

Chapter 5: Caves Guard the Past

Jenny saw it first.

“Light!” she cried as she saw the end of the tunnel. “Are we out of the cave, Bat?”

No. Look over your head, Jenny, said Bat.

Jenny looked up. Way, way up she saw a hole, and daylight was streaming through it. It was just a sliver of light but so bright that Jenny and Carlos had to squeeze their eyes shut.

Carlos looked up suspiciously. The cave narrowed above them into a tube with a hole at the top. It went up hundreds of feet. “Do we have to climb out that hole?” she asked fearfully.

Well, did you bring any mountain climbing equipment? asked Bat.

“Oh sure. Like Batman?” laughed Carlos.

Then it was Bat’s turn to laugh. *I’m serious, he squeaked. Lots of cave explorers carry ropes and things. They have to for places like this. But they don’t climb here. It’s one of those places where the top of the cave is dissolving away. It’s called a sink hole and it’s going to cave in one of these days. It’s dangerous here, so we’re going out of the cave a different way. Sorry. It’s through another tunnel.*

Bat led them into a skinny, dark, twisting tunnel. They turned off the light to save energy again. “You know Jenny, we’re getting pretty good at this. We’ve learned to use our arms to feel around, and we’re not so scared,” said Carlos.

“It’s amazing, isn’t it,” agreed Jenny as she felt the tunnel wall with her fingers. Soon, they sensed they were in one more cave room. They could tell by the way their voices echoed. Even without seeing, they could guess it was another large cavern.

They begged Bat for a rest stop. Jenny switched on the flashlight again, and moved the beam across the walls.

“Stop Jenny, look back there!” Carlos pointed to the wall. The flashlight lit up a series of pale figures. The two friends stared. A row of eight dark hand prints appeared on the wall. They looked like finger print figures made of dark clay or mud. On the left were the smallest prints — a child. On the right, adults had left larger marks.

“Whose hands were those?” Jenny wondered. “Was it the people who sprayed the wall and broke the soda straw stalactites?”

“I don’t think so Jenny. Look over there.” Carlos pointed. “Animal paintings. These things are old.”

Jenny studied the paintings, beautifully outlined in black. She agreed. It looked as if the artists had drawn the pictures with the ashes of a campfire, long, long ago. She could almost hear their voices in the cave.

A buffalo, in soft brown and orange colors, commanded the wall. Below the buffalo, a deer with antlers leaped high. It was badly wounded, with three arrows in its chest.

“Indians,” murmured Carlos. “Maybe these are the same tribes that we studied about in school, like the really old people they found in Mammoth Cave.”

They looked again in silence. They forgot all about the bat, who suddenly flapped over their heads.

Thank you! Thank you! the bat squeaked. *I’ve lived in this cave all my life and have never seen these pictures. If you hadn’t come with the flashlight, I would never have actually seen them. Thank you!*

The two children looked up at Bat, pleased and surprised. They felt happy that they could give something back to this little animal who was saving their lives. Bat hung on a rock overhead, looking at the pictures.

Together they stared at the ancient pictures. Why did these people come to this cave? Perhaps it was warm here in the winter, and cool in the summer. Did they live here all the time, or just in bad weather? Were the hand prints a family? Or members of a tribe? What happened to them?

Jenny spread her fingers near the smallest print, afraid to touch it. She held her hands in the air, matching thumb to thumb, pinky to pinky. Her hands were just a little bigger than the prints. Was this a boy, like Carlos? Or a girl, like her? If so, how old was she? What was her name?

Carlos looked at the animals. He saw the arrows in the deer’s chest, and even a line showing blood. These were hunting people. Did they hunt that huge buffalo too? Did they say prayers to the animals they hunted? Carlos had read about that before.

“Bat, how old are these Indian things?” Jenny asked.

Oh I don't know. I bet thousands of years, Bat squeaked.

“But why haven't the cave explorers found these things, Bat?”

They might have, and they were careful not to touch or destroy them. But maybe they couldn't get in here because they were grown-ups. You kids got through that skinny tunnel more easily. It's pretty small for grown-ups. I bet those people from long ago were really small, too.

