



Moss Evidence Convicts Chicago Cemetery Grave Robbers

Description

The investigation into Burr Oak Cemetery revealed a troubling situation. Official records suggested space for 130,000 graves, but documents indicated that between 140,000 and 147,500 people were listed as buried there. Additionally, some sections of the cemetery had never been used for burials. As a result, the former cemetery director, Carolyn Towns, along with two other employees, faced criminal charges.

The illegal activities were discovered as the cemetery staff became careless. They even used heavy machinery to excavate graves, damaging remains in the process. Investigators recovered around 1,500 bones identified as belonging to at least 38 individuals. Reports estimate that between 200 and 400 graves had been desecrated. Among the disturbing findings was the casket of Emmett Till, which was found in a garage covered with debris. This casket has since been restored and is now displayed at the Smithsonian's Museum of African American History.

Prosecutors needed solid evidence to build their case. Beyond the skeletal remains, the FBI collected various samples, including broken branches and soil fragments for analysis. In 2009, the FBI sought expertise from museum specialist Robert von Konrat regarding some moss they had found buried beneath the remains. Identifying the moss species and determining its burial timeline would offer vital insights into the graves' disturbance.

Von Konrat explained that moss can remain biologically active, even when dried. By analysing the degradation of chlorophyll, a pigment essential for photosynthesis, researchers could estimate how long the moss had been buried. This analysis would support the investigation and establish a timeline of events.

Vocabulary List:

1. **Desecrated** /'dɛs.ɪ.kreɪ.tɪd/ (verb (past participle)): Treated a sacred place or object with violent disrespect; in this text graves or remains were damaged or violated.
2. **Excavate** /'ɛk.sə.veɪt/ (verb): To dig up or remove earth often with tools or machines to uncover something buried.
3. **Prosecutors** /'prɒs.ɪ.kju:.təz/ (noun (plural)): Lawyers who bring criminal charges and try to prove that someone committed a crime.
4. **Skeletal** /'skɛl.ɪ.təl/ (adjective): Relating to a skeleton or bones; here referring to remains made up of bone fragments.
5. **Chlorophyll** /'klɒ:.rə.fɪl/ (noun): The green pigment in plants and moss that allows them to use sunlight to make food (photosynthesis).
6. **Degradation** /,dɛg.rə'deɪ.ʃən/ (noun): The process of breaking down decaying or losing quality; in the article the breakdown of chlorophyll over time.



Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. How many graves did official records suggest were available at Burr Oak Cemetery?
Option: 120,000
Option: 130,000
Option: 140,000
Option: 150,000
2. How many people were estimated to be buried at Burr Oak Cemetery?
Option: 140,000 to 147,500
Option: 150,000 to 160,000
Option: 130,000 to 140,000
Option: 110,000 to 120,000
3. What did the cemetery staff use that resulted in damage to remains?
Option: Hand tools
Option: Heavy machinery
Option: Simple shovels
Option: Garden trowels
4. What was the estimated range of desecrated graves in the cemetery?
Option: 100 to 200 graves
Option: 200 to 400 graves
Option: 400 to 600 graves
Option: 600 to 800 graves
5. Where was Emmett Till's casket found?
Option: In a museum
Option: In a garage covered with debris
Option: In a cemetery
Option: In a storage unit
6. Who was consulted by the FBI regarding the moss found during the investigation?
Option: A lawyer



- Option: A scientist
- Option: Museum specialist Robert von Konrat
- Option: A cemetery worker

True-False

- 7. Carolyn Towns was the former cemetery director at Burr Oak Cemetery.
- 8. Investigators recovered around 2,000 bones during the investigation.
- 9. The casket of Emmett Till is now displayed at the Smithsonian's Museum of African American History.
- 10. The FBI did not collect any samples during their investigation.
- 11. Moss can remain biologically active even when it is dried.
- 12. The investigation began in 2010.

