

Believe It or Not?

A Reading A-Z Level Z1 Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,745

Connections

Writing

Choose one of the mysteries from the book and decide if it is real or a hoax. Write a persuasive essay to make your point, using information from the book and outside resources.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about one of the mysteries in the book and create an informational brochure for your class. Include interesting facts and illustrations.

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Written by Kathie Lester

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Focus Question

Why are people fascinated by unsolved mysteries?

Words to Know

archaeologists	microwave
decompose	node
extraterrestrials	pharaoh
hoax	plasma
hover	reclusive
intricate	retracted

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Correlation

LEVEL Z1

Fountas & Pinnell	W-X
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	60



An amateur photographer took this picture in 1952 of what many thought was an alien spacecraft. Do you think it's real or a fake?

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Was this young king's tomb protected by a curse?

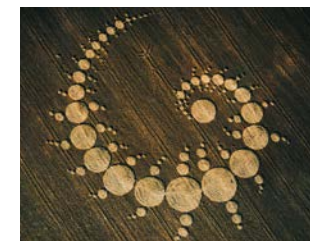


Can anyone explain the mysterious losses of ships and planes?

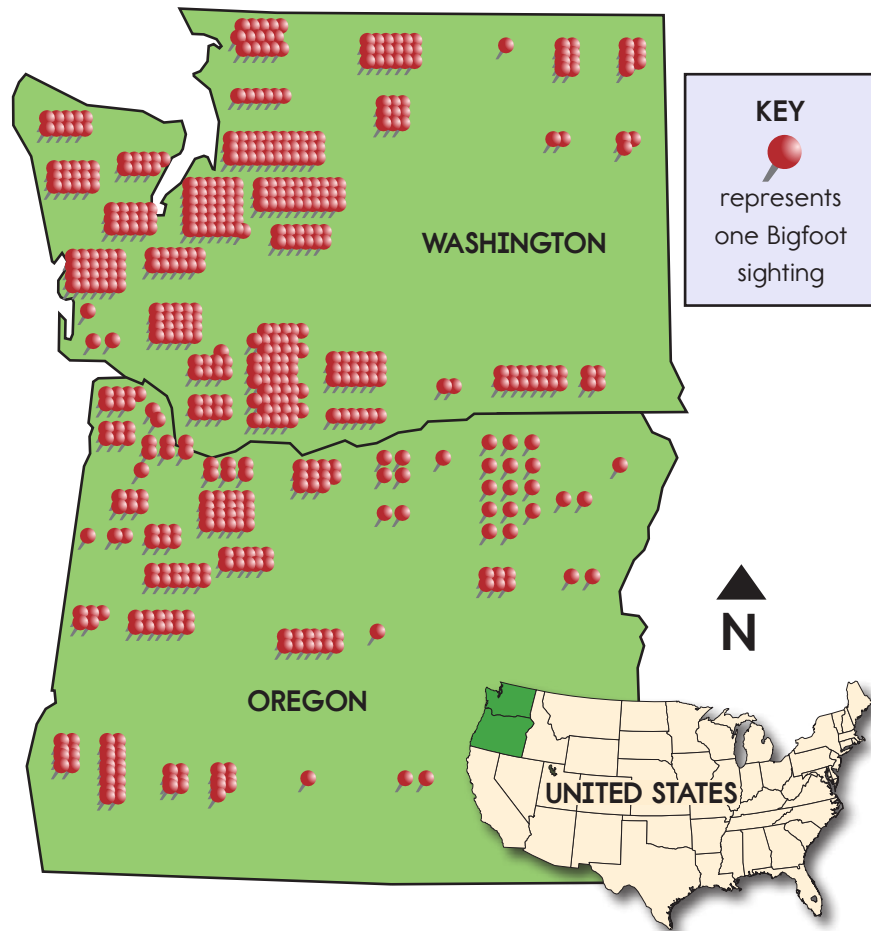
Introduction

If you heard that hairy, smelly giants live in our wilderness, or that **extraterrestrials** make pictures in wheat fields, would you believe it? What if a friend told you an ancient curse causes people to die, or that something in a part of the Atlantic Ocean makes ships and planes disappear? How would you know whether or not these stories were true?

