The Flume Gorge

Reading age: 9
Paragraphs: 7
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This lesson explores the Flume Gorge, a stunning granite canyon in New Hampshire, covering its discovery, how it was formed, and the plants, animals, and natural wonders found there.

by SpellerShip.com



Deep in the White Mountains of New HAMPSHIRE, there is an amazing natural canyon called the Flume Gorge. It was discovered way back in 1808 by a 93-year-old woman named Aunt Jess GUERNSEY, who stumbled upon it while fishing. The gorge is a narrow crack in the mountain with walls of granite that stretch up to 90 feet tall. Visitors today walk through it on wooden BOARDWALKS that hug the rocky cliffs.

Spells: GRANITE, NARROW, WOODEN
Who found this natural wonder back in 1808 while out fishing? AUNT JESS GUERNSEY
How old was Aunt Jess Guernsey when she came upon the Flume? 93
What was Aunt Jess Guernsey doing when she stumbled upon the Flume? FISHING
What is one other word the article uses for this narrow opening in the mountain? CANYON, CRACK
Which large mountain range includes the White Mountains? APPALACHIANS
In your own words, describe what the Flume Gorge looks like. *e.g. It's a narrow crack with tall granite walls.*
In your own words, explain how visitors are able to walk through the gorge today. *e.g. They walk on wooden boardwalks beside the cliffs.*
What is one place you've seen that has really tall walls or cliffs around it?
If you could touch the granite walls in the gorge, what would you guess they feel like?
Why do you think people enjoy walking through narrow, rocky spaces like canyons?



The Flume Gorge was formed over millions of years by nature's slow and patient work. Hot melted rock, called MAGMA, pushed up into cracks in the granite and cooled into a softer stone known as BASALT. Later, flowing water and ice slowly wore away the basalt, leaving behind the deep slot we see today. This long process is called erosion, and it still shapes the gorge even now.

Spells: PATIENT, MELTED, SOFTER

What is the name for the hot melted rock that pushed up into the mountain? MAGMA

What softer stone formed when the melted rock cooled inside the cracks? BASALT

What is the long, slow process of wearing rock away called? EROSION

What is one thing that slowly wore away the softer stone to leave a deep slot? WATER, ICE

What do we call a mountain that erupts magma onto the surface? VOLCANO

In your own words, explain how the gorge first began to form inside the mountain. *e.g. Hot magma pushed into cracks and cooled there.*

In your own words, describe what is still happening to the gorge today. *e.g. Erosion keeps slowly shaping the gorge even now.*

What's something in nature that you've seen that takes a very long time to change or happen?

If you could watch one thing slowly carve away stone, what would you choose?

How do you think the gorge might look different 100 years from now because of erosion?



Walking through the gorge feels like stepping into a cool, misty world. The walls are often damp and covered with bright green mosses and tiny ferns that love wet places. Some rare flowers, like the pink lady's slipper, grow in the shady spots nearby. You can also spot patches of LICHEN clinging to the stone, which shows the air here is very clean.

Spells: DAMP, BRIGHT, FLOWERS

What rare pink flower grows in the shady spots nearby? LADY'S SLIPPER

What clings to the stone and shows that the air is very clean? LICHEN

What word describes how the temperature feels inside the misty gorge? COOL

What is one small plant that loves wet places on the damp walls? MOSS, FERN

What two living things join together to form a lichen? FUNGUS, ALGA

In your own words, describe what it feels like to walk through the gorge. *e.g. It feels cool, misty, and damp inside.*

In your own words, explain why mosses and ferns grow well on the walls. *e.g. They love the wet, damp conditions there.*

What's a place that feels cool and damp and peaceful to you?

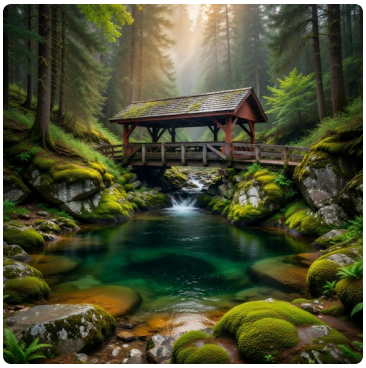
Name one small living thing you've seen growing on rocks or in wet places.

What do you think it would be like to breathe the air in a misty, green canyon like this?



Right at the top of the gorge, visitors are greeted by AVALANCHE Falls, a waterfall that drops 45 feet into the CHASM below. The falls got their name after a huge storm in 1883 washed away a giant hanging boulder that once sat above the gorge. Before that storm, the boulder had been a famous sight, and people were sad to see it go. Now, the roaring water and misty spray make the falls just as exciting to see.

