Nan Madol – the City of Flying Stones

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



Watch the video
youtu.be/D-s7oJMLrSM

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

A · Before watching

1. Imagine you had to move a stone weighing several tons across the sea – with no machines, no metal tools and no wheel. How would you try to do it?

B · While watching

1. Where is Nan Madol, what does its name mean, and what are its walls made of?

2. Who are Olisihpa and Olosohpa, and how is Nan Madol built according to the legend?

3. Who were the Saudeleur? Why did the people of Pohnpei have to bring them tribute?

4. Who is Isokelekel, and how does the rule of the Saudeleur end?

5. How do most archaeologists think the stones were moved, and why is Nan Madol in danger today?

Useful words

reef	Riff	raft	Floß
pillar	Säule	tide	Gezeiten, Flut
sorcerer	Zauberer	evidence	Beweis, Beleg
tribute	Tribut, Abgabe	to collapse	einstürzen

C · Put the story in order

Number the events from 1 to 8 in the order they happen in the video.

	The thunder god Nahnsapwe flees to Katau and fathers Isokelekel.
	A study dates coral beneath the burial enclosure Nandauwas to around the year 1200.
	The twins Olisihpa and Olosohpa arrive from Katau across the sea.
	The last inhabitants leave Nan Madol, and the walls become overgrown.
	Through magic, the stone pillars fly to the reef and lock together into walls.
	In 2016, Nan Madol becomes a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is listed as in danger.
	Olosohpa becomes the first Saudeleur and rules the whole island.
	Isokelekel defeats the last Saudeleur, who turns into a fish.

D · Think and discuss

1. The legend explains not only a building but also “what happens when rulers take too much”. Explain this message using the story of the Saudeleur and Isokelekel.

2. In the 20th century, some writers claimed Nan Madol was part of a sunken continent called Mu. Why do theories like this appear exactly where knowledge is missing? How can you check whether an explanation is backed by evidence?

E · Legend or research?

Write down the answer the legend gives and the answer research gives to each question.

	What does the legend say?	What does research say?
How did the stones get to the reef?		
Who had Nan Madol built, and why?		
How long did the building take?		

F · Get creative

1. You are a tour guide on Pohnpei, taking a group by canoe through the canals of Nan Madol. Write your talk in your exercise book (about 8–10 sentences). Include the legend, at least two facts from research and a request to visitors explaining why they should treat the place with respect.