

# The History of Mammoth Cave National Park

Podcast Length: 28:48

Character Value: Community and belonging

Health Message: Benefits of outdoors

## Synopsis

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Today's Walking Classroom podcast discusses the history of Mammoth Cave National Park. The area around Mammoth Cave has played a significant role for people in Kentucky and around the world from prehistoric times to the present, from exploration to saltpeter mining to tourism. Besides being important historically, Mammoth Cave National Park is also a place of great biodiversity with its vast array of plant and animal life. As Mammoth Cave continues to be explored, we must do what we can to help preserve it.

## Objectives

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- Discover the history of Mammoth Cave National Park.
- Identify key people associated with the area.
- Discuss its significance as a place of great biodiversity and the need to preserve it.

## Procedure

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*If you want to compare student comprehension before and after listening, administer the Comprehension Quiz before doing anything related to the podcast. Retest after walking.*

1. Review key vocabulary (included definitions are limited to the context of today's podcast).
  - **saltpeter (noun)** - the common name for the chemical compound potassium nitrate used to create gunpowder and other explosives  
**Saltpeter** mined from the cave was used for making fertilizer and gunpowder.
  - **World Heritage Site (proper noun)** - special places identified as cultural treasures or having important natural features that have been set aside to be protected  
*There are more than 1,000 **World Heritage sites** located in more than 160 countries.*
  - **biodiversity (noun)** - the variety of animal and plant life in an environment; having many different life forms in an area  
*You can discover **biodiversity** even in your own backyard, because there are many species of insects living there.*

- **conservation (noun)** - the protection or preservation of the natural environment; prevention of the wasteful use of a resource  
*Our **conservation** efforts reduced the amount of water being wasted each day.*
2. Build background by asking students, "Have you ever visited Mammoth Cave National Park? What do you know about its history?"
  3. Allow time for discussion.
  4. Podcast preview: "Did you ever wonder about how a National Park came to be? Today we're going to learn about the history of Mammoth Cave National Park, from prehistoric times to the present, and hear about some of the people and events that were part of that history. Ready? Let's go!"
  5. Walk!

## Questions for Thought & Discussion

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*Upon return to the classroom, discuss the main ideas and content from the podcast using the questions and suggested answers below.*

1. **What were some of the big ideas of this podcast?**

✓ *The area around Mammoth Cave has played an important role for people in Kentucky and around the world from prehistoric times to the present. Over the years, the cave was used for saltpeter mining and served as a popular tourist attraction even before the cave and surrounding land became a National Park.*

- ✓ *Many people have connections to the Park's land, including early Native Americans, and those who explored, settled, lived, and worked there through the early part of the twentieth century.*
- ✓ *Besides being important historically, Mammoth Cave National Park is also a place of great biodiversity with its vast array of plant and animal life, and it has been recognized as a World Heritage Site.*
- ✓ *As Mammoth Cave National Park continues to be visited and explored, we must do what we can to help preserve it for future generations.*

**2. How did developments in transportation impact tourism at Mammoth Cave?**

- ✓ *Developments in transportation had a big impact. Tourism rose even more with the building of the Mammoth Cave Railroad in 1886, which connected Park City, Kentucky, to the Mammoth Cave Hotel. Then, after a lock and dam were built on the Green River in 1906, Mammoth Cave could also be reached by steamboat. With automobile travel, an even greater number of tourists found their way to south central Kentucky; roadside signs and advertisers known as "cave cappers" helped attract visitors to the more than twenty area caves.*

**3. The history of Mammoth Cave National Park centers on Mammoth Cave itself, its formation, role in saltpeter mining and tourism, and ongoing exploration.**

**a. How did its uses contribute to the development of a community around the cave?**

- ✓ *Suggestion: Early Native Americans and European settlers lived in and around the cave at different times. Later, people who worked in the cave mining saltpeter settled around it. As it became a tourist attraction, cave guides and those who worked at the Mammoth Cave Hotel and for the Mammoth Cave Railroad Company lived nearby as well. Area businesses, a school, and churches were built for the community. By the 1920's, there were 600 families living in the area.*

**b. How has that community expanded over time?**

- ✓ *Suggestion: While the families living on the land gave up their homes in the early 20th century so that the land could be reforested and restored to its natural state for the creation of Mammoth Cave National Park, they are still connected to it. The community has been made larger by the hundreds of millions of Park visitors and the diverse species of living things that make up the natural community now inhabiting the area.*

# The History of Mammoth Cave National Park Comprehension Quiz

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Mammoth Cave and the area around it was designated as Mammoth Cave National Park in
  - a. 1941
  - b. 1957
  - c. 1924
2. Early guides in Mammoth Cave included
  - a. Hyman and Simon Gratz
  - b. Stephen Bishop, Mat Bransford, and Nick Bransford
  - c. Leo and Claude Hunt
3. What animal waste was important in the creation of saltpeter?
  - a. rabbit
  - b. deer
  - c. bat
4. Biodiversity means
  - a. having many different life forms in an area
  - b. the study of life
  - c. a place focused on biology
5. According to the podcast, what word would not describe the people living around Mammoth Cave in the 1800's?
  - a. community
  - b. belonging
  - c. isolated
6. Which of the following is a fact about early tour guide Stephen Bishop?
  - a. He was adventurous.
  - b. He drew a map of Mammoth Cave that was used until the 1880's.
  - c. He was not concerned with safety.
7. Number the events in the order in which they happen (1, 2, 3).
  - \_\_\_ Mammoth Cave became a local attraction and brought tourism to the area.
  - \_\_\_ Early native people mined gypsum and other minerals from the cave.
  - \_\_\_ European settlers made gunpowder from saltpeter in the cave.
8. Why are bats important to the ecosystem?
  - a. They have adaptations which help them survive.
  - b. They can find food in the dark.
  - c. They help control the number of night-flying insects like moths and mosquitoes.
9. Spending more time inside helps keep you healthy.
  - a. true
  - b. false
10. Time in nature has been shown to improve people's mood.
  - a. true
  - b. false

## The History of Mammoth Cave National Park Comprehension Quiz Answer Key

1. a
2. b
3. c
4. a
5. c
6. b
7. 3, 1, 2
8. c
9. false
10. true