Spells: CHASM, GIANT, FAMOUS
What is the name of the waterfall at the top of the gorge? AVALANCHE FALLS
How many feet does the water drop into the chasm below? 45
What giant hanging rock did the 1883 storm wash away? BOULDER
What is one thing at the falls today that makes them exciting to see? ROARING WATER, MISTY SPRAY
What colourful arc can appear in the spray of a waterfall on a sunny day? RAINBOW
In your own words, explain how people felt about the boulder before the storm destroyed it. *e.g. People loved it and were sad when it vanished.*
In your own words, describe the waterfall's location within the gorge. *e.g. It sits right at the top of the gorge.*
What's the most powerful thing you've ever seen water do?
If a huge boulder suddenly disappeared from somewhere you knew, how would that make you feel?
Do you think a waterfall would be more beautiful before or after it washes away something big, and why?



The Flume Gorge is part of FRANCONIA NOTCH State Park, which protects many other cool natural wonders. Nearby, you can visit the Basin, a smooth round pool carved by a swirling waterfall over 25,000 years. There is also a trail that leads to the Pool, a deep green basin that is 150 feet wide and 40 feet deep. Covered bridges built in the 1800s connect some of the paths, letting hikers cross BABBLING streams.

Spells: WONDERS, SMOOTH, BRIDGES
What is the name of the state park that the Flume Gorge belongs to? FRANCONIA NOTCH
What type of bridges, built in the 1800s, connect some of the paths? COVERED
What swirling thing carved out the smooth round pool called the Basin? WATERFALL
Name one other natural wonder you can visit in the same park. BASIN, POOL
What is a small stream that flows into a bigger river called? TRIBUTARY
In your own words, describe the Pool found along the trail. *e.g. It's a deep, wide, green basin of water.*

In your own words, explain what hikers can do thanks to the covered bridges. *e.g. They can cross babbling streams safely on paths.*
What's your favorite kind of natural pool or water feature to visit?
Which covered bridge would you most want to cross: one over a stream or one over a chasm?
If you could design your own trail through a park, what natural wonders would you want people to see along the way?



Lots of interesting animals make their homes in and around the gorge. Black bears, white-tailed deer, and red foxes roam the thick forests, though they usually stay hidden from people. Up above, you might spot PEREGRINE FALCONS zooming through the sky at amazing speeds. In the cool streams, BROOK trout flash their colorful spots as they swim between the mossy rocks.

Spells: HIDDEN, ZOOMING, COLORFUL
What speedy bird might you spot zooming through the sky above? PEREGRINE FALCON
What spotted fish swims in the cool streams between mossy rocks? BROOK TROUT
What color are the foxes that live in the forests? RED
Name one animal that roams the thick forests near the gorge. BLACK BEAR, WHITE-TAILED DEER, RED FOX
What body parts do trout use to take in oxygen from water? GILLS
In your own words, explain why the bears, deer, and foxes are rarely seen by visitors. *e.g. They usually hide from people in the forest.*
In your own words, describe how brook trout look as they swim. *e.g. They flash colorful spots between the mossy rocks.*
What wild animal would you most want to spot in the forest, even if just for a moment?
If you were a peregrine falcon, where would you like to zoom and dive?
What do you think animals see or experience in this gorge that humans can never fully understand?



Visiting the Flume Gorge is a popular adventure, especially in the fall when the leaves turn bright colors. The full loop trail is about two miles long and takes most families around an hour and a half to finish. The park is usually open from May through OCTOBER, since snow and ice make the boardwalks too slippery in winter. Each year, more than 400,000 people come to explore this special place and enjoy its wild beauty.

Spells: POPULAR, ADVENTURE, SLIPPERY

In which season do visitors come to see the leaves turn bright colors? FALL

How many miles long is the full loop trail? 2

In which month does the park usually close for the season? OCTOBER

What is one thing that makes the boardwalks too slippery in winter? SNOW, ICE

What green substance leaves lose when they change colour in autumn? CHLOROPHYLL

In your own words, explain why the park closes during winter months. *e.g. Snow and ice make the boardwalks too slippery.*

In your own words, describe how popular the Flume Gorge is with visitors. *e.g. Over 400,000 people visit the gorge yearly.*

What's your favorite season to explore outside, and what makes it special?

If you had to choose between visiting a gorge in fall or spring, which would you pick?

What do you think would be different about visiting the Flume Gorge alone versus visiting it with people you care about?