

Interpretation and Reasoning: Pirate Mystery

Teacher's Notes

1. Overview

This is an interactive geography mystery which focuses on the topic of globalization and the interaction between consumer demand in one country and employment opportunities and conditions in another. Throughout the mystery students will be attempting to uncover the reasons why Mai-Li feels her dreams have been 'stolen' by Pirate Jake, but there are some wider learning objectives which this mystery attempts to address. These are:

- Understanding that we live in a global age and actions and demands in one country have knock on effects for those in other countries
- Understanding that globalization offers new employment opportunities, but that this is not always a straightforward path for improving the standard of living in developing countries
- Understanding that the employment landscape is changing all over the world as various types of work are off-shored to workers in countries where the costs will be lower.

Students will also have the chance to evaluate a number of different sources and should be able to assess whether each source contains relevant information for solving the mystery. This should help students gain an understanding of the need for using multiple sources in effective research.

2. Setting up the mystery

Unlike the *Mountain Mystery*, this mystery has been designed to be attempted by small groups of students working cooperatively, as opposed to a teacher-led whole-class discussion. It is possible that a small class could attempt the mystery as one group, but teachers may find it difficult to give students ample opportunity to engage with the sources.

As it is not a teacher-led activity, its difficulty level is higher than that of the *Mountain Mystery* and teachers should be aware that it may not be suitable for all learners. This mystery also contains a larger amount of source material than the *Acrobat Mystery* and for this reason some students may find it the hardest of the three mysteries.

The mystery assumes that the teacher has at least one computer within the classroom. As with all Boardworks products, using a projector or interactive whiteboard will optimize the options available to the teacher, but it is not essential to the running of the first part of the activity.

As explained in the animation, students should form up to 5 groups, comprised of between 3-6 students. The teacher needs to set up 5 different evidence stations by printing out the accompanying PDF files and placing them on various tables. Evidence station 5 is to be used in conjunction with slide 7 of the Pirate Mystery PowerPoint.

The teacher can then hand worksheets out to the students. There are a few options as to what can be done here:

Worksheet W1 contains a number of questions and prompts which should guide the students through solving the mystery. The worksheet divides the questions up into evidence stations and essentially acts as a 'walkthrough'. Students will need to select a scribe to answer the questions on the worksheet and as a group they will examine and analyse all the evidence presented to them.

For students of lower ability this is likely to be the best option to facilitate a positive learning experience.

Worksheets W2a, W2b and W2c contain the same questions but in a mixed-up order. Giving each member (or every two members) of the group a different worksheet encourages interdependence, as well as encouraging effective group work. It should also help to diminish the possibility of 'piggybacking' where the brightest/most dominant member of the group supplies all the answers and the other members merely write them down.

Having no worksheets gives the teacher more flexibility over the information that the students look for. It can work very well with advanced students who are happy to work without a set structure and research independently. Similarly, it can also work well with very low ability students if the teacher merely requires them to provide an answer to the mystery and not to produce any evidence to back up their solution.

3. Running the mystery

The teacher can then give each group 5-10 minutes examining the evidence at each station before instructing the groups to move round to the next evidence station. This should allow the teacher to oversee and observe group and individual behaviours, whilst also allowing ample opportunity for the teacher to provide stimuli for groups/individuals that appear to be struggling.

Once all the evidence stations have been visited, the teacher can then begin part 2. The mystery has been designed in two parts so that it fits more easily with the demands of a wide range of timetables. Part 1 should be easily manageable within a single lesson and allows for part 2 to be attempted at a later date. However, a double lesson will probably provide the best opportunity to run parts 1 and 2 concurrently, which is likely to be more effective. Parts 1 and 2 can potentially be managed in one single lesson, but this may depend on the attentiveness of the class.

4. Concluding the mystery

Part 2 of the mystery is designed to be teacher led and involves using the evidence sorter on slide 10 of the Pirate Mystery powerPoint. Teachers should go through each statement with their class and ask them to rate each statement on its importance to solving the mystery. The teacher can also ask the students to choose 1 of 5 categories for the evidence card (the text can be edited directly via the computer's keyboard).

Once all the evidence has been ranked and sorted, the class can review the evidence, which should point to a conclusion. Once a conclusion has been reached, the opinions slider on slide 12 may be a good activity to help obtain feedback from students on the issues raised in the mystery.

5. The Solution

This mystery, as with the *Acrobat Mystery*, is designed to be slightly open-ended. As the mystery is fictional (though based on real events) the actual answer is not as important as the methods of investigation and the way students present their argument. Any student or group of students who arrive at a conclusion which is firmly backed up by evidence can be seen to have solved the mystery correctly. The evidence should, however, point to certain sets of actions as being more likely than any other.

The official 'solution' is presented below, but discussing alternative theories may allow for a worthwhile debate on the reliability of evidence and bias within sources.

Solution

Mai-Li originally lived with her husband and family in the Hunan province of China. An accident left her husband unable to work and so Mai-Li left her home and went to find work in the more industrial areas of the Guandong province. She found work in Shenzhen, as a manufacturing worker in the Hui-Huang toy factory. The working hours are very hard and the conditions are very poor, but the money earned is very valuable in supporting Mai-Li's family. Recently the factory has been awarded a large contract from HSU Merchandising. This is the merchandising arm of a Hollywood movie

company which has recently released the film 'Pirate Jake and the Barbaric Buccaneers'. The film has been very successful and the toys and associated merchandise are likely to be the number 1 toy this Christmas. To meet the increased demand HSU Merchandising has placed a very large order with Hui-Huang Toys. The factory manager has assured his contact at HSU that his factory will deliver the necessary units on time. To increase production, the factory manager has begun working the machines 24 hours a day aside from essential maintenance and is having the workers work in shifts all through the day and night. The workers are being paid more, but this amount is still less than the minimum wage. The factory may have also forged many labour contracts to satisfy local employment laws and the ethical demands of HSU.

Now that the machines are working all through the night, the noise makes it more difficult for Mai-Li to sleep. There are also people coming and going with the new shift regime, which makes it hard for Mai-Li to sleep. As Mai-Li is sleeping less, she is having the time for dreams taken away, but it is also Mai-Li's wishes/dreams for the fresh air and life with her family that is being stolen from her by the excessive workload, harsh conditions and low pay involved in producing Pirate Jake action toys. This is why she feels that Pirate Jake has stolen her dreams, as her life now consists mainly of manufacturing pirate toys, and the low wages and long hours she works are effectively trapping her in her situation.

6. Conclusion

Hopefully this mystery offers the potential to be followed up by looking at the real events it was based on from a geographical context. Students may find it interesting to discuss development challenges and whether low-paid sweat-shop work is an essential step in a country's development (akin to that of the industrial revolution in the UK) or whether this type of work is a modern evil caused by excessive consumer demand for cheap products in the West, without any sense of moral obligation to provide decent wages to workers in developing countries who manufacture such products. Other extension activities could include looking at the prices of traditional goods in Shenzhen and calculating how long Mai-Li would have to work for to be able to purchase a Western-style meal and night out at the cinema.