

Summarizing

Level 5

A Collection of Readings

**Reading
Wings** 4th
Edition

The **Savvy
Reader**

This project was developed at the Success for All Foundation under the direction of Robert E. Slavin and Nancy A. Madden to utilize the power of cooperative learning, frequent assessment and feedback, and schoolwide collaboration proven in decades of research to increase student learning.

The Savvy Reader—Summarizing, A Collection of Readings

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Edgardo's Birthday Party

S.H.O.R.T. News

Volume 3, Number 7

We Summarize for You!

www.shortnews.org

Writers Wanted!



New "Review" Section Seeks Summarizers

We're looking for a few good summarizers. Coming soon, the S.H.O.R.T. News will feature a "Reviews" section to give you the essential information on a variety of books and movies.

To bring you the best summaries we can, the S.H.O.R.T. News is looking for individuals who really know how to break down a book or movie to its most important elements and share that information in paragraph form.

If you or someone you know is a summarizing savant, or you just love to write paragraphs, please come see us at the S.H.O.R.T. News office.

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Using the strategies that we provide, our reviewers will be able to summarize just like the experts do. In fact, many of our previous summarizers have gone on to fame and fortune in the fast-paced world of professional summarizing.

Many of today's most famous summarizers, such as the world-renowned Melville Felt, got their start right here at S.H.O.R.T. News. His experience was limited when he first joined the staff, but he quickly caught on to how easy summarizing can be when using the proper strategies. He became one of our top summarizers while summarizing countless books, movies, news stories, and his favorite poems. Melville makes himself available to help young summarizers when they have difficulty finding the essential

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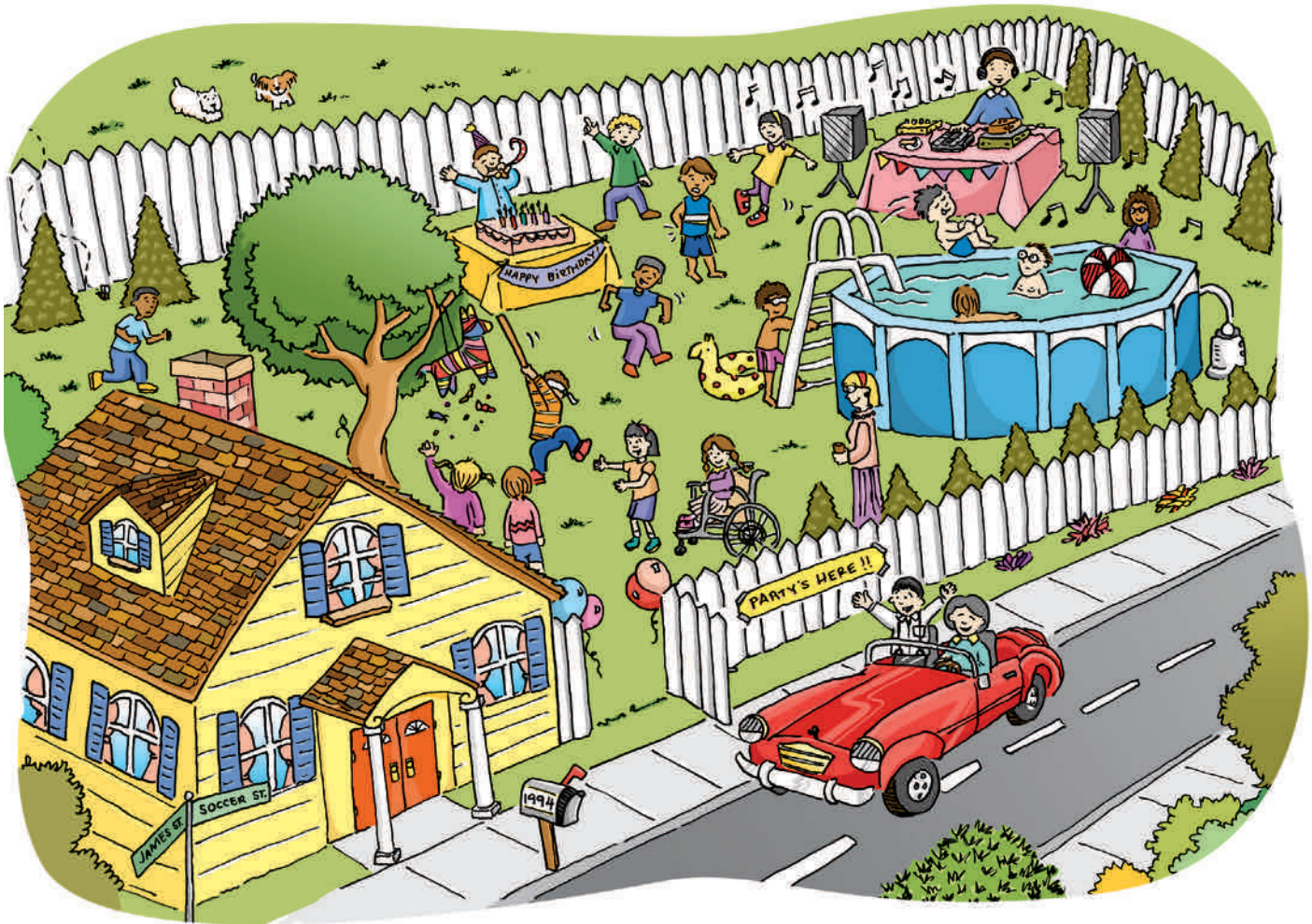
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Summarizing continues to be the best way to communicate ideas from a piece of writing quickly and accurately. A summary highlights the basic facts of a story or news article, making them stand out.

So now that you know the importance of summarizing, we know that you will have fun becoming a good summarizer.

The Editor's Challenge 

List what you think would be important to tell a friend about the party.

1. Edgardo has been a good friend of mine since the second grade.
2. He mailed me an invitation to his tenth birthday party. His party will be at his tía's house, because she has a swimming pool.
3. My mother drove me to the party. I was careful to put the invitation in my pocket because it had Edgardo's aunt's address, 1994 Soccer Street. I thought the address was funny because I was born in 1994, and I'm a terrible soccer player!
4. The party was a blast! Everyone went swimming! There was a piñata, a birthday cake, and a bag of favors for each guest. Some of the favors were candies from Mexico shaped like tropical birds and fruit.
5. My favorite part of the party was the music. There was a DJ who played all the songs I requested. Lots of the kids were dancing. Edgardo danced with some girls and he danced with his aunt. He loves to dance. I noticed that he held his side while he danced. He said he had a cramp—probably from swimming.

The Editor's Challenge 



6. Many of Edgardo's relatives were at the party. His grandparents bought him a soccer uniform. His Aunt Jessie and Uncle Pedro got him a savings bond. Edgardo wasn't sure what a savings bond was, but he thought it looked important. I got him a chemistry set. Edgardo thought it looked like it came from a horror movie. He pretended to eat some of the chemicals. (At least, I thought he was pretending!)

7. The party ended with a relay race. Edgardo couldn't run because his side hurt and he felt kind of sick. I thought he ate too much candy and cake, but he said he hadn't eaten any. My team won the relay race!



