

Barbara Mauch – St. Monica School –

Novel Resource

Elizabeth Mitchell

Journey to the Bottomless Pit

Scholastic Inc. 2004

Elizabeth Mitchell also known as Betsy, started her career in Nebraska as a newspaper reporter. She is best known as an editor of Science Fiction Books and Magazines. She has received many awards as the editor-in-chief of Del Ray Book, a publisher of science fiction for adults. She and her family are residents of Brooklyn, New York.

Connection: She used to spend her summers with her grandparents in Louisville, Kentucky. She became interested in the story of Mammoth Cave. She took her son to visit and, and read about Stephen Bishop, the young slave who explored the cave. She is a new children's author.

Journey to the Bottomless Pit, 2004

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www.u.penguingroup.com/rf/Book/Bookdisplay/0,,0_9780670059089.00html



ANNOTATION: This was really an interesting book. Quite a few of us have been to the cave, but never ever learned the history of the teenaged slave that really explored it. I also thought the book gave a good example of how helpless, the slaves felt about controlling their own lives. There was a part, where my stomach actually dropped while reading it. The descriptions are very good. Makes me want to go back and visit it again.

GENRE: Fiction, Historical, Biography, Supplies non fiction information

POINT OF VIEW: Third Person

THEME: Nature and Slavery (It shows the exploration of Mammoth Cave, now a national park.) We also learn about the feeling of Stephen Bishop, the young slave.

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CONFLICT: Stephen against the cave, would he be able to find new rooms and would he be able to find his way out? Will he be able to gain respect and his freedom?

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Stephen is very intelligent, and he devises ways to get where he wants to go in the cave. He also makes it back to the opening. He gave tours many times a day and always kept the people safe. Yes, he makes it to the Bottomless Pit and returns safely.

CHARACTERS: Stephen Bishop, a young slave (the hero)
Archibald Miller, white tour guide who trained Stephen
H..C Stephenson, white explorer
His masters: Franklin Gorin, and John Croghan,
His wife, Charlotte (also a slave)

SETTING: Mammoth Cave, Kentucky in 1838.

INTEREST LEVEL: 3rd to 6th grades, **READING LEVEL:** 4.5

BOOKTALK:

Just imagine that you are alone and in a big, empty pit in the ground. No one asked your permission to put you there. How many of you would like that? How many of you have been in completely total darkness? In Journey to the Bottomless Pit, a young slave named Stephen Bishop is taken there and taught to guide tours through Mammoth Cave. He is brave and creative and smart and wants to explore more on his own. Will he fall into the bottomless pit and if he does, will he find a way out? How many of you have been to Mammoth Cave? Where is it? Do you know that this story is true? It is about a young man who explored it and found lots of its secrets? Let's read and find out what he discovered and if he did it safely.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: PRE-READING QUESTIONS

Chapter 1 - Would Stephen enjoy his new job leading tours through the cave. Page 1

Chapter 2 - What do you think that the room in the cave called The Church looked like?
Page 14.

Chapter 3 - Do you think that the people will get their clothing dirty when going through the cave? Page 28

Chapter 4 - What does Stephen do in each room so the customers can see? Page 27

Chapter 5 – How will Stephen test the depth of some of the pits? Page 39

Chapter 6 – Who will they give the credit to when they talk about the Bottomless Pit?
Page 54

Chapter 7 – When did Stephen enjoy about the cave, the most? Page 64

Chapter 8 – Would patients volunteer to go to the underground hospital? Page 71

Chapter 9 - What was a reason that Stephen didn't run away to his freedom? Page 85

Chapter 10 – Will Stephen ever get credit for exploring and mapping the cave? Page 96

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Reading Questions:

1. Is there lots of water in the cave? Page 5
2. What was some of their material from the cave? Page 12
3. What is the most important rule for the tourists? Page 26
4. How does Stephen get across the Bottomless pit? Page 42
5. Why did Mr. Gorin sell the cave and the slaves? Page 57
6. What were some of the noises that people made in Echo Hall? Page 66
7. What kind of people were living in the cave? Page 72
8. Who did Stephen meet when he was drawing the map? Page 81
9. What did Stephen hear about the Underground Railroad? Page 87
10. In what year did the Mammoth Cave become a National Park? Page 95

Post - Reading Questions ;

1. The New Guide – How does Stephen feel when Mr. Miller looks him up and down. Page 4.
2. The Church and the Steamboat – Why is Stephen glad that he not home on the plantation with his family? Page 13
3. The First Discovery – How did the Bottomless Pit get its name? page 33
4. Across the Bottomless Pit – Why was Stephen happy to find a river? Page 51
5. A New Master - Why is Stephen's name never used to name the places or in the newspaper stories? How does he feel about it? Page 54
6. Under Crevice Pit – What is wrong with the fish that Stephen finds? Why are they like that? Page 64
7. The Underground Hospital – Why would they think that living in a cave would be good for patients with TB? P.71
8. Stephen Draws a Map – What does the pulley do for you? P. 81
9. Free at Last- How did Stephen earn freedom for his wife and son? Page 93
10. The Legacy of Stephen Bishop – How does Stephen finally get honored for his exploration of the cave? Page 96

VOCABULARY:

1. manuscript—an unfinished book, before it is published. Page ix
2. canister –a container that could hold water or oil. Page 2
3. rotunda – a large circular gathering room. Page 13
4. stalactites- rock formations that hang down from the ceiling of a cave. Page 20
5. stalagmite – rock formations that build up from the floor. Page 20
6. saltpeter – a chemical used to make gunpowder. Page 31
7. chasm – a big, deep, wide hole. Page 32
8. abolished – to do away with. Page 59
9. grapple – to catch fish with bare hands. Page 60
10. consumption – an old-fashioned name for tuberculosis.

