Monster of the Deep
Scientists explore the secrets behind the mysterious giant squid

About the Article

Levels
Lexile Range: 800L-900L
Guided Reading Level: T
DRA Level: 50

Learning Objectives
Students will read about giant squid and draw conclusions about why people are fascinated with these and other mysterious creatures.

Content-Area Connections
Science: marine biology
Social Studies: world cultures

Key Skills
Drawing conclusions, vocabulary, text evidence, interpreting text, main idea, author’s purpose, problem and solution, key ideas, compare and contrast, explanatory writing

Standards Correlations
This article and lesson support the following Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.7, W.2, SL.1, L.5, L.6

Your Teaching Support Package
Here’s your full suite of materials, all of which you’ll find at storyworks.scholastic.com:

Audio:
• On-level version • Lower-Lexile version

Differentiated article:
• Lower-Lexile version (printable)

Skill Builders to print or project:
• Vocabulary
• Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions*
• Core Skills Workout: Drawing Conclusions, Text Features, Summarizing,* Text Evidence*
• Research Kit
• Comprehension Quiz*
• Questions for English Language Learners

Vocabulary Slideshow
Great visual support!

*Available on two levels
glistening skin, and sucker-covered arms all contribute to an image of a horrifying movie creature.

- Explain what de Kersauson meant when he said “I’ve been sailing for 40 years, and I’ve always had an answer for everything . . . But I didn’t have an answer for this.” (interpreting text) De Kersauson was an experienced sailor who expected events to have logical explanations. But because many people thought giant squid weren’t real at that time, the terrifying event of seeing a 30-foot creature with tentacles seemed to lack an explanation.

- Why is “A Tall Tale?” a fitting subhead for the second section? (main idea) A tall tale is a kind of fictional story that includes larger-than-life characters but is told like it’s true. The section describes supposed tall tales about sea monsters. But the question mark at the end of the subhead suggests that some of the stories about these monsters could actually be true.

- What is the kraken? Why does the author include a discussion of this creature? (author’s purpose) The kraken is a large mythological squid-like creature that traps ships. The author includes information about the kraken because tales of its sighting were probably, in fact, the giant squid.

- What are “squid squads”? What problem were they trying to solve? (problem and solution) Squid squads were scientific teams that made use of new technology developed in the 1960s to search for giant squid. No scientist had seen a live one at that time.

- Who is Steve O’Shea? Why did he want to raise giant squid in captivity? (key ideas) O’Shea is a marine biologist with a special interest in squid. He has discovered many important facts about giant squid but has never captured a live adult. He hoped to raise the 17 baby squid he caught in captivity so he could study and learn more about them.
• What has O’Shea discovered about why giant squid are difficult for humans to find? (text evidence) Squid are difficult to find because they live far below the ocean’s surface, deeper than humans can go. Their enormous eyes and highly developed nerves allow them to see nets and cameras immediately and to get away very quickly.

• What important developments in giant squid research do you learn about in “Living Specimen”? What achievement has yet to happen? (main idea) In 2004, researchers finally saw a live giant squid. An underwater camera took pictures of the animal while it was stuck under a rock. In 2005 and 2012, teams spotted other live giant squid and photographed and filmed them. But to this day, no giant squid has been captured alive.

• Read the sidebar, “Fantastic Beasts.” What do all the creatures have in common? (compare and contrast) All four creatures were believed to be real at one time but have been shown to be imaginary. They all can possibly be explained by sightings of real animals or animal remains, mistakenly thought to be mythical creatures.

Critical-Thinking Question
• Think about what people have discovered when searching for giant squid, Bigfoot, mermaids, and other creatures. What can you conclude about why it’s important to study things we don’t understand? (drawing conclusions) It’s important to study things that seem mysterious to us so we can unlock the mysteries. Creatures that scare or haunt us can seem less scary when we understand that they don’t exist, or that they are animals rather than monsters. We can end up learning fascinating facts and ideas about the world around us.

3. Skill Building
Featured Skill: Drawing Conclusions
• Distribute the drawing conclusions Skill Builder and have students complete it in groups. Then ask them to respond to the writing prompt at the bottom of page 9.

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers
Help struggling readers tackle the writing prompt by breaking it down into its components. Create three columns on the board (Old Idea, Current Idea, Why It Changed) and go through the article and sidebar, identifying ideas that have changed over time. Add the relevant information to the chart. Discuss the writing prompt while referring to the completed chart.

For Advanced Readers
Ask students: What motivates people to dedicate their lives to uncovering a mystery? Put students in small groups to discuss, reflecting on Steve O’Shea from this article and Barry Clifford from our October/November 2016 nonfiction “The Search for Pirate Gold,” available at Storyworks Digital.

For ELL Students
Together with students, create a timeline with these dates: long ago, 1873, 1960s, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2012. Go through the article to find what happened at each date, working with kids to make sure they understand the language.

For Research
Have students choose another mythical creature to research. They should use the “Fantastic Beasts” sidebar as a guide and write a paragraph about their creature—including how it looks and behaves and whether it has a real-life basis. Students can add an illustration before sharing.