

SPELEOTHEM MATCHING:

Can you identify real cave decorations from
Carlsbad Caverns National Park?

This activity is a make-believe field trip! Journey through the dark world of caves using the black and white pictures on this website. Each picture is a different “speleothem” or cave decoration. Speleothems are formations like stalactites and stalagmites that are often found in limestone caves.

DIRECTIONS:

Print out the list of 10 different kinds of speleothems on the next page. Or, on a piece of paper, write down the list of 10 names. Then look at the following pictures.

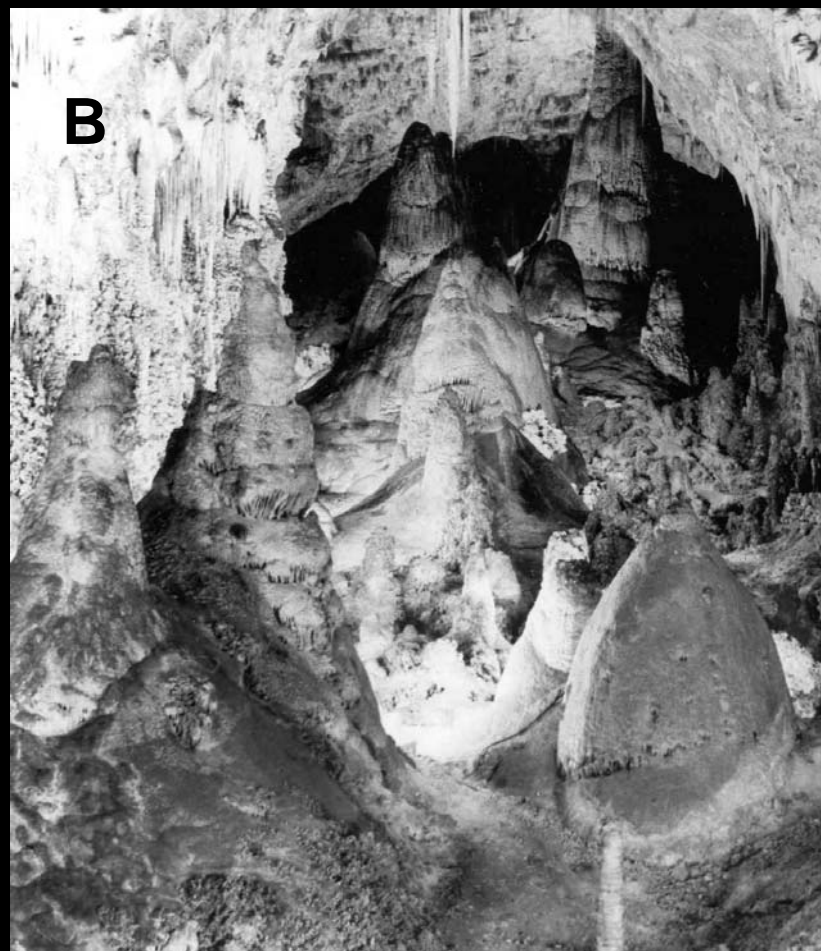
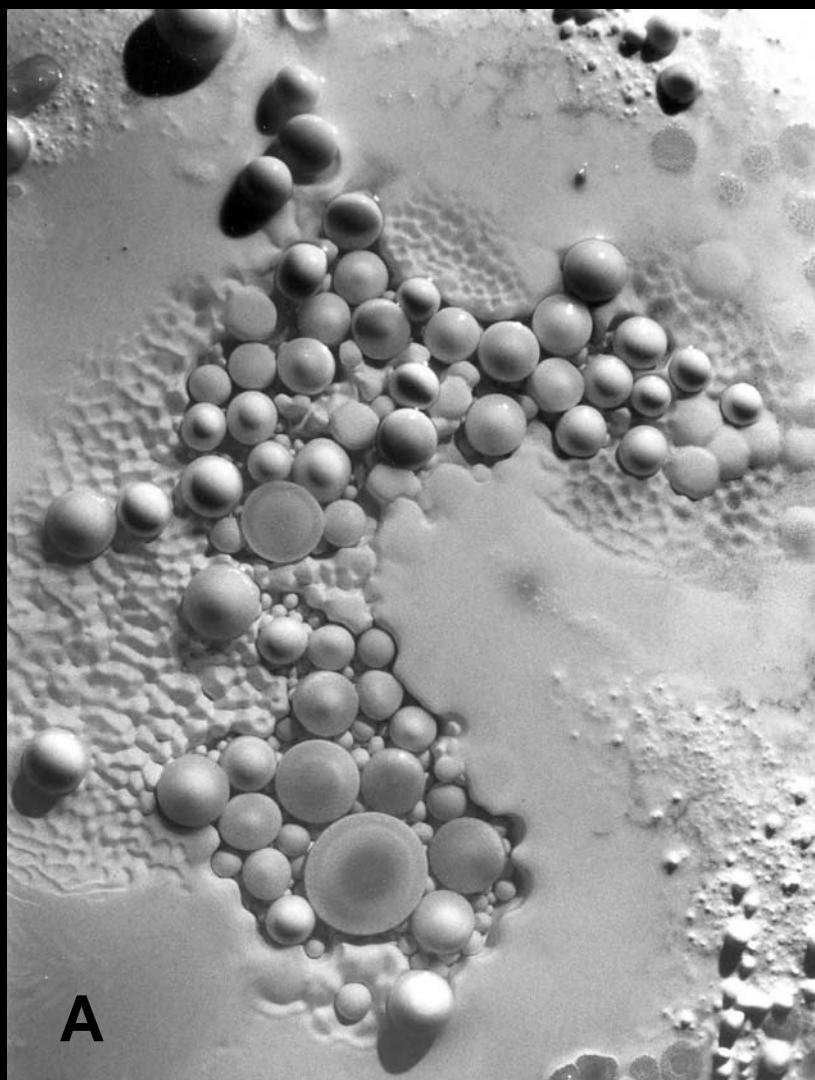
On your paper, write down the letter of the picture next to the name of the speleothem that it matches.