INDIANA STANDARDS:

- 3.1.2 Read words with several syllables
- 3.1.6 Use sentence and word context to find the meanings of unknown words.
- 3.3.1 Recognize different genre.
- 3.3.3 Determine what the characters are like from their actions.
- 3.3.6 Identify speakers or narrator

- 4.1.5 Understand and explain the figurative language.
- 4.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives of the characters

- 5.1.5. Understand and explain the figurative language.
- 5.2.2. Structural Features Analyze text in sequential or chronological order.
- 5.2.3. Recognize the main ideas, comprehension analysis
- 5.3.3 Contrast the actions, motives of the characters. 5.3.3
- 5.4.3 information pieces

Social Study – Geography

- 3.5.1 Government provides services (park)
- 4.3.6 Natural formations (compare to Indiana)
- 5.3.3 Places and Regions – Name and Locate

ANTICIPATION STATEMENTS:

True or False

1. Mammoth Cave is in Tennessee.
2. Stephen Bishop was just a teenager when he started working in the cave.
3. Stephen fell into the bottomless pit.
4. A slave needed permission to get married from his owner.
5. Stephen had to be very careful how he talked to the white people.
6. Stephen got all the credit for discovering many different and new rooms in the cave.

READ- ALOUD PAGES

Pages 42–46. These are the pages that describe crossing the pit. (Can cause a stomach to flip)

Pages 72-75. These pages describe the hospital and patients in the cave.

IF YOU LIKE... YOU WILL LOVE....

1. Mammoth Cave: The World's Longest Cave System, Brad Burnham, Rosen Publishing, Group's Powerkids Press, 2003
2. Danger at Sand Cave – The Story of Floyd Collins, Candice Ransom, Carol Rhoda Books, 2000
3. Weirdo's War, Michael Coleman, Orchard Books, 1998

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4. Mystery of the Vanishing Cave, Gertrude Chandler Warner, Albert Witman and Co. 1996
5. The Prehistoric and Early History Archeology of Wyandotte Cave and Other Caves in Southern Indiana; Patrick Munson; Indiana Historical Society, 1990.

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM:

1. Science – Research the stalactites and stalagmites and types of rocks that one can find in caves.

Science 3.2.5 Construct a model using paper and other things.

3.2.7 Draw and write a description

4.3.6 Recognize rocks

4.3.7 Observe Weathering

5.1.3 Science involves different kinds of people

5.6.4 Investigate how change came about

2. Social Studies – This would be an activity for Social Studies when studying the Civil War and slavery. This is an excellent book to show how their lives were controlled by the masters. I would have the children list the times in the book that Stephen is treated like a slave.

Social Studies 3.1.7 Distinguish between fact and fiction

3.2.2. Identify fundamental democratic principles

4.1.7 Explain roles of individuals in the social conflicts leading to the Civil War.

4.1.8 Impact of Abraham Lincoln's presidency

5.2.8 Describe group and individual actions that illustrate civic virtues

RESOURCES:

1. United Streaming videos on caves. www.Unitedstreaming.com (School Membership)
2. United States Park Service, Mammoth Cave. www.nps.gov/macaca/
3. Mammoth Cave Site; www.mammoth.cave.nationalpark.dom/
4. Directions for making stalagmites, stalactites: www.scsc.k12.ar.us/ParkerA/lessonplan.htm
5. Sites for lesson plans for teaching about caves, (United States Geological Survey) www.usgs.gov/education/learnweb/caves/intro.htm

BOOK ACTIVITIES:

1. Work in Pairs – Plan a family vacation to Mammoth Cave. Determine distance from Indianapolis. Determine what kind of tours they offer and decide which tour you would take. How much would it cost? Would you take only one? Would your mom and dad take the same tour? Find a motel and figure out how much it would cost for your family to stay there.

Math – Problem Solving – Making Precise Calculations 5.7.7.

Mammoth Cave – Information www.nps.gov/maca/

Driving Distances – www.ez-calculators.com.driving-distance-calculator.htm

Website for Mammoth Cave will give hotel/motel information.

2. Individual work – Research blind fish, and the makeup of the rocks in the cave. Draw a picture of one of rock formations. Go the Mammoth Cave site. Give the name of the place in the cave that you are drawing.

Standard: 3.2.5 construct something or draw from nature

3.2.6 Draw and write descriptions

4.3.6 Recognize Rocks

4.3.7 Weathering of Rocks

5.3.9 Observe warmer and cooler of cave and outside cave.

5.6.4. Investigate how the earth changes

Mammoth Cave www.usgs.gov/education/learnweb/caves/intro.htm

Stalactites www.scsc.k12.ar.us/ParkerA/lesson plan.htm

BIBLLIOGRAPHY:

1. Mammoth Cave –(National Park Service) www.nps.gov/maca/

2. Stalactites & Stalagmites – www.scsc.k12.ar.us/ParkerA/lesson plan.htm

3. Indiana Standards - www.doe.state.in.us/standards/docs.

4. Betsy Mitchell Website –

www.us.penquingroup.com/nf/Book/BookDisplay/0,,0_9780670059089,00.htm.

5. Driving Distances – www.ez-calculators.com.driving-distance-calculator.htm

6. Mammoth Cave – lessons – www.usgs.gov/education/learnweb/caves/into.htm

7. Stalactites- www.scsc.k12.ar.us/ParkerA/lesson plan.htm

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