

Oldest Message in a Bottle Found in Australia

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Category : Human Interest

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **stumble upon** / ‘stʌm bəl ə’pʊn, ə’pʊn / (idiom) – to find something unintentionally
Example: I **stumbled upon** a unique stone while walking along the beach.
- 2. **decipher** / dɪ’saɪ fər / (v) – to understand the meaning of something that is unclear
Example: His bad handwriting is hard to **decipher**.
- 3. **current** / ‘kʌr ənt / (n) – the natural movement of something that flows
Example: The ocean’s strong **currents** make it dangerous to sail.
- 4. **recover** / rɪ’kʌv ə / (v) – to get back something that was lost
Example: We need to **recover** the keys that we lost in the park.
- 5. **in hopes of (something)** / ɪn hoʊps ʌv / (idiom) – with the goal of
Example: I am sailing for 90 days **in hopes of** studying marine life better.

Article

Read the text below.

A woman found a 132-year-old message in a bottle, which was thrown into the Indian Ocean, in an Australian shore.

Tonya Illman, a photographer, **stumbled upon** the bottle while strolling along the beach on Wedge Island in January. Not noticing the paper inside, she decided to bring the bottle home and use it as decoration. Illman knew about the paper only after her son’s girlfriend discovered it. After drying the paper in an oven, they were able to **decipher** the writing.

Illman then took the note to the Western Australian Museum and found that the bottle containing it was thrown from a German vessel in the 19th century. The bottle was thrown into the ocean for an experiment that studied ocean **currents**. The captain’s journal entry, which dated June 12, 1886, even contained an account of throwing the bottle into the ocean.

The note was meant to be filled out by the finder with details about when and where the bottle was **recovered**. An instruction from the note also asked the finder to take it to the German Naval Observatory in Hamburg or to the closest German embassy.

Though now considered the oldest, the message in a bottle found in Australia is not the first of its kind. In 2015, a German postal worker found a 108-year-old message in a bottle with similar instructions to send it to a certain address. The note was in English, German, and Dutch. The finder was able to mail it to the given address.

This note was recognized as one of scientist George Parker Bidder’s bottles. In 1906, Bidder threw 1,000 bottles into the North Sea **in hopes of** also studying the patterns of ocean currents.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- If you found a message in the bottle, what would you do with it (e.g. follow its instructions, sell it)?

- If you had to create a message in a bottle, what would you write? Give details.

Discussion B

- Do you think that it is still effective to study ocean currents using the “message in a bottle” method? Why or why not?

- Why do you think studying ocean currents is important? Explain.

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