

## Missing Australian PM mystery solved

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**4 September, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Missing Australian PM mystery solved**

**BNE:** An intriguing political mystery that has been debated for four decades has finally been laid to rest. The disappearance of Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1967 fuelled all manner of wild and bizarre rumors. Mr. Holt, the then Australian premier, mysteriously vanished while swimming off the coast of the state of Victoria. Conspiracy theories abounded as his body failed to materialize after extensive search attempts. His disappearance was blamed on suicide, faked suicide so that he could live in Switzerland with his lover, a shark attack, a Chinese submarine rescuing the spy they had employed since 1929 and a CIA assassination plot because of his criticism of the Vietnam War.

Australian authorities concluded that Harold Holt accidentally drowned in heavy surf and that there was no real mystery or intrigue. It has taken this long to draw a conclusion because legislation has only recently been amended to allow coroners to make a ruling even when there is no body on which to perform an autopsy. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is sad that, over the years, all of these fanciful and unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should receive public ventilation, overshadow his life and require an explanation....Perhaps, in hindsight, there should have been an inquiry as it may have avoided the development of some of the unsubstantiated rumors and unusual theories."

## WARM-UPS

**1. CONSPIRACY THEORIES:** Talk about the following conspiracy theories with your partner(s):

- a. John F. Kennedy was assassinated by the CIA.
- b. Dutch flower growers assassinated Princess Diana to increase flower sales.
- c. Israelis organized the World Trade Center attacks in 2001.
- d. Elvis Presley faked his death and is still alive.
- e. Eurabia – the idea that the Islamic world is taking over Europe.
- f. The AIDS epidemic is a CIA conspiracy.
- g. The Apollo moon landing was a hoax.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Political mystery / debates / rumors / swimming / conspiracy theories / Switzerland / lovers / shark attacks / Chinese submarines / CIA plots / Vietnam War*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**3. SPECULATE:** Use the words in the “Chat” activity above to make your own predictions about the story in the article.

**4. MYSTERY:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “mystery”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. INTRIGUE:** The following people have suddenly disappeared. Despite a worldwide hunt to find them, they cannot be found. Discuss what might have happened with your partner(s). Change partners and share your ideas.

- a. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez
- b. Michael Jackson
- c. US President George W. Bush
- d. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe
- e. Rock singer and charity organizer Sir Bob Geldoff
- f. Your country’s leader
- g. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan
- h. Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. Australia's Prime Minister John Howard went missing for a week. | T / F |
| b. An Australian Prime Minister vanished while he was swimming.    | T / F |
| c. The body of the Prime Minister was recovered last week.         | T / F |
| d. Some people believe the Prime Minister was a Chinese spy.       | T / F |
| e. The Prime Minister was murdered by political opponents.         | T / F |
| f. The coroner cannot decide on the cause of death without a body. | T / F |
| g. The coroner said it was sad so many rumors spread.              | T / F |
| h. The coroner said an inquest should have happened years ago.     | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| a. intriguing      | retrospect  |
| b. laid to rest    | emerge      |
| c. premier         | altered     |
| d. materialize     | resolved    |
| e. plot            | postmortem  |
| f. amended         | conspiracy  |
| g. autopsy         | fascinating |
| h. ventilation     | unproven    |
| i. hindsight       | debate      |
| j. unsubstantiated | leader      |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| a. An intriguing                        | extensive search attempts |
| b. fuelled all manner of                | to draw a conclusion      |
| c. Conspiracy theories                  | assassination plot        |
| d. his body failed to materialize after | abounded                  |
| e. a CIA                                | recently been amended     |
| f. It has taken this long               | political mystery         |
| g. legislation has only                 | his life                  |
| h. perform                              | rumors                    |
| i. overshadow                           | wild and bizarre rumors   |
| j. unsubstantiated                      | an autopsy                |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Missing Australian PM mystery solved

**BNE:** An \_\_\_\_\_ political mystery that has been debated for four decades has finally been laid to rest. The disappearance of Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1967 \_\_\_\_\_ all manner of wild and bizarre rumors. Mr. Holt, the then Australian premier, mysteriously \_\_\_\_\_ while swimming off the coast of the state of Victoria. Conspiracy theories \_\_\_\_\_ as his body failed to materialize after extensive search attempts. His disappearance was \_\_\_\_\_ on suicide, \_\_\_\_\_ suicide so that he could live in Switzerland with his lover, a shark attack, a Chinese submarine \_\_\_\_\_ the spy they had employed since 1929 and a CIA assassination \_\_\_\_\_ because of his criticism of the Vietnam War.

Australian authorities \_\_\_\_\_ that Harold Holt accidentally drowned in heavy surf and that there was no real mystery or \_\_\_\_\_. It has taken this long to \_\_\_\_\_ a conclusion because legislation has only recently been amended to allow coroners to make a ruling even when there is no body on which to perform an \_\_\_\_\_. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is sad that, over the years, all of these \_\_\_\_\_ and unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should receive public ventilation, \_\_\_\_\_ his life and require an explanation....Perhaps, in \_\_\_\_\_, there should have been an inquiry as it may have avoided the development of some of the unsubstantiated \_\_\_\_\_ and unusual theories."

