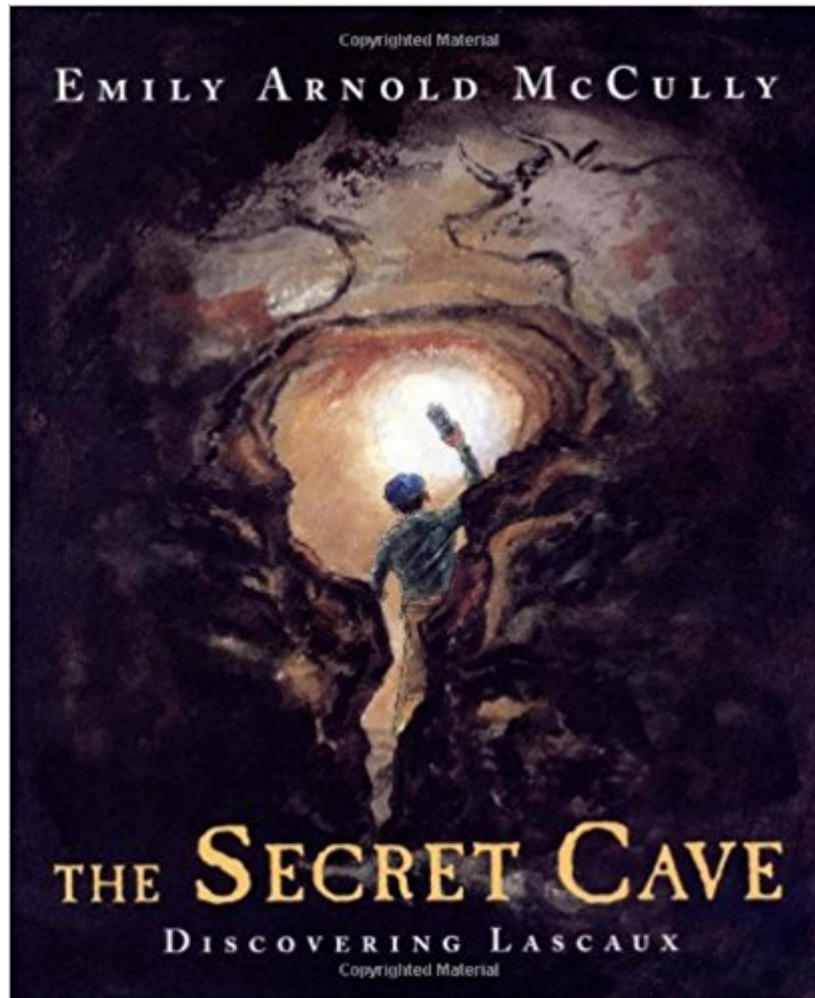




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The Secret Cave: Discovering Lascaux



Synopsis

Jacques, Jojo, Simon, and Marcel were looking for buried treasure when they explored a cave in the south of France in 1940. But the treasure inside was not what they expected, and in fact far more valuable: the walls were covered with stunning prehistoric paintings and engravings, preserved within the sealed cave for over 17,000 years. This is the true story of the boys who discovered the cave of Lascaux, bringing to the modern world powerful examples of the very beginning of art.

Book Information

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

Gr 1-4—In 1940, four boys found a tunnel beneath a tree in the French countryside. Looking for buried gold, they came upon, instead, the most famous prehistoric art of all time, the Lascaux cave paintings. This book tells their story, concentrating on the days of discovery and the boys' gradual sharing of the cave's secret, first with other children in the village, then with a trusted teacher, and finally with an expert. McCully's natural dialogue and economical prose accompany her lush, accessible watercolors. Velvety blacks and rich earth tones contrast with the blue skies and tender greens of the French countryside, portraying the stillness and mystery of the caves and the boys' well-lit daily life. The illustrator copies the cave paintings with a sensitive touch that is

somehow both impressionistic and exact, capturing the vitality and gestural grace of each line. Straightforward, easy-to-understand diagrams— a plan and cross-section of the cave, maps hanging on a classroom wall— help make the cave itself easier to visualize. An author's note tells what happened after the events detailed in the book and extends the history of the cave. Speculation as to the meaning and use of the paintings and details about the methods of their creation are also noted. A photograph of two of the boys and Abbot Breuil, the expert who authenticated their find, standing in the Hall of the Bulls, offers proof that the story is true. A kid-centered approach to a wonderful tale. Paula Willey, Baltimore County Public Library, Towson, MD

