

Read the following selection, taking note of the **boldface** words and their contexts. These words are among those you will be studying in Unit 3. As you complete the exercises in this unit, it may help to refer to the way the words are used below.

Trapped in a Cave, Felled by a Circus

—Journal Entries—

Feb. 2, 1925

Good thing I made a reservation before leaving Chicago, because the hotel here is packed full, and a whole army of people has invaded little Cave City. As I hightailed it over to Sand Cave for an update on the news, I saw some people setting up tents, and others living out of their cars and trucks. Everyone's talking about Floyd Collins. The poor spelunker **inadvertently** became trapped in a cave, and now, after just three days, he's become the biggest sensation since the sinking of the *Titanic*!

I interviewed a town official right away, and he told me Floyd was just a poor Kentucky farmer when he discovered Crystal Caves on his family's land eight years ago. To attract more tourists to the area, Floyd went looking for new caves, and that's when he found Sand Cave. Then his luck gave out, and here we are, waiting for Floyd to come out.

Feb. 3, 1925

Bad news travels fast. There must be tens of thousands of ordinary folk in Cave City today, not to mention the Red Cross

and the National Guard, plus hundreds of reporters like me. And let's not forget the stalls set up to feed and entertain all these bystanders! Everyone needs to eat, I suppose, but I suspect at least a few of these "entrepreneurs" don't just sell, but **peculate**, in taking cash from everybody.

William Burke Miller, a young Louisville newspaperman whom everyone calls "Skeets," squeezed down the narrow passageway and made contact with Floyd. Although Skeets was sent to cover the story, his being here is far from **adventitious**, since his small stature allows him access to the cave while the rest of us stand by, feeling useless. He's been bringing food down to Floyd, then interviewing him. People all around the world are now reading his dispatches.

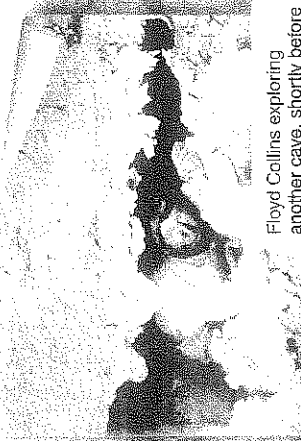
Feb. 4, 1925

Radio reports say that even Congress is getting updates on Floyd! Meanwhile, Skeets keeps bringing down sandwiches, water, and comfort. Floyd remains stuck, so workers are still trying to dig him out. Floyd's **sangfroid** in the midst of this circus is admirable.

Traffic jam outside of Cave City, Kentucky, 1900



Floyd Collins exploring another cave, shortly before his fatal accident in 1925.



Feb. 5, 1925

Interviewed Homer Collins, Floyd's younger brother. "To what do you **ascribe** Floyd's composure in these difficult circumstances?" I asked. Homer: "Well, I reckon Floyd has always been brave in caves, even as a youngster."

Feb. 6, 1925

There are so many journalists here, some will do anything to get a scoop. I've seen a few hardbitten reporters, pretending to be concerned, and kowtowing to locals just to get a quotation for the evening edition; but normally, their prose is so full of **vitriol** that it would make a grown man cry.

Feb. 8, 1925

I **commiserated** with Homer, who is now **enjoined** from helping in the rescue. Others have taken control—they pushed him aside, even though Homer knows more about caving than they do—but their attempts to reach Floyd have failed miserably. The tunnel used to reach Floyd collapsed, so they'll have to dig a **circuitous** route to the trapped man.

Feb. 10, 1925

The collapse of the shaft that had been drilled through the rock has shut Floyd off from the outside.

Feb. 11, 1925

I tried to **wheedle** an interview with Miss Jane, Floyd's stepmother. Another reporter got to her first, so I leavedscropped. I didn't catch everything she said, but let's just say she has a **tenuous** hold on reality and a **proclivity** for bending the truth. She seems a bit off in the head, so she is not exactly a reliable source.

Feb. 12, 1925

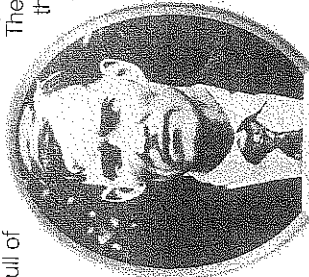
A few of us quizzed the mayor of Cave City about **expediting** the rescue. So far, all attempts have been **nominal** and feeble. The mayor and his minions are doing their utmost to **ferment** excitement about this crisis and keep the hucksters happy. It sometimes seems as if they are more interested in bringing attention to their town than in rescuing Floyd. It's a sad state of affairs.

Feb. 14, 1925

The new shaft is completed, and rescuers will attempt to reach Floyd. It's been two weeks since he became trapped. Time waits for no man. We need a miracle now.

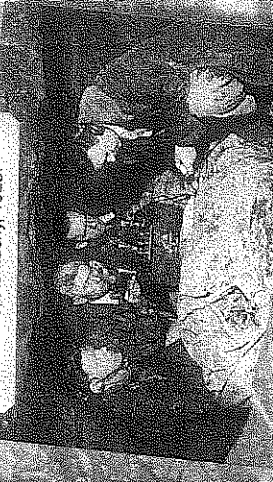
Feb. 17, 1925

Floyd is dead. I **abominated** what happened here. I witnessed a circus, not a rescue. Some of the participants in this sideshow displayed remorse, but this is a poor way to **expiate** their guilt for the role they played in this travesty. Most of the rest merely shook their heads and walked away.



Floyd Collins

A doctor listens to Floyd Collins's heartbeat through an amplifier in Sand Cave, Kentucky, 1925.



Snap the code, or go to vocabularyworksheets.com