



Moss Plays Key Role in Chicago Cemetery Robbery Conviction

Description

The investigation into Burr Oak Cemetery revealed serious issues with its records. Initially, the cemetery had space for 130,000 graves, but it listed between 140,000 and 147,500 people as buried there. Some areas of the cemetery had never been used for burials. Carolyn Towns, the cemetery's former director, and three employees faced charges for their roles in the scandal.

Authorities discovered that the individuals involved had become increasingly reckless in their actions, even using a backhoe to dig up older graves, which led to the destruction of countless bones. About 1,500 bones were recovered, and officials estimate that between 200 and 400 graves had been disturbed. Among the findings was the deteriorating casket of Emmett Till, which was found hidden in a garage behind the cemetery. This casket is now displayed at the Smithsonian's Museum of African American History.

To build their case, prosecutors needed solid evidence. The FBI collected not only skeletal remains but also broken branches and grass fragments for analysis. In 2009, the FBI contacted expert Dr. Von Konrat to help identify moss found buried with the remains. Understanding the moss's decay could establish when the remains were reburied, creating an important timeline.

Dr. Von Konrat explained that moss can retain activity even when preserved. By analysing the chlorophyll levels in control samples, the team could estimate the age of the moss found at the site, which would assist in proving the timeline of the grave disturbances.

Vocabulary List:

1. **Chlorophyll** /'klɒr.ə.fɪl/ (noun): The green pigment in plants and moss that helps them capture light for photosynthesis; scientists can measure its levels to estimate how fresh or decayed plant material is.
2. **Control samples** /'kɒn.trəʊ 'sæm.pəlz/ (noun phrase): Known or standard specimens kept for comparison in an experiment or analysis to help determine the age or condition of unknown samples.
3. **Skeletal** /'skel.i.təl/ (adjective): Relating to a skeleton or bones; used to describe remains that are mainly bones.
4. **Reburied** /,ri:'ber.id/ (verb (past participle)): Buried again after being dug up or moved; placed back into the ground.
5. **Backhoe** /'bæk,həʊ/ (noun): A large digging machine with a bucket on a two-part articulated arm used to dig holes or move earth.
6. **Prosecutors** /'prɒs.i.kju:.tərz/ (noun (plural)): Lawyers who represent the government in criminal cases and present evidence to try to prove that someone committed a crime.

Vocabulary quizzes



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

1. What is the primary function of chlorophyll in plants?
Option: Photosynthesis
Option: Respiration
Option: Nutrient absorption
Option: Water storage
2. What is the primary role of astronauts in a space mission?
Option: Drive the rocket
Option: Conduct research and experiments
Option: Develop software
Option: Build spacecraft
3. What is a meteorite?
Option: A glowing comet
Option: A space rock that lands on Earth
Option: An asteroid belt
Option: A satellite
4. What does high-resolution typically refer to in imaging?
Option: Low-quality images
Option: Detailed and clear images
Option: Black and white images
Option: Blurry images
5. Which term describes modern humans and their closest extinct relatives?
Option: Primate
Option: Hominin
Option: Anatomically modern human
Option: Neanderthal
6. Fossils provide evidence of what?
Option: Climate change
Option: Ancient life forms
Option: Soil composition
Option: Water sources
7. In archaeology what does reconstruction typically involve?
Option: Building new structures
Option: Restoring ancient artifacts
Option: Creating a visual model of past events



Option: Excavating new sites

8. What is the primary purpose of the Voyager spacecraft?

Option: To study Mars

Option: To explore the outer Solar System

Option: To orbit Earth

Option: To land on the Moon

9. What is a critical phase in a space mission that involves returning to Earth?

Option: Liftoff

Option: Launch

Option: Landing

Option: Docking

10. What is the primary goal of detecting in scientific research?

Option: Identifying unknown variables

Option: Acquiring data

Option: Measuring distances

Option: Collecting samples

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

11. In a criminal case _____ are responsible for presenting the case against the defendant.

12. A _____ is commonly used in construction sites to dig trenches and move soil.

13. A _____ orbits the Earth and collects various types of data for weather forecasting.

14. The _____ holds and protects the brain within the skull.

15. The students were _____ when they learned about their upcoming field trip to the space center.

16. The gold _____ found in the stream was worth a small fortune.

17. The space _____ aimed to explore the possibility of life on other planets.

18. Once the satellite was _____ it began transmitting data back to Earth.

19. In a scientific experiment _____ are used as benchmarks to compare with



experimental results.

20. The geologist examined the _____ to determine its age and composition.

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

21. The skull protects the brain and supports the structures of the face.
22. Plants use chlorophyll to absorb light energy for photosynthesis.
23. High-resolution images allow scientists to study details that are not visible in standard images.
24. The crew of the spacecraft will conduct research during their time in orbit.
25. The study of hominin fossils provides insight into human evolution.
26. Fossils can reveal information about ancient environments and life forms.
27. After the excavation the artifacts were carefully reburied to preserve their condition.
28. The mission to Mars aims to find signs of past life on the planet.
29. Detecting faint signals from space is crucial for astronomy research.
30. The landing of the spacecraft was successful marking a milestone in the mission.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. Photosynthesis 2. Conduct research and experiments 3. A space rock that lands on Earth 4. Detailed and clear images 5. Hominin 6. Ancient life forms 7. Creating a visual model of past events 8. To explore the outer Solar System 9. Landing 10. Acquiring data
Gap-Fill: 11. prosecutors 12. backhoe 13. satellite 14. braincase 15. excited 16. nugget 17. mission 18. operational 19. control samples 20. rock
Matching sentence: 1. skull 2. chlorophyll 3. high-resolution 4. crew 5. hominin 6. fossils 7. reburied 8. mission 9. detecting 10. landing

CATEGORY

- 1. Sci/Tech - LEVEL4

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