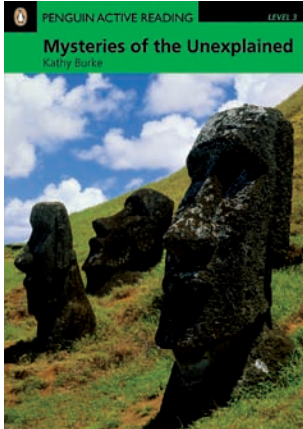




Mysteries of the Unexplained

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Summary

We are lucky to have a better understanding of things that happen around us than people who lived many years ago, because science can help to explain things. We expect to know what is happening around us, on earth and even in space. Therefore, we are at a loss when we are faced with phenomena for which scientists can offer no explanation. *Mysteries of the Unexplained* is about some of these uncanny things that scientists cannot explain.

Chapter 1: In the first chapter, 'Other Worlds', readers can find short articles on spaceships and aliens.

Chapters 2–3: In the second chapter, 'Strange Disappearances', we can read about how people have disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle, that part of the Atlantic Ocean where not only people but also ships and planes have disappeared and no one knows how to explain what has happened. In 'Mysterious Monsters', we can read about monstrous animals, including the famous Loch Ness monster. We can also find out about mysterious land animals which people claim to have seen. Are they real or not?

Chapter 4: *Mysteries of the Unexplained* also explores mysteries across time. In 'Ancient Worlds', for example, we can read about the Pyramids in Egypt. How were they built? And how were the Nazca lines made? There are also many mysteries about Stonehenge in England. Building it seems to have required tools and skills that people did not have at that time. How was it built? What for? The same questions are asked about the statues on Easter Island.

Chapter 5: People contain mysteries too: no one really knows how the mind works, and funny things can happen. Uri Geller is famous for being able to bend spoons just by

thinking about them! More uncanny experiences such as this one are told in 'Mind and Body'.

Chapter 6: 'Ghosts and Past Lives' is about ghosts. How do the dead come back? There are stories of ghosts from all round the world.

Chapter 7: Finally, in 'Earth Mysteries', there are unexplained mysteries of the earth itself. Every summer in England there are reports in the newspapers about crop circles in farmers' fields. Who makes them and why? Rain falls all over the world, but sometimes it brings down fish, frogs and sand from thousands of miles away. It can even rain fire too!

Background and themes

Believing: 'Seeing is believing', they say. Many of the phenomena in the book, such as the existence of spaceships and ghosts, are hard to believe in. What does it feel like to tell someone you have seen a ghost or a spaceship, or an alien, and notice that no one believes you? It is true for you, but is it real?

Science: Scientists ask questions, try and find answers and then develop theories. When science has answers it sometimes leads to more questions. But can science ever explain all the phenomena around us or will mysteries for ever remain unsolved?

The uncanny: Many things are difficult to explain through reason or evidence. They are considered strange or odd or 'paranormal'. These things are more often than not seen as eerie or frightening, so people tend to link them with the supernatural or with magic.

The supernatural: Many things are impossible to explain by natural causes. These mysterious things, which cannot be explained, seem to involve the powers of gods, special forces or magic.

Magic: Mysteries are not always as frightening as monsters or aliens: they can be interesting, like corn circles, or beautiful like Stonehenge. Is the world a more interesting place when not everything can be explained?

History: Many mysteries originated a long time ago, when events were not recorded. Only stones or buildings are left. There are no history books telling us how the pyramids were built, for example. This suggests that people who lived in those times thought very differently about the world around them. However, one day people who study history may discover a record of what happened.



Mysteries of the Unexplained

Life and death: many mysteries are about the body and the mind, about life and death. What happens after death, for example? The pyramids were built for kings who had died, to ensure them an 'afterlife'. Ghosts are supposed to be people who died and have come back to earth. How and why do they come back?

Discussion activities

Before reading

10 Discuss: Mysteries we cannot explain

- a Get students to discuss what films they have seen about mysteries we cannot explain connected with outer space, ancient cultures, monsters, and ghosts. Write these headings on the board and fill out a table with students' contributions. For example:

| Ancient cultures | Monsters | Outer space and aliens | Ghosts |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>The Mummy</i> | <i>Jaws</i> | <i>X-Files</i> | <i>The Others</i> |
| <i>Indiana Jones</i> | <i>Anaconda</i> | <i>ET</i> | <i>Sixth Sense</i> |
| | <i>Godzilla</i> | <i>Alien</i> | |

- b Ask students the following questions: *Were they good? How real did they look? Which unexplained mysteries did they show? Why can't we understand them?*
- 2 Guess:** Make a list of words.
- a Tell students to look at the cover of the book in pairs and to describe to each other what they see. Then ask all the group: *How real is what the photo shows? How many of you believe it is possible to see it? How does science explain this? Why do we consider it a mystery?*
 - b Have students go through the Contents page in pairs. Ask them to rank the topics there (aliens, monsters, ancient worlds, ghost, past lives, etc) from the most to the least mysterious. Make a survey on the board: *Which topics are the most interesting? Why?*
 - c Get your students to work in groups and draw a chart with the topics in the Contents page. Tell them to refer to the Word list at the back of the book. Ask them to fill in their charts with the words there.
 - d Each group will be assigned one topic and will invent and write down the outline of a mysterious story with the words they have chosen. Ask them to go over the book and choose two pictures that will go with their story. Make sure they all keep their stories to work on them again once they have finished reading the book.