8. When our parents came to pick us up, Edgardo waved good-bye to us. He felt worse and worse and had to be taken to the hospital. I think Edgardo's party was more fun for me than for him.





The Gift

by Elizabeth McGraw-Austin

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Miguel Velasquez pulled his worn-out hat over his shaggy hair as he walked up the street. He hummed a tune his father, a trumpet player, had taught him. But Miguel's father had died three years before, when Miguel was nine. After that everything had seemed to go wrong. Miguel's mother, Katrina, was pregnant and the family did not have enough money to stay in the house where they lived. They had to move to a small, run-down house that they shared with another family. The house was so small, and the family so poor, that Miguel, his mother, his 8-year old brother Jorge and his 2-year old sister Isabella all had to sleep in the same room, with just blankets on the floor.

Miguel's mother became very sick, and she was forced to stay in bed for many weeks. With each passing week, she grew paler and softer of voice. Miguel knew he had to get some medicine to help his mother. An old woman from the neighborhood had said that if Miguel's mother got a tea made from a special combination of roots and herbs that she would get better, so Miguel took the last of their money to the old woman to buy the medicine.

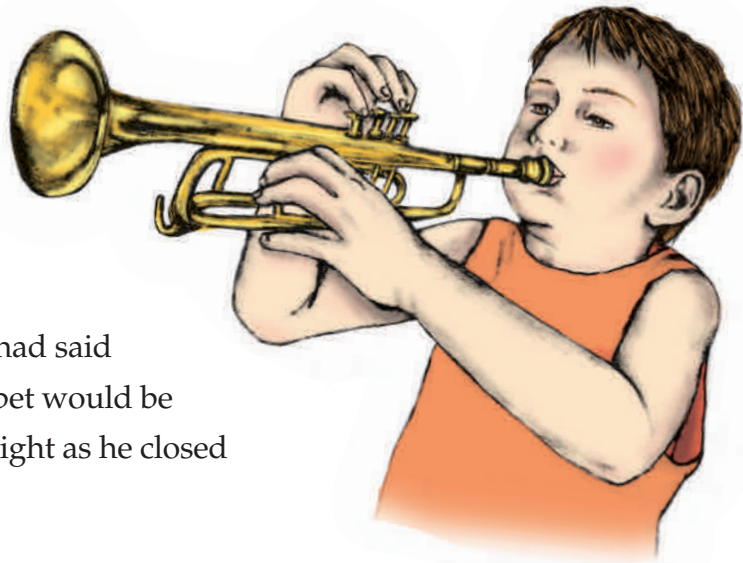
But as Miguel walked up to his house, he heard crying inside. It wasn't just the crying of his little sister, who sometimes cried for no reason. Miguel could also hear the sobs of Jorge, his brother. As Miguel passed through the front door and his eyes adjusted to the darkness in his house, he saw his brother and sister kneeling by his mother.

"She's gone, Miguel," said Jorge.

"Mama!" said Isabella. Then she turned to Miguel and started moaning and rubbing her stomach.

Miguel put the medicine on a dusty table and sat down slowly in a chair with one broken leg. He knew that Isabella was asking him for food. But he didn't have any. Miguel was very sad, but he couldn't cry now; he had to think.

There was no food in the house. There was no money to bury his mother. Miguel realized that it was time for him to try to get some money for his family. Everything they owned had been sold during the weeks of his mother's illness. Everything, that is, except for his most precious possession—the trumpet that his father had left him. Miguel's father had only taught him to play one song on it, but he took the trumpet out and played that one song every day. His mother would smile when he played. Then he would wipe the trumpet off and put it carefully away in the case. Miguel thought that he might have to sell the trumpet to get money to bury his mother. He opened the case where it lay and looked at it. It gleamed. He thought about how his father had said that if he ever died, that the trumpet would be Miguel's. He felt his throat grow tight as he closed the case, but he didn't cry.



He picked up the trumpet case and walked out the door. He walked slowly down the road to the marketplace.

As he walked, he thought of the song his father taught him. It made him feel better. He started to hum the song to himself as he approached the marketplace. The song grew louder and louder in his head, until he realized that he was really hearing it! There was a guitar player in front of the bus station in the marketplace, playing the song. People who got off the bus would stand and listen, and clap when he stopped playing.

“Hola, Miguel,” said the guitar player as Miguel walked closer. Miguel looked at the man closely—then he recognized him—he had been a friend of his father’s. They had been in a band together. “Hola, Señor,” said Miguel, sadly.

“How are you?” said the man.

Miguel told the man about how his mother had died, about having no money to bury her, and about how his sister was hungry. He even told him that he was going to sell the trumpet to get the money he needed. All the sadness welled up inside of him as he talked, but he did not cry.

The man listened with a serious expression on his face. Then he spoke.

“Miguel, didn’t your father teach you how to play that trumpet?”

“Only one song,” said Miguel. “That same song you were playing.”

“You know this song?” asked the man. “Could you play it with me? But your trumpet is a lot louder than my guitar, so put your hat over the bell of the trumpet to soften the sound.”

Miguel took the trumpet out of its case and began to play. All of his feelings poured out as he played the song. People stopped to listen and smiled with enjoyment. When the song was over, Miguel started to put his hat back on his head, but a man came up and put money in it! Then an old lady put money in. Then a mother gave a toddler some money to put in the hat.

“Now you can go buy some fruit and rice for your brother and sister and yourself,” said the man. “When you’ve all eaten, come back and we’ll play some more. But don’t sell that trumpet along the way—it is worth more to you than it is to anyone else!”

Miguel thanked him and ran up the street to the store, still carrying the trumpet in a case. He took food back to his brother and sister who ate hungrily. Then he went back to the marketplace to play his trumpet. At the end of the day, there was more money in the hat, and Miguel took it home to give to a man to bury his mother.

Every day after that, Miguel would take the trumpet to the marketplace and play. The man taught him a new song every week, and eventually another guitar player and a bongo drum player joined them. The crowds that watched them grew larger and larger, and more and more money found its way into Miguel’s hat.

One day, when Miguel had grown tall, a man pulled up in a big car and asked the band to play in his club. The band became very popular, and people would come to dance to their music. As the years passed, music from their island became famous around the world, so Miguel and the band traveled to the United States, to Africa, and to Europe. Everyone loved their music.

Miguel never forgot the feelings he had that day when he first played the song with the man. And every time he played it, whether it was in Europe, Africa, the United States, or in his country, he thought of how the song was his parents’ gift to him.





