Pen Pals in the U.S.A.

Story by Wendie Old and Laura Burton Rice
Illustrations by Scott Mattern
Green Words and *Challenge Words:

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Red Words to practice every day:

- **oceans**
- **many**
- **lion**
- **world**
- **friends**
- **wild**

Challenge Words are starred (*).
Explain how underlined words are used in the story.
The U.S.A. is a BIG place. It is so big that it has two oceans. The East Coast is on the Atlantic Ocean. The West Coast is on the Pacific Ocean, 3,000 miles away.

How many oceans does the U.S.A. have? (WGR) [two]
Name them. [They are the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.]
How far apart are the two coasts? [The two coasts are 3,000 miles apart.]
Tony Rush lives on the East Coast. He lives in an apartment in Baltimore, Maryland. Tony has a Native American friend named Shala Chipps. She lives in a wooden house in Washington state.

Tony and Shala are good friends. But they have never seen each other! They are pen pals.

Where does Tony live? [Tony lives on the East Coast in Baltimore, MD.]
Where does Shala live? [Shala lives in Washington state.]
How can Tony and Shala be friends if they have never met? [They are pen pals. They write letters to each other.]
Tony wrote a letter to Shala. The letter said:

Dear Shala,

Thanks for the good book you sent! I liked it a lot. Here is a book for you. It is about fish. This is how I got the book.

What did Shala send to Tony? [Shala sent Tony a good book.]
What kind of book is Tony going to send to Shala? [Tony will send Shala a book about fish.]
My mom and I rode the bus to visit the Baltimore harbor. Many shops and ships are there. Some ships are tall. They have big masts and sails. They are called clipper ships. I looked at them all.

Where did Tony go with his mother? [They went to the Baltimore harbor.]
What did Tony look at while he was there? [He looked at different kinds of ships.]
Then Mom took me to visit the aquarium. It has lots of neat fish! I got this book in the aquarium shop. I hope you will like it.

Where did Tony’s mom take him next? [Tony’s mom took him to the aquarium.]
What did he see there? [He saw lots of neat fish.]
What did Tony get for Shala at the shop? [He got a book.]
This summer, I will see lots of fish at the beach. I am going to visit Assateague Island on the Atlantic coast. I will swim in the sea. I like to ride the waves. I will see the wild ponies. Mom says they are not too wild. But it is best just to look at them. I do not want a pony’s hoof to hit me!

Please write and tell me what you will do this summer.

Your pal,
Tony
Shala read Tony’s letter. Then she sat down to write to him. Her letter said:

Dear Tony,

Thanks for the book! I like fish too. Dad and I fish from a boat in the Pacific Ocean. Sometimes whales pass by the boat. They are bigger than the boat!

What does Shala do in the Pacific Ocean? [She fishes from a boat.]
What does she see from the boat sometimes? [She sees big whales.]
A sea lion teased me one day when Dad and I were fishing. It took my hook. It took my fish. Then it popped up by the boat. It shook its flippers. It seemed to grin at us. What a joke!

What did the sea lion do? [It teased her. It took her fish. Then it popped up by the boat and shook its flippers.]
This summer, we will take a trip down the coast to see the biggest trees in the world—the sequoia trees. They are over a hundred feet tall!

What will Shala do this summer? [She will take a trip down the coast.]
What will she see on her trip? [She will see the biggest trees in the world.]
How big are the trees? [They are over a hundred feet tall!]
Then we will visit the Plains states. They are not like the Olympic Mountains near where I live. The plains are so flat. Mom says when you look ahead you see something that looks close. Yet you drive all day to get there!

Where will Shala go next? [She will visit the Plains states.]
What do the plains look like? [They are flat.]
I have a secret to tell you. I asked my granddad what my name means. He says it means “medicine person.” So I am learning about the plants that help sick people get well. I want to be a doctor when I get big.

Write and tell me what your name means. And tell me what you will do when you grow up!

Your pal,
Shala

What does Shala’s name mean? [It means “medicine person.”]
What does Shala want to be when she grows up? [Shala wants to be a doctor.]
Shala mailed her letter to Tony. He read it and sat down to write to her about what he hopes to do when he grows up.

What did Tony do after he read Shala’s letter? [He sat down to write about what he will do when he grows up.]
Model: **Give a fact that shows that the U.S.A. is a big place.**

*The U.S.A. has two oceans. / The West Coast is 3,000 miles from the East Coast.*

Model: Write the answer on the blank line.

If you see boats, ships, and sailboats, you might be at a [**harbor**].
A. harbor  B. mountain  C. farm

1. **How can Tony and Shala be friends when they have never met?**
   
   *Tony and Shala write letters to each other. / Shala and Tony are pen pals.*

2. Write the answer on the blank line.
   
   In the story, Washington is a [**state**].
   A. state  B. part  C. mountain

Model: **What will Tony see when he goes to the Atlantic coast?**

*Tony will see fish at the beach. / Tony will see wild ponies.*

1. **What animals swim in the Pacific Ocean?**
   
   *Whales and sea lions swim in the Pacific Ocean.*

2. Write the answer on the blank line.

   A sea lion **made fun of** Shala. It [**teased**] her.
   A. helped  B. teased  C. shook

Model: **What will Shala see in other parts of the U.S.A.?**

*Shala will see sequoia trees on the coast and lots of flat land on the plains.*

1. **Tell something about the Plains states.**
   
   *The Plains states are flat. / Things that look close are far away.*

2. Write the answer on the blank line.

   Shala lives near the Pacific Ocean. She lives on the West [**Coast**].
   A. Mountain  B. Coast  C. Plains
Reading Roots, Level 4

Pen Pals in the U.S.A.

“OO” as in book

Reading Roots Shared Stories were developed under the direction of Robert E. Slavin and Nancy A. Madden, codirectors of the Success for All Foundation Family of Programs.

Success for All Foundation is a nonprofit education reform organization that develops and disseminates research-based reading and math programs for students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary and middle schools. These programs were originally developed at Johns Hopkins University.

Illustrations for this book were colored digitally by Jason Lego.

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