

“Is This Mountain Cursed?” and “Gold Fever”

Two articles explore humanity’s obsession with gold.

About the Story

Lexile: 880L

For qualitative complexity factors,
go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to synthesize
information from two articles about
gold

Key Skills: author’s craft, key ideas and
details, text structure, interpreting text,
summarizing, synthesis

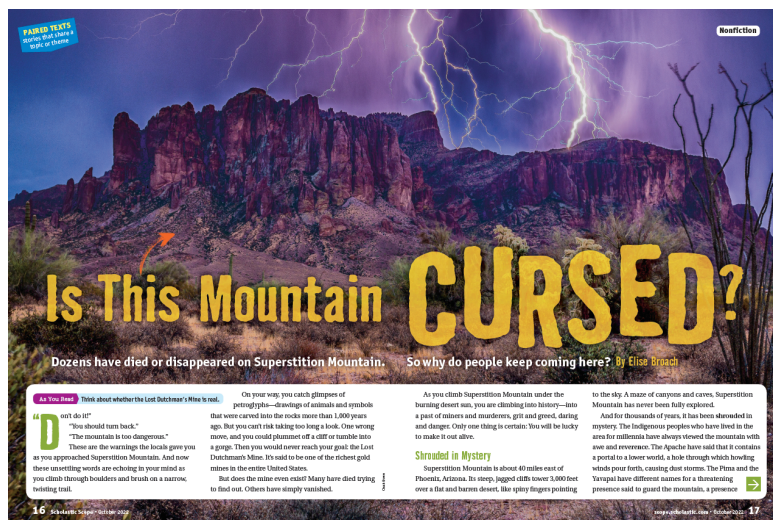
Essential Questions:

- What makes something valuable?
- What shapes our values and beliefs?
- When is a risk worth the reward?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these
Common Core anchor standards:
R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.9, W.1,
W.2, W.4, SL.1, SL.2, 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-alouds
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Video:

- Beyond the Story: “Into the World of Gold”

Differentiated Article:

- Lower-Lexile version

Connected readings from the

Scope archives:

- “Are Those Aliens?”
- “The Beast of Loch Ness”
- “Vanished”
- “Escape From Alcatraz”

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

- Writing Planner: The Lost Dutchman’s Mine
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Gold In Everyday Language
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Choice Board
- Quiz*
- Core Skills Workout: Text Evidence*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

20 minutes

Do Now: Look at Language (10 minutes)

- Project the following task on your whiteboard, or use our **Gold in Everyday Language** handout, found in your Resources tab. (Sample answers can be found in the Answer Key.)

The word *gold* is part of our everyday language, found in many common expressions and sayings. Consider the phrases below. For as many as you can, explain what the phrase means or use it in a sentence.

- “heart of gold”
- “a gold mine”
- “good as gold”
- “All that glitters is not gold.”
- “worth its weight in gold”
- “sitting on a gold mine”
- “golden age”
- “a golden touch”
- “Silence is golden.”
- “gold standard”
- “to strike gold”
- “go for gold”
- “golden ticket”

Together, what do these uses of *gold* in our language reveal? What does gold symbolize to us?

Watch a Video (5 minutes)

- Share the video “**Into the World of Gold**,” which introduces key vocabulary and concepts and answers the question: Where does gold come from?

Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class. Highlighted words: *credible, droves, ore, plunder, revelation, reverence, scant, shrouded*. Optionally, print or share the interactive link directly to your LMS and have students

preview the words and complete the activity beforehand. (Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud are embedded in the interactive slides.)

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

“Is This Mountain Cursed?”

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box that appears on page 16 of the magazine and at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article through once as a class. Optionally, have students listen to author Elise Broach 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.
- Have students reread the article silently to themselves. Then discuss the following.

Close-Reading Questions

(20 minutes)

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

1. **In her introduction, how does author Elise Broach transport you to Superstition Mountain? What kind of feelings do you get from “being there”?** (author’s craft) *Broach begins her article with a series of quotations from the locals about the mountain—all warnings against going there. She then uses a second-person point of view, addressing you directly as someone who is climbing Superstition Mountain, and therefore someone who might vanish or even die as many have in the past. She vividly describes your surroundings—a “narrow, twisting trail” beneath the “burning desert sun”—and how you could easily “plummet off a cliff or tumble into a gorge.” She repeatedly uses alliteration: “boulders and brush” and “miners and murderers, grit and greed, daring and danger.” This language is striking and dramatic, and it adds to the sense of dread and suspense.*
2. **What initially brought gold seekers to Superstition Mountain?** (key ideas and details) *The Spanish had heard stories from Indigenous peoples about “vast riches” in the American Southwest. The Spanish assumed “riches” referred to gold, and came to Superstition Mountain eager to find it. But in reality, the Indigenous peoples may have been referring to the wealth of bison that they used for food, clothes, blankets, and tools.*
3. **How does the section “A Secret Mine” contribute to the article?** (text structure) *The section “A Secret Mine” helps readers understand the role Jacob Waltz played in fueling the*

rumors about hidden treasure on Superstition Mountain. His death set off a chain of events that caused Julia Thomas, Adolph Ruth, and hundreds of others to risk their lives to find the treasure.

4. **Broach writes, “But perhaps the curse reveals a deeper truth—a warning well worth heeding.” What deeper truth is Broach referring to?** (interpreting text) *Broach is referring to the real dangers that exist on Superstition Mountain. The mountain is hazardous, with extreme weather conditions making it even more risky. And as Broach suggests, the risks extend beyond just the natural dangers. Gold brings out greed in people, and greed can cause people to do terrible things.*

“Gold Fever”

- Read the informational text as a class. Then discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions, some of which apply to both articles.

Close-Reading Question

(2 minutes)

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

1. **Why is gold so valuable to humans?** (summarizing) *Gold is valuable for several reasons. Its strength guarantees that it will last for years. It is malleable and versatile, allowing it to be used in many different ways. It is rare and hard to get, which increases its value. It is also universally considered beautiful.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

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

1. **Consider the saying “Gold makes monsters of men.” What do you think this means? What evidence from the articles supports this saying?** *The saying means that wealth or the desire for wealth can bring out the worst in people. In “Is This Mountain Cursed?” it’s suggested that Adolph Ruth may have been murdered because he found the Lost Dutchman’s Mine. The article later states, “When you factor in the possibility of gold, there is also the threat of crime—robbery and murder.” In “Gold Fever,” the authors state that gold has “toppled empires.” These examples show that gold can drive people to do unimaginable and maybe even monstrous things.*
2. **Do you think the risks associated with searching for gold are worth the reward? Use evidence from both texts to support your answer.** *Answers will vary.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

20 minutes

- Have students complete **Writing Planner: The Lost Dutchman's Mine**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the prompt on page 21 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.

Other *Scope* narrative nonfiction articles from the online library you can use to practice evaluating evidence:

- [“Are Those Aliens?”](#) (December 2021/January 2022)
- [“The Beast of Loch Ness”](#) (May 2021)
- [“Vanished”](#) (December 2019/January 2020)
- [“Escape From Alcatraz”](#) (December 2017/January 2018)