After reading this book, you'll have evidence about these four unsolved mysteries. You can decide whether you think they're real or fake.



Who or what has made such intricate designs on acres of fields?



Bigfoot

In remote areas of the Pacific Northwest, Native Americans have told stories for hundreds of years of having encountered gigantic, **reclusive**, apelike creatures. The Salish peoples of Canada called them Sasquatch, which means “wild man of the woods,” but other tribes use different names. English speakers most often use the name Bigfoot.

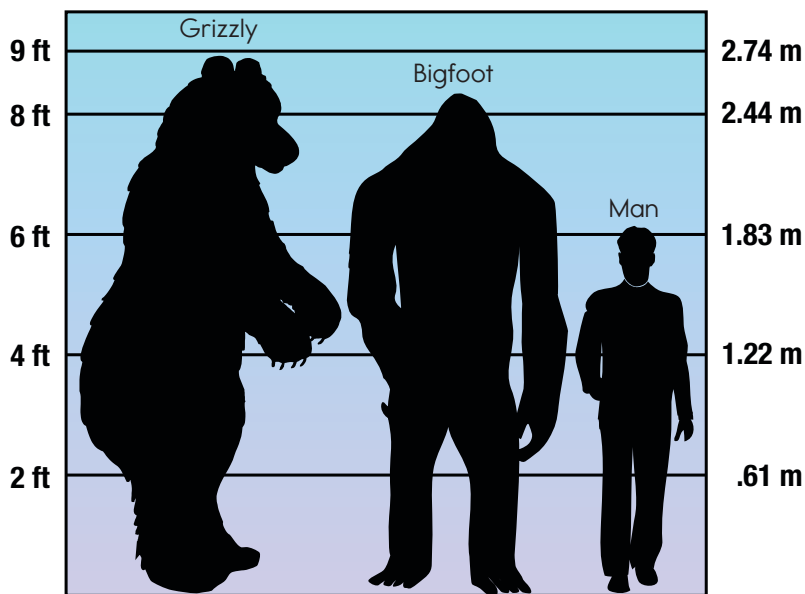


Roger Patterson took this picture in 1967. Is it a Bigfoot, a bear, or a human in a gorilla suit?

In addition to Native Americans, others who have reported encounters with this creature are railway and forest workers, hikers, travelers, and people who live in remote areas. Most of them have never heard the Native American stories, so they haven’t had the opportunity to be influenced by other accounts of these creatures.

A Bigfoot is reported to be huge, as much as 8 feet (2.4 m) tall, with hair all over its body. Based on the depth of its enormous footprints, its weight is estimated to be between 350 and 800 pounds (160–360 kg). People who see one usually report hearing high-pitched screams and smelling a terrible odor.

Cryptozoologists (scientists who study animals that may or may not exist) and other curious people have spent a great deal of time and money to find out whether Bigfoot really exists. After following up on thousands of eyewitness reports, they have not yet been able to find proof.



Bigfoot is believed to be smaller than a grizzly bear but taller than the average man.



In 1998, Dr. John Bindernagel examined a pit in which he thought a Bigfoot had built a nest.

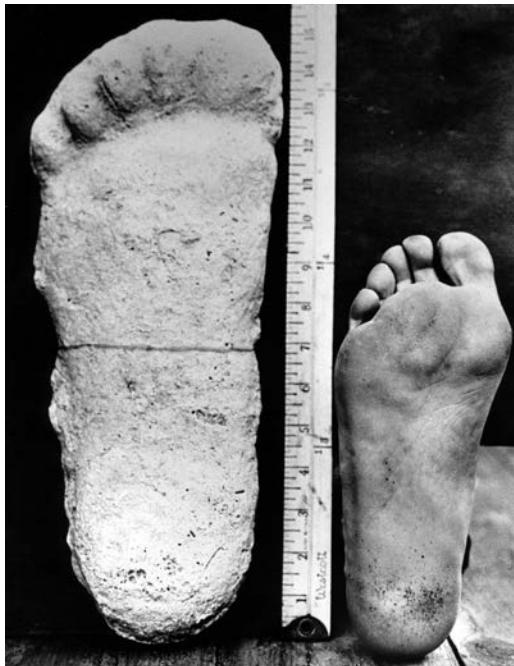
In 1924, a lumberjack named Albert Ostman went into the mountains alone to prospect for gold. During the third night of his trip, he was carried off in his sleeping bag by something huge and smelly. After several hours, it dropped him in a clearing, where four huge, hairy, apelike creatures surrounded him. They seemed to be a family made up of a father, a mother, and two children. Albert escaped, badly shaken but unharmed, after nearly a week. This is just one of many reports of Bigfoot encounters, though not all were so peaceful.

