



Around The World

The velvet green landscape fell away below me. Fields of different shades of green rolled across the hills like a patchwork blanket. I was off on the adventure of a lifetime. It had taken six months to put together the balloon. It was worth it. Flames roared overhead as I pulled on the chord to inflate the balloon even further.

It didn't take long to leave the verdant hills of England behind. I was soon able to look down onto the wind-swept highlands of Scotland. A lone albatross rose on a current of warm air and floated alongside me for a while. It seemed close enough to reach out and touch.

Around lunchtime, I saw Iceland as a speck on the horizon. The glaciers and Northern Lights beckoned me, but the weather had other ideas. A storm picked up and snatched the balloon in its grasp. Lightning arced across the coal-black clouds and thunder shook the basket underneath my feet. Suddenly, it didn't feel very secure. I watched forlornly as Iceland shrank away again. The storm was blowing in from the west. There was nothing I could do to control my vessel now. I just had to hold on.

By the time the storm abated, I was far off-course. The mountains and ravines of Norway and Sweden passed beneath me in a blur. Panic quickly set in. How would I get home? There was no time to dwell on my fears, though. The almighty landmass of Russia crept into view soon enough. Endless snow settled on the plains like a crisp white bed-sheet. The candy-coloured domes of St Basil's Cathedral appeared and vanished as I stood and gawped. I watched a pack of wild wolves chasing unseen prey between sparse trees. A pair of eagles flew even higher than the balloon, chattering endlessly to one another.

The wind changed direction once again and cast me south. The basket rocked perilously, but another gust of flames steadied it nicely. Mongolia and China passed serenely below. I picked up the course of the Great Wall for a while - the movement of my vessel following its sinuous curves. At one point, I received the shock of my life. I turned just in



time to see the vast peak of Mount Everest, rising up like an ice giant. We skimmed the ice close enough to grab a handful of snow but narrowly avoided crashing.

I picked up the pace now. I pulled hard on the chord. The balloon filled with hot air. We shot forward. We were moving fast enough now to chase the rising sun. The parched landscape of Australia filled the entire world. Uluru and then Sydney harbour drifted lazily past. Nothing does anything in a hurry in Australia. It's too hot.

There wasn't time to enjoy the sunshine before thousands of miles of open ocean stretched before me. I closed my eyes and caught a wink of sleep. The sound of people playing on the beach woke me. I looked over the edge of the basket to see California passing by. I watched the cities of the United States of America become farmland and factories. The towering skyscrapers of New York jutted upwards like teeth in the distance.

Soon, it was all behind me. I watched the coastline of England growing in the distance and gently brought the balloon down to land.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find an example of a simile in the text.
2. Using the context of the text, write a definition for "abated".
3. Find and copy a word that is used to describe the landscape of England as "bright green or covered in grass".
4. Which word tells you that the albatross was on its own?
5. Write a synonym for the word "serenely".

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

What landmark gave the author a fright?

S

List the countries the author flew over in order.

R

What landmarks did the author see in Australia?

E

How do the author's emotions change throughout the text?

S

What was the author doing just before they saw California?

Changing Names

Throughout history, countries and cities have changed their names. Sometimes, it is a result of a new government coming into power. It might happen when a country gains independence. On rare occasions, it might be done to attract attention!

New...York?

New York was originally established as New Amsterdam in 1624. The Dutch West Indies company created the colony in honour of their masters back home. They purchased Manhattan from a local tribe in 1626. The English took control in 1664 and renamed it New York.

DISH

If you'd have visited a small town in Texas before 2005, you might have stepped into the town of Clark. After that, the signs would have welcomed you to DISH. A satellite TV company struck a deal with the town in 2005 to rename itself as DISH in an advertising stunt. As a reward, all of the residents received 10 years of free satellite TV.

Bognor Regis

Before 1929, the British seaside town of Bognor Regis was simply known as Bognor. King George V visited in 1929 to recover after an illness. The officials applied to have Regis added to its name. Regis is Latin for 'of the King'. They were successful and have been known as Bognor Regis ever since.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has changed names several times in the last hundred years. Before 1947, the area was part of Bengal. This was part of the British Empire. It became known as East Pakistan in 1947 but was part of the larger country of Pakistan. Bangladesh gained independence and its current name in 1971.



