MISSION WORKBOOK • CEFR A2–B1 • AGES 7–14

The Master of Mind Games: Zhuge Liang and the Empty Fort

Psychological Warfare & The 150,000 Army Bluff | 三國智謀巔峰：諸葛亮與空城計之謎

SCAN TO PLAY AUDIO
curioquestkids.com

EXPEDITION MAP — Where Are We Landing? 古代中國時空座標

Three Kingdoms (228 AD) — **228 AD • 33°N, 106°E**

📍 **Xicheng Fort & Qishan Mountains** (西城要塞與祁山古戰場)

[Lin]: "Fifteen thousand enemy cavalry are charging your gate, and you have zero soldiers left. What do you do? Open the doors and play music!"

[Leo]: "Zhuge Liang sat on the wall playing a wooden guqin with a smile! How did a song make 150,000 soldiers run away in terror?!"

WARM-UP — Before You Warp: Predict True or False! 聽前真假預測

Guess the answers before listening to today's episode! (聽故事前先猜猜看！)

1. Zhuge Liang defeated Sima Yi's massive army at Xicheng by firing thousands of flaming arrows.
TRUEFALSE

2. During the standoff, Zhuge Liang ordered the city gates thrown wide open with attendants casually sweeping dust.
TRUEFALSE

3. Sima Yi retreated because he knew Zhuge Liang was famously cautious and never took reckless risks.
TRUEFALSE

READING PASSAGE

The Ultimate Bluff in Ancient Military History

攻心為上：諸葛亮西城空城計傳奇

A ~230-word standalone story covering core historical facts and all 12 vocabulary words. Works with or without audio! **（約 230 詞獨立精讀短文，底線標記全部 12 個核心單字，無音響設備亦可獨立教學）。**

During the turbulent Three Kingdoms era, no rivalry was more intense than that between Shu master **strategist** Zhuge Liang and Wei supreme commander Sima Yi. In 228 AD, during the Northern Expeditions, disaster struck: the critical Shu outpost of Jieting was lost, leaving Zhuge Liang trapped in the small **citadel** of Xicheng with fewer than 2,500 exhausted clerks and attendants. Suddenly, clouds of choking dust darkened the horizon—Sima Yi's **vanguard** of 150,000 elite troops had arrived. Escape was impossible, and combat meant certain annihilation. Instead of barricading the gates in panic, Zhuge Liang orchestrated the most audacious masterclass in psychological warfare. He ordered the four city gates thrown wide open and commanded elderly soldiers disguised as civilians to calmly sweep the street dust. Ascending the watchtower dressed in a crane-feather robe, Zhuge Liang lit incense, smiled serenely, and began playing his seven-stringed **guqin**. Halting his cavalry outside the gate, Sima Yi listened intently. The notes floated down without a tremor of fear. Knowing Zhuge Liang was famously prudent, Sima Yi suspected an elaborate, deadly **ambush** hidden inside the silent streets. Paralyzed by **deception** and unable to maintain his **composure**, Sima Yi ordered a full **retreat**. Without releasing a single arrow, Zhuge Liang proved that an extraordinary mind can **outthink** the fiercest army on earth.

SCIENCE FACT

The Acoustic Bluff & Game Theory 古琴音律心理學與博弈論

Playing a stringed guqin requires relaxed fingers and steady breathing. If Zhuge Liang's heart was racing, the strings would buzz and stutter! Sima Yi listened for emotional panic in the pitch. Hearing tranquil harmonics, he concluded it was an ambush trap.

READ & SPOT

Quick Story Check 閱讀關鍵線索任務

- Spot the number of enemy troops approaching Xicheng: 150,000 soldiers.
- Find what elderly soldiers were doing at the open gates: Calmly sweeping the dust.
- Locate the instrument Zhuge Liang played: The 7-stringed guqin (古琴).

LISTENING LOG

5-Act Time-Travel Mission Notes 五幕式聽力探險筆記

Listen to EP04 (use **0.8x speed** on curioquestkids.com if you want extra thinking time!) and record key details. **(邊聽播客邊記錄每一幕關鍵線索，官網播放器支援 0.8x 慢速跟聽)。**

Act 1 • The 150,000 Enemy Army 十五萬大軍壓境 00:00
Why was Zhuge Liang in extreme danger at the tiny outpost of Xicheng?

Act 2 • Enter Strategist Zhuge Liang 傳奇軍師諸葛亮登場 02:01
How did Zhuge Liang use calmness instead of panic when facing impossible odds?

