

High Intermediate 1
Unit 1 Reading
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Who Really Discovered America?

Was Columbus really the first explorer to discover the Americas? The great Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl didn't think so. He believed that ancient people were able to build boats that could cross oceans.

Columbus = Christopher Columbus

explorer = a person who tries to discover new lands

the Americas = North America + South America

Norwegian = from Norway

ancient = very old; related to the old times

To test his ideas, Heyerdahl decided to build a copy of the reed boats pictured in ancient Egyptian paintings and sail across the Atlantic from North Africa to Barbados. Heyerdahl's team also copied ancient Middle Eastern pots and filled them with enough food for their journey—dried fish, honey, oil, some eggs and nuts, and a little fresh fruit. Ra, the expedition's boat, carried an international group including a Norwegian, an Egyptian, an Italian, a Mexican, and a Chadian.

sail = travel by ship

Barbados is an island country in the West Indies, in the Caribbean region of the Americas, and the most easterly of the Caribbean Islands.

reed = a kind of long plant that grows along rivers

journey = trip

expedition = a long journey or voyage undertaken for a specific purpose

On May 25, 1969, Ra left Safi in Morocco and headed across the widest part of the Atlantic. Ra fell apart just before it reached Barbados, but everyone survived and wanted to try again.

May 25 = May Twenty-Fifth

head = move

wide ≠ narrow

fall apart = be destroyed

just = exactly

survive = stay alive

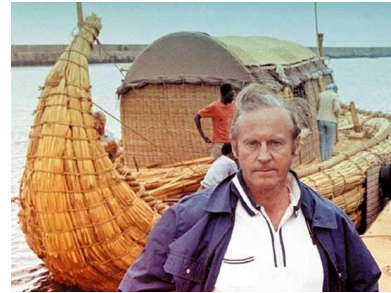
On May 17, 1970, Ra II, sailing under the flag of the United Nations, successfully crossed the Atlantic in 57 days. The expedition proved that ancient civilizations had enough skill to reach the Americas long before Columbus did.

May 17 = May Seventeenth

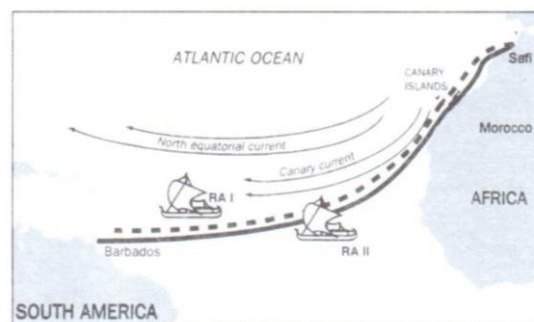
civilization = human culture and achievements



The Flag of the United Nations



Thor Heyerdahl



Full Text:

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Sample Summary:

Thor Heyerdahl, a Norwegian explorer, believed that ancient people could build boats capable of crossing oceans. To test this, he built a reed boat like those in ancient Egyptian paintings and sailed from North Africa to Barbados. His first boat, Ra, fell apart near Barbados in 1969, but his second boat, Ra II, successfully crossed the Atlantic in 1970. This journey showed that ancient civilizations might have reached the Americas long before Columbus.

Source:

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