The Czech Republic and Slovakia

Czechoslovakia split into two separate countries in 1993. Czechoslovakia itself had only been created at the beginning of the First World War. The split wasn't welcomed by everybody in the new Czech Republic. Many wanted the countries to remain united.

To Zaire and back again

The African country of Zaire gained independence from Belgium in 1960. It changed its name to the Republic of Congo. This was very confusing because the country next to it was also called the Republic of Congo! For the next few years, the only way to know which country was being talked about was by the name of their capital city. Eventually, the newer Republic of Congo changed its name again to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A new president took charge in 1965. In 1971 he reverted the name back to the African name of Zaire. That name lasted until 1997 when it changed back again to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What was New York originally called?
2. Which town renamed itself in exchange for free TV channels?
3. Why did Bognor add Regis to its name?
4. What was the area of Bangladesh originally called?
5. When was the last name change for Zaire?

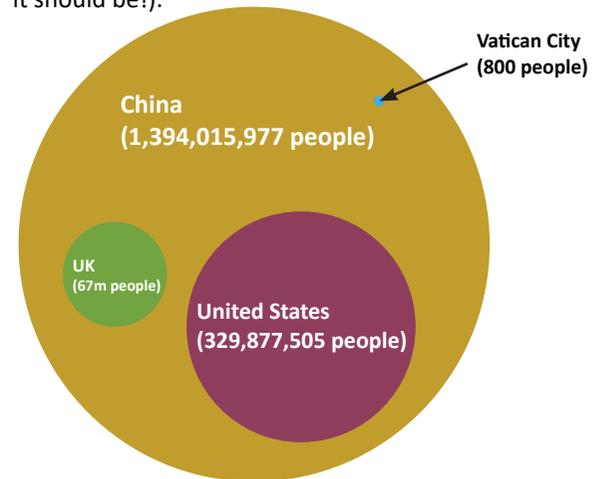
VIPERS QUESTIONS

- S** Why did the new name of the Republic of Congo cause confusion? How did they solve the problem to begin with?
- V** Which word or phrase in the text means to do something out of respect?
- V** Copy a phrase that tells you a place renamed itself to attract attention.
- S** Looking at the examples in the text, why might a place change its name?
- P** If you could rename the place where you live, what would you call it and why?

Every country in the world is different. Some have millions of people living there whereas others only have a few hundred. Some countries are very rich but others are not. Some things are free in some places but expensive elsewhere. Let's have a look around the world.

POPULATION

China and India both have populations of over 1.3 billion people! The United States is third with 330 million. That's a big jump! You can see the difference with the circles below. The least populated country is Vatican City. There are only 800 people living there (the tiny dot is still nearly a thousand times bigger than it should be!).



VIVE LA FRANCE

France welcomed nearly 87 million visitors in 2017. That makes it the most visited country on Earth! The second most popular holiday destination was Spain with 82 million people dropping in to say "Hello". The United States came third with 77 million.



£££

United States: £20,000 per year
New Zealand: £14,300 per year
Australia: £11,500 per year
Canada £10,400 per year

££

United Kingdom (Except Scotland): £9,500 per year

So, which countries are free?

£

Scotland, Argentina, Greece, Sweden and Finland!

HOT AND COLD

Most countries experience different temperatures throughout the year. Some countries on the Equator don't have these seasons. But where are the hottest and coldest temperatures on Earth?

The hottest temperature ever recorded on Earth was at Death Valley in the United States of America. The temperature reached a scorching 54.4C on Sunday 16th August, 2020.

At the other end of the scale, the coldest temperature ever recorded on the ground was in July 1983. The temperature plummeted to -89C in Antarctica. Since then, satellites have measured temperatures as low as -98C in inaccessible spots close by! You'd better take a coat!

A TIGHT SQUEEZE

There are 7.5 billion people living on planet Earth today. That's a vast number of bodies to support. However, if we were to all stand shoulder to shoulder, we would all fit into the city of Los Angeles! That's comforting to know!



RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Where in the world has a population of roughly 300 million people?
2. What is the coldest temperature ever recorded on Earth?
3. If everybody squeezed together, which city would we all fit into?
4. Which country had the second highest number of tourists in 2017?
5. When was the hottest temperature on Earth recorded?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

Why might more people study at university in Argentina or Greece than in Australia or Canada?