Act 3 • The Empty Fort Bluff 大開城門與古琴心理戰 04:41
What did Sima Yi hear in the tranquil guqin melody that caused him to panic and retreat?

Act 4 • Word Power-Ups & Mind Games 核心英語詞彙充電 08:02
How does 'keeping your cool' help students solve high-stress challenges today?

Act 5 • Time Machine Quiz Challenge 時光機問答挑戰 09:50
Why did Zhuge Liang's deep understanding of his opponent win the day?

PART A Complete the Field Report (Cloze) 關鍵詞聽讀填空

Choose words from the word bank to complete Leo's mission debrief. **(從單字庫中選出正確單字填入空格)**

strategist citadel guqin ambush retreat outthink

Zhuge Liang was a legendary Shu (1) _____ trapped in a small (2) _____. When 150,000 enemy cavalry arrived, he climbed the wall to play his peaceful (3) _____. Fearing a deadly hidden (4) _____, Sima Yi ordered a full (5) _____, proving that calm intelligence can (6) _____ sheer military brute force.

PART B Timeline Detective (Order 1–4) 歷史事件先後排序

Number the chronological events from 1 (earliest) to 4 (latest). **(依歷史發生順序填入數字 1 到 4)**

[ ]
Jieting falls, leaving Zhuge Liang stranded in Xicheng with minimal defenses.

[ ]
Zhuge Liang orders the gates thrown wide open with attendants sweeping streets.

[ ]
He plays tranquil guqin music from the tower as Sima Yi halts his vanguard.

[ ]
Sima Yi fears a trap and retreats, allowing the Shu forces to evacuate safely.

WORD BANK 12 Core Mission Words 12 個核心歷史英語詞彙

Master these 12 power words to boost your historical reading, listening, and debate writing! **(掌握這 12 個核心詞彙，全面提升聽說讀寫實力)**

strategist n. · /ˈstræt.ə.dʒɪst/
A master expert skilled in planning military, political, or game campaigns.
"Zhuge Liang was recognized as the greatest military strategist in ancient China."
✦ 中文釋義：軍師・戰略家

retreat v./n. · /rɪˈtriːt/
To withdraw or pull back troops from enemy contact or dangerous territory.
"Fearing an invisible ambush, the general commanded his troops to retreat."
✦ 中文釋義：撤退・退兵

guqin n. · /guːˈtʃɪn/
An ancient Chinese seven-stringed plucked zither celebrated for meditative music.
"He strummed the silk strings of his guqin with absolute tranquility."
✦ 中文釋義：古琴（七弦琴）

suspicious adj. · /səˈspɪʃ.əs/
Having or showing a cautious distrust of someone or something unusual.
"The open gates made the suspicious general question if an ambush was set."
✦ 中文釋義：多疑的・起疑的

ambush n./v. · /ˈæm.bʊʃ/
A surprise attack launched from a concealed hiding position.
"The canyon was an ideal setting for an infantry ambush."
✦ 中文釋義：伏擊・埋伏

terrain n. · /təˈreɪn/
The physical features, landscape, and topography of a stretch of land.
"He used the mountain terrain to make the city look like a bottleneck trap."
✦ 中文釋義：地形・地勢

bluff n./v. · /blʌf/
An attempt to deceive someone by pretending to have strength or resources you lack.
"Opening the gates was a daring bluff that tricked Sima Yi into believing an army waited inside."
✦ 中文釋義：虛張聲勢・瞞天過海

citadel n. · /ˈsɪt.ə.del/
A fortified stronghold or walled fortress commanding a city or mountain pass.
"Xicheng was an isolated citadel surrounded by steep mountain ridges."
✦ 中文釋義：城池・要塞

deception n. · /dɪˈsep.ʃən/
The act of deliberately misleading someone or creating a false impression.
"Sun Tzu wrote that all warfare is based on psychological deception."
✦ 中文釋義：計策・詐術・欺敵

composure n. · /kəmˈpoʊ.ʒər/
The state or feeling of being calm, composed, and in total control of oneself.
"Zhuge Liang maintained his composure even with enemy horses right at the gate."
✦ 中文釋義：沉著・鎮定・從容

vanguard n. · /ˈvæn.gɑːd/
The foremost, leading part of an advancing military army or fleet.
"The cavalry vanguard halted immediately when they heard the lute music."
✦ 中文釋義：先鋒・前鋒部隊

outthink v. · /ˌaʊtˈθɪŋk/
To defeat or overcome an opponent by using superior cleverness and wisdom.
"You don't always need bigger muscles if you can outthink your opponent."
✦ 中文釋義：智取・以智慧勝出

PRACTICE 1 Match the Word to Its Clue 單字線索配對

1. Strategist	A. Pretending to be strong when you have no soldiers left
2. Bluff	B. A master planner who uses intelligence to win campaigns
3. Guqin	C. An ancient seven-stringed Chinese musical zither
4. Composure	D. Staying calm and steady under extreme danger
5. Outthink	E. To overcome an opponent through superior cleverness

PRACTICE 2 Upgrade Leo's Field Journal 語境進階詞替換

Replace the bracketed everyday words with power words from Page 05.

