

Believe It or Not?

A Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,492

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

encounters	microwave
evidence	mysteries
extraterrestrials	node
hoax	pharaoh
hover	plasma
intricate	retracted

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Correlation

LEVEL Y

Fountas & Pinnell	T
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



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?

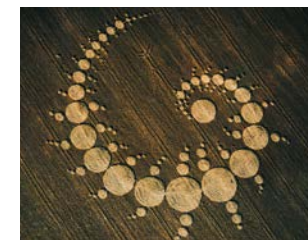


Can anyone explain the mysterious losses of ships and planes?

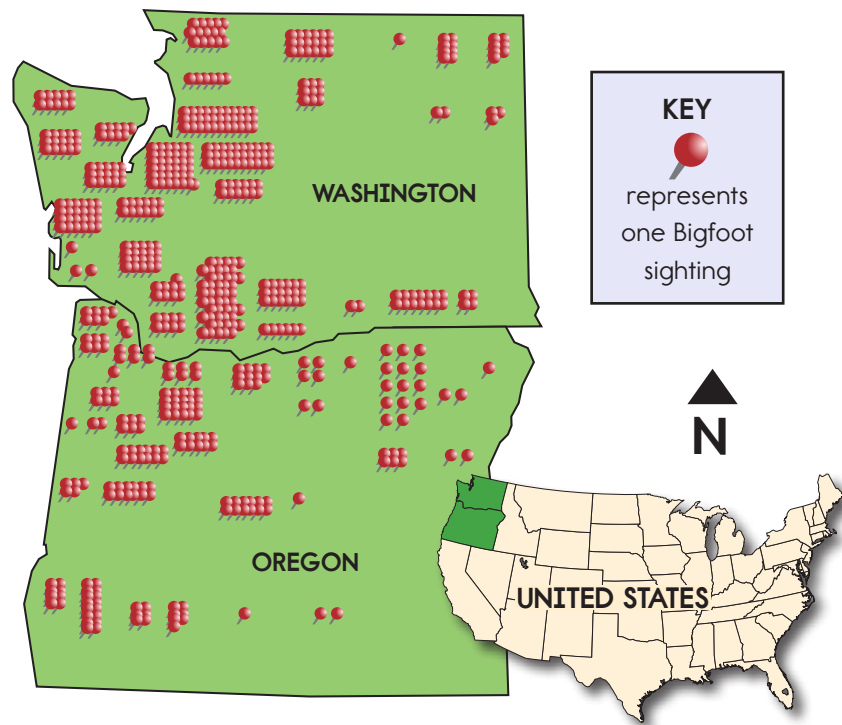
Introduction

If you heard that hairy giants live in our wilderness or that **extraterrestrials** make strange designs 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 disappear? How would you know if these stories were true?

After reading this book, you'll have **evidence** about these four unsolved **mysteries**. You can decide whether or not you think they're real.



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



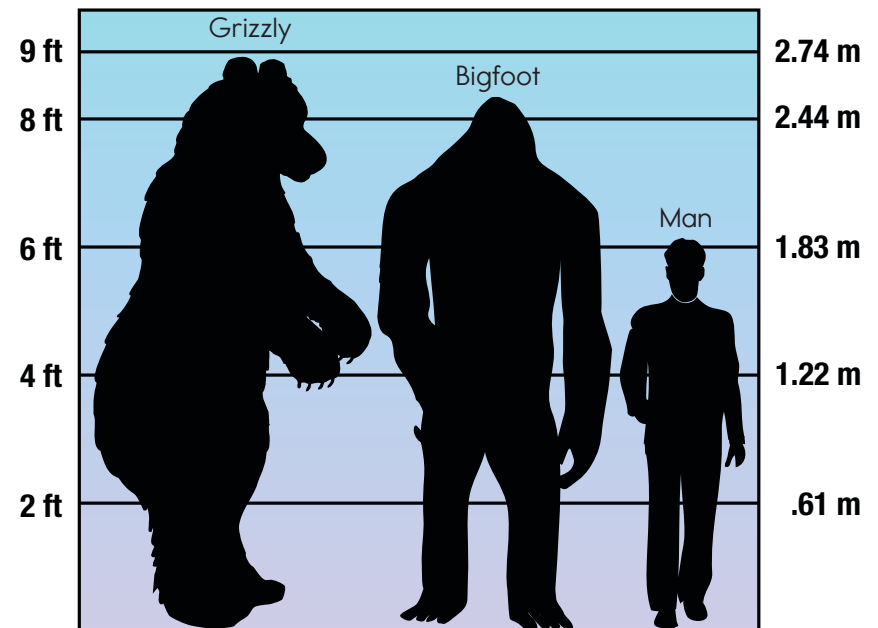
Bigfoot

In remote areas of the Pacific Northwest, Native Americans have told stories about gigantic, mysterious, apelike creatures for hundreds of years. The Salish peoples of Canada called them Sasquatch, which means "wild man of the woods." English speakers most often use the name Bigfoot.

Others who have reported **encounters** with this creature include railway and forest workers, hikers, travelers, and people who live in remote areas. Most of them have never heard the Native American stories.

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

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



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

In 1924, a lumberjack 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. Later, it dropped him in a clearing, where four other apelike creatures surrounded him. They seemed to be a family. He escaped, badly shaken but unharmed, after nearly a week. This is just one report of a Bigfoot encounter.