V

Find a word with a definition close to “dropped quickly”.

V

What is a “destination”?

I

Why might satellites have been able to detect temperatures that scientists on the ground couldn't?

E

What is the effect of showing the different populations as circles on top of each other?

Mythical Countries

Fabulous and mythical countries have appeared in stories for centuries. Many explorers headed off into the wild to find them, only to then perish. Some of them are based on real places. Most are just the stuff of fantasy.

El Dorado

Legends of lost cities filled with gold go back thousands of years. The city of El Dorado first appeared in stories in the 16th century. Europeans believed that there was a lost city of gold hidden somewhere in the New World of South America. The origins of the story do have a grain of truth. The first Europeans to arrive in Colombia heard of a tribe in the mountains. The tribe showered their new chiefs with gold and jewels. These precious gifts were thrown into a lake to please their gods. Settlers referred to the chief as El Dorado. Eventually, the tribe was conquered by another. Spanish settlers moved into the area and found gold and treasure in the lake. There was so much that they assumed it must come from a city of great wealth somewhere close. Nobody has ever found such a city.

Lost City of Atlantis

The legend of Atlantis stretches all the way back to the Ancient Greeks. The story first appeared 2,300 years ago. It was told by the famous philosopher Plato. Almost all of it is false. He said that a race of people who were half-human and half-god built a new city. It was created on a series of islands in the ocean. He said that it was a paradise filled with treasure and exotic wildlife. Plato said that the island existed 9,000 years before his time. He said that many poets had spoken of it. However, his story is the only one that has ever been discovered. Powerful earthquakes and volcanic eruptions were common back then. There is a chance that great cities might have succumbed to them. It is unlikely that any of them were created by demigods.



Shangri-La

Shangri-La is actually a very modern legend. It is another story that contains a paradise on Earth. James Hilton described a perfect village deep in the Himalayan mountains in his book 'Lost Horizon'. It was published in 1933. According to the story, all of the wisdom of humankind is stored in the community of Tibetan monks. Several places in Tibet have claimed to be the inspiration for the tale. None have been officially recognised.

Cantre'r Gwaelod

The Lost Land of Wales is an ancient story that was originally called Maes Gwyddno (The Land of Gwyddno). Both myths explain how a stretch of land between Ramsey Island and Bardsey Island, off the coast of Wales, sank beneath the waves. In Maes Gwyddno, the priestess of a fairy well allowed the water to overflow. It flooded the land, and the island sank to the bottom of the sea. The tale of Cantre'r Gwaelod began in the 17th century. In this story, a careless guard left the floodgates of a dam open, and the water flooded the land. The church bells of Cantre'r Gwaelod are said to ring out under the waves in times of danger.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which words in the first paragraph tells you that the stories might not be real?
2. Find and copy a phrase that tells you that one of the stories might have had a little of bit of truth in it.
3. If somebody is "showered with gold and jewels", what does it mean?
4. Which phrase tells you that the story of Shangri-La isn't ancient?
5. Find a word with a definition closest to "the place a story is based on".

VIPERS QUESTIONS

S

Why might the story of Atlantis be partly true?

R

Which story was created most recently?

R

What does Maes Gwyddno mean?

S

Summarise how the story of El Dorado began.

E

Which of the stories do you think is most likely to have been based on a real place? Why?



The Smallest Country

Not all countries are as big as you might think. Some are smaller than some of the cities of you know. They might even have fewer people living there than are in your school! Let's have a look at the 5 smallest countries in the world.

Fifth smallest - San Marino

Once upon a time, Italy was made up of lots of small city-states. These all became part of one big country over time, but San Marino stood on its own. It is the world's oldest republic (a nation that has an elected president instead of a king or queen). San Marino is situated in the middle of Italy. This makes it almost unique. It has an area of 23.63 square miles and a population of roughly 33,000 people.

Fourth smallest - Tuvalu

Tuvalu is a country made up of 9 tiny islands in the South Pacific Ocean. It is part of the British Empire. The total area of the islands is less than 10 square miles. Most of the 11,000 people live on the island of Fongafale. This island is only 20 metres across at its narrowest point! Scientists and locals are worried that the islands will disappear beneath the sea in the next 50 to 100 years because of global warming.