- Zhuge Liang was a master [war planner]. → **Upgrade:** _____
- Leaving the gates open was a giant [trick to scare the enemy]. → **Upgrade:** _____
- He kept his [calm and quiet mood] without panicking. → **Upgrade:** _____
- A clever player can always [win with their brain]. → **Upgrade:** _____

PRACTICE 3 Leo's Code Scramble & Power Sentence 解碼與造句

A trick to make others think you have an army (B F F L U) → _____

Seven-stringed zither played on the wall (G I N Q U) → _____

A surprise attack from a hiding spot (A B H M S U) → _____

To march backward away from danger (A E E R R T T) → _____

Write your own power sentence using at least one new mission word:

PART A History Detective Quiz 深度理解選擇題

1. Why was Zhuge Liang's situation at Xicheng so desperate?

A. His army was asleep　　B. He had fewer than 2,500 troops against 150,000 enemy cavalry

C. His weapons had broken in the rain　　D. Sima Yi had captured his city walls

2. What did Zhuge Liang order his soldiers to do when Sima Yi approached?

A. Hide in the basement and hold their breath　　B. Throw the gates open and sweep the streets in disguise

C. Wave giant flags and shout war cries　　D. Run away into the high mountains

3. What was Zhuge Liang doing on top of the city tower?

A. Playing the guqin calmly and burning incense　　B. Reading a heavy history book　　C. Firing a giant crossbow

D. Assembling a wooden ox robot

4. Why did Sima Yi order a full retreat instead of charging the open gate?

A. He ran out of water and food　　B. Knowing Zhuge Liang was famously cautious, he feared an invisible ambush trap

C. A sudden thunderstorm struck his army　　D. He felt sorry for Zhuge Liang

PART B Explain in Your Own Words 開放式簡答思考題

✦ **How did Zhuge Liang use Sima Yi's own cautious personality against him?**

✦ **Describe a moment in school or sports where 'keeping your cool' helped you succeed.**

CRITICAL THINKING & OPINION WRITING • CCSS W.4.1 / CEFR B1

Did Sima Yi Truly Fall for the Bluff, or Did He Intentionally Spare Zhuge Liang?

Some military historians believe Sima Yi was genuinely terrified of an ambush. Others argue Sima Yi was too smart: if he killed Zhuge Liang, the Wei Emperor would no longer need him and might execute him! Weigh both sides! **司馬懿是真的中計，還是故意放走諸葛亮以求自保?**

STEP 1 Weigh Both Sides (Evidence T-Chart) 正反證據分析

THEORY A — He Genuinely Feared an Ambush (純粹中計派)

- Zhuge Liang was renowned as China's greatest military genius; a silent, open city violated all standard warfare logic and looked like a classic death trap.
- Sima Yi was a conservative, cautious commander who refused to gamble his entire 150,000-man vanguard on an uncertain risk.

THEORY B — He Spared Zhuge Liang to Protect Himself (養寇自重派)

- In imperial court politics, general Sima Yi was deeply distrusted by the Wei Emperor; as long as Zhuge Liang was alive, the Emperor needed Sima Yi in command.
- Sima Yi's son Sima Zhao suggested sending scouts inside, but Sima Yi immediately silenced him and retreated to keep his own strategic value.

