

LEVELED BOOK • R

Ghost Towns

MULTI
level
L.O.R

Written by Kira Freed

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Ghost Towns



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Focus Question

What is a ghost town? How does a town become a ghost town?

Words to Know

abandoned
deserted
nuclear power
plant
radiation

remote
residents
resource
settlements
tsunami

Page 3: Kayakoy, Turkey, became a ghost town after a war between Greece and Turkey that ended in 1922. After Greece lost the war, Kayakoy's Greek residents were forced to leave because of their religion.

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Bannack, Montana, is now a state park and a National Historic Landmark.

A Deserted Town

In the summer of 1862, John White found gold by Grasshopper Creek in what is now southern Montana. News of his discovery spread quickly. Within a few months, hundreds of prospectors had arrived at Grasshopper Creek in hopes of striking it rich. By the following year, about three thousand people lived in the town, known as Bannack. Millions of dollars' worth of gold was found in the area over the next few years. However, once gold became hard to find, Bannack turned into a ghost town.

Ghost Towns Around the World



Kayakoy, Turkey, page 3

Bannack, Montana, page 4

Kolmanskop, Namibia, page 6

Grytviken, South Georgia, page 7

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Ordos, China, page 14

Villa Epecuen, Argentina, page 15

Ghost towns are human **settlements** where people no longer live. As shown on the map above, these empty towns are found around the world, and each one has a story to tell. **Residents** often leave a town because of some kind of threat or because their work disappeared. Visitors walk among the empty buildings and imagine what life was like for the people who once called these places home.



Germans built Kolmanskop after discovering diamonds there (top). Today, tourists walk through knee-deep sand to explore the buildings (bottom).

Resources Vanish

Many ghost towns, like Bannack, are **abandoned** after a **resource** runs out. In 1908, a railroad worker found a sparkly gem in southern Africa's Namib Desert. When word got out that his find was a diamond, people flocked to the region. Soon after, the town of Kolmanskop (KOHL-mun-skop) grew. Eventually, after diamonds became harder to find there, a better supply was discovered several hours to the south, and people moved away.



Today, Grytviken, South Georgia, is home to wildlife such as penguins and seals. A research station is South Georgia's only settlement.

A former settlement at the end of the world is now a haunting ghost town. Grytviken (GRIT-vee-kuhn) was once a busy whaling port on South Georgia, a **remote** island in the South Atlantic Ocean. For close to sixty years beginning in 1904, dozens of companies on South Georgia hunted whales for meat and blubber. More than 175,000 whales were killed there. Over time, there were fewer whales around the island. Whaling companies were gone by 1965, and everyone left. Buildings, boats, and equipment remain in Grytviken.



Eruptions continue to happen on Montserrat (left). Once-thriving areas of the island are now buried in ash (right).

Forces of Nature

Events in nature can cause settlements to become ghost towns. Before 1995, the Caribbean island of Montserrat (mon-sur-RAT) was home to more than ten thousand people. A volcano on the island had not been active for more than three hundred years. In July 1995, the volcano erupted, and it's been erupting ever since. Lava, gases, and dangerous clouds of hot ash spill out of the volcano. The south half of Montserrat is now **deserted**, and the capital, Plymouth, was destroyed by an eruption. More than half of the island's residents have moved away for good.



Because of Craco's unusual beauty, the empty village has been featured in several movies.

Craco, Italy, also became a ghost town because of natural events. The village sits on a steep cliff more than 1,300 feet (400 m) above the surrounding land. Over the years, people faced many problems. Along with illness, crime, and poor farming conditions, local people dealt with earthquakes and landslides. More than two thousand people once lived in Craco. Between 1892 and 1922, over one thousand of them left to seek an easier way of life.

Craco was almost totally destroyed by landslides between 1959 and 1972. The remaining residents were moved to a valley area about 5 miles (8 km) away.