Chapter 1

After reading

- 3 **Role play:** Get students to work in pairs on the following situation.
Imagine you are one of the witnesses to any of the mysterious visits (e.g. Socorro, Valensole, Woolpit, etc) reporting to the police. Write the dialogue between the police officer and the witness. Make sure that the witness reveals very detailed and secret information about what they saw.
Then ask them to act out their dialogues in front of the class.
- 4 **Write:** In class or as homework, get students to write on the following topic.
Imagine you are one of the persons taken away by aliens (e.g. Betty and Barney Hill, Travis Walton). Write about and draw what nobody has ever seen! Where were you taken? What did you see? What happened to you? Why did you come back?
Then have the whole class sit in a circle and invite students to show their drawings while they read their story.

Chapters 2–3

After reading

- 5 **Guess:** Get students to work in groups. Each student chooses to be one of the mysterious monsters in chapters 2 and 3 (Nessie, Giant Squid, Globster, etc). They take it in turns to describe themselves and what they do and the others guess who they are.
- 6 **Write:** I came back from Bermuda!
 - a Tell students to look at the pictures on pages 8 and 9 and write the following:
Imagine you are one of the pilots who disappeared in the Bermuda Triangle but you have come back. Write down the most important paragraphs to be published in your best-seller book: 'I survived Bermuda'.
 - b Encourage students to read each other's work and vote for the best story.
 - c In groups, have students propose a cover for the book. You can also have a classroom display of the posters advertising the book.

Chapter 4

After reading

- 7 **Read carefully:** Get students into groups and have them imagine they are scientists. Ask them to choose one of the ancient places in Chapter 4 (Stonehenge, Easter Island, Egypt, etc) and write a short report with five mistakes. Then ask them to pass on their report to another group and tell them to correct them. Then they will check whether the corrections are right.
- 8 **Research:** Have students learn about Egypt. Get students to work in groups and prepare presentations on 'Mysteries of Egypt'.



Mysteries of the Unexplained

On pages 18–19 we are told about unexplained mysteries of the unexplained in Egypt. Get into groups of four and choose the most interesting one. Find out more about it and get ready to present your findings to the class.

- 9 Artwork:** More drawings in Nazca!
- Tell students to look at the drawings on page 21 and ask them the following:
Imagine that new mysterious drawings are found in Nazca. What would they be like? Make them as big as possible.
 - Ask students to describe what their drawings represent. Get them to stick all the drawings in a wallpaper collage and choose a title for it.

Chapter 5

After reading

- 10 Discuss:** The future. Tell students to imagine they are Nostradamus and to work on five predictions for the 21st century. Write students' predictions on the board and have them discuss which are the most probable ones and why.
- 11 Role play:** People in the book.
- Have 5 students come to the front and choose to be any of the people on pages 26–27.
 - Tell the rest of the class to ask them as many questions as possible about what happened to their bodies.
 - Students then vote for the most mysterious experience.

Chapter 6

After reading

- 12 Artwork:** Divide the class into groups and ask them to bring a big world map and coloured markers. Use the following instructions.
In groups, re-read pages 31–33. Underline the names of the ghosts and the countries in which they were seen.
- Use different colours to paint all the countries mentioned in the chapter on your map.*
 - Draw small pictures of the different ghosts and people described in the chapters (cartoon size) and then cut them out and stick them on the map.*
 - Write a short text to advertise 'mystery tours' of the places on the map.*
 - Show your work to the other groups. Discuss: Would you like to go on a tour of those mysterious places?*

Chapter 7

After reading

- 13 Research:** Encourage students to do research on black holes. You can use instructions like these.
- In groups, re-read page 39 and discuss how much you know about 'black holes'.*
 - Decide which aspects of black holes you would like to learn more about. Go to the library or use the Internet to find more information.*
 - Present your findings to the class.*

After reading the book

- 14 Pair work:** Have students choose their favourite mysterious character in the book and take down short notes on what he or she is like.
- Then ask them to do the following task in pairs:
Imagine that these characters meet in a competition called 'I am the most frightening character'. Each of them thinks he or she will be the winner. Write the conversation between them and then act it out in front of the class.
 - Ask the class to vote for the most frightening monster of all.

Write: Invite your students to write a ghost story.

- You can use instructions like these:
You are alone in a dark castle at midnight. Say what you see, what you hear, what you feel and what happens.
- Ask students to tell their stories while the others listen in a dark room or with their eyes closed.
- Have students discuss what stories they liked best and why. Then get them to vote for the best story.

Projects

- 16 Write:** Get students to look at the story they wrote in groups before reading the book.
- Ask them to draw a chart comparing similarities and differences with the stories in the chapter of the book corresponding to the topic they wrote about.
 - Have them choose ten words from the chapter to improve their story. Ask them to include dialogue.
- 17 Artwork:** Students will continue to work in the same groups as in Activity 16. Divide all groups into two halves, A and B.
- Students in group A will re-read the stories that they wrote in 16 b and draw a cartoon based on their story.
 - Students in group B will write a short script based on the story to role play.
Allot time for students to show their cartoons to the class and to act out their scripts.
 - Get the class to prepare a display for the classroom with their stories, cartoons and scripts. You can invite other classes to visit your classroom. Your students can then present their work to a real audience in a meaningful situation.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word list and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.