TIME FOR KIDS

UNSOLVED!

Mysterious Events



Lisa Greathouse
Stephanie Kuligowski

For teachers' inspection ONLY

Consultant

Timothy Rasinski, Ph.D.
Kent State University

Lori Oczkus
Literacy Consultant

Publishing Credits

Dona Herweck Rice, *Editor-in-Chief*
Lee Aucoin, *Creative Director*
Jamey Acosta, *Senior Editor*
Lexa Hoang, *Designer*
Stephanie Reid, *Photo Editor*
Rane Anderson, *Contributing Author*
Rachelle Cracchiolo, M.S.Ed., *Publisher*

Image Credits: p.11 Alamy; pp.16–17, 18 (bottom) David Parker/Photo Researchers, Inc.; p.18 (top), pp.28–29, 39 (top left) iStockphoto; pp. 34–35 NASA; pp. 6–7, 14 (left) EPA/Newscom; pp. 15, 19 (middle) Solent News/Splash News/ Newscom; pp. 4, 36–37 WENN/Newscom; pp.19 (top), 32 ZUMA Press/Newscom; all other images Shutterstock.

Based on writing from *TIME For Kids.*
TIME For Kids and the *TIME For Kids* logo are registered trademarks of TIME Inc. Used under license.

Teacher Created Materials
5301 Oceanus Drive
Huntington Beach, CA 92649-1030
http://www.tcmpub.com
ISBN 978-1-4333-4827-3
© 2013 Teacher Created Materials, Inc.

Table of Contents

A Mysterious World 4
Spooky Sights and Sounds 6
Puzzling Patterns. 14
Unexplained Events 28
Glossary 42
Index 44
Bibliography 46
More to Explore 47
About the Authors 48