Gap-Fill

- 13. Official records suggested space for _____ graves at Burr Oak Cemetery.
- 14. The former cemetery director, Carolyn Towns, faced _____ charges.
- 15. Investigators recovered around 1,500 _____ identified as belonging to at least 38 individuals.
- 16. The FBI sought expertise regarding some _____ found buried beneath the remains.
- 17. The degradation of _____ is essential for estimating the burial timeline.
- 18. The casket of Emmett Till was found covered with _____ in a garage.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. 130,000 2. 140,000 to 147,500 3. Heavy machinery 4. 200 to 400 graves 5. In a garage covered with debris 6. Museum specialist Robert von Konrat

True-False: 7. True 8. False 9. True 10. False 11. True 12. False

Gap-Fill: 13. 130,000



14. criminal 15. bones 16. moss 17. chlorophyll 18. debris

Vocabulary quizzes

Multiple Choice (Select the Correct answer for each question.)

1. What do constellations primarily represent in the night sky?

- Option: Groups of stars
- Option: Planets
- Option: Galaxies
- Option: Comets

2. What is the main function of processors in a computer?

- Option: Storage
- Option: Processing data
- Option: Networking
- Option: Input

3. A terawatt is a unit of power equal to how many watts?

- Option: 1,000 watts
- Option: 1 million watts
- Option: 1 billion watts
- Option: 1 trillion watts

4. What is typically included in a proposal?

- Option: Decorative elements
- Option: Business strategies
- Option: Personal opinions
- Option: Random thoughts

5. What does thermal energy relate to?

- Option: Sound
- Option: Heat
- Option: Light
- Option: Electricity

6. What are propellants primarily used for?



- Option: Cooling engines
- Option: Creating thrust
- Option: Generating electricity
- Option: Storing fuel

7. Which of the following is a primary component of natural gas?

- Option: Ethane
- Option: Propane
- Option: Methane
- Option: Butane

8. What does thrust measure in a propulsion system?

- Option: Speed
- Option: Force
- Option: Weight
- Option: Distance

9. Cryogenic technology is most commonly used in which field?

- Option: Cooking
- Option: Space exploration
- Option: Fashion design
- Option: Agriculture

10. What is the benefit of reusable launch vehicles?

- Option: Increasing cost
- Option: Reducing waste
- Option: Limiting access
- Option: Increasing energy

Gap-Fill (Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

11. After the combustion process, the exhaust contained a significant amount of _____ .
12. The rocket's performance _____ expectations during the test flight.
13. The startup secured additional _____ to expand its operations.
14. The platform has different service levels, with each _____ offering unique features.
15. Many _____ supported the innovative project through crowdfunding.



16. The event offered _____ access to its VIP guests.
17. The team built significant _____ heading into the final stages of the project.
18. During the long trip, we had a three-hour _____ at the airport.
19. The company issued _____ for all employees attending the conference.
20. The documentary was _____ with subtitles for better understanding.

Matching Sentences (Match each definition to the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

21. Over the years, she gradually accumulated a vast knowledge of history.
22. The school's alumni reunion brought together graduates from all classes.
23. The event was designed to celebrate and honor military spouses.
24. The ancient temple was sadly desecrated by vandals.
25. Archaeologists planned to excavate the site for hidden artifacts.
26. The prosecutors presented strong evidence during the trial.
27. The skeletal remains were found in the abandoned building.
28. Plants use chlorophyll to absorb light for photosynthesis.
29. Environmental degradation can have severe impacts on biodiversity.
30. The city's proposal for a new park received public support.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. Groups of stars 2. Processing data 3. 1 trillion watts 4. Business strategies 5. Heat 6. Creating thrust 7. Methane 8. Force 9. Space exploration 10. Reducing waste

Gap-Fill: 11. soot 12. surpassed 13. funding 14. tier 15. backers 16. exclusive 17. momentum 18. Layover 19. Travel orders 20. Captioned

Matching sentence: 1. accumulated 2. reunion 3. spouses 4. desecrated 5. excavate 6. prosecutors 7. skeletal 8. chlorophyll 9. degradation 10. proposal



CATEGORY

1. Sci/Tech - LEVEL5

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2. ESL learning
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