UNIT 3 · GRAMMAR FOCUS 3

What might have happened?

It may have disappeared… · It could have been a gift…

Notice: A careful guess about the past

The historian in Lesson 6 is not 100% sure. Compare a fact with a careful guess.

SURE: A FACT	NOT SURE: A CAREFUL GUESS
The body **disappeared**.	The body **may have disappeared**.
The silver dish **was** a gift.	The silver dish **could have been** a gift.
past simple	*may / might / could + have + past participle*

ALWAYS HAVE

He **may have** known.
They **might have** known.
Not: has / had
He **may not have** known.

PAST PARTICIPLE

be → **been**
know → **known**
take → **taken**
bring → **brought**
disappear → **disappeared**

Key idea: may, might and could + have show the historian is not 100% sure about the past.

Practice: Complete the careful guesses

Read the puzzles from Lesson 6. Then write the modal + have + the past participle of the verb in brackets.



Modern illustration. This is not a source.

PUZZLE	A POSSIBLE ANSWER
no bones	acidic soil destroyed them
a dish from far away	a trader brought it
a lot of gold	people wanted to show he was rich
no name	it was a different king

1 The acidic soil _____ (may / destroy) the bones.

2 A trader _____ (might / bring) the silver dish from far away.

3 People _____ (could / want) to show that the king was rich.

4 The grave _____ (might / be) for a different king.

Fix it Each sentence has one mistake. Write it again correctly.

5 "The silver dish could have be a gift."

6 "Sima Qian may not has known about the soldiers."

Your turn: More puzzles from Lessons 2–4

Read each puzzle. Write one careful guess with may, might or could + have.

LESSON	PUZZLE
2 Pompeii	The person in the cast is covering their face. Why?
3 Terracotta	Most of the paint on the clay soldiers has gone. Why?
4 Hamel	Hamel says 36 men lived. The report says 38. Why?

7 Pompeii: The person

8 Terracotta: The paint

9 Hamel: The numbers are different because

Check: may / might / could + have + past participle. Never has or had.