

Real Life Mystery: Oak Island

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Looking for a twist on mysteries for your teen programming? Why not share this story of the real mystery surrounding Oak Island? Discuss the different theories about the treasure with teens, asking them to evaluate them, and see if they have any theories of their own.

Background

Pirate treasure, deadly curses, and the Holy Grail all sound like things straight from the pages of a great adventure novel. But, what if someone told you there was a place where those stories were a reality?

Oak Island, a small island in Mahone Bay off the coast of South Shore Nova Scotia, may be a real life treasure island. The island has been the subject of myth and speculation for ages. For 200 years, amateur explorers have been scouring the island in hopes of uncovering buried treasure. Yet, the secrets of the island remain a mystery.

The First Treasure Hunt

One day in 1795, a teenage boy was out for a hike on Oak Island when he

stumbled upon something interesting: an oak tree with unusual markings and a hollowed out hole under the tree. Hearing tales of hidden pirate treasure and excited by the idea of discovering riches beyond his belief, the boy told two of his friends about the discovery; this began the first treasure hunt on the island (Neff, 2002). The three boys did not have the correct tools to dig very deep, so they recruited a crew to help. At 90 ft., the crew found a mysterious stone tablet with a code written on it. The tablet was later decoded, and found to say: "Forty feet below, two million pounds are buried" (Neff, 2002, p. 13). However, when the tablet was removed, the hole that had been dug flooded with sea water. Despite their best efforts, the crew was unable to prevent the flood. This site is now known as the money pit, and it is still the site where the search for Oak Island's treasure is taking place (Neff, 2002).

Theories

Even what is hidden on the island remains a mystery, and the theories on Oak Island's treasure are varied. One of the most notable theories is that the island contains treasure hidden by the

infamous pirate Captain Kidd or Blackbeard. Blackbeard often boasted that he hid his treasure “where none but Satan and myself can find it” (Blackbeard, n.d.). This certainly sounds like it could be the famous money pit. After all, if there is anything hidden on Oak Island, it must be well-hidden as no one has found it in the past 200 years. Captain Kidd claimed he hid his treasure on an island somewhere east of Boston (The Mystery Pit of Oak Island, 1998). Again, based on what Kidd said, it is possible Oak Island is the final resting place of his treasure. Other theories on what may be hidden on the island include Marie Antoinette’s missing jewels, a sunken Viking ship, a decoy for the real location of the treasure, or even a naturally occurring sinkhole.

Perhaps the most interesting theory about what is hidden on Oak Island is that it is the Holy Grail or the Ark of the Covenant, last believed to be in the possession of King Arthur and his Knights Templar. According to legend, in order for the Holy Grail to be uncovered, there need to be seven deaths. Thus far, six people have been killed on Oak Island while searching for treasure. In 1861, a steam pump exploded, killing one person.

Another man fell to his death, and in 1965, four men were killed when they drowned in the money pit (Neff, 2002). If the legend is true, one more person must be killed on Oak Island before the treasure can be uncovered

Conclusion

No one knows what is hidden deep within the soil of Oak Island, if anything is hidden there at all. However, one thing is clear: as long as there is the promise of uncovering buried treasure, there will be someone willing to look.

If you are interested in learning more about the mystery of Oak Island, check out *The Curse of Oak Island* on the History Channel.

References

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