

Scientists at Work: Diving in underwater caves for new forms of life

By Tom Iliffe, The Conversation, adapted by Newsela staff 02/07/2018 Text Level 5 Word Count 760

- 1) Skim for vocab words you might not know

2) Write two Predictions of what you think the article might be about:

3) Read, B/S, T2T (One chunk at a time)

Box and summarize

Talk to the Text

Many university professors perform experiments in labs. Others study old books in the library. I get to go cave diving. I study underwater caves and the sea animals that live in them. My diving partners and I often explore caves no one else has seen before.

Over the last 40 years, I have explored more than 1,500 underwater caves around the world. I've been to Australia, to the Mediterranean Sea between Europe and Africa, and to Hawaii. I've also been to the Bahamas, which are islands near Florida, and to the Caribbean Sea. The experience can be breathtaking. I might dive in a cave that is as deep as a building with nine floors. These caves have zero light and can be 20 miles long. I never know what I am about to see.

I mainly search for new forms of life. Most of the animals I find are white crustaceans without eyes. Crustaceans are sea animals with shells, like crabs and shrimp. The ones I find don't need eyes because they live in places that are completely dark.

The caves I'm interested in are filled with water and can only be explored in person. The only way to get there is to strap on a scuba tank and jump in. Scuba tanks contain air for me to breathe underwater.

Science as Extreme Sport

Many things can go wrong during a cave dive. Equipment can fail and scuba tanks can leak. You can get lost. The cave you are exploring can fall in or fill with poisonous gas. This kind of environment is extremely dangerous. I have had some close calls over the years. Sadly, I have lost several good friends and scientists in cave accidents.

When accidents happen, someone usually made a mistake. Divers don't follow the rules or they don't have enough training and experience in cave diving. My family has gotten used to the idea that my job is not always safe. They know that safety and being