Third smallest - Nauru

Nauru is a tiny island in Micronesia. It is northeast of Australia. It gained independence in 1968. Only around 200 tourists travel to Nauru each year. In 1982, one of those tourists was Queen Elizabeth II. It is estimated that only 15,000 people alive today have visited or lived on the island. It is the smallest island nation in the world. It has an area of just 8 square miles. It was once a tropical paradise. Mining has removed most of the wildlife and natural resources. It is now used by the Australian government to house refugees.



Second smallest - Principality of Monaco

A principality is a country which is governed by a prince. The current prince is Prince Albert II. It is bordered on three sides by France and by the Mediterranean Sea on the fourth. It has an area of only 0.78 square miles. That's smaller than a lot of villages! Just over 38,000 people live in Monaco.

The smallest country in the world - Vatican City

Vatican City is by far the smallest country in the world. It has an area of just 0.17 square miles. Only 825 people live there but over 20,000 people a day visit during the summer. Much like San Marino, Vatican City is surrounded by Italy. In fact, it is entirely surrounded by the city of Rome. It has been the official home of the Catholic pope since 1377. It was declared an independent nation in 1929. Almost 75% of the people who live in Vatican City are members of the church.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Which country might disappear in the next century?
2. Which country is the world's oldest republic?
3. When did Queen Elizabeth II visit Micronesia?
4. On how many sides does Monaco border France?
5. Vatican City is the official home of which church?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- I** Which fact does the author consider surprising in the section about Monaco? How do you know?
- V** Find a word or phrase that tells you Nauru became its own country.
- S** How have these countries been selected as the smallest? What fact was used?
- E** Why has the author listed the countries in descending order? What impact does this have?
- V** Which word tells you that Prince Albert II is the prince of Monaco at the moment?

Answers - Around The World:

1. One of: Fields of different shades of green rolled across the hills like a patchwork blanket.

Or

Endless snow settled on the plains like a crisp white bed-sheet.

2. Calmed down or stopped

3. Verdant

4. Lone

5. Peacefully, calmly, tranquilly

R: Mount Everest

S: England, Scotland, (accept Iceland as being spotted), Norway and Sweden, Russia, Mongolia, China, Australia, United States of America.

R: Uluru and Sydney harbour

E: At the beginning, the author is excited. When the storm hits and they are blown off-course, they become frightened and panicked. By the end, they are excited again.

S: Sleeping

Answers - Changing Names:

1. New Amsterdam
2. Clark
3. King George V went there to recover from an illness
4. Bengal
5. 1997

S: It was the same name as the country next to it. The capital cities had different names which helped to identify each one.

V: In honour of

V: An advertising stunt

S: A place might change its name when a new person takes charge. It might gain independence or it might do it to get money or attention.

Answers - Country Comparison:

1. The United States (of America)

2. -98C

3. Los Angeles

4. Spain

5. 16th August 2020

I: It is free, whereas it is expensive in Canada and Australia

V: Plummeted

V: Somewhere that you are headed to or are visiting/the end of a journey

I: The text says the satellites found the temperatures in inaccessible places. This means that it would have been hard for scientists to get to.

E: You can see just how much smaller or larger the populations are.

Answers - Mythical Countries:

1. Mythical and fantasy
2. A grain of truth
3. They were given lots of them - metaphorically covered in them
4. A very modern legend
5. Inspiration

S: There were lots of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes back then. These could have destroyed or sunk an ancient city.

R: Shangri-La

R: The Land of Gwyddno

S: Spanish settlers heard of a tribe who filled a lake with gold and treasure to please their gods. When the tribe left, the Spanish found the gold and believed it must have come from a wealthy city.

R: Accept any answer that looks at the information given in the text and uses it to give a rational explanation. For example: I think that El Dorado is most likely to have existed because there definitely was a tribe who put gold in the lake. They must have got it from somewhere.

Answers - The Smallest Country:

1. Tuvalu
2. San Marino
3. 1982
4. 3
5. Catholic church

I: That's smaller than a lot of villages! The use of an exclamation mark shows excitement or surprise.

V: Gained independence

S: They have the smallest area.

E: Descending order builds suspense to find out the first in the list. Accept answers that discuss the impact of this on them as a reader

V: Current