

The search for the lost city of El Dorado

For centuries many different explorers have searched for the lost city of El Dorado in the Amazonian jungle. *El Dorado* in Spanish means 'the Golden One'. Some explorers claim to have had success in discovering lost civilisations in the Amazon jungle. Each time though it beguiled them, leading many to their deaths. Between 1519 and 1540 Spanish explorers first hit upon the idea of a golden city somewhere in the Amazon jungle. In 1519, Hernan Cortes and his soldiers discovered the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, in Mexico. In the 1530s, Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire, in what is now Peru. Since then the European imagination has never released its hold on this idea. In 1753, a Portuguese *bandeirante* – a soldier of fortune – emerged from the Amazon jungle saying he had seen the ruins of an ancient city from a mountain top. The *bandeirante* wrote, "The ruins well showed the size and grandeur which must have been there and how populous and opulent it had been in the age in which it flourished."

Just before the Great War, a British explorer, with a huge bushy moustache, Colonel Percy Fawcett read the *bandeirante's* report. He was fascinated by it. As he prepared maps to look for this lost city war intervened. In 1920, the Colonel, who by now worked for the Royal Geographical Society led a shambolic mission to find this lost city. Dismissed as a crackpot at the time he was doing what explorers had spent 500 years hunting in vain for - the lost city of El Dorado. Ambushed by natives the eccentric Colonel returned from his abortive adventures still determined the lost city actually existed. He called it 'the City of Z'. Returning for more funds to the Royal Geographical Society he said there were 'the most remarkable relics of an ancient civilisation in the Amazon.' Unfortunately, he had his doubters who did not back him. Nearly destitute in 1925, he set off one last time to find 'the City of Z'. He was never seen again.

In 1927, the Royal Geographical Society declared him 'missing'. Two missions attempted to find him but were unsuccessful. Roll forward to today...and the eccentric Colonel and his lost city discovery is about to be made into a Hollywood movie starring Brad Pitt!

Part 2 – of this story follows... (see 15th March 2010)

Category: History / South America / Lost city
Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Lost City: What do you know about the lost city of El Dorado? Think of another lost city. Where is it? What do you know about it? Go round the room swapping details.

2. Geography: The Amazon: Where is the Amazon? What countries are in the Amazonian region? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

3. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self correct your work from page two - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - we need to do some work!

4. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. Vocabulary: Students now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. The article: Students look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) What does 'crackpot' mean?
- d) What does 'have his doubters' mean?

7. Let's tell a story: In pairs. Create a short story to tell your partner about Colonel Percy Fawcett and the 'the City of Z'.

The teacher will choose some pairs to retell their stories in front of the class.

8. Let's think! In pairs, think of five explorers, then add five things they discovered and where they discovered them? Write them below. Explain to the class why you chose these?

Five explorers	Five things they discovered	Where/When?
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

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9. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the Colonel.
- 2) What did the Colonel have on his face?
- 3) What is the name of the lost city?
- 4) How does Brad Pitt come into the story?
- 5) What does the Portuguese word *Bandeirante* mean?
- 6) What did the Portuguese Bandeirante say?

Student B

- 1) What happened in 1920?
- 2) What did the Colonel call his lost city?
- 3) What happened in 1927?
- 4) What happened in 1519?
- 5) What happened in the 1530s?
- 6) What have explorers spent 500 years doing?

10. Let's write! Spend five minutes writing a short article on: **A lost city**. Students might be asked to read their passage aloud.

11. Presentation: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation either on **El Dorado or the Amazon**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the strong and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

12. Let's think! In a group in a circle. A quick-fire session. The teacher asks the class, "**I love the Amazon because...**"

13. As an explorer in the Amazon... In pairs, think of three unusual things you might see in the Amazon and three dangers you may face.

	Things you might see	Dangers
1		1
2		2
3		3

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

14. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) El Dorado _____
- b) The eccentric Colonel _____
- c) 'The City of Z' _____

