stories, and start the discussion in pairs.
- Differentiation: stronger students write a one-sentence summary of each paragraph; others underline timeline words (in 1937, in 2020, by Monday) and match them to events.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Elicit quick reasons, then ask which details in the text keep interest alive.
2. Take a show of hands, pair believers with doubters, and have each side give two reasons.
3. Board ideas (maps, radios, satellites, boats) and push for one advantage and one limit for each.
4. Set a 30-second think time; then ask for one benefit and one cost from each student.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In two teams, prepare and deliver 90-second arguments for or against funding future searches.

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word news update the team could send when they arrive at Nikumaroro.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where is the team travelling to?
   Nikumaroro, a remote island in Kiribati.
2. What object are they hoping to inspect?
   The Taraia Object seen in images.
3. How long is their journey from the capital?
   Nearly 1,000 miles.
4. In what year did Amelia Earhart disappear?
   1937.
5. What does Ric Gillespie think the object might be?
   A fallen tree, not a plane.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete with the past continuous (was/were + verb-ing).

1. The researchers ___ to Nikumaroro when the news broke. **were travelling**
2. The Taraia Object ___ by a lagoon when a satellite saw it. **was sitting**
3. We ___ a film about Earhart when the lights went out. **were watching**
4. I ___ about Amelia Earhart when my friend called. **was reading**
5. Crew members ___ maps while the captain steered. **were checking**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use was/were + verb-ing to show an action in progress at a time in the past, often with when/while for background. Form: was/were + verb-ing. (Examples constructed.)

*"Earhart **was trying** to reach Howland when she disappeared."*

*"Researchers **were looking** at photos while the boat moved."*