In the vast uninhabited forests and glaciers of the northwestern United States, nature quickly gets rid of dead bodies. They **decompose** or are eaten by insects or other animal scavengers. However, scientists believe that if Bigfoot does exist, someone should be able to find a dead body, a skeleton, or fossil remains, yet nothing has ever been found.

In 1977, a Bigfoot sighting in northern Washington turned out to be a **hoax** planned by three young men with gorilla suits and walkie-talkies. This makes people think that other reports must have been faked as well.

Do you think the Bigfoot sightings are real or a hoax?

A man's foot compared to a cast of a Bigfoot footprint



Many crop circles are very large. This one consisted of 149 circles and appeared near Stonehenge within 20 minutes in broad daylight.

Crop Circles

In fields of tall crops, circles where the plants have been flattened were reported as early as 1590. Farmers thought they were made by wind. In the 1980s, the number of circles increased dramatically, and since then, they have changed from simple circles to complex designs.

Most crop circles form mysteriously in the night, but a few people report having seen them formed by spaceships or whirlwinds. Sometimes lights are seen in the sky and humming or music is heard, and sometimes radiation can be detected inside the circles.

The crops inside circles are not crushed, but instead are bent at the lowest **node** on the stalk. Often these bent crops grow better than the unbent plants outside the circle. Scientific experiments suggest that high-powered **microwave** beams might cause the crops to lie down in this way. But from where would they come, and who would be controlling them? Some people think they are messages from beings on other planets.

In areas where many circles are found, people who watch the fields overnight for signs of activity and new circles say that **intricate** circle patterns can appear in just a few minutes.



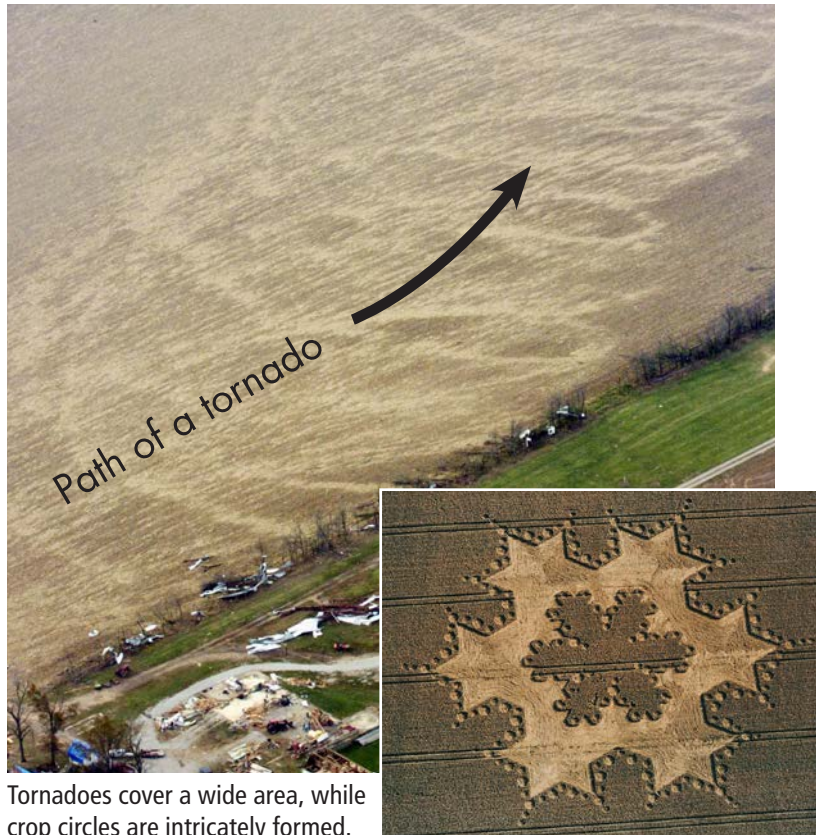
The stalks inside a circle bend in a spiral pattern.