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DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Have you ever met anyone eccentric like the Colonel?
- 3) Have you ever heard of Colonel Percy Fawcett before?
- 4) What do you think of the Colonel?
- 5) Do you think the Colonel actually found the lost city of El Dorado?
- 6) What do you think of Brad Pitt?
- 7) Do you think Brad Pitt could be the new Indiana Jones?
- 8) What do you think happened to the Colonel?
- 9) Why do you think some people in the Royal Geographical Society in the 1920s disbelieved him?
- 10) Was the Colonel ahead of his time?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Why has it been so difficult to discover the lost city of El Dorado?
- 3) Do you know of any other explorers who have searched for lost cities in the Amazon?
- 4) What do you know about the Aztec's?
- 5) What do you know about the Inca Empire?
- 6) What do you think of the Spanish explorers who went in search of lost worlds and discovered new civilisations?
- 7) What does '*the golden one*' mean in your language?
- 8) What do you now know about the Lost City of Z?
- 9) What would you like to discover?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's brainstorm! Search for a lost city

Allow 10-20 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

You are about to set off on an adventure together. You are going to discover a lost city! Brainstorm some ideas about how you will do this? Choose a spokesperson who can present your ideas to the class at the end of your preparation. Present it visually or use the board etc... Try to be imaginative!

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Action plan – Three things at the top of your 'to do' list |
| 2 | Where is your lost city located? |
| 3 | How will you go about finding it |
| 4 | What difficulties might you encounter? |
| 5 | How will you raise the money to pay for the trip? |
| 6 | What you will take with you? |
| 7 | What is the name of your discovered city? |

The teacher can moderate the session

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The search for the lost city of El Dorado

For centuries many different explorers have searched for the lost city of El Dorado in the Amazonian jungle. *El Dorado* in Spanish means 'the Golden One'. Some _____ claim to have had success in discovering lost civilisations in the Amazon _____. Each time though it beguiled them, leading many to their deaths. Between 1519 and 1540 _____ explorers first hit upon the idea of a golden city somewhere in the _____ jungle. In 1519, Hernan Cortes and his soldiers discovered the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, in Mexico. In the 1530s, Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire, in what is now Peru.

Since then the European _____ has never released its hold on this idea. In 1753, a Portuguese *bandeirante* – a soldier of fortune – emerged from the Amazon jungle saying he had seen the _____ of an _____ city from a mountain top. The *bandeirante* wrote, "The ruins well showed the size and grandeur which must have been there and how populous and _____ it had been in the age in which it flourished."

Just before the Great War, a British explorer, with a huge bushy _____, Colonel Percy Fawcett read the *bandeirante's* report. He was fascinated by it. As he prepared _____ to look for this lost city war intervened. In 1920, the _____, who by now worked for the Royal Geographical Society led a shambolic mission to find this lost city. Dismissed as a _____ at the time he was doing what explorers had spent 500 years hunting in vain for - the lost city of El Dorado.

Ambushed by _____ the _____ Colonel returned from his abortive adventures still determined the lost city actually existed. He called it 'the City of Z'. Returning for more funds to the Royal Geographical Society he said there were 'the most remarkable _____ of an ancient civilisation in the Amazon.' Unfortunately, he had his doubters who did not back him. Nearly _____ in 1925, he set off one last time to find 'the City of Z'. He was never seen again.

ancient

explorers

ruins

imagination

opulent

jungle

Amazon

Spanish

destitute

eccentric

moustache

relics

crackpot

maps

natives

Colonel

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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For centuries many _____ have searched for the lost city of El Dorado in the Amazonian jungle. *El Dorado* in Spanish means 'the Golden One'. Some explorers claim _____ in discovering lost civilisations in the Amazon jungle. Each time though it beguiled them, leading many to their deaths. Between 1519 and 1540 Spanish explorers first hit upon the _____ somewhere in the Amazon jungle. In 1519, Hernan Cortes and his soldiers discovered the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, in Mexico. In the 1530s, Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire, in what is now Peru.

Since then the _____ has never released its hold on this idea. In 1753, a Portuguese *bandeirante* – a soldier of fortune – emerged from the Amazon jungle saying _____ of an ancient city from a mountain top. The *bandeirante* wrote, "The ruins well showed the size and grandeur which _____ and how populous and opulent it had been in the age in which it flourished."

Just before the Great War, _____, with a huge bushy moustache, Colonel Percy Fawcett read the *bandeirante's* report. He was fascinated by it. As he prepared maps to look for this lost city war intervened. In 1920, the Colonel, _____ for the Royal Geographical Society led a shambolic mission to find this lost city. Dismissed _____ time he was doing what explorers had spent 500 years hunting in vain for - the lost city of El Dorado.

