

The Beast of Loch Ness

The facts and the fiction behind one of the world's favorite fantastical creatures

About the Story

Lexile: 940L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to evaluate evidence presented in an article

Key Skills: key ideas and details, compare and contrast, text structure, author's craft, evaluating evidence

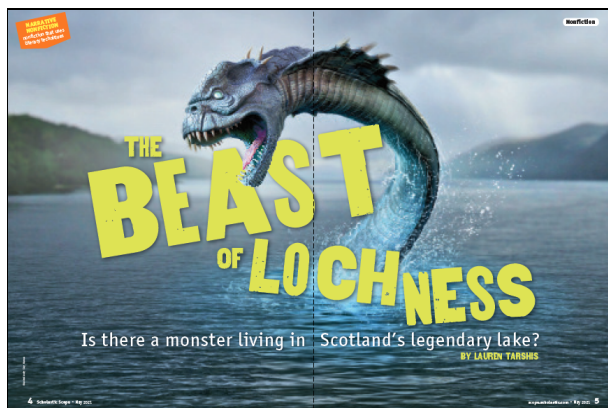
Essential Questions:

- Where do stories about imaginary creatures come from?
- What is the appeal of imaginary creatures?
- How do myths and legends help explain the world?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Article read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary slideshow

Differentiated Articles:

- Lower-Lexile version
- Spanish language version

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- Paired Texts: "Hunting a Monster" and "Monster of the Deep"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: Could Nessie Really Exist?
- Nonfiction Elements*
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing*, Text Features, Text Structure, Text Evidence*
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

10 minutes

Do Now: Solve a Riddle. (5 minutes)

- Post this riddle in your classroom or virtual hangout:
*I live in a lake in Scotland.
 I have lived there for centuries.
 Some call me a monster.
 Others say I'm a large marine reptile.
 Still others say I'm simply a figment of the human imagination.
 Who am I?*

Give students a couple minutes, then reveal the answer: the Loch Ness Monster. Then ask:
Have you heard of this creature before? If so, do you think it's possible that the Loch Ness monster could really exist?

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow** on your whiteboard, or if you're remote, share it on your screen. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class or in groups. Optionally, share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently. Highlighted words: *incontrovertible, murky, plausible, ploy, preposterous, scrutinizing, sonar*

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 6 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article once through as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the **lower-Lexile version** of the article with students who may need it.*) Optionally, have students listen to the article read-aloud while they follow along. The **read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.

- Divide students into groups to read the story again and respond to the following close-reading questions. *Tip: If you're remote, you can have each group respond in a shared doc or discuss the questions in their own chat room; you can also use the questions as an asynchronous assignment.*

Close-Reading Questions (10 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- 1. Traditionally, how have people characterized Loch Ness and the creature that is said to live in it? Are attitudes about Loch Ness and the creature any different today?** (key ideas and details, compare and contrast) *Loch Ness has traditionally been characterized as gloomy, mysterious, and spooky. Legends portray the creature living in it as huge, elusive, and terrifying; the creature was said to have a taste for human flesh. These old stories portrayed Loch Ness as a place to be avoided. Today, the loch and the creature are seen as fun and interesting. Tourists flock to the loch by the thousands to visit a special exhibition center and take lake cruises to look for Nessie.*
- 2. Why do most scientists reject the idea that the Loch Ness monster exists?** (key ideas and details) *One reason scientists reject the idea that the Loch Ness monster exists is that few plants or fish can survive in the harsh conditions of Loch Ness; there is likely not enough food, light, or warmth to sustain such a creature. Another reason scientists reject the idea is that they have searched the lake thoroughly using sonar and satellites and found nothing unusual.*
- 3. Why does author Lauren Tarshis include information about the giant squid and the okapi in the article?** (text structure) *Many people once believed these animals were imaginary. Tarshis includes information about them to support the idea that creatures widely believed to be imaginary—like Nessie—do at least occasionally turn out to be real.*
- 4. Explain how Tarshis uses rhetorical questions throughout the article. What purposes do these questions serve?** (author's craft) *In the article, author Lauren Tarshis uses rhetorical questions for several purposes. In the introduction, after describing reported sightings of the Loch Ness monster, Tarshis writes, "But . . . what was it?" This rhetorical question is used to build suspense. In the section "Finding Proof," Tarshis uses a series of rhetorical questions to emphasize the unlikelihood of Nessie's existence, writing, "What would the creature eat? And how could there be just one creature? . . . Is it likely that a group of giant animals lives in the loch, invisible to all but a few accidental witnesses?" Together, these questions express skepticism. Later, Tarshis uses rhetorical questions to encourage readers to consider the possibility of Nessie's existence, asking questions such as "But can they all be making it up?" and "Who knows?"*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **How convincing do you find the evidence for the idea that the Loch Ness monster exists?**
Explain. *Answers will vary. Students may say that the evidence is not convincing because it is mainly anecdotal (eyewitness accounts), from folklore, or poor quality (blurry photos and videos). Also, scientists have conducted several searches of Loch Ness and concluded that there are “no signs of any large living animal” in the loch. That scientists do not find the “evidence” of a Loch Ness monster credible further supports the conclusion that this evidence is not convincing.*
2. **Why do you think people continue to be interested in the story of the Loch Ness monster?** *Answers will vary. Students will likely say that the fact that some imaginary creatures have turned out to be real drives some to believe that Nessie may eventually be confirmed as real too. They may also say that something in humans simply longs for magic and mystery—that we continue to be interested in Nessie’s story because we want to live in a world that science cannot fully explain.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Could Nessie Really Exist?** This activity will help them evaluate evidence and organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 8 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Connected readings from the *Scope* archives about cryptids:

- Paired Texts: [“Hunting a Monster”](#) and [“Monster of the Deep”](#) (March 2019)

Other articles you can use to practice evaluating evidence:

- Narrative Nonfiction: [“Vanished”](#) (December 2019/January 2020)
- Narrative Nonfiction: [“Escape From Alcatraz”](#) (December 2017/January 2018)