

Comprehension Passage

During a routine archaeological dig beneath Barcelona's former fish market, Mercat del Peix, experts uncovered a rare and fragile maritime relic—a medieval wooden ship dating back to the 15th or 16th century. The vessel, named provisionally as *Ciutadella I*, was found over 18 feet below sea level, buried under centuries of sediment. Measuring approximately 30 feet in length and 10 feet in width, the ship's structure consists of about 30 ribs joined together with both iron and wooden fastenings.

Lead archaeologist Santi Palacios, representing the cultural heritage group Arqueòlegs.cat, described the discovery as “extraordinary.” Speaking at a press conference, he emphasized that such well-preserved maritime finds are extremely uncommon and can provide valuable insight into the operations of Barcelona's historic port. The ship, classified as a “derelict” in marine archaeological terminology, was likely abandoned and gradually submerged as the coastline evolved.

Due to the waterlogged soil and the prolonged dampness, the ship's wooden components are in a delicate state, demanding highly controlled excavation and conservation techniques. The wood must remain moist at all times to prevent disintegration. Restoration specialist Delia Eguiluz highlighted that the recovery would be a slow and meticulous process. The team has temporarily left the vessel in its original location, covering it with wet sponges and native soil to retain moisture.

Plans for recovery involve extensive 3D scanning and digital documentation. Following this, each part of the ship will be moved carefully in water-filled containers. To reinforce the fragile wood, specialists will inject it with water-soluble wax, allowing the internal structure to regain strength and stability. The ultimate aim is to reassemble the ship and preserve it for future research and display.

The discovery occurred as part of the groundwork for the Ciutadella del Coneixement—a future research hub being constructed in the Parc de la Ciutadella area. Ironically, the ship was found underneath the proposed site of a parking garage. As excavation continues, historians and scientists alike see this as a unique opportunity to deepen our understanding of medieval maritime life and Barcelona's evolving urban coastline.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/see-the-rare-medieval-boat-discovered-over-18-feet-below-sea-level-in-barcelona-180986524/>

QUESTIONS

(i) What is the estimated age of the ship found beneath the Mercat del Peix?

[1]

- (A) Around 100 years old
- (B) From the 13th century
- (C) From the 15th or 16th century
- (D) Built during the 19th century

(ii) Why is the ship referred to as a “derelict”?

[1]

- (A) Because it was used in battle
- (B) Because it was completely intact
- (C) Because it was abandoned and buried as coastlines shifted
- (D) Because it was restored and preserved earlier

(iii) What measures have been taken to prevent the ship's wooden structure from deteriorating? Mention any two.

[2]

(iv) How will the team conserve and restore the ship once the excavation resumes? Write your answer in about 40 words. [2]

(v) Complete the sentence appropriately:

The discovery of the ship during construction of the Ciutadella del Coneixement is considered ironic because _____.

[1]

(vi) Select the option that best captures the central idea of the passage.

- [1]
- (A) Advances in 3D scanning help preserve wooden artifacts.
 - (B) Accidental discoveries have no historical significance.
 - (C) Maritime trade was essential to Barcelona's growth.
 - (D) A medieval ship discovered in Barcelona offers a glimpse into port life and demands careful conservation.
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(vii) Based on the passage, select the correct set of characteristics describing the ship *Ciutadella I*.

- [1]
- (A) Metallic frame, modern tools, and waterproof shell
 - (B) Wooden hull, ribbed structure, fragile condition
 - (C) Single-sailed, painted exterior, and reinforced keel
 - (D) Dual-motor system, broad deck, and steel fittings
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(viii) Choose the correct synonym of the word *exceptional* as used in the passage:

- [1]
- (A) Unusual
 - (B) Conditional
 - (C) Expected
 - (D) Recent

(i) What is the estimated age of the ship found beneath the Mercat del Peix? [1 mark]

(C) From the 15th or 16th century

(ii) Why is the ship referred to as a “derelict”? [1 mark]

(C) Because it was abandoned and buried as coastlines shifted

(iii) What measures have been taken to prevent the ship’s wooden structure from deteriorating? [2 marks]

Sample Answer:

- The ship has been left in situ and covered with original soil.
 - Wet sponges are applied to the wood to maintain constant moisture.
(½ mark each for any two correct points)
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(iv) How will the team conserve and restore the ship once the excavation resumes? [2 marks]

Sample Answer (within 40 words):

The team plans to use 3D scanning to document the ship, then dismantle it carefully and transport it in water-filled containers. Later, they will inject water-soluble wax into the wood to strengthen its internal structure before reassembling it for long-term preservation.

(v) Complete the sentence:

The discovery of the ship during construction of the Ciutadella del Coneixement is considered ironic because **it was found beneath a planned parking facility for a science hub.** [1 mark]

(vi) Select the option that best captures the central idea of the passage. [1 mark]

(D) A medieval ship discovered in Barcelona offers a glimpse into port life and demands careful conservation.

(vii) Characteristics of the ship *Ciutadella I*: [1 mark]

(B) Wooden hull, ribbed structure, fragile condition

(viii) Synonym of *exceptional* as used in the passage: [1 mark]

(A) Unusual