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

In the vast forests and glaciers of the northwestern United States, nature quickly gets rid of dead bodies. 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** that was planned by three young men. This makes some people think that other reports must have been faked as well.

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



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

Crop Circles

Strange circles of flattened plants in fields were reported as early as 1590. Farmers thought they were made by wind. In the 1980s, the number of circles increased, and they changed to more **intricate** designs.

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

The crops inside circles are not crushed. They are bent at the lowest **node** on the stalk. Often these bent crops grow better than the plants outside the circles. Scientific experiments suggest that **microwave** beams might cause the circles. But from where would they come, and who would be controlling them? Some people think they are messages from outer space.

In areas where many circles are found, some people watch the fields at night for signs of activity. They say that complicated circle patterns can appear in just a few minutes.

Many crop circles are made by humans for a variety of reasons. Some people just want to prove that it can be done, while others want to play tricks.

In 1991, Englishmen Doug Bower and David Chorley claimed they had made every crop circle since 1978. Some people accepted the explanation of their hoax, while others doubted they had the skill and strength to create huge patterns at night without being seen. Doug **retracted** his confession seven years later.

Some people suggest that the circles are created by tornadoes. Crop circle designs are controlled and intricate, though, while tornadoes destroy a wide area. Another weather theory is based on a type of whirlwind called a **plasma** vortex. A plasma vortex can create the lights and sounds reported by 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 military is developing a high-energy weapon powered by microwaves. In this scenario, crop circles are produced by tests of this top-secret weapon.

Do you think crop circles are real or a hoax?

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. 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."

Carter's search for the tomb was funded by Lord Carnarvon. When Lord Carnarvon died in 1923, newspapers said that he was killed by a pharaoh's curse.

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



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 (left)

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. The timing of his death might have been a coincidence. Research shows that 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 he lived for seventeen years after the discovery. The curse that was reportedly written in the tomb was not there at all.



King Tut's tomb was filled with valuable treasures.

Dead bodies might produce bacteria that could cause illness and death. Could this have contributed to Lord Carnarvon's death? Early people who robbed tombs might have become sick in this way. This might have been how stories of a curse started.

Early Egyptians 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?



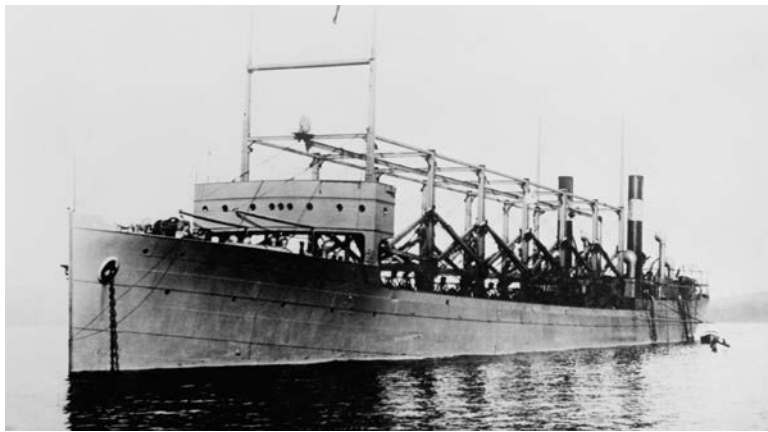
Some people include a larger area when describing strange events in the Atlantic Ocean.

Bermuda Triangle

Strange things have been happening to ships and planes in the Atlantic Ocean 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. He also called it the Triangle of Death.

Numerous planes and ships disappear in this area. Crews vanish from ships, dense fogs suddenly appear, and compasses and navigation equipment stop working.

On a clear day in 1945, while a group of planes was on a routine training mission, all of them lost their bearings and disappeared. The rescue airship that went to look for them also disappeared.



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

In 1881, the merchant ship *Ellen Austin* discovered a ghost ship floating without a crew. A crew boarded to steer her to port, but a thick fog surrounded both ships. When the ghost ship was found the next day, the second crew had disappeared as well.

The USS *Cyclops* disappeared in 1918. This 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 ship 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. Some people 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. Any vessel that is destroyed would sink without a trace. After being rescued, some of the missing crews tell stories of being forced to leave their storm-damaged ships.

Some insist that nothing unusual is going on in the area. They suggest that some of the losses blamed on the Bermuda Triangle actually happened several hundred miles away. Sometimes vessels that have been reported lost appeared 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

Mysteries will always exist. Some people will think they are nonsense, and others will claim they are real. Now that you've read evidence 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

encounters (<i>n.</i>)	unexpected meetings, conflicts, or experiences (p. 5)
evidence (<i>n.</i>)	something that supports a theory or claim (p. 4)
extraterrestrials (<i>n.</i>)	beings from outside Earth or its atmosphere (p. 4)
hoax (<i>n.</i>)	something meant to mislead or trick (p. 7)
hover (<i>v.</i>)	to stay in one place in the air (p. 9)
intricate (<i>adj.</i>)	very detailed or complicated; complex (p. 8)
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. 8)
mysteries (<i>n.</i>)	things that are unknown or difficult to understand (p. 4)
node (<i>n.</i>)	the place on the stem of a plant from which a leaf or branch grows (p. 8)
pharaoh (<i>n.</i>)	a ruler in ancient Egypt (p. 10)
plasma (<i>n.</i>)	charged particles of gas that can conduct electricity (p. 9)
retracted (<i>v.</i>)	took back or withdrew (p. 9)