

Atlantis

Atlantis – Lost or Found

Atlantis is the name of a BBC series which first appeared on our screens in 2013. Although there were mixed reviews from critics and viewers, the BBC began a second series in November 2014. So why is it so popular? What or where is Atlantis? Why do most viewers love it so much?

2,400 years ago, the philosopher Plato from Athens, wrote one of the most tantalising and controversial stories ever written. He related that many centuries ago, in the Atlantic Ocean, there had existed a magnificent seafaring civilisation which had tried to conquer the world, but had disappeared when the island sank into the sea.

The inhabitants of Atlantis were supposed to be extremely advanced in science and engineering, far superior even than we are today. They were said to have discovered the secret of unlimited power and energy, using 'crystals' to harness their energy.

Tales of amazing feats performed by the Atlanteans were told: they could fly in anti-gravity machines resembling spaceships; they had weapons which were like lasers and 'computers' which could talk; they could even communicate telepathically! When Hollywood got hold of the legend, some films even had the Atlanteans still alive today, living in huge domed cities beneath the sea!

Then, as legend has it, Atlantis was destroyed, along with all its people. One story is that it was the result of a natural disaster, such as a volcano or an earthquake (or both simultaneously), that sank Atlantis without a trace. Another story says that the Atlanteans discovered powers they couldn't control, which eventually broke loose and destroyed them.

In the 20th century, scientists discovered, buried under the seas off Greece, the remains of an entire civilisation. They began to believe they may have found Atlantis. In 2009, marine archaeologists, aided by digital technology, were able to properly survey the ruins. Exploration revealed a world of buildings, main streets, rock cut tombs and religious structures. Marine geologists have yet to work out why the settlement sank. Theories include sea level changes, ground subsidence as the result of earthquakes, or a tsunami.

Despite this 'proof', many people did not believe that Atlantis had been found. Thanks to films, television and writers with inimitable imaginations, the favourite location for Atlantis was not Greece but the Bermuda Triangle. Indeed, in 1968, divers had discovered steps, pathways, walls and even pyramids under the water off the coast of Bimini, in the Bermuda Triangle. To add to the excitement, if Atlantis was beneath the Bermuda Triangle, it could help to explain some of the mysteries that had happened there. Perhaps there were some Atlantean machines, with superpowers still working under the ocean. Subsequent investigations by divers however, found that the 'walls and roads' were in fact natural rock formations. There were no traces of cities, pyramids or sophisticated machines. But the search for Atlantis still continues. Perhaps people haven't looked in the right places... yet.

Or do we just need legends like Atlantis to give us something to imagine – and dream about?

6. Which of the following statements best describes the purpose of the text?

This is a multiple choice question which asks you to choose the best fit meaning for a word or statement based on its use in this passage.

- a. The writer wishes to convey her interest in the history of ancient civilisations.
- b. The writer wishes to discover why the BBC series is so popular with most viewers.
- c. The writer is interested in the idea that no one is sure about whether Atlantis existed or not.
- d. The writer wishes to convey her fascination with the legend of Atlantis which still intrigues people today.

Oracy

7. Group discussion: Exploration has always inspired the world. In your group discuss whether you think Virgin Galactic's proposed voyages into space are a good idea.

Ensure that everyone has a chance to give his/her opinion and that you listen carefully to everyone.

Writing

8. This question assesses the quality of your writing skills. You should aim to write 350-500 words. Choose **one** of the following for your writing:

a. Write a review of an episode of Atlantis which you have seen or any other film/series based on legend.

or

b. Write an essay explaining what you consider to be the most important invention of recent years.

Present your argument sensibly giving relevant examples and providing clear reasons for your choice.