The children were silent for a moment. Bat was telling them that they had just made a discovery. Probably no other people in modern times had seen these pictures. Even Bat hadn't seen them.

Jenny sat down near the paintings. She shone the light around the cavern. On one wall, the Indian paintings seemed to call to her from the past. In the rest of the cavern, crystals and rock formations gave the feeling of hidden jewels and lost treasures. For a moment, she felt almost happy in the cave.

The Bat *flap, flapped* overhead for a minute.

Carlos looked worried. “You know, I really want to tell my friends about this cave. But if I do . . .”.

“Yeah. I wonder about that too,” Jenny admitted. “I don't want people to come here and ruin the cave. I mean, what would we have done without the bat? We might have gotten lost, or made a mess, or accidentally broken the soda straws.”

Bat settled on a stalactite overhead. *There's one solution. Find a caver group at home. Join up and learn how to be a caver. Then you'll do it right. And you can tell people about this cave if they know how to do it right. I learn a lot from cavers.*

The Bat then ordered the children to turn off the flashlight.

Lights out, heads down. Go to your left, one last tunnel.

Whispering goodbye to the mysterious hand prints, Jenny led the way into the tunnel on her hands and knees. This time the tunnel twisted and turned, taking the occasional hump or valley. Now and then they could hear the bat bump into the wall around sharp corners. Many other tunnels branched off. Without the bat's squeaky instructions, the children knew they would never get back to camp — or find their way back in. Jenny almost believed that Bat was taking

them into this tunnel so that they'd never find their way back.

At last, Jenny spotted a glimmer of light shining on the tunnel wall.

“We're almost out, Carlos!” she shouted.

Bat squeaked with excitement. *It's mosquito time! Mosquito time! Sun's down, bugs up, and bats bite!*

At last they stood at the cave entrance. Carlos wondered just how many openings there were. The rain had stopped and the sky had darkened as the sun began to set. The cave entrance was hidden behind tall bushes. The camp was at the bottom of the hill. But nobody could see Jenny and Carlos because of the bushes. Campers below were lining up at the dining hall for supper.

Jenny looked up at Bat, hanging from a rock. “Thanks for saving us, Bat. Carlos and I will keep your secret. We'll just tell people that we got lost and fell asleep under a big rock. I hope they haven't worried too much.”

“And we'll come back some day with a caver's group. We'll be too big to get in that last tunnel,” Carlos added.

Thanks kids. Now get yourself back to camp. I'll fly over your campfire tonight. Look for me.

With that, the children pushed their way through the bushes and ran down the hill to camp. Behind them, Bat began to zoom through the cloud of bugs that hang around cave entrances. He couldn't remember when he'd been this hungry.

Later that night, Carlos and Jenny sat with the other campers around the camp fire. While everyone else was slapping mosquitoes, the two friends stared into the night sky. The afternoon's adventure seemed too fantastic to be real. But still, they wondered which of the bats, swooping like great black butterflies overhead, was their Bat.

They worried a bit. Had Bat used too much energy in helping them? Did he catch enough mosquitoes? Was he OK after helping them?

Just then they heard a familiar squeak just behind their heads. Soft leather wings brushed past their cheeks.

Good night, Jenny! Good night, Carlos!

The two friends smiled at each other.

“ ‘Night, Bat.”

<i>Grade Levels</i>	K, 1, 2, 3
<i>Science Topics</i>	Anthropology Biology Mineralogy
<i>Disciplines</i>	History Geography Art

LESSON 5.1 Reading Follow-up Activities

Materials Provided

Handout 9: Reading Follow-up Coloring Page

Procedure

1. Distribute Handout 9: Reading Follow-up Coloring Page.
2. While students are coloring, talk about Discussion Questions, below.
3. Incorporate New Words into writing and vocabulary lessons.

Discussion Questions

1. Many caves have become National Parks. Can you explain why?
2. Why would people long ago use caves?
(Caves provide shelter from enemies, and from bad weather in the summer or the winter, and provide certain mineral resources.)