Many crop circles are made by humans for a variety of reasons. Some people just want to prove that it can be done, some people want to play tricks, and others who call themselves “crop artists” say that God inspires them.

In 1991, Englishmen Doug Bower and David Chorley claimed they had made every crop circle since 1978. Some people accepted their explanation of a gigantic hoax. But others doubt they would have the skill and strength to create huge patterns in the dark of night without being seen. Doug **retracted** his confession seven years later and declared that “unknown forces” made the circles.



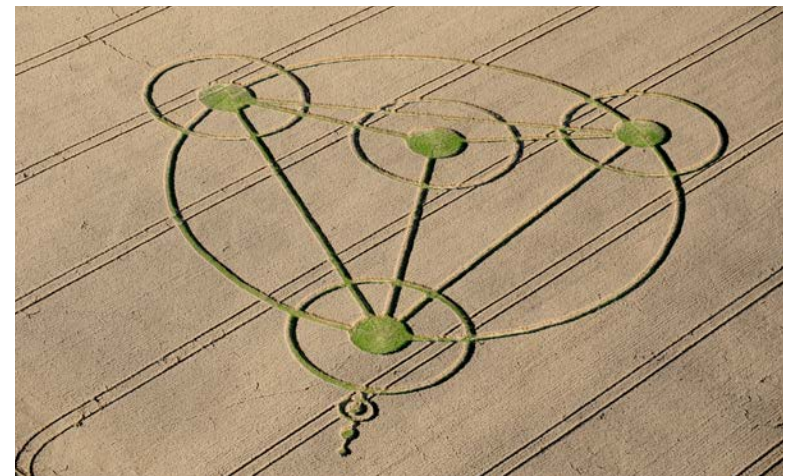
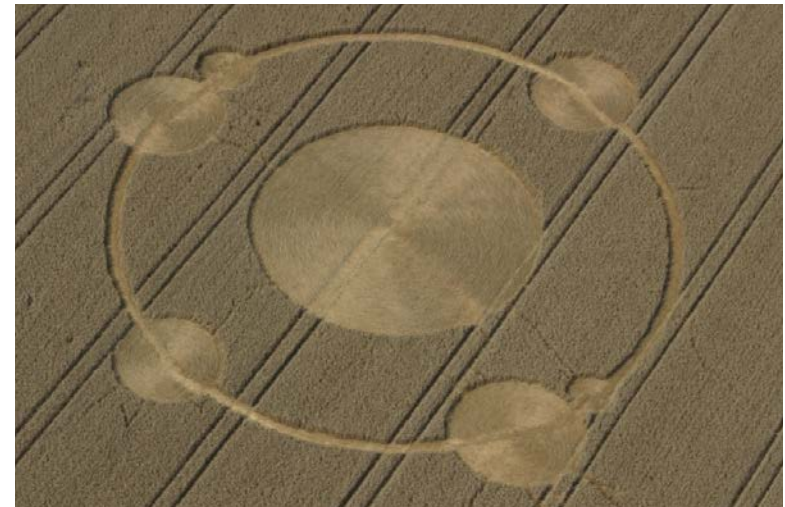
Doug Bower demonstrates how to make a crop circle in a field. Someone could fake crop circles, but it's a lot of work.



Some people suggest that the circles are created by tornadoes, but crop circle designs are controlled and intricate, while a tornado destroys a wide area. Another weather theory is based on an electrically charged whirlwind called a **plasma** vortex. A plasma vortex can create the strange lights and humming sounds reported by crop circle eyewitnesses. It can **hover** in one place or move as if it's under remote control, which could make it look like a UFO.

