

***Is It Real? The Loch Ness Monster***

By Candace Fleming

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IS IT REAL?

THE LOCH NESS MONSTER

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The Story

Nestled in the lush green hills of the Scotland Highlands lies Loch Ness, a deep, murky lake with a storied history. It is also the home of the Loch Ness Monster. Numerous stories and photographs by people claiming to have spotted the mysterious monster have surfaced, often gaining immediate fame. But after decades of countless expeditions, documentaries, firsthand accounts, pictures, and videos, the mystery of Nessie continues to haunt us.

Now, Sibert Award-winning author Candace Fleming invites you to become a detective and to join the race to uncover the truth. You'll learn how real-life detectives and scientists conduct their investigations to solve the greatest mysteries as the principles of the scientific method and more tools for boosting critical thinking and analysis are introduced. You will consider the evidence, see if you can tell the difference between fact and fiction, and maybe you can answer this age-old question about the Loch Ness monster: Is it real?

Reading Group Questions

1. Had you ever heard of the Loch Ness Monster before reading this book?
2. Before reading, did you believe the Loch Ness Monster was real, or myth? Did reading this book change your mind? Why or why not?
3. The Loch Ness Monster is often called a “cryptid.” Are there any other “cryptids” you’ve ever been curious about? Are you planning another investigation with the skills you’ve learned from this book?
4. Have you ever had to use your critical thinking skills before? Why, and what did you learn from that experience?
5. Can you name one example where your critical thinking and analysis skills will be useful? Why? How would you use these skills to resolve that situation?

About the Author



Photo © Candace Fleming

Candace Fleming is the versatile and acclaimed author of more than twenty books for children and young adults, including *Crash from Outer Space: Unraveling the Mystery of Flying Saucers*, *Alien Beings*, and *Roswell*; *The Curse of the Mummy: Uncovering Tutankhamun's Tomb*; *The Enigma Girls: How Ten Teenagers Broke Ciphers, Kept Secrets, and Helped Win World War II*; *The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh*, winner of the YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Award; the Sibert Award winner *Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera*; the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize winner and Sibert Honor Book *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of the Russian Empire*; and the critically acclaimed *Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart*. Visit Candace Fleming online at candacefleming.com. She lives outside of Chicago.

Author Q&A

What made you want to dive into the mystery of the Loch Ness Monster?

My love affair with Nessie started when I was in fifth grade. That year, I watched a documentary on television about the mystery and became obsessed. I mean, OBSESSED! What could be more wonderful than the idea of a long-forgotten, rarely seen creature—a plesiosaur, no less—gliding beneath the cold, dark waters of a Scottish lake? After that, I gobbled up everything about Nessie I could get my hands on. But I never found anything about the monster. Does Nessie really have a secret system of underwater tunnels or not? Is she a prehistoric creature or something else? As a kid, the not-knowing drove me nuts. To tell you the truth, it still does! And so, I decided to write about the mystery. This would not only allow me to satisfy my own curiosity, it would also provide the chance to share my discoveries (and my Nessie love) with readers. Win-win!

What was the most fun part of this book to write? What was the most challenging part?

By far, the most fun part of writing this book was the sightings. There are so *many* first-hand accounts of people's encounters with Nessie, and I found every single one wonderful. Some people claim they saw horns sprouting from her head. Others claim her eyes are a blazing red. One woman even reported seeing a "litter of monsterlings" playfully splashing together in the loch. Isn't that great? Baby Nessies! Most believed they'd seen the monster, and many claimed to have been changed by their encounters. All this explains why I found the most challenging part of this book to be deciding on which sightings to include. I wanted to include them all. Sadly, I had room for just a few.

What are some cool things you learned while researching and writing this book?

Call me a nerd, but some of the coolest stuff I discovered had to do with the lake itself. For example, did you know that because of something called "thermocline" Loch Ness experiences huge, *underwater* waves? Did you know that waterspouts are common? Did you know the loch is so murky, the water so peaty, that its visibility is super low, even near the surface? I'd always thought the monster was the biggest mystery in Loch Ness. But now I view the lake as equally strange and inscrutable.

Can you describe the research you did in order to write this story? Where you did look and what did you find?

I did lots of "primary research" for this book. That is, I searched for first-hand accounts from people who had a direct connection to the monster. I discovered interviews and other first-hand accounts in old books, newspapers and magazines, all of which I found online. I looked at archival photographs and newsreels (also online). I read scientific papers published by the Loch Ness Project, a group that concerns itself with the "research, exploration and investigation" of Loch Ness. But here's the coolest part of research: it never really ends. Just because I've finished writing this book doesn't mean I'm not still curious. In fact, I'm headed to Loch Ness next spring to take part in a "surface watch" organized by the Loch Ness Center. Yes, that's right, I'm going to be a "watcher." Wish me luck!