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When did humans first start to draw their experiences? Caldecott medalist McCully celebrates “the very beginning of art” in this picture-book introduction to the prehistoric paintings of Lascaux. In 1940, a group of schoolboys in the south of France were searching for a cache of fabled gold when they stumbled across treasure of another kind: underground caverns decorated in a dazzling array of 17,000-year-old paintings and engravings. Uncertain about what they’d really seen, the boys brought in a teacher and then experts to confirm the cave art’s authenticity. Eventually, the French teens grew up to become caretakers of their incredible find. McCully’s text builds suspense in moment-by-moment descriptions of the boys slithering through narrow, dark, subterranean passageways, but it’s the images that have the biggest impact. The dramatically lit, mixed-media scenes evoke both the thrilling exploration and then the astonishing discoveries, reproduced in evocative, textured images. A final spread includes a photo of the boy heroes, as well as more background about the paintings and their preservation, and theories about how the ancient artists created their awe-inspiring works.

Grades 1-3. --Gillian Engberg

My husband and I were very impressed when we saw the replica of the cave at Lascaux. We bought the book so we could share the experience with our grandchildren. We thought it told the story well, and the children were fascinated.

Very well done, I really enjoyed this

Interesting children's book detailing the discovery of the Lascaux prehistoric cave paintings by local

boys.

it was not what I was looking for but it was good reading any way. Thanks for your help in ordering.

The story of the discovery of the Lascaux caves is one of those human accidents that seems too good to be true. This book tells the story in text and pictures that are emotionally evocative and thrilling. The light-dark illustrations put you right there on the page. If you have a child who is interested in human antiquities, this is a great choice. Also try *The Mildenhall Treasure* *Archaeologists Dig for Clues (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science 2)* *Seeker of Knowledge: The Man Who Deciphered Egyptian Hieroglyphs*

Years ago, back in 1940, in Montignac, France, four boys made a startling discovery. Jacques, Jojo, Simon, and Marcel discover a series of tunnels leading to Lascaux, a cave beholding some of the earliest paintings dating back 17,000 years! This book is a retelling of the original discovery, and is conveyed in picture book format, suitable for young children. The story reads like an adventure, with an element of suspense as to what the boys will discover when they go exploring, and later, as to how this discovery changed the boys' lives; how the Second World War affected the discovery; and, the post-war publicity. The author's note at the back of the book explains how these 600 paintings, and 1,500 engravings withstood the ravages of time (the cave itself had been sealed, and the protective layer of chalk prevented the erosion of the paintings). Since then, the paintings have been ravaged by time because of exposure to microorganisms brought in by human visitors, and exploration of the cave is presently restricted to scholars. This is a fascinating story that will appeal to young history buffs.

This is a wonderful picture book story about the discovery of the famous Lascaux cave by some French school boys. Based on memories collected years later, the information about its exact discovery is considered fictional although the cave is real as is the incredible prehistoric art the boys found by exploring the cave. Interestingly, during the war, the Resistance used the cave "as a secret storehouse for munitions" The cave was reopened for visitors in 1948 and two of the discoverers "guided the first visitors and were appointed official guardians and guides. One remarkable fact about this cave is that because it was sealed for over 17,000 years, the artwork was vibrantly colorful. As time went by, the presence of so many visitors began a process of deterioration. Subsequently, the original cave was copied and then closed to all but scholars. The illustrations are

stunning, and show the sequence leading up to the discovery of the cave art; a few examples of the cave art are included. The author's note is very informative, and she includes a brief bibliography for readers interested in learning more about this remarkable discovery.

We used this for a library program today for 3rd & 4th graders. It was very well received. We took a box they could crawl into and create their own cave drawings. Dig Big! The theme was ancient art.

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