Ambushed by natives the _____ returned from his abortive adventures still determined the lost city actually existed. He called it 'the City of Z'. Returning _____ the Royal Geographical Society he said there were 'the most remarkable relics of an ancient civilisation in the Amazon.' Unfortunately, _____ who did not back him. Nearly destitute in 1925, he set off one last time to find 'the City of Z'. He was never seen again.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The search for the lost city of El Dorado

For centuries (1)___ different explorers have searched for the lost city of El Dorado in the Amazonian jungle. *El Dorado* in Spanish means 'the Golden One'. (2)___ explorers claim to have had success in discovering lost civilisations in the Amazon jungle. Each time though it beguiled (3)___, leading many to their deaths. Between 1519 and 1540 Spanish explorers first hit upon the idea of a golden city somewhere in the Amazon jungle. In 1519, Hernan Cortes and his soldiers discovered the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, in Mexico. In the 1530s, Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire, in (4)___ is now Peru.

(5)___ then the European imagination has never released its hold on (6)___ idea. In 1753, a Portuguese *bandeirante* – a soldier of fortune – emerged from the Amazon jungle saying he had seen the ruins of an ancient city from a mountain top. The *bandeirante* wrote, "The ruins well showed the size and grandeur which (7)___ have been there and how populous and opulent it had been in the age in (8)___ it flourished."

Just before the Great War, a British explorer, with a huge bushy moustache, Colonel Percy Fawcett read the *bandeirante's* report. (1)___ was fascinated by it. (2)___ he prepared maps to look for this lost city war intervened. In 1920, the Colonel, who by now worked for the Royal Geographical Society led a shambolic mission to find this lost city. Dismissed as a crackpot at the time he was doing what explorers had spent 500 years hunting in vain for - the lost city of El Dorado.

Ambushed (3)___ natives the eccentric Colonel returned from his abortive adventures still determined the lost city actually existed. He called (4)___ 'the City of Z'. Returning (5)___ more funds to the Royal Geographical Society he said there were 'the most remarkable relics of an ancient civilisation in the Amazon.' Unfortunately, he had (6)___ doubters (7)___ did not back (8)___ . Nearly destitute in 1925, he set off one last time to find 'the City of Z'. He was never seen again.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words, which are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	eccentric	11	beguiled
2	imagination	12	moustache
3	opulent	13	different
4	civilisations	14	Amazon
5	bushy	15	destitute
6	crackpot	16	unsuccessful
7	abortive	17	discovery
8	ancient	18	unfortunately
9	Hollywood	19	Portuguese
10	centuries	20	European

LINKS http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazon_Basin

<http://www.mnn.com/technology/research-innovations/stories/el-dorado-lost-city-found-using-google-earth>

<http://www.mnn.com/technology/research-innovations/stories/el-dorado-lost-city-found-using-google-earth>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/01/books/review/Cohen-t.html>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: The search for the lost city of El Dorado: For centuries many different explorers have searched for the lost city of El Dorado in the Amazonian jungle. *El Dorado* in Spanish means 'the Golden One'. Some **explorers** claim to have had success in discovering lost civilisations in the Amazon **jungle**. Each time though it beguiled them, leading many to their deaths. Between 1519 and 1540 **Spanish** explorers first hit upon the idea of a golden city somewhere in the **Amazon** jungle. In 1519, Hernan Cortes and his soldiers discovered the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan, in Mexico. In the 1530s, Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca Empire, in what is now Peru. Since then the European **imagination** has never released its hold on this idea. In 1753, a Portuguese *bandeirante* – a soldier of fortune – emerged from the Amazon jungle saying he had seen the **ruins** of an **ancient** city from a mountain top. The *bandeirante* wrote, "The ruins well showed the size and grandeur which must have been there and how populous and **opulent** it had been in the age in which it flourished." Just before the Great War, a British explorer, with a huge bushy **moustache**, Colonel Percy Fawcett read the *bandeirante's* report. He was fascinated by it. As he prepared **maps** to look for this lost city war intervened. In 1920, the **Colonel**, who by now worked for the Royal Geographical Society led a shambolic mission to find this lost city. Dismissed as a **crackpot** at the time he was doing what explorers had spent 500 years hunting in vain for - the lost city of El Dorado. Ambushed by **natives** the **eccentric** Colonel returned from his abortive adventures still determined the lost city actually existed. He called it 'the City of Z'. Returning for more funds to the Royal Geographical Society he said there were 'the most remarkable **relics** of an ancient civilisation in the Amazon.' Unfortunately, he had his doubters who did not back him. Nearly **destitute** in 1925, he set off one last time to find 'the City of Z'. He was never seen again.

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