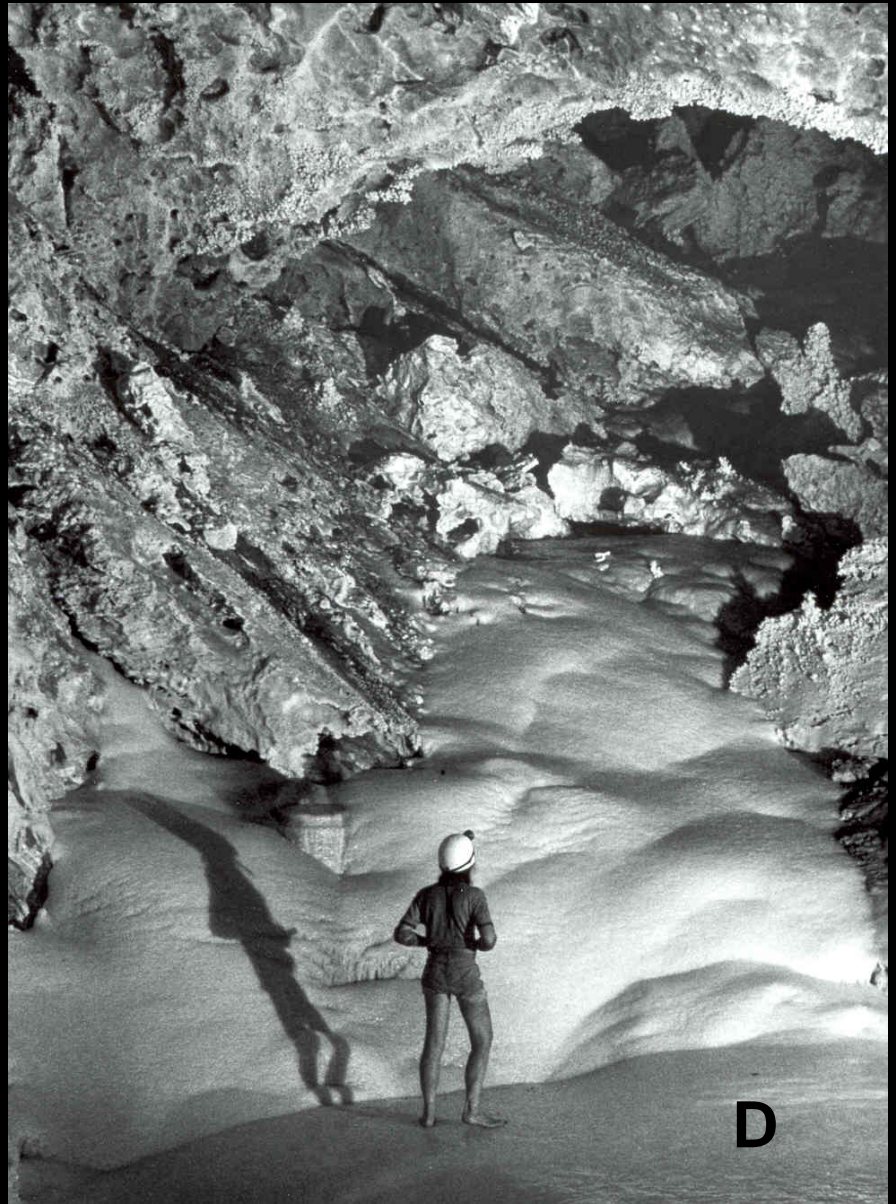
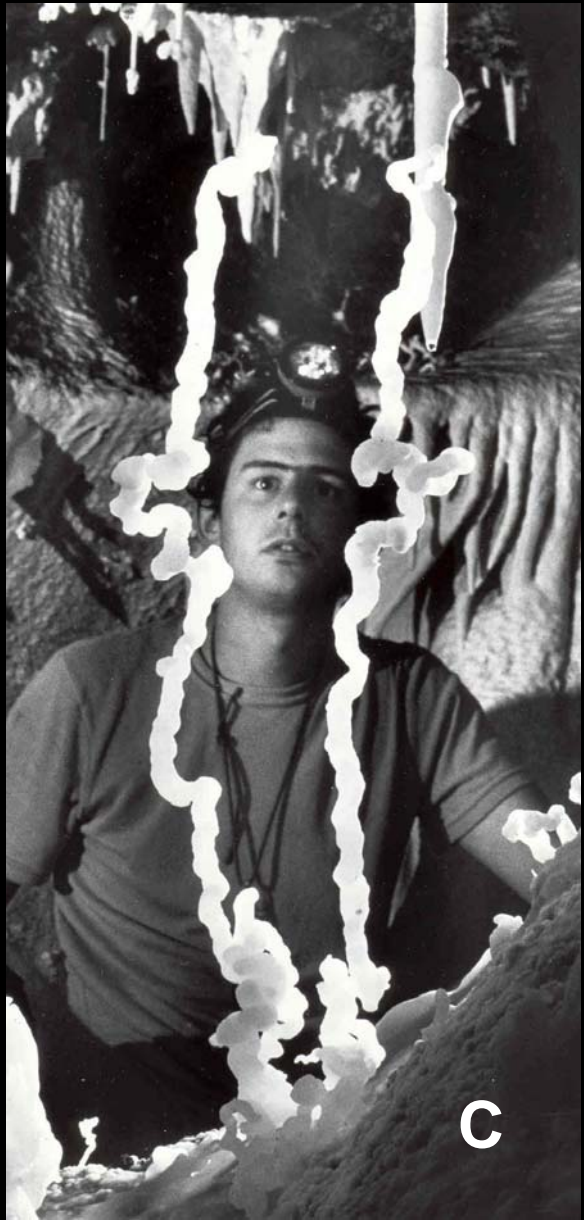
When you've completed the matching, check your answers on the Speleothem Matching: Answer Page.

