mystery science

Grades K-5
Mini-Lesson: “Is the lost city of Atlantis real?”

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

VIDEO 1

Hi, it's Danni. Growing up, my favorite fairy tale stories were about mermaids. I loved imagining what it would be like to live underwater. So, I decided to be a mermaid. Well, sort of. This is my mermaid tail. It's special swim gear that fits over my feet and legs. To swim in it, you have to move your body sort of like a dolphin. Someone named Easton is curious about an underwater story from a really long time ago. Let's give Easton a call now.

[Video Call]

- Hi, Danni!

- Hi, Easton!

- I have a question for you. Is the lost city of Atlantis real?

- Oh, that's a great question.

If the name Atlantis sounds familiar to you, you may have heard it in a movie like *Aquaman*, where Atlantis is shown as a high-tech underwater kingdom. Atlantis appears in lots of other stories, too. Depending on the story you know, Atlantis might make you think of an underwater palace with mermaids or a city where sea creatures live. But if you were a kid in ancient Greece more than two thousand years ago, you might have heard a different story about Atlantis. In the original version, Atlantis is a huge island surrounded by the sea. It's more like a country than it is

a single city, and its leaders are rich and powerful. But then, disaster strikes: an earthquake shakes the island, giant waves crash down, and all of Atlantis sinks into the ocean. It's a dramatic story with a scary ending, but is this story of Atlantis a true story? Many people have wondered that over the years. Some have even searched the ocean, hoping to find Atlantis. I'm curious, what do you think? Do you think the story of Atlantis could be true?

VIDEO 2

I'm not sure how you answered, but picture this: You're a pilot flying over the Mediterranean Sea. That's here on a map. Looking down from the airplane, you notice strange shapes under the water. See all those straight lines and rectangles? It looks a bit like when you fly over a city and see all the streets and buildings below. The pilot who noticed this spot knew that it was special. And once people were able to explore there, they discovered surprising things like sculptures and colorful tiles and sections of walls and streets. The pilot had accidentally found an ancient city that sank underwater. Incredible, right? But this is not Atlantis. This is a part of an ancient town called Bahia. Today, parts of the ancient town still exist on land next to a modern city, and writings from the past tell us what it was like thousands of years ago. Back then, it was a popular place for vacations, a sunny spot next to the sea. But over time, that changed. Now, half of Bahia is under the sea. Scientists are studying why. They've discovered lots of activity from nearby volcanoes. You know that volcanoes can have big eruptions. See that flowy orange stuff? It's made from rocks so hot they actually melt. Above ground, we call this lava, but rocks can also melt and flow underground—that's called magma. When flowing magma starts to collect underground, it pushes up on the land above it. It actually changes the land. And when that magma flows out, the land changes again; it sinks down. That's what happened to the

ancient town. The land it was built on slowly started to sink. Over many years, some parts sank so much that they were lower than the sea, and the buildings and roads there ended up being beneath the waves. This is a unique place, but it's not the only ancient city discovered underwater. Across the Mediterranean Sea, explorers have made another remarkable find: parts of what may have been Queen Cleopatra's palace. The palace once stood on a small island, but more than a thousand years ago, strong earthquakes likely shook the land, which may have created crushing waves that caused the island to sink down under the sea. Even though there were stories about the palace sinking, no one knew exactly where it ended up. It took years of searching before possible signs of the lost island were found. So, what about Atlantis? Has it been found too? Well, the answer is no, but that's because Atlantis probably never existed. Most experts think Atlantis was a made-up place and its sinking was just a story. But that made-up story was likely inspired by real experiences with volcanoes, earthquakes, and floods. People living thousands of years ago knew these forces could change the land around them in powerful ways. Today, the story of Atlantis inspires people in new ways, imagining what a life underwater might be like. So, in summary, the lost city of Atlantis is probably not a real place, but there are real ancient places that experienced real natural disasters. Some lost cities have even been rediscovered underwater. Today, we still live with the challenges of natural disasters. To help us be more prepared, some scientists study volcanoes, earthquakes, and other natural forces. Scientists are also learning more about how people lived in ancient places long before they sank. Maybe you'll join their investigation someday or even rediscover another lost city. That's all for this week's question. Thanks, Easton, for asking it.