*faked*

*fuelled*

*plot*

*intriguing*

*abounded*

*rescuing*

*vanished*

*blamed*

*autopsy*

*intrigue*

*rumors*

*draw*

*overshadow*

*concluded*

*hindsight*

*fanciful*

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'lay' and 'rest'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "MYSTERY" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about mysteries and conspiracy theories.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| • political | • surf       |
| • fuelled   | • draw       |
| • coast     | • ruling     |
| • extensive | • autopsy    |
| • lover     | • overshadow |
| • plot      | • unusual    |

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What were your feelings after you read the article?
- d. Did you know anything about this story before you read the article?
- e. What do you think happened to Harold Holt?
- f. Are there any mysteries surrounding the political figures in your country?
- g. Have you heard any bizarre rumors recently?
- h. What's the latest gossip about your country's leaders?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Are there any unanswered questions about your country's government?
- d. Should it have taken so long for a verdict to be made about Harold Holt's death?
- e. What do you think Australia should now do to remember Mr. Holt?
- f. How possible is it that an Australian Prime Minister could be a Chinese spy?
- g. How possible is it that America's CIA might assassinate an Australian Prime Minister (or another country's leader)?
- h. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## SPEAKING

**MYSTERY:** In pairs / groups, create a mystery story about a famous person. Use the ideas in the left column to help you:

Who is the famous person?	
What happened?	
How?	
What mysterious object was left at the scene?	
What did the police say?	
What reasons might the person have for disappearing?	
What conspiracy theories are there?	
Other	

Change partners and tell each other your stories. Try to help each other make your stories more interesting and intriguing.

Return to your original partners and talk about how your story has changed.



## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### Missing Australian PM mystery solved

**BNE:** An \_\_\_\_\_ political mystery that has been debated for four decades has finally been \_\_\_\_\_. The disappearance of Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1967 \_\_\_\_\_ all manner of wild and bizarre rumors. Mr. Holt, the then Australian premier, mysteriously \_\_\_\_\_ while swimming off the coast of the state of Victoria. Conspiracy theories abounded as his body failed to \_\_\_\_\_ after extensive search attempts. His disappearance was blamed on suicide, \_\_\_\_\_ suicide so that he could live in Switzerland with his lover, a shark attack, a Chinese submarine rescuing the spy they had employed since 1929 and a CIA assassination \_\_\_\_\_ because of his criticism of the Vietnam War.

Australian authorities \_\_\_\_\_ that Harold Holt accidentally drowned in heavy surf and that there was no real mystery or \_\_\_\_\_. It has taken this long to draw a conclusion because legislation has only recently been \_\_\_\_\_ to allow coroners to make a ruling even when there is no body on which to perform an \_\_\_\_\_. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is sad that, over the years, all of these \_\_\_\_\_ and unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should receive public ventilation, overshadow his life and require an explanation....Perhaps, in \_\_\_\_\_, there should have been an inquiry as it may have avoided the development of some of the unsubstantiated rumors and unusual \_\_\_\_\_."

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on Harold Holt. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. NEWS REPORT:** Write a news report about someone who has mysteriously disappeared. Read your report to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

**4. CONSPIRACY THEORY:** Find a conspiracy theory and make a poster on it. Show the poster to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. F      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| a. intriguing      | fascinating |
| b. laid to rest    | resolved    |
| c. premier         | leader      |
| d. materialize     | emerge      |
| e. plot            | conspiracy  |
| f. amended         | altered     |
| g. autopsy         | postmortem  |
| h. ventilation     | debate      |
| i. hindsight       | retrospect  |
| j. unsubstantiated | unproven    |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| a. An intriguing                        | political mystery         |
| b. fuelled all manner of                | wild and bizarre rumors   |
| c. Conspiracy theories                  | abounded                  |
| d. his body failed to materialize after | extensive search attempts |
| e. a CIA                                | assassination plot        |
| f. It has taken this long               | to draw a conclusion      |
| g. legislation has only                 | recently been amended     |
| h. perform                              | an autopsy                |
| i. overshadow                           | his life                  |
| j. unsubstantiated                      | rumors                    |

### GAP FILL:

#### Missing Australian PM mystery solved

**BNE:** An **intriguing** political mystery that has been debated for four decades has finally been laid to rest. The disappearance of Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1967 **fuelled** all manner of wild and bizarre rumors. Mr. Holt, the then Australian premier, mysteriously **vanished** while swimming off the coast of the state of Victoria. Conspiracy theories **abounded** as his body failed to materialize after extensive search attempts. His disappearance was **blamed** on suicide, **faked** suicide so that he could live in Switzerland with his lover, a shark attack, a Chinese submarine **rescuing** the spy they had employed since 1929 and a CIA assassination **plot** because of his criticism of the Vietnam War.

Australian authorities **concluded** that Harold Holt accidentally drowned in heavy surf and that there was no real mystery or **intrigue**. It has taken this long to **draw** a conclusion because legislation has only recently been amended to allow coroners to make a ruling even when there is no body on which to perform an **autopsy**. Coroner Graeme Johnstone said: "It is sad that, over the years, all of these **fanciful** and unusual theories about Mr. Holt's disappearance should receive public ventilation, **overshadow** his life and require an explanation....Perhaps, in **hindsight**, there should have been an inquiry as it may have avoided the development of some of the unsubstantiated **rumors** and unusual theories."