Making the Team

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Making the Team

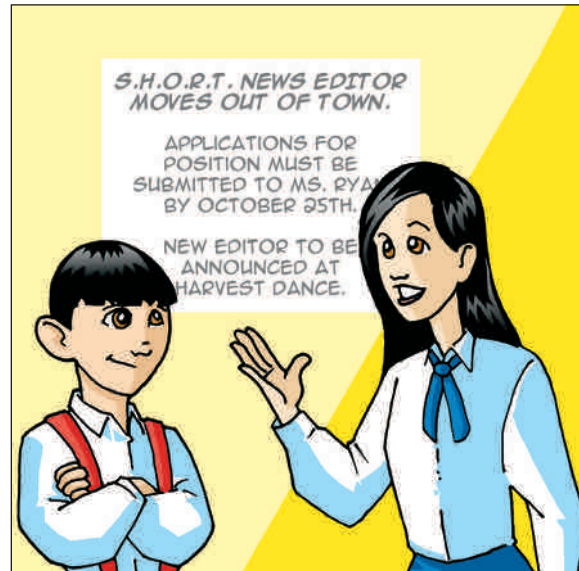
Partner 1 reads page 1 and Partner 2 retells; then you switch, so Partner 2 reads and Partner 1 retells.

Mica wasn't always a popular student at South Henry O. R. Thomas Elementary School, or the editor of the *S.H.O.R.T. School News*. In fact, if you had asked anyone on campus about Mica, that is if you could have found anyone who knew her, they would have told you that she was smart, a little bossy, and kept to herself. Mica's only friend was a boy one year younger than she who lived down the street. His name was Radford.

Radford didn't have many friends either. He was often teased by the other kids. When he tried out for soccer, he scored a goal for the other team. When he tried out for basketball, none of his shots found the net. During swimming tryouts, he nearly drowned! Even worse, his parents made him wear suspenders. His family didn't have much money, so his mom bought his pants one size too big so he could grow into them. He needed the suspenders to hold them up. The kids would snap his suspenders when Radford walked down the hall. Everyone started calling him Snappy.

Mica tried hard to fit in too. She thought about trying out for cheerleading, but decided it wasn't her thing. She did try out for the girls' volleyball team, but fell into the net and got so tangled up, she had to be cut loose.

Mica and Radford rode the bus to school together, and it was on the bus that their friendship blossomed and school became less lonely for both of them.



One day Mica read a poster on a wall near the principal's office: **S.H.O.R.T. News editor moves out of town. Applications for position must be submitted to Ms. Ryan by Oct. 25. New editor to be announced at Harvest Dance.** Mica grew very excited. "I can write really well!" she exclaimed. "What about you, Radford?"

"Well, actually, I'm a pretty good writer too," Radford replied.

The *S.H.O.R.T. School News* needed a lot of help. The articles were neither short nor interesting.

In fact, they were very long, filled with unnecessary details, and very boring. Most kids never even read the school paper. So Ms. Ryan was very surprised when Mica and Radford rushed breathlessly into her classroom to apply for the editor's position. "You'll have to write an essay explaining what you would do to make the *S.H.O.R.T. School News* a better school newspaper," she told them. "No problem!" cried Mica and Radford together.

The Editor's Challenge

Making the Team

(Partner 2 reads, Partner 1 restates)

"I'm suffocating in this costume, Dad," Radford complained, fussing with the straw in his scarecrow costume. "Could you roll down your window so I can get some air?"

Neither Radford nor Mica had much interest in going to the Harvest Dance, but they were dying to find out who would be named editor of the school newspaper. So, as Radford's dad drove them to school, the duo of Scarecrow and Pumpkin (Mica, in a hand-me-down costume) pledged that if one of them were named the editor, he or she would choose the other for the staff.

Just as the school band finished playing a tune ("I wish they knew some rock and roll," one student was overheard commenting.), Ms. Ryan stepped to the microphone. "Well, it looks like the *S.H.O.R.T. School News* has a new editor," she said, "It's Mica! Give her a round of applause everyone!"

Mica froze. Her face flushed bright red. "Mmmme?" she spluttered.

"Yes, Mica," Ms. Ryan continued, "Your suggestion that we make articles shorter and include just the important events, as well as your plans to include cartoons and book and movie reviews, earned you this prestigious position. Congratulations!"

Weeks passed and the students of South Henry O.R. Thomas Elementary found that the *S.H.O.R.T. School News* had really improved. The paper now reported the results of the volleyball, basketball and soccer games and had interesting articles like the one about the time the entire cheerleading squad had a bad hair day.



One day the captain of the swimming team bumped into Radford in the hall. "Hey, Snapp—I mean Radford, I liked your story about the swimming team," he said. "By the way, cool suspenders. I like the look."

Radford couldn't wait to tell Mica what had happened and about how amazing it was to be on the *S.H.O.R.T. School News* team and about how great school was now. He went on and on. "I agree, Radford," Mica replied, "But remember, keep it SHORT, keep it very, very SHORT!"



The Book Raiders

1. Samantha loved browsing through the library looking for new books to read. She went to the library once a month to find at least one new book. Sometimes she asked the librarians if they had any suggestions for new stories. The librarians loved that Samantha took an interest in reading.

2. One thing that bothered Samantha was that she never had anyone with whom she could discuss the books she read. Her friends enjoyed reading as well, but they never read the same book at the same time. Samantha wanted to read the books together and then discuss them in a group.

3. “Why don’t you start a book club, Samantha,” Miss Campbell, a librarian, suggested. “You and your friends could read the same book and then discuss it when you all finish,” she said. “But what if some of us don’t like the book?” Samantha asked. Miss Campbell laughed. “That’s the point! You and your friends will talk about what you liked and didn’t like. Disagreements might make the discussions more exciting,” she said.

4. Samantha called her friend Kanye up on the phone. “How would you like to start a book club?” she asked. “I want to start a club where a group of us will read one book a month and then discuss it. Then we’ll pick out a new book to read together for the next month,” Samantha said. Kanye thought Samantha had a great idea and immediately agreed. “We should call Marcus and Grace and ask them to join,” Kanye said.

5. Marcus and Grace liked Samantha’s idea too. “Now we just need to figure out where we’ll meet and how we’ll decide on books,” Grace said. “I’ve got that all figured out already guys,” Samantha said. “I asked the librarians, and they said we could reserve a study room in the library one day a month,” she explained. “That’s great!” Kanye, Marcus, and Grace exclaimed. “But what about the books we’ll read?” asked Marcus.

6. “I have a plan for that too,” Samantha said. “Each of us likes different genres of books, right?” Marcus likes science fiction, Grace likes historical novels, Kanye enjoys funny stories, and I love everything. Every month we’ll choose a different genre of book. That way we’ll all read something a little different than we would ordinarily and be introduced to new things. Does that sound okay to all of you?” Kanye, Marcus, and Grace congratulated Samantha on her good thinking.

7. “Let’s give our club a name,” Marcus said. “I think it should be the Book Raiders. It sort of describes how we’re going to raid the library for books each month, like pirates raiding the coast,” he added. The other three thought about it and agreed that it was a good name. “Samantha, you should decide what the Book Raiders will read first,” Kanye said.

8. “Let’s read a classic then,” Samantha said. “Miss Campbell suggested I read *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* once, but I never checked it out. Has anyone read that already?” she asked. Her friends shook their heads. “Great! Let’s see if there are enough copies for all of us,” Samantha said. The friends quickly found the book, and they each checked out a copy. They reserved a study room for the last Saturday of the month. “We’ll all meet back here in three weeks to talk about the book,” Samantha said.

