



The **INCREDIBLE** yet **TRUE** Adventures of **ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT**

The Greatest Inventor-Naturalist-
Scientist-Explorer Who Ever Lived

Before Reading

Discuss the cover illustration and the title of the book.

Read/listen to the **Prologue**. A *prologue* is an introduction to a literary work. The prologue establishes the context and gives the reader background details about the book. The prologue in ***The Incredible yet True Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt*** opens the story by telling the reader that a “groundbreaking transformation is underway.” Explain what this means.

Who is Alexander von Humboldt?

What does he do? Identify the job descriptions of an inventor, naturalist, scientist, and explorer.

How are these fields similar?

Where and **when** does the story take place?

Why would an author write about an individual like Alexander von Humboldt?

Read and notice the chapter titles and headings from ***The Incredible yet True Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt***. Discuss the titles and make predictions about what the story will be about.

During Reading

Summarize each chapter.

- ◆ Farewell, Europe
 - ◆ Venezuela
 - ◆ Through the Andes Mountains
 - ◆ The Voyage Home
 - ◆ New Adventures
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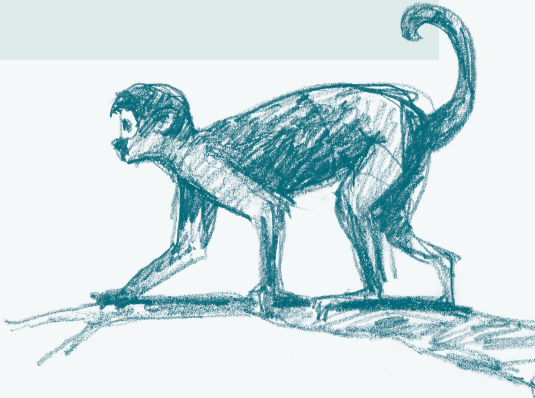
Describe the overall structure of events, ideas, concepts, and information in *The Incredible yet True Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt*.

- ◆ What “fanned the flames of Alexander’s wanderlust” in the beginning? What fascinated Alexander most as a young man?
- ◆ Alexander’s mom wanted him to get a “dependable” job. Explain what she meant by this and why she may have felt that way. What does having a dependable job mean to you?
- ◆ Alexander does not want to disappoint his mother. He becomes very successful and has a bright future ahead of him. Discuss his early education and job choices.
- ◆ What events change Alexander’s life? When and why does he pursue his passion for travel and exploration? How does he prepare for his journey?

As you read, jot down notes about Alexander’s many discoveries. Use evidence from the text to document the number of observations and new ideas that Alexander came up with!

Discoveries and Observations	Evidence from the Text

As you read, identify the central themes and ideas of the book. How are they conveyed through specific details?



After Reading

How does the author, Volker Mehner, spark curiosity and entice the reader to read on?

How does the author use visuals to enhance meaning and tone in the book?

Why was meeting Aimé Bonpland an important event in Alexander's life?

Compare and contrast Alexander and Aimé.

Why was the friendship between Alexander and Aimé considered to be an unlikely friendship? Why do you think Aimé always remained in Alexander's shadow as the "second man"?

What was going on in the world during the time Alexander was making new scientific discoveries? Include Europe as well as the US in your discussion of how this influenced his studies.

How did Alexander feel about slavery? Use evidence from the text.

Discuss the many obstacles and conflicts that Alexander and Aimé faced through the years of exploration.

- ◆ Human vs. human
- ◆ Human vs. self
- ◆ Human vs. society
- ◆ Human vs. fate
- ◆ Human vs. nature

Explain Alexander's reason for creating **Cosmos**. Why was collaboration a huge part of this collection of knowledge? Discuss why **Cosmos** was such a success.

What makes Alexander different from other scientists of his time?

How do you think Alexander was able to show everything in the universe is connected?

What does this famous quote from Alexander mean to you? Do you agree with his philosophy of life?

***The most dangerous worldviews are the worldviews
of people who have never viewed the world.***

Think about the most fascinating thing you read in the book. Create a fictional narrative based on that event.

Write a newspaper article about something noteworthy from Alexander's story, reflecting the time period and setting.

THE MOST FAMOUS EXPLORER OF HIS TIME!



Create a timeline of important events in the life of Alexander von Humboldt.



Through observation and exploration, Alexander knew the world better than anyone else.
Describe what he learned in the following areas of science:

Geology

Climatology

Zoology

Electromagnetism

What did Alexander learn about people?

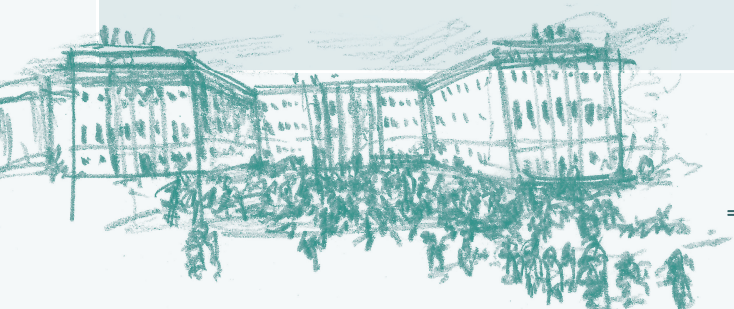


The chain of events in this biography is long and impressive. Think about the many cause-and-effect relationships in the book. Identify ten of these linked relationships in the chart below.

For example:

In the book, I learned that Alexander became a mining inspector, wrote books, and taught about mining because he was fascinated by everything that took place in the belly of Earth.

Cause	Effect
He was fascinated by everything that took place in the belly of Earth.	Alexander became a mining inspector and wrote books on mining. He even created a mining school.



Think about it . . .

If Alexander von Humboldt could come back and visit our planet today, what would he think, say, and do?

Does Alexander's life make you believe that your dreams can come true?

What character trait did he possess that you wish you had? Why?

What character traits do you share with him?

Why was he successful? Can you apply this approach to your life?

What can you do today as a direct result of his contributions?

How does Alexander's life story help you to understand a different viewpoint?

Have you changed the way you think as a result of reading the biography?

What fact about Alexander did you find most interesting? Why?

Do you know anyone who is similar to him? How are they the same?

What does his story tell you about the time in which he lived?

Would you recommend this biography to another reader?

If you could talk to Alexander, what question would you ask?

Would you have liked to have been him? Why or why not?



Guided Reading Level: W
Grade Level Equivalent: 6
Interest Level: 4–8

Next Generation Science Standards

STEM Content

- ◆ MS-PS1-Matter and its Interactions
- ◆ MS-PS2-Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions
- ◆ MS-PS3-Energy
- ◆ MS-PS4-Waves and their Applications in Technologies for Information Transfer
- ◆ MS-LS1-From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes
- ◆ MS-LS2-Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics
- ◆ MS-LS3-Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits
- ◆ MS-LS4-Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity
- ◆ MS-ESS1-Earth's Place in the Universe
- ◆ MS-ESS2-Earth's Systems
- ◆ MS-ESS3-Earth and Human Activity
- ◆ MS-ETS1-Engineering Design