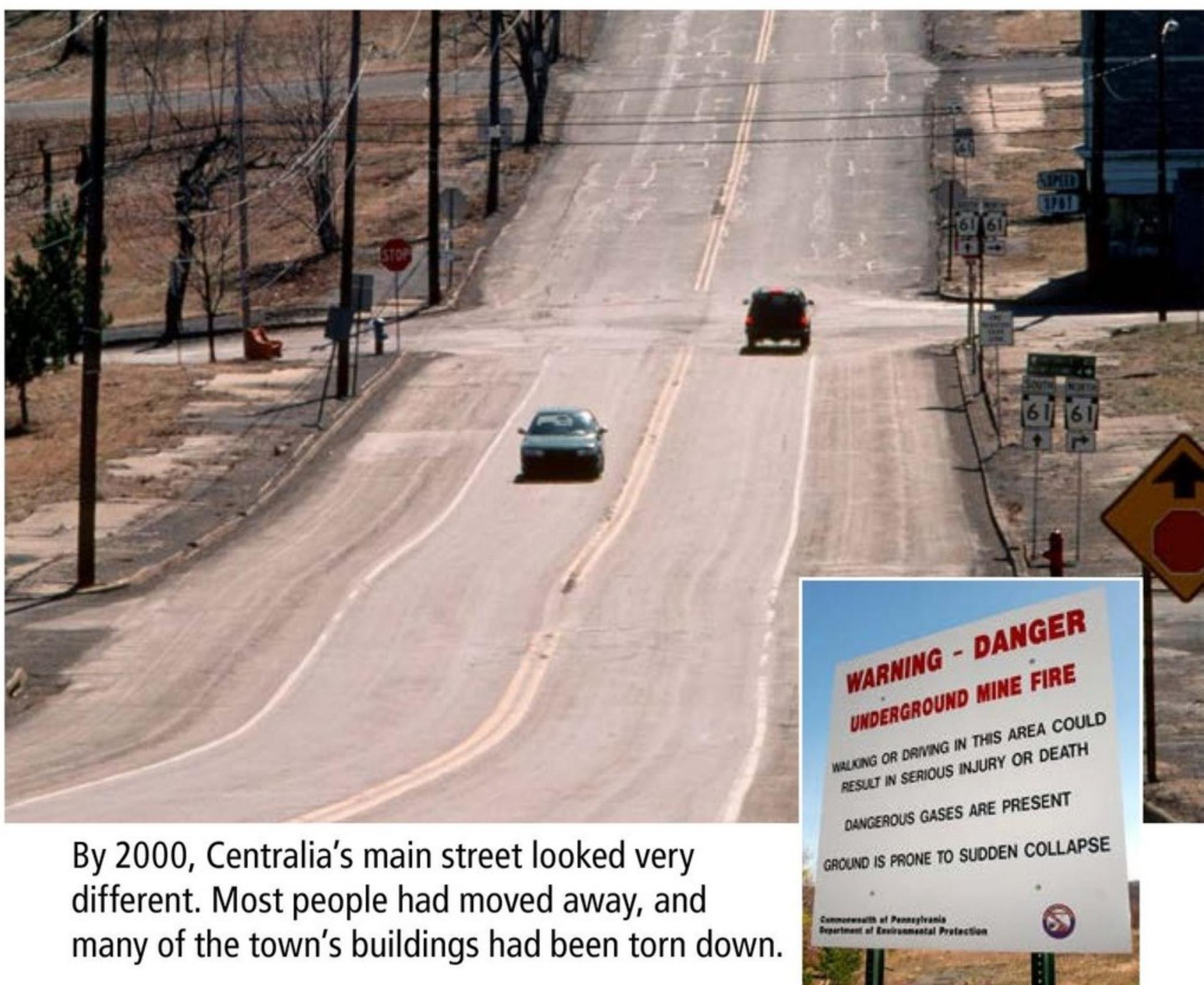


In 1983, people still lived in Centralia, Pennsylvania. The town's main street looked the same as before the accident.

Deadly Land

Some places are almost impossible to live in after the land turns deadly. Centralia, Pennsylvania, is a coal-mining town in the mountains. The town had about two thousand residents in the mid-1900s. Life in Centralia changed forever on May 27, 1962. Firefighters set fire to the town's trash dump to clean up for a holiday. The dump was located on top of an old mining pit on the outskirts of town. The fire was not put out properly, and it spread into the abandoned mines around the pit. No one could stop it.