9. Three weeks passed, and then Samantha, Kanye, Marcus, and Grace met at the library for the first book discussion of the Book Raiders club. “What did you all think of the story, characters, and writing?” Samantha asked. “I really enjoyed it! I felt so bad at the end when Justin does not come out of the hole,” she added. “I agree with you, Samantha,” Grace said. “Justin was such a hero in the story. You just know he sacrificed himself to save Brutus,” she said. “I normally wouldn’t have read this book, but I’m glad I did,” Marcus said. “It was a really enjoyable story,” Kanye agreed. “It had just the right amount of suspense and comedy to appeal to all of us,” he said. The group continued chatting and agreed upon their next book. Samantha thought her idea was a roaring success!

Crazy About Kids

Comprehension Questions

Read *Crazy About Kids*, and answer the following questions.

1. Carl didn't mind that he had to get home from school quickly to make sure he was there for his little brother, Ike. Ike finished school thirty minutes after Carl finished. Carl enjoyed bonding with his brother after school.
2. "I know you have to sacrifice a lot to come home and babysit Ike after school," Carl's mom said. "I wish there was a way you could join the baseball team and still keep an eye on Ike." This gave Carl an idea.
3. "Sonya, you do a lot of babysitting, don't you?" Carl asked the next day in school. "Yes, I do," Sonya replied. "I take care of the Johnsons' two kids all the time." "That's great," he said. "Maybe you can help me with my new business idea."
4. "What are you thinking?" Sonya asked. Carl handed her a notebook with a detailed plan for a babysitting club inside. "I want to start a babysitting club," he said. "We'll form a club that takes on babysitting jobs and divides them between good babysitters, depending on our schedules," he explained.
5. "That's a great idea, Carl!" Sonya exclaimed. "Sometimes I feel bad when I can't watch the Johnsons' kids because I have ballet practice. But this way, an available club member could go instead!" "Exactly!" Carl shouted. "I got the idea because I want to join the baseball team, but I can't because Ike needs a babysitter after school."
6. "I think Tracy would be really interested in joining the club," Sonya said. "I know she takes care of her little sister, Trina, all the time, and sometimes she takes care of the Johnsons' kids when I can't." "Great, we'll ask her about it at lunchtime," Carl said. "I think Rodrigo would like to join as well. He has a big family and is used to babysitting a lot of little kids," he added.

7. Both Tracy and Rodrigo were excited about the club. Tracy thought it would be easier for neighborhood parents to find a babysitter with the four of them pooling their efforts. “We should make posters and come up with a club name to advertise,” Rodrigo said. “I know my own mom will appreciate knowing who to call when she needs a sitter and I’m not home.”

8. “Good idea, Rodrigo!” Sonya said. “We need a name that shows we truly enjoy babysitting and taking care of kids.” Carl agreed. “But it needs to be catchy too, so parents remember it,” he added. “How does Crazy About Kids sound?” Tracy suggested. The group cheered for the name. “It’s perfect!” they all exclaimed.

9. After school, Carl, Sonya, Tracy, and Rodrigo got together at Carl’s house to make posters and fliers for their club. Since Carl had the idea, it was decided that his house would be the base of operations. They put the club’s contact information on the advertisements and took Ike around the neighborhood in his wagon to hand out fliers and hang up posters. When Carl’s mom got home, she said she thought her son’s idea was brilliant. “Now I know whom I can call to babysit Ike while you’re busy playing baseball,” she said.

Somewhat the Sailor

STORY BY DARNELL PARKER ✦ ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES BRAVO



PROLOGUE

(Or, an Introduction of Sorts)

Everyone has heard of Sinbad the Sailor, who sailed the Seven Seas in search of fame and fortune. Stories of Sinbad's adventures have come down through the ages, and an untold number of children have listened, as their weary eyes closed for the night, to Sinbad's swashbuckling sagas. Indeed, Sinbad the Sailor's legend will live on, and tales of bravery on the ocean will entertain children of all ages for centuries to come.

But perhaps not everyone has heard of his less famous brother, Somewhat the Simpleton.

Somewhat the Simpleton, alas, never fared as well as his older brother. As young boys, they would ride their horses over the green hills of Crete, their home. Sinbad was a master of riding, and he would gallop on his horse with confidence and style over the hills. Somewhat would try to keep up, yet would find himself falling from his own horse, for he knew not how to lash a saddle tight.

Other days, the boys would practice archery. Sinbad would shoot his arrows straight and true and hit targets with his eyes closed. Somewhat would try to do the same, but his arrows would not fly true. Never would they hit the target. People would say that when Somewhat the Simpleton was practicing his archery, nowhere in Greece was safe, for nobody knew where his arrows would go.

When Sinbad would play his lyre, beautiful music would waft over the air, and people would stop what they were doing and listen to the lovely sounds. But when Somewhat practiced his lyre, it would make the most awful sounds, for Somewhat knew not how to play the correct chords. So, people often wondered whether Somewhat the Simpleton would amount to much.

Gentle reader, this is the story of Somewhat the Simpleton, how he valiantly fought the vicious Sea Beast of the East Sea with his friend Molly Merriweather and became known as Somewhat the Sailor. So, my friend, the wind has picked up, the sun is shining bright over the waves, the sailors are unfurling the sails, and it is time to sail. Come along.

BOOK THE FIRST

(Or, Chapter 1)

The day started out like any other day. The sun rose in the morning, as it always does. Somewhat the Simpleton was busy making himself some breakfast. Well, he spent most of the time bandaging his thumb, for he'd burned it on the stove.

"Go figure," Somewhat the Simpleton said to himself, "I've burned myself. Things like this seem to always happen to me."

After he bandaged his thumb and finished his breakfast, Somewhat the Simpleton waited for the mail. He expected a letter from his brother Sinbad, who was sailing somewhere on the Seven Seas. Somewhat the Simpleton never understood how Sinbad could send letters from the open seas, but still he waited for the letter.

A trumpet blast! The mail had arrived!

Somewhat the Simpleton ran to the door, stubbing his toe on the doorstep. Grumbling in pain, Somewhat stumbled awkwardly down to the sidewalk and met the postman, who rode up on his horse. "Good morning, kind sir," he called, rather simply.

"And a good morning to you," responded the postman.

"Have you any mail for me today?" asked Somewhat.

"Indeed, sir, I do," said the postman. "Here it is." He pulled a paper envelope from his leather satchel and handed it to Somewhat.

Trying hard not to grimace from the pain in his throbbing toe, Somewhat took the envelope. Sure enough, clumsy Somewhat dropped the envelope in a puddle. "Poor me," he pouted, "it is but early in the morning, and I've burned my thumb, stubbed my toe, and dropped my mail in a puddle. What else might befall me on this day?"

Nevertheless, he thanked the postman as he rode away and limped back into his cottage. He turned the stove on and carefully warmed up the letter to dry it. Then he fixed himself a spot of tea and made himself as comfortable as could be at the kitchen table, banging his knee in the process. Taking a sip of the hot tea from his mug and burning his lip, he said to himself, "Trying to read this letter is sure to be the end of me." Nevertheless, Somewhat opened up the letter and began to read.