STEP 2 Write Your Historian's Verdict 撰寫歷史觀點短文

Lin's Opinion Starters: *"In my opinion, ... because ..."* · *"Evidence shows that ..."* · *"While some argue ..., I believe ..."*

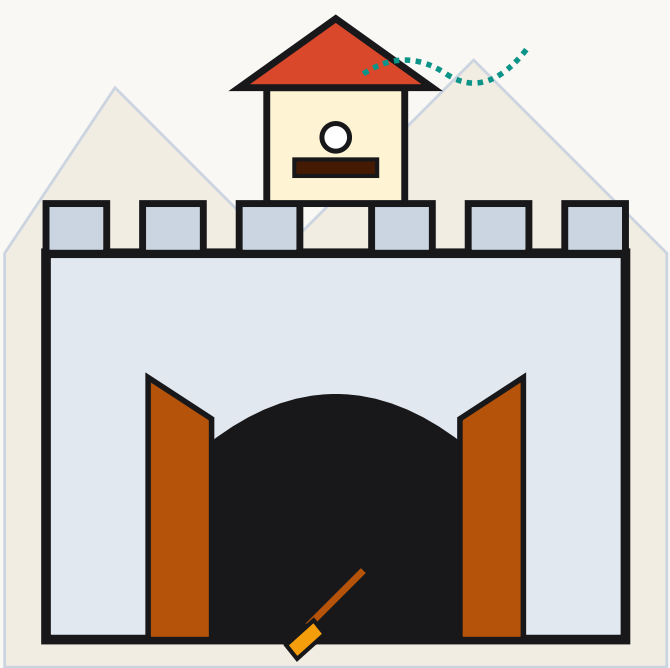
Writing Checklist: [ ] Clear opinion stated [ ] 2 historical reasons with "because" [ ] Concluding statement [ ] Capital letters & periods

MUSEUM LAB

Design the Xicheng Open Gate Decoy & Guqin Tower!

設計西城大開城門與城樓古琴心理陷阱!

Draw the open heavy wooden city doors, the street sweepers, and Zhuge Liang playing his guqin on the high parapet!



★ XICHENG FORTRESS & GUQIN DECOY ★

Historical Design Specs

1. **Color Palette:** Mineral pigment highlights.
2. **Special Feature:** Add tools, sails, or banners.
3. **Mission Symbol:** Hidden dynastic crest.

Explorer Tip

Use fine-tip markers or colored pencils to bring your ancient artifact to life!

THREE KINGDOMS • 228 AD

★

EP04 • EMPTY FORT FEATHER FAN SEAL

✂ CUTOUT EXPLORER PASSPORT SEAL • 探險護照專屬實體印章

Congratulations, Time-Traveler! Cut along the dashed border and glue this official seal into your CurioQuest Passport. **（恭喜完成任務！沿虛線剪下這枚官方印章並貼入你的探險護照）。**

Explorer Signature: _____

ADULT COACHING GUIDE • ZERO PREP

Standards, Complete Answer Key & Writing Models

CEFR A2–B1 CCSS Aligned

教學對標、完整解答與分級範文指南

Standards Alignment:

- **CEFR A2–B1:** Narrative comprehension & reasoned opinion writing.
- **CCSS:** SL.4.2 (Listening), RI.4.1 (Evidence), L.4.6 (Vocab), W.4.1 (Opinion).

3-Day Pacing Suggestion:

- **Day 1:** P1 Warm-up → Listen/P2 Reading → P3 Notes.
- **Day 2:** P4 Cloze/Timeline → P5–P6 Vocab → P7 Quiz.
- **Day 3:** P8 Debate Essay → P9 Museum Lab & Seal!

COMPLETE ANSWER KEY

P1 Warm-Up: 1-F, 2-T, 3-T.
P4 Cloze: (1) strategist, (2) citadel, (3) guqin, (4) ambush, (5) retreat, (6) outthink.
P4 Timeline: A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4.
P6 Match: 1-C, 2-D, 3-B, 4-A, 5-E.
P6 Upgrade: 1. strategist, 2. bluff, 3. composure, 4. outthink.
P7 MCQ: 1-B, 2-B, 3-A, 4-B.

DIFFERENTIATED WRITING MODELS (P8):

Level 1 (CEFR A2 / Grades 3–5): "In my opinion, Zhuge Liang won because he knew how to outthink his rival. When Sima Yi arrived, Zhuge Liang did not scream or run. He stayed cool and played his guqin with a gentle smile. Sima Yi thought it was a trap and ran away. Brains are stronger than swords."

Level 2 (CEFR B1 / Grades 6–8): "The Empty Fort strategy represents the absolute pinnacle of asymmetric warfare and behavioral psychology. Confronted with a numerical disadvantage of over sixty to one, conventional defense would have guaranteed catastrophic defeat. Zhuge Liang recognized that Sima Yi's greatest weakness was his own hyper-cautious intellect. By presenting a scenario so baffling that it defied basic military prudence, Zhuge Liang weaponized Sima Yi's imagination against himself. Whether Sima Yi was tricked or acted out of political self-preservation, Zhuge Liang's ice-cold composure remains an enduring lesson in leadership under pressure."

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