Some researchers have suggested that the U.S. and British military are developing a high-energy weapon powered by microwaves. In this scenario, crop circles are produced by test firings of this top-secret weapon.

Do you think crop circles are real or a hoax?





King Tut's tomb was filled with valuable treasures.

The Curse of the Mummy

In 1922, Howard Carter discovered the tomb of the Egyptian **pharaoh** Tutankhamun, known today as King Tut. The tomb was filled with incredibly valuable treasures. In 1922, newspapers circulated stories of a curse painted on a tomb wall that said, "They who enter this sacred tomb shall swift be visited by wings of death."

Early Egyptians believed that cobras are the protectors of the pharaohs. On the day Carter opened the tomb, his canary was swallowed by a cobra.

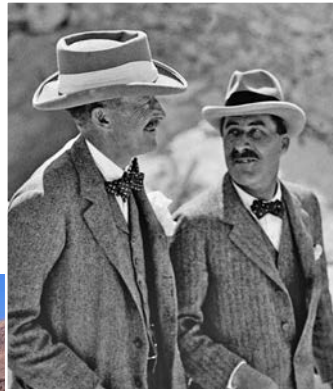


Howard Carter opens a door to King Tut's tomb in 1922.

Carter's search for the tomb was funded by Lord Carnarvon. When Lord Carnarvon died in Egypt in 1923, newspaper stories said that he was killed by a pharaoh's curse. It was also said that Carnarvon's dog howled and dropped dead in England at the same minute as his owner.

The newspapers reported that twenty-six people involved with finding the tomb died in the first ten years. Many of these deaths were supposed to involve suspicious circumstances. This mystery has been so fascinating that it has been used as the theme for many movies, books, and games.

In the early 1900s, reporters sometimes invented facts to make stories more exciting. Lord Carnarvon had actually been sick for twenty years before he died, so the timing of his death might have been just a coincidence. Research shows that actually only six people involved with finding the tomb died in the first ten years. Howard Carter worked on the tomb for at least ten years, and yet he lived for seventeen years after the discovery, and the curse that was reportedly written in the tomb was not there at all.



Howard Carter with Lord Carnarvon (right, inset photo), who funded the search for King Tut's tomb in an area of Egypt called the Valley of the Kings (above)

It is possible that dead bodies produce bacteria that could cause illness and death. Could this have contributed to Lord Carnarvon's death? Today's **archaeologists** wear rubber gloves and clothing that protects them, but early people who robbed tombs might have become sick in this way. This might have been how stories of a curse started.

Early Egyptians went to a lot of trouble to prepare their kings for burial. They believed that kings should be buried with riches to use in their next life. These Egyptians may have started legends of danger to keep people away from the tombs.

Do you think the curse of the mummy is real or a hoax?



Egyptian pharaohs were buried in pyramids.



Some people include a larger area when describing strange events in the Atlantic Ocean.

Bermuda Triangle

Strange things have been happening to ships and planes for years in an area of the Atlantic Ocean that is generally between Florida, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico. In 1965, Vincent Gaddis wrote a book about these strange occurrences called *Invisible Horizons*. He was the first to call the area the Bermuda Triangle, and he also called it the Triangle of Death.

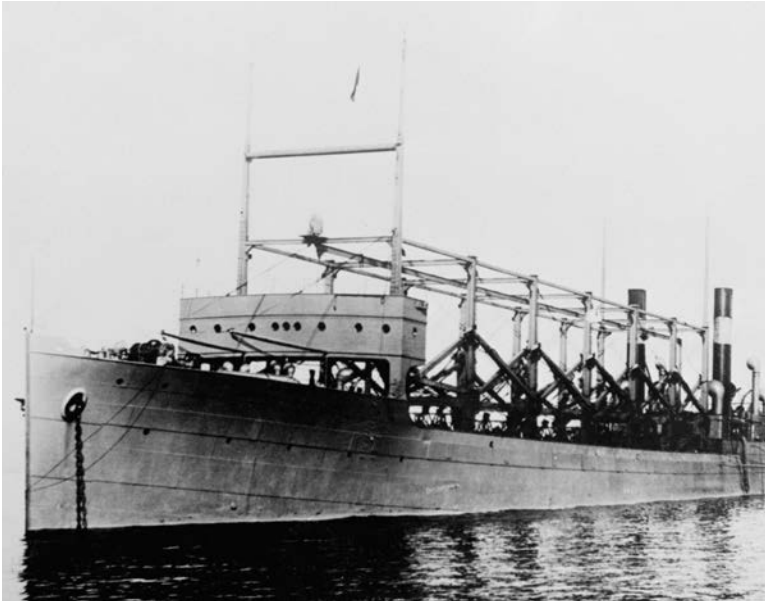
In this area, numerous planes and ships disappear without a trace. Crews mysteriously disappear from ships, dense fogs suddenly appear, and compasses and navigation equipment won't work.