This is the letter:

Dear Brother,

It is with great respect that I write to you this day. Recent events have tested me and my valiant crew of sailors. We sailed, of late, from Corsica to Crete, on the sixth of the Seven Seas. The journey was jubilant at first, for the wind was at our backs and we sailed smoothly.

But then, disaster struck.

On the ninth night (or, was it the eighth eve? I don't recall), a storm struck. It was unlike any storm I've ever sailed through. The wind was a monster that ripped at our riggings and slashed at our sails. The many blows of the gale force winds mangled the mast.

We lost many sailors that night, dear brother. My crew of brave men, which numbered one hundred before we set sail from Corsica, was reduced to but five sailors. And the other bad news is that we lost the ship. My beautiful ship, taken from me by the winds! Oh, brother, the five men and I had to escape in a lifeboat as the ship sank! Never have I been so sad.

Still, dear brother, I am at a loss right now. Though the five men and I escaped from the storm and arrived safely ashore in Crete, they have deserted me. The men said they could not face the dangers of the sea again.

Dear brother, I have heard of vast riches that lie just beyond the East Sea, yet I have no ship and no crew. This is why I write to you. Mr. Moneypenny, the banker in town, knows of my gold holdings. I have sent a letter also to him. In it, I have instructed him to give to you from my account as many gold pieces as you need to hire a crew, rent a ship, and sail to meet me in Crete.

Somewhat, dear brother, please do as I ask. Do it for the honor
of our brotherhood. Do it for the riches that we could share,
if only we can reach the islands past the East Sea.
I await your response, or your arrival.
Bravely yours,
Sinbad the Sailor

Somewhat the Simpleton simply couldn't believe what he was reading, though he was reading with his own two eyes (for whom else's eyes would he read with, dear reader?). Somewhat had always been afraid and frightened of the frothy sea. That was why Somewhat stayed landlocked while his brother Sinbad sailed the oceans. Yet now here was his brave brother Sinbad the Sailor asking Somewhat to do the impossible!

For indeed, Somewhat thought that this was simply impossible! Somewhat knew nothing of sailing ships, or renting boats, or hiring sailors! But he loved his brother. What was he to do?

Somewhat sat still for a second and then had a brilliant idea. "I know!" he exclaimed. "I can ask Molly Merriweather what she thinks! She'll know what to do!" Molly Merriweather was Somewhat's oldest and truest friend. She owned a public house, a sort of restaurant for sailors and others, near the docks in town.

Somewhat folded the letter and stood up. He made sure the stove was off (for he remembered the time when he left the stove on and singed the silk curtains in his kitchen). Then he gathered his hat and coat and walked out the door. Or rather, I should say he limped out the door, for his stubbed toe was still hurting.

It was a nice morning as Somewhat limped down to Molly's Public House. He took off his hat and walked inside.

Molly was behind the counter, cleaning coffee cups. She looked up and saw Somewhat. "Somewhat! Dear friend," she said cheerily, for Molly was always cheery. In fact, have you ever heard the phrase "a cup of good cheer"? If you have, you should know that Molly invented that. She continued, "What brings you to my Public House on this fine day?"

"Oh, Molly," said Somewhat, as he sat down at the counter. "I have received a letter from my brother Sinbad this morning."

“Do tell,” said Molly, smiling, “for I always love to hear of your brother’s exploits on the Seven Seas.”

Somewhat said, “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you. Perhaps you should read the letter yourself.”

“Sure thing,” said Molly as Somewhat unfolded the letter and handed it to her. Molly poured Somewhat a cup of hot cocoa (for that was Somewhat’s favorite drink), and Somewhat sat in silence as Molly read the letter.

Molly's eyes widened as she read the letter. She gasped in astonishment at the surprising parts about the dangerous storm. She whistled softly when she read of Sinbad's request. When she finished, she folded the letter and handed it back to Somewhat.

"What shall I do, Molly?" Somewhat asked.

For but a brief moment, Molly's brow furrowed. Then, in an instant, the cheer came back to her face. She triumphantly declared, "We shall do as your brother asks!"

Somewhat was confused. "We?" he asked quizzically. "What do you mean, 'we?'"

Molly said brightly, "Somewhat, I have been thinking about taking a vacation anyway. Let's make it the grandest of all vacations! Let us rent a boat, hire a crew, and set sail to help your brother!"

Somewhat had hoped that Molly would say he shouldn't go sailing on the dangerous seas. But somewhere, deep inside, he knew what she would say. Somewhat was terrified by the idea, and he said so. "But Molly, dear friend," he cried, "I'm too frightened!"

Molly reached across the counter and patted his hand. "You're not frightened, Somewhat," she said. "You perhaps lack confidence. That is all. Now, I shall make a sign telling my customers that I'm on vacation, and ask them to be sure to turn the lights out if they help themselves to coffee and scones while I'm gone. You, stop worrying about things and go to Mr. Moneypenny and ask him to give you money from your brother's account. I think 2,000 gold pieces should suffice. I'll meet you at the East docks in twenty minutes."

Somewhat's head was spinning. Everything was happening so fast! But deep inside, he trusted Molly Merriweather. She always made the right choices. So he bade her farewell for the moment and left the restaurant.

He walked up the street to the bank, took off his hat, and went inside. There were no customers at that hour of the morning, so Somewhat and Mr. Moneypenny were the only people in the bank.

“Ah, Mr. Somewhat,” said Mr. Moneypenny. “I’ve been expecting you. I’ve received your brother’s letter.”

Somewhat cleared his throat. Nervously, he said, “Mr. Moneypenny, sir, may I withdraw 2,000 gold pieces from my brother’s account?”

Mr. Moneypenny chuckled. He said, “I knew it would be that amount. My good friend Mr. Boatswain, the shipbuilder, has told me that’s what it would cost for a ship and a crew.” He handed Somewhat two sacks of gold. Then he said, “I’ve also taken the liberty of telling Mr. Boatswain that you’d be going to see him. He’s selected a fine sailing ship for your use. He has also assembled a fine crew of sailors. They’re at the East dock, awaiting.”

Indeed, things were moving quite fast!

With his sacks of gold in hand, Somewhat walked down to the East dock. He felt as though he wasn't in control of anything. It was as if everyone in town, from the banker to the boatman to Molly, were conspiring to make him go on the voyage.

More than fearing the sea, Somewhat feared disappointing his friends. He knew that Molly was rather excited about the voyage. And sure enough, dear reader, when he found Molly down at the dock, she was laughing and telling jokes with a rowdy bunch of women and men. They numbered twenty or so. This group was, obviously, the group of sailors that Mr. Boatswain had selected for him.

When he reached them, the men and women cheered. "Hooray, Captain Somewhat! Hooray!" they yelled in unison.

Mr. Boatswain stepped forth. "Mr. Somewhat," he said, his voice rich and deep, "these sailors are the finest crew, aside from the brave men who sail with your brother. I am honored to have them sail with you." As he spoke, Mr. Boatswain eyed the sacks of gold in Somewhat's arms. Then he said, "Perhaps you should address the group?"

