Teacher's notes and answer key

Nan Madol – the City of Flying Stones

Subjects: English · History · Geography | recommended from age 12 (B1) | Video: 8:45 min

Answers B

1. Off the east coast of Pohnpei (Micronesia, Pacific), on a coral reef, nearly a hundred artificial islands. Name usually “the space in between” (the canals). Walls of basalt pillars (cooled lava, five or six sides), stacked crosswise, gaps packed with broken coral, no mortar.

2. Twin sorcerers from the legendary land of Katau in the west (possibly Kosrae). They look for a place for an altar to Nahnisohn Sahpw (god of agriculture), fail several times, find the reef off the east coast; by magic the pillars fly there (in some versions with the help of a flying dragon).

3. The dynasty of the “Lords of Deleur”, starting with Olosohpa; the first rule over the whole island. The islets had no fresh water or fields, so the people had to paddle food in by canoe (later traditions: the best fish and harvests).

4. Son of the thunder god Nahnsapwe, born in Katau. He sails to Pohnpei with 333 warriors and defeats the last Saudeleur, Saudemwohl, who flees to a river and turns into a fish. Isokelekel founds a new order with chiefly titles (probably 16th/17th c.).

5. Rafts floated across the reef at high tide, ramps of palm trunks, levers, ropes of plant fibre, many generations and hundreds of people. Threatened by mangroves in the canals, silt and collapsing walls (on the World Heritage in Danger list since 2016).

Answer C

Correct numbers from top to bottom: 4 – 7 – 1 – 6 – 2 – 8 – 3 – 5

Notes on C, D and E

C follows the video. Discussion point: the legend tells the story of power, research supplies the data (around 1200, about 750,000 t of stone, pillars from several places on the island).

D1: The Saudeleur demand more and more tribute and become cruel; a god turns against them and his son overthrows them. Message: abuse of power has consequences; Isokelekel's titles still exist today. D2: Gaps in knowledge get filled with fantasy; there is no evidence at all for Mu. Checking: sources, finds, dating, experts, contradictions.

E: Stones – magic, flying (sometimes a dragon) | rafts at high tide, ramps, levers, ropes, human muscle. Builders – the twins Olisihpa/Olosohpa, for an altar | a ruling elite (Saudeleur) as a seat of power, worship and burial (royal tombs from c. 1200). Time – apparently quick, by magic | unknown, probably generations or centuries.

Content note and age

Recommended from age 12. Oppression, cruel rulers and a war are only mentioned, not shown. Many people on Pohnpei still regard Nan Madol as a sacred place; please treat it with respect.

Background: oral tradition of Pohnpei, UNESCO World Heritage since 2016 (also “in danger”), coral dating beneath Nandauwas (2016 study), 20th-century Mu theory without evidence.

The narrator's voice and the illustrations in the video are AI-generated; the script follows the established tradition. You are welcome to copy and share this worksheet for classroom use.

Like this material? Please subscribe to the channel.
Subscribing is free and helps “Myths and Legends You've Truly Never Heard Of” a lot: enough subscribers are what keep this material free and let it grow with new episodes and worksheets every week. Scan the QR code or visit: youtube.com/@mythsandlegendsyouvetrulynever