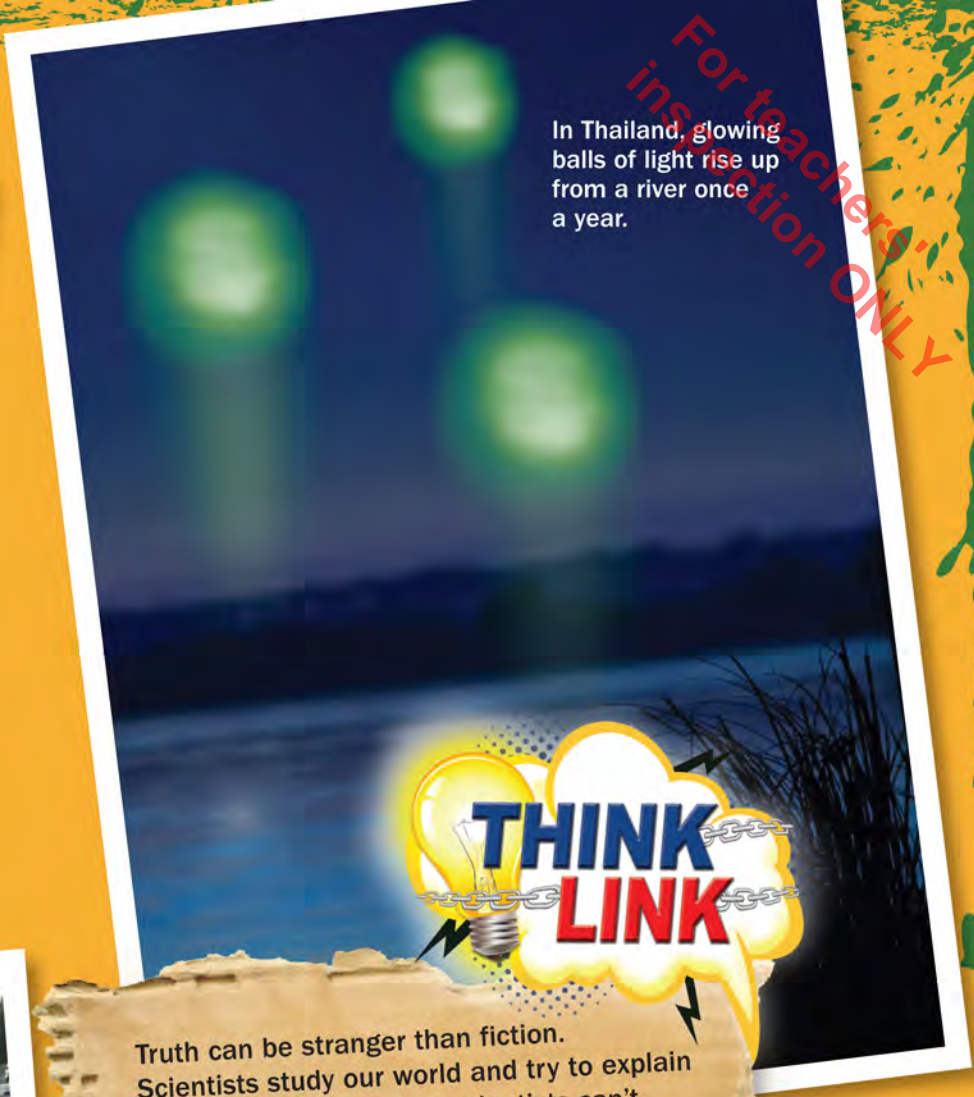
A Mysterious World

There have been many advances in science and technology. But many things about our world remain mysterious. In Thailand, glowing balls of light rise up from a river once a year. In Honduras, fish rain down from the sky every summer. In the California desert, huge rocks slide across the ground when no one is watching.

These strange **phenomena** (fi-NOM-uh-nuh) may seem like science fiction. But the events in this book are scientific fact. They have been seen by many people. They have been photographed and studied by scientists. And yet they remain unsolved mysteries.



In Honduras, fish rain from the sky every year.



In Thailand, glowing balls of light rise up from a river once a year.

For teachers' inspection ONLY

THINK LINK

Truth can be stranger than fiction. Scientists study our world and try to explain why things happen. But scientists can't explain these freaky phenomena.

- Why do you think people see creatures that don't exist?
- How can we explain events when no one can see or witness them?
- Why is it important to investigate these strange events?

For teachers' inspection ONLY

Spooky Sights and Sounds

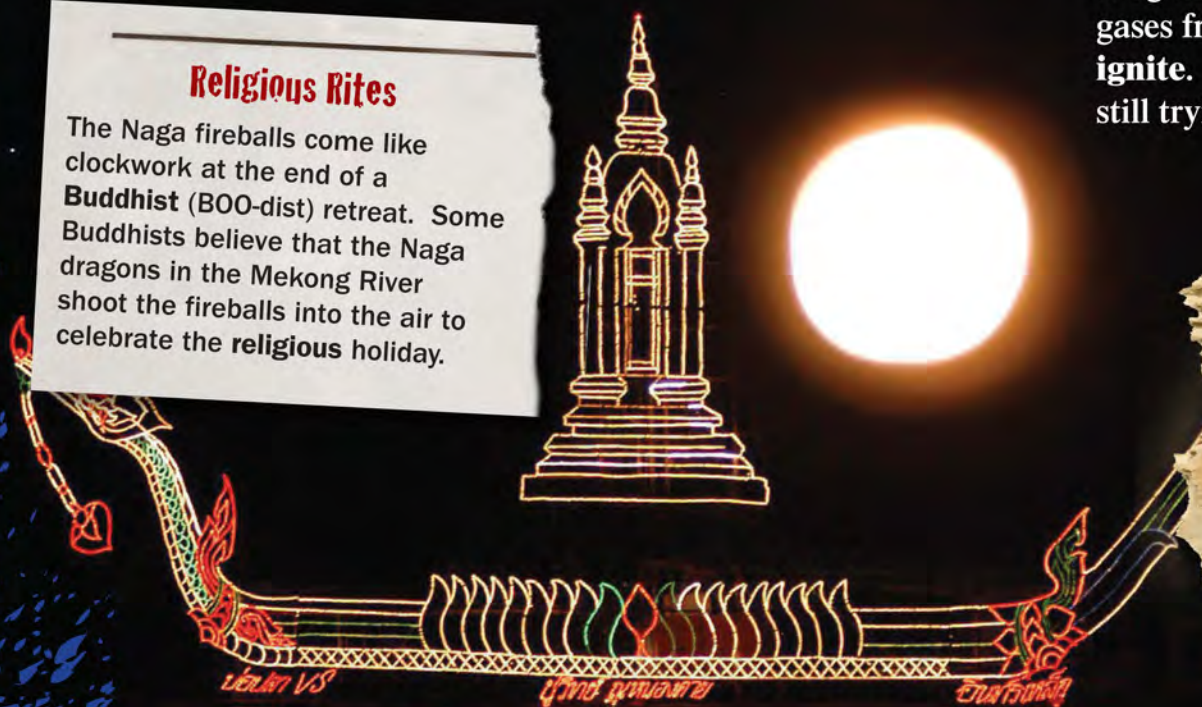
The world is full of strange sights and sounds. There are glowing **orbs** and balls of lightning that hover in the air. There are intense booms. And there are rocks that ring like bells. Millions of people have been lucky enough to see and hear these mysterious phenomena!