Somewhat gathered all his courage and began to speak. "Dear sailors," he said, his voice trembling, "I will pay you handsomely if you will all join me on a sea quest...."

Someone in the crowd interrupted him. "Why will we seek a West? What does that mean?"

Somewhat said, "No, a sea quest!"

Someone else then shouted, "A sea quest! I see! I see!"

Another yelled, "A sea quest? *Si! Si!*" for this certain sailor was from Spain. "West or east?" the Spanish sailor added.

Somewhat continued, "To the East Sea we will sail, to the east at least as far as we can sail."



Everyone cheered, including Molly. “To the east, at the very least!”

Mr. Boatswain addressed Somewhat again. He said, “Mr. Somewhat, or shall I say *Captain* Somewhat, I would be glad to join you on the trip, and my men are at your disposal. Shall we discuss payment?”

Somewhat said, “I have 2,000 gold pieces for you and your sailors.”

When the sailors heard of that handsome sum, they all cheered again.

Mr. Boatswain said, “Allow us time to load the ship, the *Golden Fleece*, with food and supplies, Captain. May I suggest that you return to your home to pack? We set sail in three hours, Captain.”

Somewhat liked the sound of that. He liked being called Captain. Perhaps the trip was turning out to be a good idea after all.

Well, dear reader, Somewhat was in for the trip of his life.

BOOK THE SECOND

(Or, Chapter 2)

The crew of the *Golden Fleece* had been sailing for a fortnight, or two weeks. The days had been perfect for sailing. A strong breeze blew the ship along, and the crew was making good time. The nights were calm, and not a drop of rain had fallen. Mr. Boatswain, although he called Somewhat the “Captain,” controlled the crew of sailors well. Reader, have you heard the phrase “he runs a tight ship?” Well, that’s exactly what Mr. Boatswain did. The men and women of the crew seemed to be having the time of their lives. They would whistle as they lowered the boom, came about, and swabbed the deck. There was a general air of happiness about the crew.

Somewhat, on the other hand, wasn’t enjoying himself quite as much. One of the reasons he didn’t sail much, aside from the fact that he was dreadfully afraid of the sea, was his seasickness. If you were to look at Somewhat the Simpleton, you might wonder why he had a green tint to his face. Whenever Somewhat was aboard a ship, he felt continually queasy. That was the case on this voyage. He spent all of his days below deck, listening to his rumbling stomach.

“Molly, dear friend,” Somewhat said one afternoon as they sat in his cabin together. “I feel terrible. I feel as though my insides are upside down. What can I do?”

Molly looked at her friend and chuckled. She took his hand. Tenderly, she said, “Oh, Somewhat. You’re seasick. One way to get over seasickness is to go up to the deck. You need some fresh air. Also, looking at the horizon helps with seasickness. Come with me.” She stood up from her place at his table.

“Dear Molly,” Somewhat said, “I can’t bear to face the sea. What if I fall in? What if a giant wave knocks me into the water?”

Molly held her friend's hand tighter. "Somewhat," she said, "do you remember what I said about confidence? You need to face your fears. And, if you do, I promise you'll feel better."

Somewhat, as always, trusted Molly. "Okay, dear friend," he said, "I'll try it." Hand in hand, the two walked up into the sunshine. Somewhat breathed the salty sea air. He felt the sunshine warm his face. Almost immediately, he felt better.

"Ahoy, Captain Somewhat!" called Mr. Boatswain from the helm.

"Hello, Mr. Boatswain," responded Somewhat. "I wonder if you might give me a tour of the ship?"

"Indeed, sir!" shouted Mr. Boatswain.

"Well done, friend, you did it," said Molly.

"Thank you, Molly," said Somewhat. "Now, Mr. Boatswain, where were we?"

An hour or so later, Mr. Boatswain and Somewhat completed the tour. Somewhat said, "Well, that was very informative, Mr. Boatswain, and I thank you for it."

"Indeed, sir," said Mr. Boatswain, "I'm quite glad you enjoyed it. As you can see, we run a tight ship here."

Somewhat said, "Well, I'll make sure to stay out of your way. I would never want to be any sort of nuisance to you and the crew. However, if there's anything I can do to help, please don't hesitate to let me know."

"Yes sir, I'll be sure to do that," said Mr. Boatswain. "Good day, sir."

Somewhat walked to the front of the ship and gazed out at the sea. He breathed the air and felt the warm breeze. Soon he heard Molly approach from behind him. He turned around to face her. "Ah, dear friend," said Somewhat, grateful to see her. "Don't you just love the smell of the sea air, the feel of the sun against your skin, and the way the breeze billows the sails above?"

Molly seemed genuinely surprised that Somewhat had taken to sailing. "Why, Somewhat," she exclaimed. "I do declare that you seem to be a changed man. But just an hour ago, you were positively green from seasickness!"

"Much has happened in that hour," said Somewhat, "and I have you to thank for that."

Molly said, "Well, Somewhat. I always said that you just lack confidence. It seems as though you're rather full of it now, I'd say. You're positively brimming with confidence. Let that be a lesson well-learned. If you face your fear, you can do anything."

"Indeed," said Somewhat, as he turned to face the sea again. Alas, dear reader, Somewhat was still somewhat clumsy. As he turned, he tripped on a rope. He clattered to the deck, and banged his knee on the way down.



Molly had to suppress a giggle. “Oh, clumsy Somewhat, somewhat clumsy,” she said. “Are you all right?”

Somewhat grinned from the deck, and then sprang sprightly to his feet. “Indeed! I’m fine!” he exclaimed, beaming with happiness. It seemed to Somewhat the Simpleton and Molly Merriweather that all was right.

If only that were the case.

The next day dawned clear and bright. Nobody could have known what was in store. By nightfall, the peace and calm aboard the *Golden Fleece* would be gone.

The crew of the *Golden Fleece* had breakfast like they always did. Then they all proceeded to do their morning chores. Some swabbed the deck, others peeled potatoes for dinner. Some hauled in the rigging, and others manned the crow's nest.

After lunch, Mr. Boatswain was gazing at the sea through his looking glass, watching the clouds roll by. Somewhat and Molly were by his side. Then, dear reader, at about one o'clock in the afternoon, there arose the most peculiar sound. It was a low rumbling, and it seemed to come from beneath the surface of the sea.

It grew louder and louder. "What is that infernal sound?" asked Somewhat, somewhat annoyed that such an awful sound would disrupt such a beautiful day.

"I can say for certain that I'm not certain," said Mr. Boatswain.

"Perhaps it's an underwater volcano?" mused Molly. "That would be quite a sight to see."

"No, I've heard plenty of underwater waterspouts in my time," said Mr. Boatswain, obviously unaware that waterspouts and volcanoes are not the same thing. "This is something truly different."

The rumbling roar grew louder and louder. Then directly ahead of the *Golden Fleece*, bubbles started to appear on the surface of the water. "Come about and stop the ship!" commanded Mr. Boatswain.

The crew got to work stopping the ship. One of the sailors hauled the anchor to the side and tossed it overboard. Mr. Boatswain, Somewhat, and Molly watched the bubbles. Soon more than bubbles appeared. The sea churned and frothed, boiled and rumbled.

