

LEVELED BOOK • 0

Ghost Towns

**Multi
level
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Written by Kira Freed

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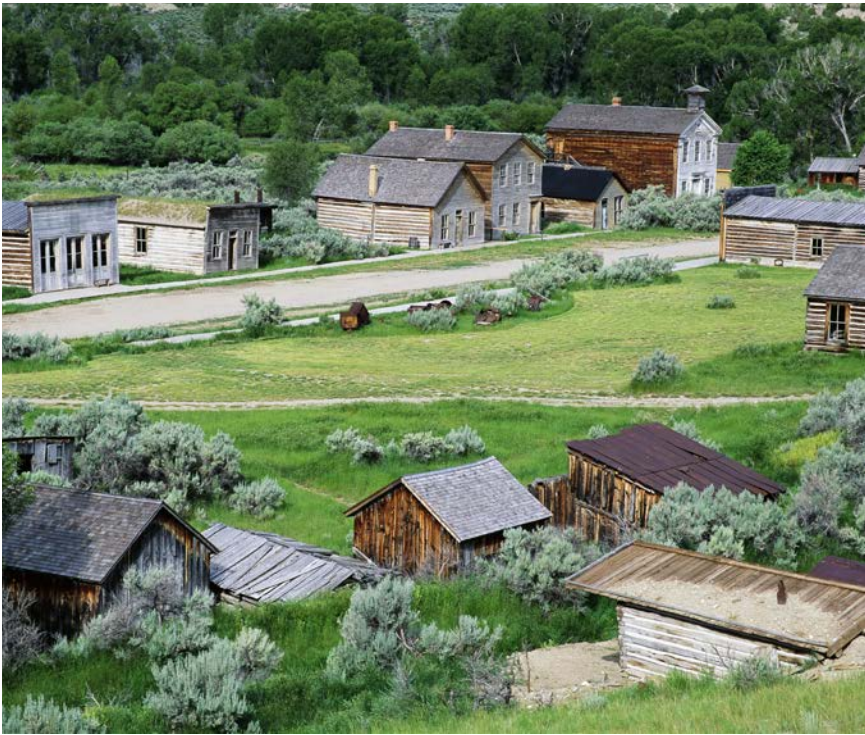
Focus Question

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



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

A Deserted Town

In 1862, John White found gold by a creek in what is now Montana. Soon after, many people went there in hopes of finding more gold. By the next year, about three thousand people lived in the nearby town. Millions of dollars' worth of gold was found there. Once gold became hard to find, the town turned into a ghost town.



Ghost towns are places where people no longer live. As shown on the map above, these empty towns are found around the world. People often leave a town because of some threat or because they can no longer find work. Visitors imagine what life was like for the people who once called these places home.



Germans built Kolmanskop after someone found a diamond there (top). Today, tourists walk through knee-deep sand to explore the buildings (bottom).

Resources Vanish

Many ghost towns, like the one in Montana, are left after a **resource** runs out. In 1908, a railroad worker found a diamond in an African desert. People moved to the area, and soon a new town was born. After diamonds became hard to find there, everyone left.



Today, the island is home to wildlife such as penguins and seals. A research station is the only place where people live.

An animal can also be an important resource. An island in the Atlantic Ocean is home to a haunting ghost town that was once a busy whaling port. In the 1900s, many companies on the island hunted whales. Over time, there were fewer whales around the island. Whaling companies were soon gone, and everyone left the island. Buildings, boats, and equipment can still be found in this **deserted** town.



The volcano on the island still erupts (top). Many areas are now buried in ash (bottom).

Forces of Nature

Some places become ghost towns because of natural events. More than ten thousand people used to live on an island in the Caribbean Sea. A volcano on the island had not been active for many years. In 1995, the volcano erupted, and it has been active ever since. The capital city was left in ruins. More than half the people who lived on the island have moved away.



Because of the village's unusual beauty, it has been used in several movies.

A ghost town in southern Italy sits on a steep cliff far above the rest of the land. Natural events caused people in the village to leave. They had to deal with earthquakes, **landslides**, poor health, crime, and many other problems. Over half the people left to find an easier way of life.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the village was almost totally ruined by landslides. The people who still lived there were moved to a valley area nearby.