3. Many pictures and art from ancient peoples have been found in caves. Why would this be?
(No plants grow in caves, and leaves would not cover the remains. Also, dry caves preserve bones, bodies, and art.)
4. Both ancient art and street graffiti are similar. They are both drawn on walls or rocks. How are they different?

New Words:

All grades sink hole

Kindergarten art, deer

Grade 1 paint, discover, campfire, buffalo

Grade 2 hunt, arrow

Grade 3 mosquito, guardian, ancient



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<i>Science Topics</i>	Anthropology Biology
<i>Disciplines</i>	Social Studies Art

LESSON 5.2 Cave Art and History

Activity Summary

This activity gives students a sense of the creative background for ancient cave art. If possible, teachers should enrich the activity with references or Internet materials showing cave art in the United States or Europe.

Educational Goals

Students will be able to:

- Name three ways that humans have used caves.
- Give two possible interpretations for cave art depicting animals.
- Name two possible reasons for ancient cave art.

Teacher Background

Prehistoric cave art inspires us today, even centuries later. Somehow, artists of old can still communicate with us through their simple, monumental rock paintings. In this activity, your students will get a feeling for both making and viewing such art.

If you have Internet access, explore Web pages with search phrases such as “cave AND art” or “cave AND paintings.” Internet addresses can change unpredictably, but at the time of publication of this teaching guide, Web pages with graphic cave images include:

<http://www.culture.fr/culture/gvpda-en.htm>

http://www.aquarel.fr/region/Lascaux/salle_des_taureaux/salle_des_taureaux.html

Both sites illustrate French cave painting discoveries, including the recent ones at Vallon-Pont d’Arc. French caves have revealed some of the world’s most awesome cave art. Animal depictions may have been

the artists’ way of keeping records of animals that they had killed. Why the Cro-Magnon artists drew in caves remains a mystery. Some cave paintings are 25,000 years old.

Many Web sites showing Asian caves are full of exciting art also, but much of it is of an erotic nature and not suitable for young students.

In America, the caves of the Anasazi tribes, in the southwest, and Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky, offer impressive prehistoric art. Mammoth Cave is the site of four-thousand-year-old objects, including spoons and moccasins. There is evidence of gypsum mining. Gypsum and other minerals were probably used for body paint, and perhaps for seasoning and medicine.

Cave art is not surprising, when one considers the many ways that humans have used caves over the centuries. These uses include religious worship, storage, mining, and burial. In some parts of the world, entire communities live in caves today, as the Anasazis did in the past.

American history has many stories about caves. Along the route of the Underground Railroad, slaves took shelter during the civil war. Desperado Jesse James is thought to have hidden \$100,000 in gold coins in a Missouri cave. Other people have used caves for producing nitrates for gunpowder and fertilizer. Food producers have used caves for cooling chickens and aging cheese.

Over the years, both children and their dogs have played an important role in cave discovery, including the sites of major cave art. Why? Partly because both children and dogs are naturally curious and love to explore. Both are also small. Like Carlos and Jenny in

the story, children and their pets can squeeze into small passages.

If your class lives in cave country, or travels in cave country, it is important to emphasize the danger that caves present. Children need to realize that if they find caves, they should not explore them by themselves. Even adults should not explore wild caves except in the company of trained cavers.

Materials Required

- Colored chalk
- Newsprint
- Finger paints or poster paint (large jars)

Procedure

Show the class pictures of cave art from books, Internet, etc.

Choose one of the following approaches:

1. Blackboard as cave wall

Invite students to draw one object on the cave wall.

Trace children's hand prints in chalk, color in.

Draw an animal that a prehistoric hunter might hunt (deer, rabbit, mammoth, etc.)

2. Newsprint as cave wall

3. Personal rock art — ask students to bring a smooth rock to school. Ask them to paint rock art on their stone.

Invite students to contribute one piece to the cave wall. Same objects as above, but use brown finger paint or thick poster paint. Create a mural.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did people make cave drawings?

(Tell stories, keep records, represent religious events, worship.)

2. Why did ancient people choose caves for their art instead of other places?

(To keep pictures secret, to shelter from bad weather, good surfaces for drawing.)

3. In what ways are cave drawings like television, magazines, or newspapers?

(Pictures tell stories and record history.)