Mr. Boatswain ran to the main cabin and found an atlas. “This can’t be happening,” he said.

“What? What is it?” cried Somewhat, more than bothered by the tone of Mr. Boatswain’s voice.

Mr. Boatswain opened the atlas to a map of the East Sea. He pointed at a spot on the map. “It would seem that we’ve made a terrible mistake. I thought we were sailing far enough north to avoid this, but it seems we haven’t,” he said sharply.

“What do you mean?!” cried Somewhat.

“My dear Mr. Somewhat,” said Mr. Boatswain. “It would seem that we’ve sailed directly into the lair of the Sea Beast of the East Sea. We are lost, for nobody has ever faced the Sea Beast of the East Sea and lived to tell the tale. I’m dreadfully sorry, Mr. Somewhat.”

BOOK THE THIRD

(Or, Chapter 3)

As Mr. Boatswain and Somewhat were studying the atlas, they heard a series of shouts from the foredeck of the *Golden Fleece*. They ran from the cabin to the deck to see what all the commotion was about.

Dear reader, I'm not sure if I can describe to you what they saw. The Sea Beast of the East Sea almost defies description, but I'll do my best. The Sea Beast had risen from the water and towered over the crew scampering about on the deck of the *Golden Fleece*. The Sea Beast had fire in its eyes, and its scaly skin was the darkest green, darker than the darkest forest. Instead of arms, the Sea Beast had eight tentacles, like an octopus does, but it was more horrible than any octopus in the world.

And the sounds it made were horrible! It roared with the sound of a thousand lions. Somewhat watched in horror as the Sea Beast let out a horrible roar, and, with lightning speed, reached out and plucked Mr. Boatswain from the deck! Before any of the crew could react, the Sea Beast carried Mr. Boatswain under the surface of the sea. Reader, I'm sorry to report that that was the last anyone saw of the brave Mr. Boatswain, the fearless leader of his crew.

As quickly as the Sea Beast appeared, it disappeared. Somewhat stood in shock, unable to fathom what he'd just seen. One moment he was standing next to Mr. Boatswain, and the next moment Mr. Boatswain was gone. Somewhat's knees began to shake, and he felt as though he would faint. He grabbed hold of the side of the boat to steady himself.



Molly Merriweather ran to Somewhat. “Steady, dear friend!” she said, a seriousness in her eyes that Somewhat had not seen before. The look in Molly’s eyes made Somewhat stand tall. Then Molly spoke again. She said, “Somewhat, I need you to listen to me. Mr. Boatswain was the leader of this crew. And now he is gone. The crew will need someone to lead them. I cannot do that alone. You must help me lead this crew to safety.”

Somewhat gathered all of his courage and said, as strongly as he could, “Yes, Molly, I’ll help you.”

Molly turned to face the crew. Some of them stood silently, with looks of shock on their faces. Others wept quietly at the loss of their leader. Molly Merriweather cleared her throat. As she began to speak, her voice floated across the near silence of the deck.

“Crew of the *Golden Fleece!*” she exclaimed. “The loss of Mr. Boatswain is a sad one. But we must not put ourselves in any further jeopardy. The Sea Beast will soon be hungry again, and it will eventually return for another meal. We must sail to safety, and we must do so at once!”

One member of the crew, Sarafina Strongbow, who usually worked the sails of the *Golden Fleece*, stepped forth. “Ms. Merriweather,” she began with all the strength she could muster, “I agree. We must sail to safety. Otherwise we’ll never reach Sinbad in one piece.” As she spoke, the strength in her voice grew and grew. “We cannot let the Sea Beast and its awful deeds go unpunished. We must regroup and return to take on the Sea Beast. We must do it for Mr. Boatswain!” By the time she finished speaking, the other members of the crew were cheering.

“For Mr. Boatswain!” they shouted in unison. “For our leader!”

“Very well!” shouted Molly, for she knew she could not dissuade these stubborn sailors from this particular idea. “We shall return soon to face the Sea Beast. But now, let us sail to safety. So, men and women, off to your posts! Ms. Strongbow, pull up anchor! Off we go!”

Immediately, the crew leapt into action. Even without their fearless leader, the crew acted like a well-oiled machine. Each man and woman had a job to do and did it with precision and skill.

“Come about!” shouted one sailor.

“Unfurl the mainsail!” shouted another.

“Aye aye, madam!” shouted another.

The ship slowly began to turn away from the East. Somewhat and Molly, who at that moment did not have particular tasks, stood out of the way. “You are quite brave, my dear Molly,” said Somewhat.

“It’s not bravery, Somewhat,” said Molly. “It is confidence. I have confidence in myself. I have confidence in you. And I need you to have confidence in yourself, if we are to survive this ordeal.”

“I shall do my best,” said Somewhat, somewhat weakly.

BOOK THE FOURTH

(Or, Chapter 4)

As the sun rose higher in the sky, the crew sailed the *Golden Fleece* about three nautical miles away from the lair of the Sea Beast of the East Sea. Now, gentle reader, if you are unfamiliar with a nautical mile, that is probably because you are not a sailor. A nautical mile is but a thousand feet longer than a regular mile. So the ship sailed a bit more than three and one-half miles away from where the Sea Beast lurked under the surface.

At that point, Sarafina Strongbow called to the crew, “I think we’ve sailed a safe distance. Drop anchor!”

Molly Merriweather agreed. “Indeed, it is a safe distance. Drop anchor!”

The crew did as they were commanded. They threw the anchor overboard, and the ship sailed to a stop on the serene seas. Molly called to the crew. “Gather ’round, brave sailors, and let us discuss our plans!”

The crew gathered around Molly, Sarafina Strongbow, and Somewhat.

Molly said with authority, “To know your foe is to vanquish him. Does anyone know anything about the Sea Beast of the East Sea, aside from how it looks and what it likes to eat?”

One sailor from the back of the crowd spoke up. She said, “My father sailed the East Sea when he was a young man. Though he never faced the Sea Beast, he told me legends and stories about it that he had heard while on the seas. One thing in particular that I recall, is that the Sea Beast cannot look to the North. It has something to do with its fear of the North Star.”

“Well, that is something,” said Somewhat suddenly, a bit surprised at himself for speaking up so boldly. “So we could attack from the North, where the Sea Beast cannot see us.”

Molly listened to Somewhat and smiled at his confidence. “My friend, Somewhat,” she said, “that is a fine idea. Good show, Somewhat!”

“Yes! Hooray, Somewhat!” shouted the sailors.

Somewhat smiled. He could feel his confidence growing. Then he had another idea. “I have another idea,” he said to the crew. “Gather ’round.” The crew gathered around to hear what he had to say.

After Somewhat had told the crew of his plan (which I'll leave as a secret for now, dear reader), they all agreed it was a grand idea.

"Before we do anything else," suggested Sarafina Strongbow, "I believe we should honor our fallen leader, Mr. Boatswain. Does anybody have anything they'd like to say?"

