

Criminal Podcast – Deep Dive in a Tar Pit

On a separate sheet of paper, completely and thoughtfully answer the following questions.

Questions to answer while listening:

1. For how long has Sgt. David Mascarenas worked as a diver for the Los Angeles Police Department?
2. Unlike recreational diving, police divers tend to work in rough, cold waters where visibility is usually less than _____.
3. Narrator Phoebe Judge uses a literary device to help the listener visualize La Brea tar pits. She says that a request to search for evidence there was “like being asked to scuba dive in a pit of toxic cold molasses.” Which device does this phrase include, a simile or a metaphor?
4. Police are told that evidence from a 2011 murder case has been dumped into the tar pits. Police want to use remote-operated underwater search equipment to recover the evidence from the tar pits, but they can’t. Why not?
5. Why did Mascarenas volunteer to be the one to dive into the tar?
6. When Mascarenas spoke to his lieutenant, what was the main reason that motivated them to decide to go forward with the risky dive?
7. Prehistoric animals would get stuck in La Brea tar pits and die slowly, unable to free themselves. At the tar pits and museum, visitors can see the perfectly preserved bones of a saber-toothed tiger that is believed to be _____ years old and a coyote that’s _____ years old.
8. The makers of the hazardous materials suit that Mascarenas wore thought the suit could survive the environment of the tar pits, but they weren’t sure for how long. What, did they warn, might happen if the suit was submerged in the tar for too long?
9. Mascarenas couldn’t swim or easily propel himself through the thick, pudding-like tar, so how did he move to where he needed to go?



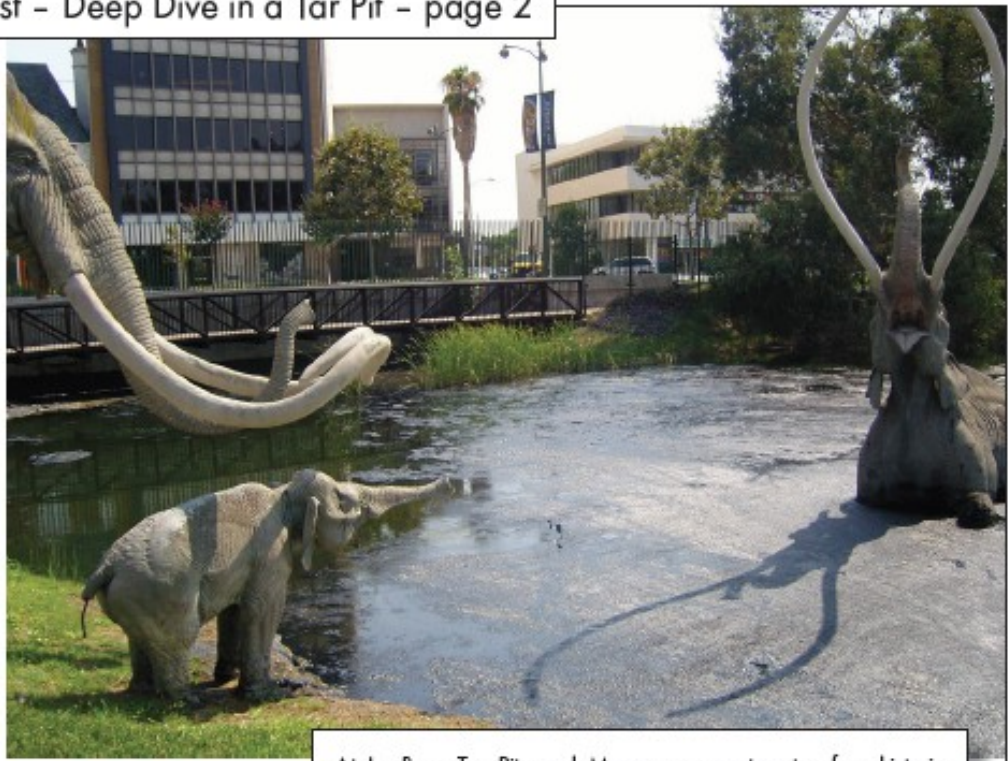
Some of the tar is thick and sticky, while other sections of the tar pits are more “liquid,” according to L.A.P.D. Sgt. David Mascarenas. Methane gas bubbles up to the surface. Since 1906, more than one million bones have been recovered at the tar pits, according to the museum’s website.

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Left: Betsy Wabar, Flickr, CC2.0.

10. What was supposed to be a nine-minute dive ended up being _____ minutes.

11. Mascarenas wasn't planning on telling his wife, Leslie, about the risky dive, but she found out about it anyway. How?

12. Leslie Mascarenas says she actually isn't nervous that her husband will get hurt on the job as a police officer. Why not?



At La Brea Tar Pits and Museum, reenactments of prehistoric animals being trapped in the tar are part of the tour. Ice Age fossil excavation continues today at the city, right in the middle of Los Angeles.

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Questions to answer after listening:

13. Based solely on the descriptions of La Brea tar pits given in the podcast, is this a place you would want to visit on a vacation to Los Angeles? Explain your answer.

14. Why didn't the podcast reporter ever tell us what specific item/s Mascarenas pulled out of the tar pits?

15. The evidence recovered in the tar pits did help detectives in the murder case bring suspects into custody, but the case remains open and unsolved. This unsatisfying end to the story might cause someone to believe that Mascarenas risked his life for nothing, since no justice has yet been served in the murder case. Do you agree with that opinion? Why or why not?

16. Mascarenas says he doesn't usually talk to his wife about the intense things he sees at work. Is this wise or not? Explain your answer.

17. One of the hallmarks of a good leader is someone who wouldn't ask a team member to do something he/she wouldn't also be able or willing to do. Mascarenas certainly meets that definition of a good leader. Identify two other qualities that you think are necessary for someone to be a good leader. Does Mascarenas have those qualities? Explain your answer using evidence from the program to support your opinion.