

Trapped in a Cave

The incredible rescue of a boys soccer team and their coach

About the Story

Lexile: 880L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to identify problem-solution relationships that appear in a narrative nonfiction article

Key Skills: author's craft, text structure, cause and effect, key ideas and details, problem and solution, interpreting text

Essential Questions:

- What does it take to survive?
- What is the power of cooperation?
- What role does weather play in our lives?

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:

- Author read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Video: Beyond the Story

Differentiated Articles:

- Lower-Lexile version
- Spanish language version

Connected narrative nonfiction from the Scope archives:

- "Disaster in Space"
- "The Children's Blizzard"
- "The Race Against Death"
- "Lost in the Woods"

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

- Preparing to Write: Rescuing the Wild Boars
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Vocabulary Definitions and Practice
- Video Discussion Questions
- Nonfiction Elements
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing*, Text Features
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels



Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

25 minutes

Do Now: Find Calm (10 minutes)

- Turn the lights down low or off completely. Project [this 10-minute guided mindfulness practice](#) from Calm.com on your board. (No ads appear on this YouTube link.) Be sure to turn on your speakers.
- After completing the guided practice, discuss: How do you feel? Is it different from the way you felt when you entered the classroom? If so, how? Do you think there are benefits to calling attention to our thoughts, feelings, and environment in the present moment? If so, what might those be? (Want to do more exercises like this with your students? [Check out these resources on Lincoln Middle School's "Chill Space" page.](#))
- Tell students that today they're going to read a story about kids their age in Thailand who also meditated. They used meditation to help them survive while trapped in a flooded cave.

Watch the Video (10 minutes)

- Watch the **Beyond the Story** video, in which author Christina Soontornvat talks about her writing and research process. Have students respond to the **Video Discussion Questions** (available in your Resources tab) in small groups or pairs.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class. (Optionally, have students complete the practice activity for homework.) Highlighted words: *comrades*, *confound*, *current*, *junction*, *meditate*, *recede*, *stalactites*, *torrential*

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 5 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article once as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the **lower-Lexile version** of the article with students who may need it.*) Optionally, have students listen to Christina Soontornvat read her article aloud while they follow along. The **audio 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.

Close-Reading Questions (15 minutes)

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

1. **How does the author bring the setting of the story to life?** (author's craft) Soontornvat brings the setting to life by providing vivid sensory details about the town of Mae Sai and the Tham Luang cave. She describes the sights the Wild Boars pass as they ride their bikes—the area's animals, plants, and geography—in a way that makes readers feel as if they are riding through the lush and vibrant landscape of northern Thailand themselves. Her description of the monsoon season, with clouds that "crack open" and a type of rain that "feels like walking through a waterfall" helps readers imagine the weather at that time of year, a key part of the story.
2. **How does the section "The Monsoon Season" contribute to the article?** (text structure, cause and effect) The section "The Monsoon Season" helps readers understand what caused the Tham Luang cave system to fill with water and trap the Wild Boars and Coach Ek inside: seasonal heavy rainfall. In addition, it helps readers understand why the team mistakenly believed it would be safe to enter the cave: A changing and unpredictable climate caused the rainy season to start weeks earlier than usual.
3. **How does Soontornvat portray Tham Luang cave as both dangerous and wondrous?** (key ideas and details) Soontornvat portrays Tham Luang as dangerous by describing the faded sign that warns visitors not to enter during the rainy season, the stalactites that hang from the cave's ceilings "like dragon teeth," and the complete darkness and claustrophobia-inducing narrow spaces the cave contains. At the same time, she portrays the cave as wondrous when she describes its big, airy rooms, the allure of exploring its fascinating depths, and the sacred power it holds for many people in northern Thailand.

4. **What challenges did divers and other team members face during the rescue mission? What challenges did the Wild Boars face within the cave?** (problem and solution) *The divers and other team members faced continual rain, low visibility, strong currents, and a lack of equipment and experience needed to dive through sumps. They had to quickly problem-solve to find alternate ways into the cave and more effective ways to pump water out of it. Plus, the rescue team was exhausted, getting by on little sleep and also dealing with the loss of a Navy SEAL who died during the mission. Inside the cave, the Wild Boars were challenged with staying warm, dealing with hunger, and managing the emotional toll of being trapped.*
5. **Soontornvat writes, “But as John pointed out, being alive inside a cave and being alive outside a cave are two very different things.” What did John mean?** (interpreting text) *John was referring to how dangerous and difficult it would be to get the Wild Boars and Coach Ek out of the cave now that they had been located. He was saying that although the team was alive inside the cave, there was still a long way to go before they were actually safe.*

Critical-Thinking Question

(5 minutes)

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

1. **What can be gained from learning about the soccer team’s rescue and other survival stories?** *Answers will vary. Students may say that learning about the soccer team’s rescue and other survival stories can remind us of the power and strength of nature. Such stories can also remind us of the resilience and strength of the human spirit. Survival stories can strengthen our faith in human goodness by showing us people like the more than 1,000 volunteers and experts from around the world who cooperated to save the Wild Boars, putting their own lives at risk to save others.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Rescuing the Wild Boars**. This activity will help them evaluate evidence and organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 10 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 narrative nonfiction from the *Scope* archives about survival:

- ["Disaster in Space" \(December 2016/January 2017\)](#)
- ["The Children's Blizzard" \(February 2019\)](#)
- ["Race Against Death" \(October 2018\)](#)
- ["Lost in the Woods" \(September 2020\)](#)