After that, maybe you'd like to try the Speleothem Challenge!

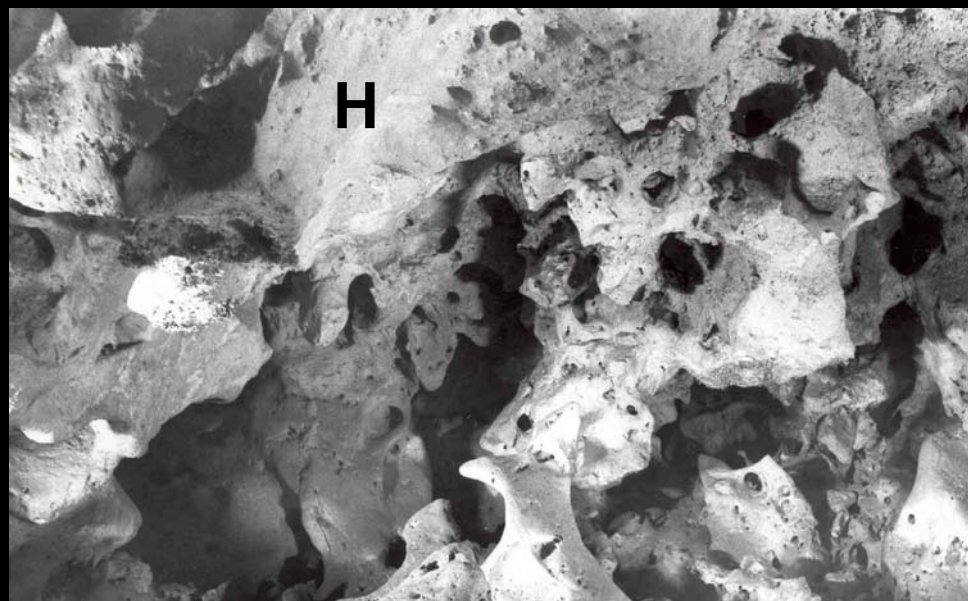
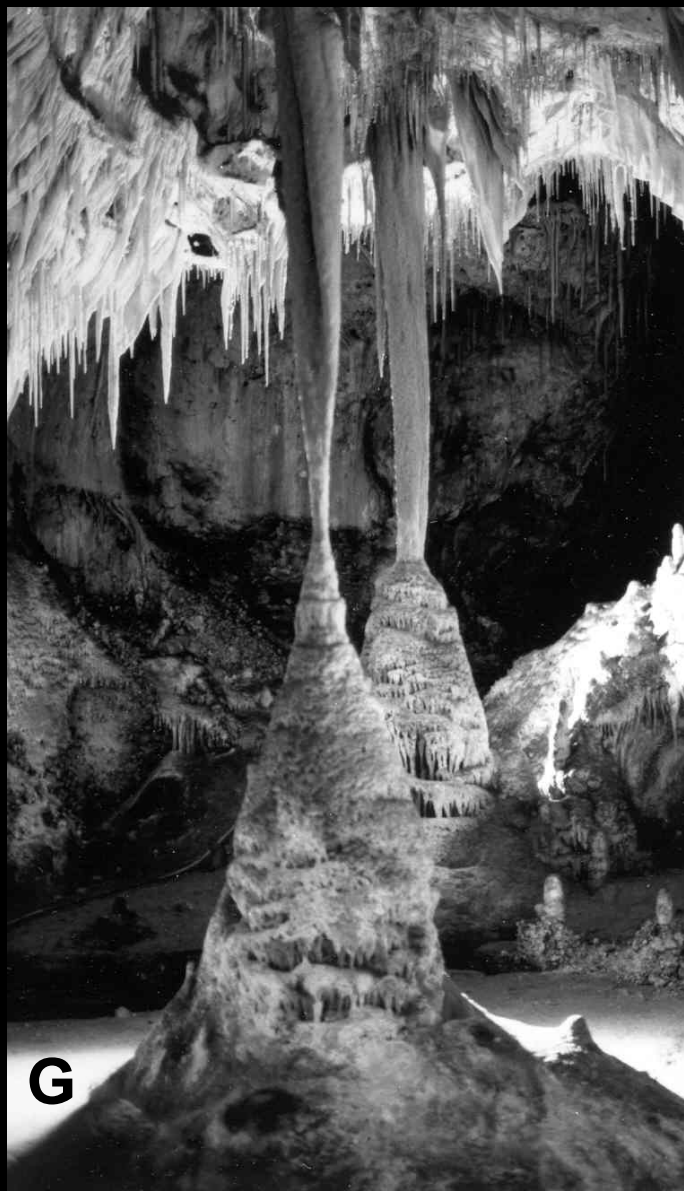
SPELEOTHEM MATCHING: Print this page, or copy the names of the formations onto your paper.

1. **STALACTITES**—hang from the ceiling of a cave; they are usually wider where they are attached to the cave ceiling, and narrow down to a point.
2. **STALAGMITES**—build up from the floor of a cave; usually are widest at the bottom
3. **COLUMNS**—are built when a stalactite and a stalagmite meet and become joined to become one decoration
4. **SODA STRAWS**—hang from a cave ceiling; they have the same width for their entire length
5. **DRAPERIES**—hang from a cave ceiling that is slanted or sloped; the draperies may be straight and flat, or meandering and folded back and forth; sometimes called curtains or ribbons; those with striping are often called “cave bacon”
6. **HELICITITES**—may hang from a cave ceiling or stick out from a wall, or may form underwater in a pool; small, thin formations that twist and turn in different directions
7. **BONEYARD**—connections of round holes in a cave wall or ceiling, where the holes can be large or small; sometimes called “spongework” or “honeycombing”
8. **CAVE PEARLS**—little spheres or balls; limestone forms a smooth, even coating around pebbles or particles of mud
9. **FLOWSTONE**—smooth, flat areas of limestone caused by thin, flowing films of water
10. **POPCORN**—small, solid bubbles, bumps or knobs that form on other speleothems or directly on cave walls











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photo by B. Ballman

You've seen all ten pictures!
You can go back and look at the
pictures again, or you can check
the Speleothem Matching:
Answer Page.

SPELEOTHEM MATCHING: Answer Page

#	speleothem	answer
1	stalactites	F
2	stalagmites	B
3	columns	G
4	soda straws	E
5	draperies	I
6	helictites	C
7	boneyard	H
8	cave pearls	A
9	flowstone	D
10	popcorn	J

How did you do?
Check your ranking.

Check your ranking for the Speleothem Matching:

NUMBER CORRECT	RANKING
8 - 10	Cave Expedition Leader
5 - 7	Cave Explorer
0 - 4	New Caver; welcome to the “grotto” (cave club)!

Would you like to try the Speleothem Challenge?