On a clear day in 1945, while a group of planes called Flight 19 was on a routine training mission, all five Avenger bombers lost their bearings and disappeared. The rescue airship that went to look for them disappeared as well.

In 1881, the merchant ship *Ellen Austin* discovered a ghost ship floating without a crew, yet there were no signs of struggle on board. A crew boarded to steer her to port, but when a thick fog surrounded both ships, they lost contact overnight. When the ghost ship was found the next day, the second crew had disappeared as well.



If a deserted ship could be brought to port, the crew could claim a reward.



The USS *Cyclops* disappeared in 1918 with 306 people on board and is one of the earliest incidents linked to the Bermuda Triangle.

In 1966, Captain Donald Henry's tug, the *Good News*, was towing a cargo barge from Puerto Rico to Florida. When a dense fog suddenly swirled around the barge, the *Good News* lost the use of all of its instruments and partially lost power. For five minutes, the *Good News* struggled in a tug-of-war with the fog bank; it finally managed to pull itself and the barge free.

People claim that a mysterious power causes the many losses of ships and crews in the Bermuda Triangle. Because weird lights are seen there, some think that UFOs capture humans and take them away.

Others say the unexplained losses are a result of the severe weather common in the area. Hurricanes and violent waterspouts blow up suddenly, and tidal waves are common. Any vessel that is destroyed would wash away without a trace. Some of the missing crews, when rescued later, tell stories of being forced to leave their storm-damaged ships.

Some say that nothing unusual is going on in the area. They suggest that some of the losses blamed on the Bermuda Triangle actually happened hundreds of miles away. Other vessels that have been reported lost actually showed up later.

Do you think the Bermuda Triangle is real or a hoax?



In the vast ocean, violent weather could destroy a ship and not leave any evidence.



Easter Island

How were the moai statues carved and moved?



Stonehenge

Why and how were these structures built?

Conclusion

Mysterious occurrences—things we can't understand—will always exist. Some people will think they are nonsense, and others will claim they are real. Now that you've read evidence here about four of them, it's time to consider what you've read and determine what you believe. You can use the Internet and the library to find more information. What do you think about these mysteries, and what others can you find?

Glossary

archaeologists (<i>n.</i>)	scientists who study the remains of ancient cultures (p. 18)
decompose (<i>v.</i>)	to decay, rot, or break down into small parts (p. 9)
extraterrestrials (<i>n.</i>)	beings from outside Earth or its atmosphere (p. 4)
hoax (<i>n.</i>)	something meant to mislead or trick (p. 9)
hover (<i>v.</i>)	to stay in one place in the air (p. 13)
intricate (<i>adj.</i>)	very detailed or complicated; complex (p. 11)
microwave (<i>n.</i>)	an electromagnetic energy wave that is shorter than a radio wave but longer than infrared radiation, often used in heating and radar devices (p. 11)
node (<i>n.</i>)	the place on the stem of a plant from which a leaf or branch grows (p. 11)
pharaoh (<i>n.</i>)	a ruler in ancient Egypt (p. 15)
plasma (<i>n.</i>)	charged particles of gas that can conduct electricity (p. 13)
reclusive (<i>adj.</i>)	shut off or apart from the world; solitary (p. 5)
retracted (<i>v.</i>)	took back or withdrew (p. 12)