After burning for years, the fire began to burn underneath the town. Carbon monoxide, a deadly gas, leaked into people's homes, and holes opened up in the ground. Many people moved away, and houses were torn down. A few residents who refused to leave fought in court for the right to stay. In 2013, Centralia's eight remaining residents were given permission to stay for the rest of their lives. Only a few buildings are still standing in Centralia. The fire is likely to burn for many more years.



By 2000, Centralia's main street looked very different. Most people had moved away, and many of the town's buildings had been torn down.



A shopping area in Okuma is one of the town's "no-entry zones" after the nuclear accident.

Water can be just as deadly as fire. Okuma, Japan, was a peaceful coastal town before March 2011. A powerful earthquake struck off the coast of Japan. The earthquake caused huge **tsunami** waves that hit a **nuclear power plant**. As a result, a huge amount of harmful **radiation** was released into the air. People living near the plant, including thousands from Okuma, had to move away. Several years later, radiation remains high in Okuma. No one knows when—or if—residents will be allowed to return.



Chernobyl Disaster

Japan isn't the only country with a ghost town caused by a nuclear accident. The city of Pripyat, Ukraine, was home to the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant's workers and their families. Pripyat was abandoned after a deadly nuclear accident in 1986.



St. Kilda is now a nature area that is home to about 680,000 seabirds.

A Hard Way of Life

Towns are sometimes abandoned because they are too remote. St. Kilda, Scotland, is a group of small islands 110 miles (177 km) off the west coast of the Scottish mainland. Fewer than two hundred people lived on the islands for more than two thousand years. Over time, the islands had too few resources for residents, including the means to grow enough food or heat their homes. Also, many young people moved away, and others were lost to illness. Life in such a remote place simply became too difficult. The last thirty-six St. Kildans were taken to larger islands in 1930.



Homes, office towers, and other buildings in Ordos, China, stand empty. New buildings are still being built, even though no one is moving there.

A Brand-New Ghost Town

Most ghost towns were once lived in, but the world's largest ghost town—actually a ghost city—has always been empty. In the early 2000s, a huge coalfield was discovered in Ordos, in northern China. Kangbashi New Area was built to house hundreds of thousands of people. However, it was poorly planned. Kangbashi is too large and too expensive. The brand-new city stands mostly empty.



Villa Epecuen (VEE-yuh e-pe-KWEN) is a ghost town located on a salty lake in Argentina. After a bad storm that caused a nearby dam to break, the town was underwater for many years.

Empty Places

Ghost towns can be old or new, and they exist for many different reasons. However, they all have one thing in common: they are lonely places with secrets to share. Learning their stories brings life to places where only shadows and memories may remain.

Think About It

Which cities and towns have you lived in or visited? Hundreds of years from now, some of these places may be ghost towns. What might happen to cause people to move away?

Glossary

abandoned (<i>adj.</i>)	left behind and uncared for (p. 6)
deserted (<i>adj.</i>)	empty of people; totally abandoned (p. 8)
nuclear power plant (<i>n.</i>)	a building or complex that uses atomic energy to make electricity for an area or region (p. 12)
radiation (<i>n.</i>)	dangerous and powerful energy that is released in the form of radio waves or atomic particles (p. 12)
remote (<i>adj.</i>)	distant or isolated (p. 7)
residents (<i>n.</i>)	people or other animals that live in a place (p. 5)
resource (<i>n.</i>)	a supply of something valuable or very useful (p. 6)
settlements (<i>n.</i>)	new places where people live (p. 5)
tsunami (<i>n.</i>)	a large, destructive ocean wave caused by an underwater earthquake, landslide, or volcanic eruption (p. 12)

Ghost Towns

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book

Word Count: 984

Connections

Writing and Art

Create an imaginary ghost town. Give it a name and a location on a map, then write a story about how it became a ghost town. Share your ghost town with your class.

Social Studies

Choose two of the ghost towns from the book. Compare and contrast the towns using a Venn diagram. Share your Venn diagram with a partner.

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