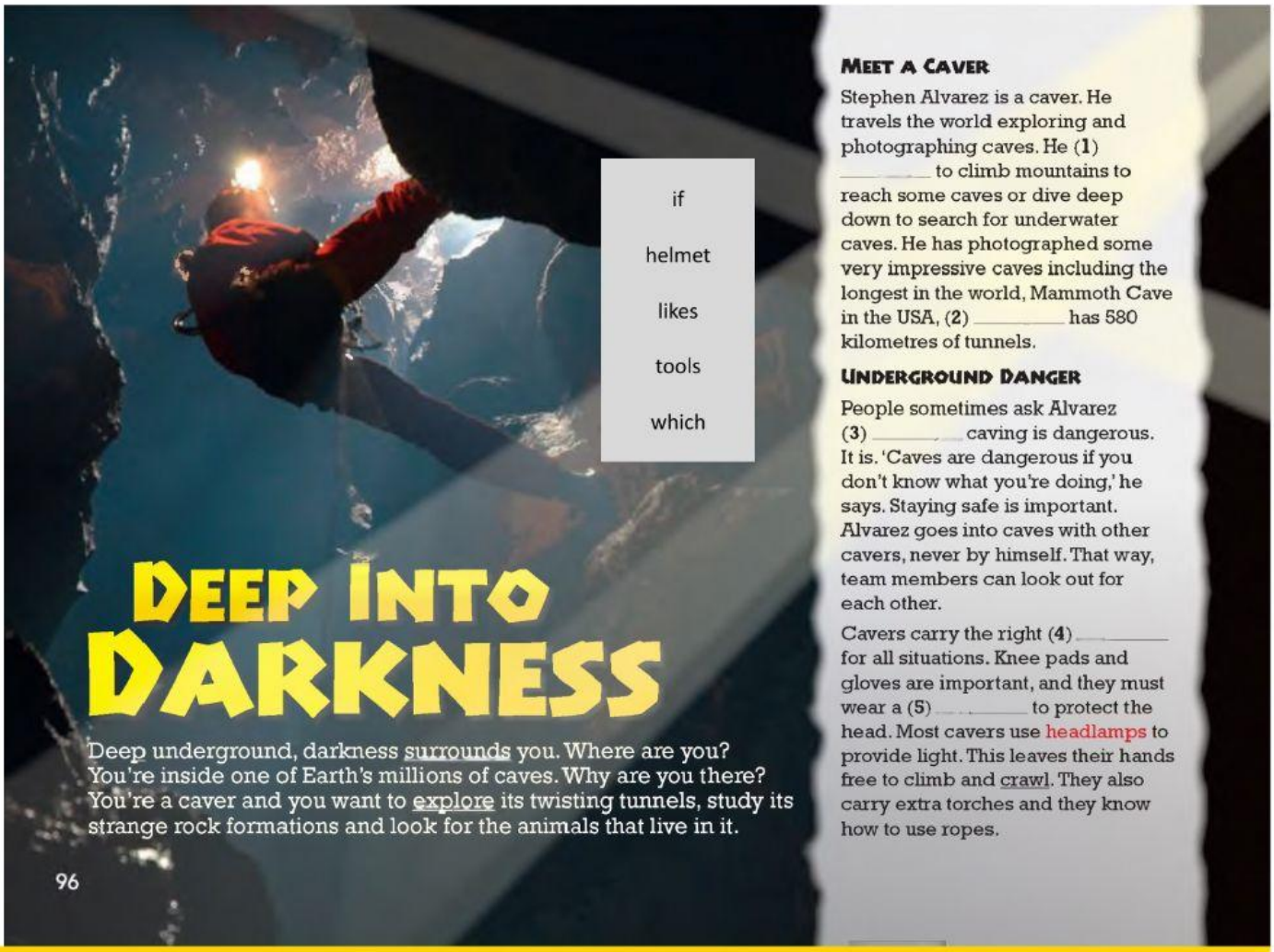


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Deep Into Darkness

Deep underground, darkness surrounds you. Where are you? You're inside one of Earth's millions of caves. Why are you there? You're a caver and you want to explore its twisting tunnels, study its strange rock formations and look for the animals that live in it.

Meet a Caver

Stephen Alvarez is a caver. He travels the world exploring and photographing caves. He (1) _____ to climb mountains to reach some caves or dive deep down to search for underwater caves. He has photographed some very impressive caves including the longest in the world, Mammoth Cave in the USA, (2) _____ has 580 kilometres of tunnels.

Underground Danger

People sometimes ask Alvarez (3) _____ caving is dangerous. It is. 'Caves are dangerous if you don't know what you're doing,' he says. Staying safe is important. Alvarez goes into caves with other cavers, never by himself. That way, team members can look out for each other.

Cavers carry the right (4) _____ for all situations. Knee pads and gloves are important, and they must wear a (5) _____ to protect the head. Most cavers use headlamps to provide light. This leaves their hands free to climb and crawl. They also carry extra torches and they know how to use ropes.

Decorations

There are fantastic shapes to see in caves. These shapes are called decorations and they form when rainwater drips onto stone. Examples of these are stalactites, which hang down from a cave ceiling, and stalagmites, which grow upwards from the cave floor. But Alvarez says there are many (6) _____, including some that look like popcorn and some that look like a nest of eggs.

Cave Creatures

Beautiful cave decorations are not all that you'll see in caves. Animals live in caves, too. Many of (7) _____ are eyeless. They don't need eyes because there is no light in the cave. Alvarez has seen fish and spiders without eyes. Because they can't see, these creatures can hear, touch or smell very well. They can move around and they know what's nearby. They can capture their food without ever seeing the victim!

Cave Threats

Explorers like Alvarez know how important it is to (8) _____ caves. Pollution is one threat. Polluted water from farms or businesses can flow into caves, destroying decorations and killing animals. Human visitors can also be a threat. A (9) _____ caver can destroy in minutes what took thousands of years to form. That's (10) _____ responsible cavers say, 'Take nothing but pictures. Leave nothing but footprints. Kill nothing but time!'

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Ben Caddell descends into Majlis al Jinn cave in Oman



Cavers light the entrance passage of Ora Cave. New Britain Island, Papua New Guinea

LIVEWORKSHEETS