Part 6

You are going to read an article about some ancient ships discovered in the Black Sea. Six sentences have been removed from the article. Choose from the sentences **A–G** the one which fits each gap (**37–42**). There is one extra sentence which you do not need to use.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

Ancient ships in the Black Sea

In 2016, an international team of researchers from the University of Southampton in the UK made an amazing discovery in the Black Sea – the sea between Eastern Europe and Western Asia. The goal of their expedition had been to map the sea floor and study the prehistoric landscapes, which were flooded during the last ice age. To their surprise, they came across perfectly preserved shipwrecks – ships that had sunk to the bottom of the sea a long time ago.

Many of the 41 wrecks they found were already known about from historical sources. **37** They were dispersed across roughly 2,000 square kilometres and were discovered during a month-long survey conducted by the scientists aboard the research ship, Stril Explorer. The ships, which were lying between 150 and 2,200 metres beneath the surface of the water, were in such perfect condition that researchers could make out individual rope coils, rudders, pots and wooden decorative elements. Even marks made by tools on specific planks were visible.

The oldest ship found dates back to the late 800s when the region was part of the Byzantine Empire. There are also numerous Ottoman vessels from the 16th to the 18th centuries as well as a few from the 19th century. **38** It turned out to be the remains of a 14th century medieval Italian vessel, dating from the days of Marco Polo, the famous explorer from Venice.

Images of the sunken ships were captured by high resolution 3D cameras. **39** Information from the pictures taken gave them an idea of each ship's starting port and also where it was probably heading. Because the crafts were found quite far out to sea, experts believed they were merchant trading ships travelling over great distances.

Finding such well-preserved wrecks is a very rare occurrence, as wood and rope usually break down rapidly in saltwater. **40** It was once a freshwater lake, although that changed about 12,000 years ago, at the end of the last ice age. As temperatures rose, they caused water levels in the nearby Mediterranean Sea to rise, and saltwater began entering the lake.

As a result, the Black Sea is now fed by saltwater, as well as freshwater from rivers. The two types of water have different amounts of salt in them, creating distinct regions of water. The upper layer, with less salt in it, contains oxygen, while the water that lies 150 metres below the surface contains none. Oxygen breaks down natural materials, so without it, things like ropes and wood disintegrate at a much slower rate. Also, the inhospitable environment means there are no tiny animals to feed on the materials. **41**

Given that the Black Sea was the site of most of the ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Empire's colonial and commercial activities, marine archaeologists say the discovery provided interesting information about trading habits and community life during those times. **42** In fact most ships were merchant transports carrying goods like grain, timber and other commodities.

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A However, that didn't happen in this case because the Black Sea is a little different from other seas.

B Nevertheless, they were able to use the best technology available to find them.

C While these ships were interesting, there was one from a different period which was particularly exciting.

D Although learning more about such things makes the wrecks historically valuable, no-one ever expected to find any treasure.

E However, none of them had ever been seen before.

F These factors, taken together, explain why the ships had been so well preserved.

G Marine archaeologists had fitted these onto remotely operated underwater vehicles.

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