

Where Is Amelia Earhart?

Three Theories

49 *by John Roach*

Amelia Earhart, the first woman to fly solo ____ the Atlantic Ocean, was attempting a round-the-world ____ in 1937. She planned to land on the tiny Pacific Ocean island of Howland, just ____ of the equator. She never ____. Exactly what happened to her and her navigator,[1] Fred Noonan, is ____ one of aviation's greatest mysteries. Researchers have spent millions of dollars investigating the case, and several books ____ been published that look at the different theories.

The official US opinion is that Earhart ran out of fuel and crashed in the Pacific Ocean. The radio records from a US ____ Guard ship suggest that she must have been near Howland when contact was ____.

Another theory says that Earhart could have ____ and later died on a different island, called Nikumaroro. Nobody ____ there.

And another theory says she was ____ while on a secret mission to the Japanese-controlled Marshall ____ in the North Pacific, then eventually returned to the USA with a new identity.

Lost and found?
The missing pilot

50

by Ker Than

Amelia Earhart's dried saliva[2] could help solve the mystery of the aviator's 1937 disappearance. Scientists plan to create a genetic profile by taking samples of her DNA from letters she wrote. This could then be used to test recent suggestions that a bone found on the South Pacific island of Nikumaroro is Earhart's.

Justin Long is a Canadian whose family is financing part of the DNA project. He makes the point that at the moment, anyone who finds pieces of bones can say that they are Amelia Earhart's remains. According to Long, Earhart's letters are the only existing items that are definitely hers and that might contain her DNA. The remains of Earhart, her navigator Noonan, and their twin-engine plane were never found. But in 2009, researchers discovered a piece of bone on Nikumaroro, which they believed might have been from one of Earhart's fingers. However, some scientists have suggested that the Nikumaroro bone isn't human at all but may be from a turtle.

The new Earhart DNA project will be organized by Dongya Yang, a genetic archeologist at Simon Fraser University in Canada. Yang will work on four letters Earhart wrote to her family. It is believed that Earhart must have sealed[3] the envelopes herself.

However, geneticist Brenna Henn of Stanford University, USA, said she knows of no other case where DNA has been collected from old letters. The problem is that the envelopes probably don't contain much DNA. The project needs a big sample to distinguish between Earhart's DNA and that of other living people, because about 99 percent of the genome[4] is identical among all humans. To make sure that the DNA from the letters belonged to Earhart, the team will compare it to DNA from Earhart's relatives who are still alive and also DNA extracted from another letter, written by Earhart's sister.

[1] **navigator** (n) /ˈnævɪˌgeɪtər/ the person who plans the direction of a plane or ship
[2] **saliva** (n) /səˈlaɪvə/ the liquid in your mouth
[3] **sealed** (adj) /siːld/ closed safely so that it's hard to open
[4] **genome** (n) /ˈdʒiːnəʊm/ the genetic information of each living thing

Reading

1 Work in pairs. Look at the photo and the title *Where is Amelia Earhart?* Discuss these statements. Which of them do you think could be true?

1 Amelia Earhart was a famous pilot.
2 She flew across the Atlantic Ocean.
3 In the photo, she's just landed her plane.
4 She lived until she was one hundred years old.

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3 Work in pairs. Read the second article. Answer the questions.

1 What is the theory talked about in the article?
2 Which modern scientific technique might give an answer to the Earhart mystery?
3 If the new project is successful, what will it prove?
4 What is the biggest problem for the researchers on the new project?

Critical thinking speculation or fact?

9 Read the definitions. Then decide if the sentences from the articles report speculation (S) or fact (F).

Speculation is having a theory or guessing about something.
Facts are items of information that we know to be true.

1	Amelia Earhart [...] was attempting a round-the-world flight in 1937.	S	F
2	Earhart could have landed on a different island.	S	F
3	About 99 percent of the genome is identical among all humans.	S	F

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