



CHRISTINA SOONTORNVAT



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Also available as an e-book and in audio

PHOTO BY SAM BOND PHOTOGRAPHY



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHRISTINA SOONTORNVAT is the author of several books for young readers, including the middle-grade fantasy novel *A Wish in the Dark*. She holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and a master's in science education. Christina Soontornvat lives with her family in Austin, Texas.

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

This guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading informational text standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used as writing prompts for independent work.

ALL THIRTEEN

THE INCREDIBLE CAVE RESCUE
OF THE THAI BOYS'
SOCCER TEAM

ABOUT THE BOOK

On June 23, 2018, twelve young players of the Wild Boars soccer team and their coach hiked through a cave in Thailand for an afternoon's adventure. But when they went to leave, rising floodwaters blocked their way out. They were trapped! Before long, news of the missing team spread, launching a seventeen-day rescue operation with thousands of rescuers from many countries. Around the world, people watched and worried: how long could a group of ordinary kids survive in complete darkness with no food or clean water? Luckily, the Wild Boars were very extraordinary "ordinary" kids.

Combining firsthand interviews of rescue workers with in-depth science and details of the region's culture and religion, author Christina Soontornvat—who was visiting family in Thailand when the Wild Boars went missing—shows how both the complex engineering operation above ground and the psychological strength of the young people below proved critical in the life-or-death mission. Meticulously researched and generously illustrated with photographs, this page-turner immerses readers in the most ambitious cave rescue in history.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your impression of the boys as a group? How did they interact with one another and with their coach? Did their time in the cave change their relationships? Describe a few of those trapped and how the author conveys their personalities.
2. Why did Coach Ek and the boys believe it would be safe to visit the cave? What unexpected forces of nature worked against them? What role might climate change have played in this? Explain geographical features and aspects of weather that made the rescue difficult. What made their days in the cave dangerous?
3. Describe some of those who helped in the rescue and why they did. In her author's note, Christina Soontornvat explains that she wanted to tell not only about the European divers but also about the Thai people who joined the effort. Did she succeed? Whom did you get to know through her narrative, and how?
4. Problem solving was a theme throughout the rescue effort. Recap the efforts of some of those who emphasized problem solving, such as Thanet Natisri, the divers, Major Hodges, Dr. Harris, and others. What kind of problem solving did the coach and boys need to do in the cave to survive?
5. Different groups involved in the rescue had different opinions about how it should be done. At one point, the author writes, "Relationships between the diving team and the Thai authorities become tense" (page 99). What were the different opinions? How was conflict resolved at this point and at other times during the rescue?
6. Cultural differences crop up at various times in the rescue. In the situation in the previous question, the Thai military considered the divers rude. Later in the cave, the divers "seem stunned that the kids are so upbeat" (page 140). Discuss these and other cultural differences. How would understanding each other's culture help in these situations?
7. Why was there resistance to a dive rescue? What were the other possible rescue solutions, and what were the problems with each alternative?
8. Describe the step-by-step preparations for the dive rescue, including rehearsals. Lay out the steps of the rescue itself. What were some of the dangers? What problems did the divers and others on the team encounter during the rescue?
9. Even if you know before reading the book that the boys survived, the narrative is suspenseful. What is innately dramatic about the story? What emotions does it raise in you as a reader? What narrative techniques does the author use to intensify the suspense?
10. The author draws readers in to the story through imagery and figurative language. She also uses words related to the senses to make scenes come alive. Find examples of these narrative devices and discuss their impact. Also discuss the use of the present tense and its effect on the narrative.
11. How do the visual aspects of the book help convey information, personalities, and emotions? How do the maps and diagrams make the rescue operation easier to understand? Discuss the use of sidebars and what they add to your understanding of technical topics and of Thai culture.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Q&A

The rescue attracted amazing people from many areas of life. Assign individual or pairs of students to interview someone in one of the areas like caving, diving, the military, Buddhism, or others. Have students conduct short interviews in person, by phone, or through email, then share their findings with the class. (Check sites like caves.org and diveguide.com for leads.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4

A Virtual Visit to Thailand

Many aspects of Thailand are mentioned but not explored deeply in the narrative. Have students individually or in pairs choose an aspect of Thailand such as government, religions, or customs to research using print and digital sources. They should then prepare a multimedia presentation to share with the class. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5

Many Heroes

As the author notes, Western media coverage of the rescue often focused on the divers rather than the boys or Thai volunteers. As a class, watch a video listed in the bibliography, such as *20/20*'s "One Way Out" or Australian Broadcasting's *Four Corners*' "Out of the Dark." Discuss the video's content, emphasis, and impact, and compare them to the book's.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7

Creating Cliffhangers

Survival and rescue stories have always attracted news coverage. Ask each student to find out about such a story, recent or historical. After their research, students should outline or draft a speech about the event, rehearse it, and then deliver it to the class, using narrative techniques like Christina Soontornvat did to create suspense.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4

June 23, 2018

Ask students to imagine that they are one of the last boys to be rescued. Have them create a journal for that boy, with entries for every day in the cave. The brief entries should include facts and emotional reflections. Invite students to compare similarities and differences in their journals. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3

This guide was prepared by Kathleen Odean, a school librarian for more than fifteen years who now gives professional development workshops for educators about new books for children and teens. She chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee and served on earlier Caldecott and Newbery Award Committees.