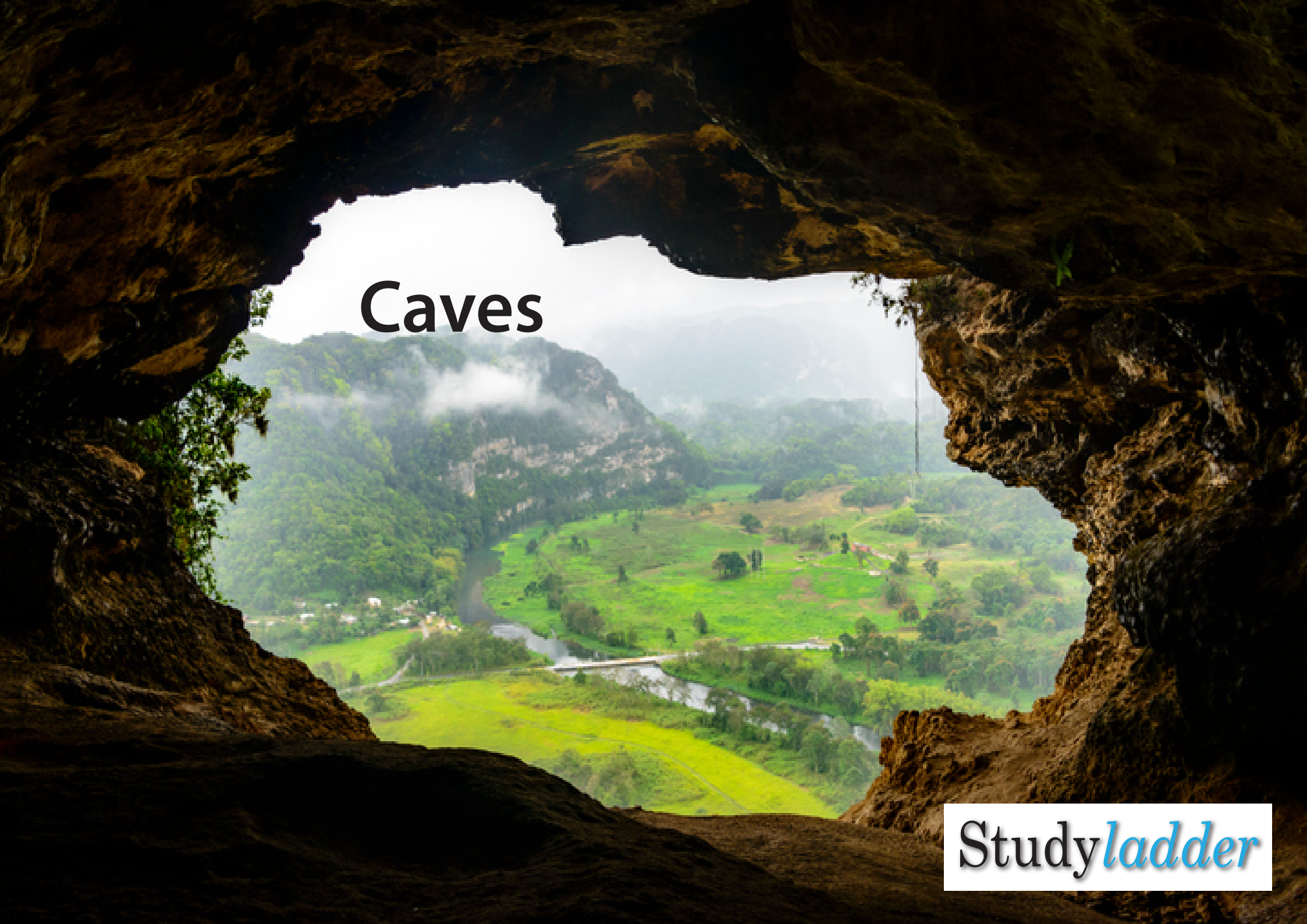

Caves
Studyladder

Caves

Limestone, stalagmites, stalactites, columns, flowstones, shawls.