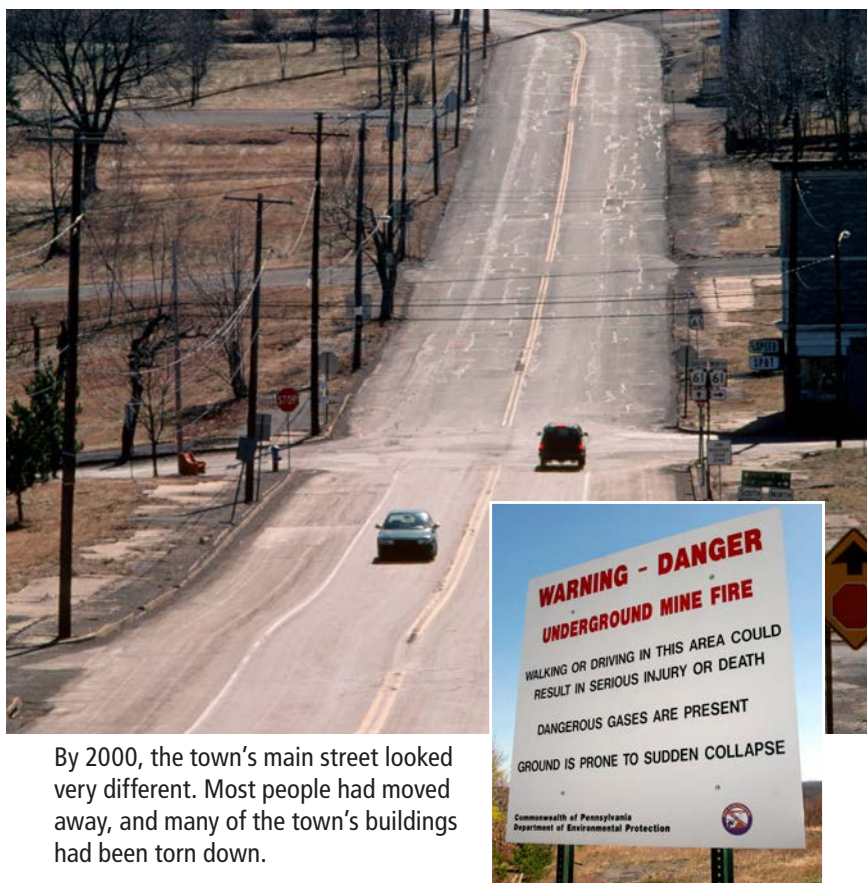


In 1983, people still lived in the Pennsylvania mining town. The main street looked the same as before the accident.

Deadly Land

Some places are almost impossible to live in after the land turns deadly. A mining town in the mountains of Pennsylvania is now almost completely deserted. One day in 1962, the town's trash dump was set on fire to clean up for a holiday. The dump sat on top of an old mining pit just outside the town. The fire was not put out right, and it spread into the mines around the pit. No one could stop it.

After many years, the fire began to burn under the town. Deadly gas came into people's homes, and holes opened up in the ground. Many people moved away, and houses were torn down. Only eight people were allowed to stay for the rest of their lives. The fire is likely to burn for many more years.



By 2000, the town'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 is one of the town's "no-entry zones" after the nuclear accident.

Water can be just as deadly as fire. In March 2011, a powerful earthquake struck off the coast of Japan. The earthquake caused huge waves that hit a **nuclear power plant** near a quiet town. As a result, harmful **radiation** was released into the air. Thousands of people living near the plant had to move away. No one knows when—or if—anyone will be allowed to go back.



Chernobyl Disaster

Japan isn't the only country with a ghost town caused by a nuclear accident. A city in Ukraine was home to the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant's workers and their families. The city has been empty since 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 left because they are too **remote**. St. Kilda is a group of small islands that are part of Scotland. For a long time, fewer than two hundred people lived there. However, people had a hard time living on the remote islands. They couldn't grow enough food or heat their homes. Many young people moved away, and others died because of poor health. The last thirty-six people from St. Kilda were taken to bigger islands in 1930.



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

A Brand-New Ghost Town

Many ghost towns were once lived in. However, the world's largest ghost town has always been empty. In the early 2000s, a coal-rich area was found in northern China. A city was built nearby to house hundreds of thousands of people. However, it was poorly planned. It is too big and too expensive. The brand-new city stands mostly empty.



Villa Epecuen (VEE-yah eh-peh-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 are left.

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

deserted (<i>adj.</i>)	empty of people (p. 7)
landslides (<i>n.</i>)	moving masses of soil and rock that flow down slopes (p. 9)
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>)	a dangerous and powerful form of energy (p. 12)
remote (<i>adj.</i>)	distant or isolated (p. 13)
resource (<i>n.</i>)	a supply of something valuable or very useful (p. 6)

Words to Know

deserted

landslides

nuclear power
plant

radiation

remote

resource

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

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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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