

The Uncertain Metre

C1 Advanced · Places · about 2 min of audio

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Name _____

Date _____

Part 1 — Fill the gaps while you listen

1. Before the metre could _____ commerce, two surveyors had to make an invisible fraction of the planet physically persuasive.
2. In seventeen ninety two, amid _____ turmoil, two French surveyors began tracing a meridian between Dunkirk and Barcelona.
3. Their aim was to define one part in ten million of the _____ from the equator to the North Pole.
4. Rather than measure that immense arc directly, they climbed towers, church steeples, and hilltops, linking distant points through _____.
5. Each angle demanded exact _____, while war, suspicious officials, and fragile instruments turned mathematics into an expedition.
6. In Spain, one surveyor's _____ observations near Barcelona disagreed, by a tiny amount, with the geometry he trusted.
7. Rather than dismiss the discrepancy, he revisited his _____, becoming so troubled that he delayed reporting it.
8. His colleague eventually traced the mismatch to a small _____ error, although the new standard had already begun its public career.
9. The _____ metre missed its intended fraction of Earth by a sliver, less than the width of a grain of sand.
10. That shortfall did not make the unit useless, because repeatability mattered more than perfect _____ with a planet.
11. The expedition shows that _____ is not the opposite of uncertainty, but a public agreement built carefully around it.

Part 2 — Write every sentence you hear

1. _____

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

Answer key

Part 1 — the missing words

1. standardize
2. revolutionary
3. distance
4. triangles
5. observation
6. astronomical
7. calculations
8. observational
9. resulting
10. correspondence
11. measurement

Part 2 — the full transcript

1. Before the metre could standardize commerce, two surveyors had to make an invisible fraction of the planet physically persuasive.
2. In seventeen ninety two, amid revolutionary turmoil, two French surveyors began tracing a meridian between Dunkirk and Barcelona.
3. Their aim was to define one part in ten million of the distance from the equator to the North Pole.
4. Rather than measure that immense arc directly, they climbed towers, church steeples, and hilltops, linking distant points through triangles.
5. Each angle demanded exact observation, while war, suspicious officials, and fragile instruments turned mathematics into an expedition.
6. In Spain, one surveyor's astronomical observations near Barcelona disagreed, by a tiny amount, with the geometry he trusted.
7. Rather than dismiss the discrepancy, he revisited his calculations, becoming so troubled that he delayed reporting it.
8. His colleague eventually traced the mismatch to a small observational error, although the new standard had already begun its public career.
9. The resulting metre missed its intended fraction of Earth by a sliver, less than the width of a grain of sand.
10. That shortfall did not make the unit useless, because repeatability mattered more than perfect correspondence with a planet.
11. The expedition shows that measurement is not the opposite of uncertainty, but a public agreement built carefully around it.

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