Studyladder

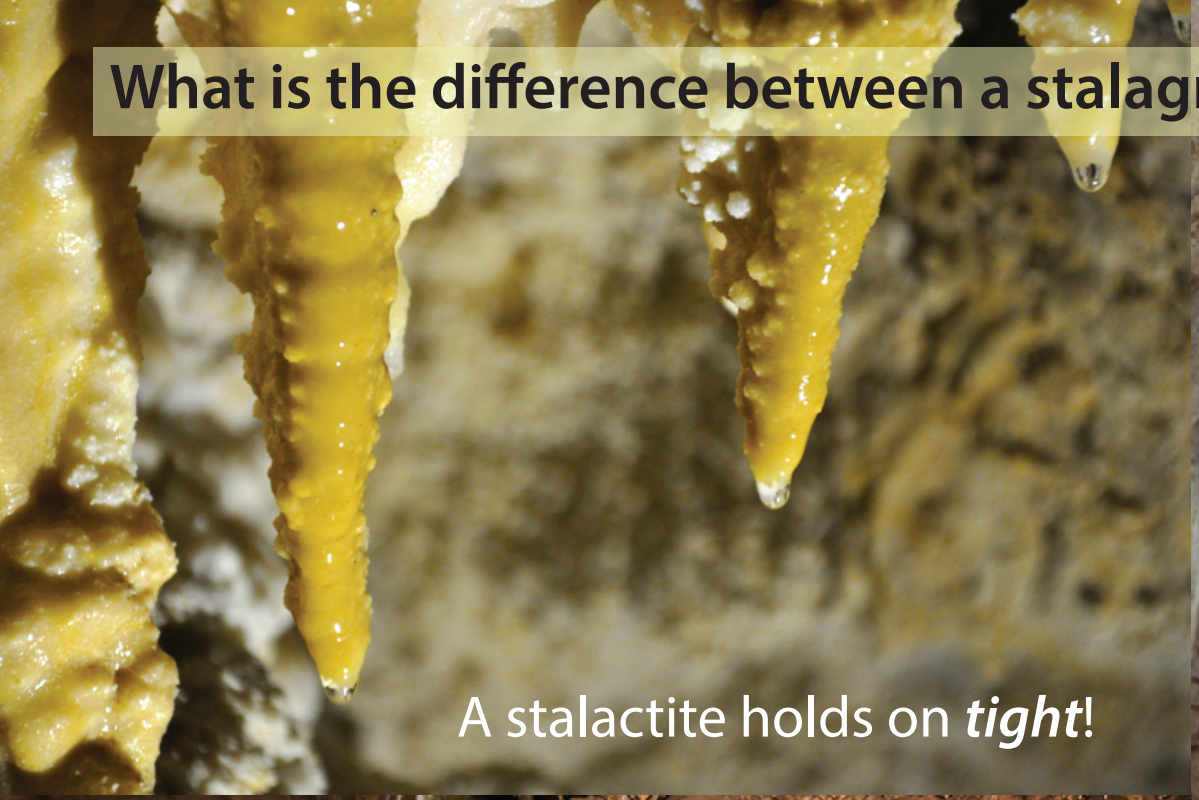
How do caves form?

When rainwater seeps through the soil it picks up carbon from decaying plant life and becomes acidic. The acidic water can dissolve certain types of rock, such as limestone, gypsum and dolomite.

After thousands of years a cave can develop. Underground lakes and rivers can be found flowing through some caves.

Sometimes the cave cannot support the weight of the overlying rock above. A cave-in will send rubble falling to the floor of the cave and allow light to enter.

What is the difference between a stalagmite and a stalactite



When water drips into a cave it can leave behind traces of minerals like calcite that build up over time.

Stalactites and stalagmites form in pairs as a result of dripping water that contains calcite. The calcite hardens and builds up over time.

When they grow big enough, a stalagmite and a stalactite may meet up and form a column that meets in the middle.

Sometimes sheets of calcite form when water seeps through limestone. These can produce interesting shapes inside the cave.