Lesson 14

**Bigfoot: Fact or Fantasy?**

When European explorers returned from Asia and Africa in the Middle Ages, they reported having seen twelve-foot lizards with huge jaws that could eat a person whole. Most people who heard these stories were **incredulous** and accused the travelers of lying. The stories seemed **preposterous** to them. At that time hardly anyone in Europe had ever seen a crocodile. For centuries, travelers have been ridiculed for their reports of **exotic** creatures seen in distant lands. But the Komodo dragon of Indonesia, the giant panda of Western China, and the mountain gorilla of Ethiopia, to mention just three that were dismissed at one time as imaginary, really do exist.

More recently, there have been stories of Bigfoot, the **legendary** ape-like creature of the American Northwest. And Bigfoot’s **counterpart** is said to live just below the snowline in the Himalayan Mountains of Asia. It is the yeti, also known as the Abominable Snowman. **Alleged** sightings, and even photographs, of both creatures make news periodically. Plaster casts have supposedly been made of their footprints. But the photographs are never sharp; the plaster casts could well be fakes; and the claims of those who say they have seen Bigfoot are not very **plausible**. Scientists have been **scrupulous** in their examination of the evidence. Their view is that it is not **conclusive**. Most remain unconvinced that Bigfoot and the yeti actually exist.

In spite of the scientists’ findings, some people feel the need to believe that such creatures do exist. Such people are **enthralled** by the mysterious. They would like to think that somewhere deep in the forest, Bigfoot is **lurking**. They imagine that high in the Himalayas, a team of mountaineers is about to come upon the yeti. Supermarket tabloids **pander** to these people. They print headlines such as “Bigfoot Stole My Baby” or “Yeti Attacks Climbers on Mount Everest.” Of course, only the most **naive** people believe such stories.

Given our **dismal** record of dealing with wild creatures, it would probably be best for Bigfoot and the yeti, if indeed they are real, to remain undiscovered. What would we do with them if we captured them? Such creatures do not belong in a **menagerie** to be peered at and photographed.
by sightseers. Such is the fate of the giant panda, the Komodo dragon, and the mountain gorilla. Bigfoot and the yeti are probably best left where they are now, creatures of our imagination, along with unicorns, fire-breathing dragons, and mermaids.

**Answer each of the following questions in the form of a sentence. If a question does not contain a vocabulary word from the lesson’s word list, use one in your answer. Use each word only once.**

1. Do tabloid newspapers do a responsible job of reporting the news?

2. What is the meaning of *naive* as it is used in the passage?

3. What do Bigfoot and the Abominable Snowman have in common?

4. How does the yeti compare with Bigfoot?

5. What do many people imagine Bigfoot to be doing?

6. Where would a creature like Bigfoot *not* belong?

7. What is the meaning of *incredulous* as it is used in the passage?

8. What is the meaning of *scrupulous* as it is used in the passage?
9. Why does the passage describe sightings of Bigfoot as “alleged”?
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___________________________________________________________________

10. Why do most people not accept claims of Bigfoot sightings?
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___________________________________________________________________

11. What kind of evidence would lead scientists to believe that Bigfoot exists?
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___________________________________________________________________

12. What would be a likely reaction of people should there be a more convincing account of a Bigfoot sighting?
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13. What is the meaning of **dismal** as it is used in the passage?
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___________________________________________________________________

14. Why would a rabbit not be considered an **exotic** creature?
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15. Why would a report that a unicorn had been spotted be **preposterous**?
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___________________________________________________________________
• The adjective **dismal** is formed from two Latin words: *dies*, “day,” and *mal*, “bad.” It is easy to see how having a bad day might make a person feel dismal.

• The Old English word *thrael* means “a slave” and survives in our modern English word **enthrall**, one of whose meanings is “to enslave.” The more common meaning, “to hold as if in a spell,” can suggest a kind of enslavement; to be enthralled by someone is to be so fascinated by him or her that one surrenders one’s will to that person.

• The Latin verb **credere** means “to believe” and is used in the formation of a number of English words. **Credulous** persons are easily fooled because they are inclined to believe whatever they are told, no matter how unlikely. On the other hand, persons who are **incredulous** find it hard to believe what they are being told. A **credible** story is one that sounds believable. An **incredible** story is one that is hard to believe.

• A **scruple** is a twinge or sense of guilt felt when one wants to do something that one shouldn’t. A **scrupulous** person is someone who has scruples and won’t do something that is wrong or dishonest. Some people have no scruples and will do whatever is necessary to further their own purposes. They are **unscrupulous**.