Floating Balls of Fire

For a few nights every October, people in Thailand see a strange light show. Glowing orbs rise from the Mekong River. The lights range in size from tiny sparks to spheres as big as basketballs. They glow red and pink as they float into the sky. Locals call these **Naga** fireballs. The Naga are dragons believed to live in the river. Scientists say gases from the river bottom rise to the surface and **ignite**. It happens every year. But researchers are still trying to explain this event.

Religious Rites

The Naga fireballs come like clockwork at the end of a **Buddhist** (BOO-dist) retreat. Some Buddhists believe that the Naga dragons in the Mekong River shoot the fireballs into the air to celebrate the **religious** holiday.



Nature's Jack-o'-Lanterns

In the United States and Canada, floating lights are often seen in swamps and bogs. They are called *will-o'-the-wisps, jack-o'-lanterns, hinkypunks,* or *fairy lights.* Scientists say that decaying plants emit chemicals. This process can produce flickering lights.

Boing, Boing, Zap

For hundreds of years, ball lightning has baffled scientists. Witnesses tell of glowing balls that hover in the air. Sometimes, they bounce off the ground, sizzle, spin, or spark. They can even melt through glass and metal! The lightning balls appear suddenly indoors and fade away quickly. Sometimes they even explode.

The orbs can vary in size. Some are as small as a tennis ball. Others are as large as a beach ball. They usually occur during storms. There are nearly 10,000 accounts of ball lightning. But scientists have been unable to explain this strange phenomenon.

Eyewitness Account

In 2011, Rose Bellamy was taking cover from a massive tornado headed toward Joplin, Missouri. A strange sight caught her attention. She told a local newspaper, "I saw balls of fire in the backyard, big balls of red fire about the size of basketballs bobbing along across the backyard. I have no idea what it was."

For teachers' inspection ONLY

Phenomenal Proof

In 2007, scientists tested the **theory** that lightning strikes soil and makes a **vapor**. With this experiment, they were able to create ball lightning in the lab. Their results are giving scientists a better understanding of how this mysterious phenomenon occurs in nature.



Step 1

Lightning strikes soil that's rich in elements such as **silicon**, aluminum, or iron.



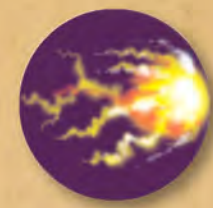
Step 2

Heat from the lightning transforms the soil into a vapor.



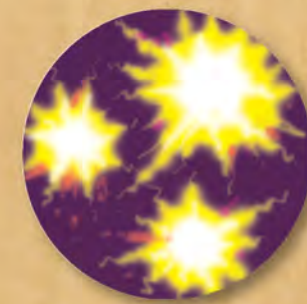
Step 3

The vapor combines with the air and begins burning.



Step 4

The vapor floats through the air in small glowing orbs.



Step 5

Within 10 seconds, the glowing balls disappear or explode.