The sailors had not forgotten about their fallen leader, and their eagerness to commence with Somewhat's plan was quickly replaced by sadness. Almost every sailor on the *Golden Fleece* had fond memories of the brave Mr. Boatswain. Some told of sailing with him on voyages to strange and exciting lands. Others told of his intelligence and wit. Yet others told of his ability to build the strongest and fastest ships, such as the one they were sailing now. Somewhat and Molly Merriweather listened to the stories with kindness in their hearts. Indeed, the sailors had loved Mr. Boatswain and missed him fervently.

Somewhat then addressed the group. He said, "When my brave brother Sinbad the Sailor bade me to begin this voyage, Mr. Boatswain was more than helpful in acquiring a ship and a wonderful crew for me. For that I will always be grateful. And, I promise, friends, that I will do anything I can to help you with the task ahead."

"That is very kind, Captain Somewhat," said Sarafina Strongbow. "And there is something that you might not know. Many years ago, when your older brother sailed in his first voyage, one of his fellow sailors was a young man named Boatswain. Our Mr. Boatswain. During that voyage, when Sinbad and his crew sailed across the South Sea, a horrible storm hit the ship. The young Mr. Boatswain was thrown overboard by the violent storm. Sinbad, your brother, acted fast and saved Mr. Boatswain's life. From that point on, Mr. Boatswain promised to help you and your brother, in gratitude to Sinbad.

Somewhat had never heard that story before. But simply put, it made many things make sense. That was why Mr. Boatswain was so willing to help Somewhat with this voyage.

But Somewhat knew that he couldn't dwell on the past. As Sinbad had helped Mr. Boatswain long ago, so had Mr. Boatswain helped Somewhat. And, in his honor, Somewhat knew that he and the crew had work to do.

The hour of the day grew late and it was time, once again, to face the Sea Beast of the East Sea. “Shall I pull up anchor and call the crew to work?” Sarafina asked Molly and Somewhat.

Molly turned to Somewhat. She whispered in his ear, “Somewhat, dear friend, this is a decision that you must make. Be confident, be brave, and make your choice.” She patted him on his shoulder.

Somewhat cleared his throat, and spoke as clearly as he could. “Yes indeed, Ms. Strongbow,” he said with authority. “Pull up anchor and call the crew to work!” For the first time in his life, Somewhat the Simpleton felt a powerful confidence, as though people were depending on him.

“Pull up anchor!” shouted Sarafina Strongbow. “Unfurl the mainsail! Come about! Step lively, lads and lasses!”

“Aye aye, Madam! Anchor up! Mainsail unfurled!” shouted the crew. Slowly, the *Golden Fleece* turned to face the east. It steadily picked up speed as it sailed away from the twilight horizon in the west. Somewhat stood at the bow of the *Golden Fleece*, with Molly Merriweather right next to him. The ship sailed faster and faster. The waves chopped against the bow of the grand sailing ship. “How do you feel, dear friend?” asked Molly Merriweather, resting her hand on his shoulders.

“Well, Molly,” said Somewhat the Simpleton, “for the first time, I actually feel confident. I believe that our plan may work. Do you?”

“We shall see, Somewhat,” said Molly. “No one can see the future. But be strong, be brave, and be of good cheer, and things will turn out for the best. They always do, don’t they?”

“Always looking at the world through rose-colored glasses, aren’t you Molly?” asked Somewhat. Molly smiled, and together the two of them looked toward the east.

Before long, the *Golden Fleece* had made up the three nautical miles. It was time. Darkness had fallen, and the crew hoped that the cover of night would aid them in their attack.

“Ms. Strongbow,” whispered Somewhat the Simpleton. “Stealth is a requirement for this attack. Quietly ask the crew to drop anchor, halt our forward progress, and prepare the lifeboat.” Dear reader, the lifeboat was a crucial part of Somewhat’s plan.

As quietly as possible, Sarafina Strongbow had the crew follow Somewhat’s orders. The *Golden Fleece* coasted to a stop in the choppy waves. The crew quietly slid the heavy anchor into the water. Then they unlash the lifeboat from its moorings.

Seven members of the crew gently lowered the lifeboat into the water. Somewhat stood on guard at the front of the ship, watching the water for the telltale bubbles that would mean the Sea Beast was swimming toward the surface. Molly Merriweather stood guard with him. The bubbles were nowhere to be seen.

“Are we sure this is the right place, Ms. Strongbow?” asked Somewhat.

“Aye aye, sir,” said Sarafina Strongbow. “This morning, we sailed three nautical miles due west of the scene of the attack, and this evening we returned by sailing three nautical miles due east. This is, indeed, the place.

“All right then,” whispered Somewhat the Simpleton. “Now, Ms. Strongbow, instruct the crew to take the lifeboat and row to the north. If the legend is true, then you and the crew will be safe from the Sea Beast. Follow the North Star. I promise that you will know when it is safe to return.”

“Aye aye, Captain Somewhat,” said Sarafina Strongbow.

“Now, dear friend,” said Somewhat to Molly Merriweather, “go with them. I shall take care of the Sea Beast myself.”

For the first time, Somewhat saw anger cross Molly's face. "How dare you, Somewhat?" she whispered sharply. "How dare you ask me to leave you now? I shall stay by your side and assist in any way I can. And that will be the end of the question."

Somewhat knew better than to argue with his oldest friend. He said, "Very well, dear friend. You and I will face the Sea Beast together."

BOOK THE FIFTH

(Or, Chapter 5)

Somewhat and Molly watched the rowboat float away from the *Golden Fleece*, transporting the crew to safety. The two of them were alone. Suddenly, Somewhat realized the seriousness of the situation. Here he was, with only his oldest friend, far from home, preparing to take on the vicious Sea Beast of the East Sea. Somewhat knew well that no one had ever escaped unharmed from the Sea Beast, and he remembered what had happened to poor Mr. Boatswain that very morning.

Molly could see that fear was creeping back into Somewhat's face. She patted him on the shoulder and said, "Be confident in yourself, Somewhat. You've come this far, and the crew is counting on you. They've seen something in you. Something special, and I've seen it, too. I've always thought you lack confidence, and that has been the cause of much of your unfortunate clumsiness. But think of this, dear friend. Since we lost Mr. Boatswain, you've not fallen down, or banged your poor head, or burned your thumb, even once. That's because confidence is building in you, Somewhat."

Somewhat thought about that for a moment. He thought back to the last time his clumsiness overtook him. That was the day before, when he'd tripped on the rope on the deck. He did feel as though he was changing.

But still, was he confident enough to take on the vicious Sea Beast of the East Sea? He couldn't be sure. And dear reader, if I had been there, I'm not sure I could be sure either. But Somewhat knew he'd have to wait and see.

He didn't have to wait long. Soon enough, the sea started bubbling and churning, just as it had earlier that day. A familiar low rumbling roar came from under the sea's surface.

"Quick, Molly!" shouted Somewhat the Simpleton. "Behind the mast!"

The Sea Beast from the East Sea was coming.

Somewhat the Simpleton and Molly Merriweather dove headlong behind the main mast of the *Golden Fleece* just as the Sea Beast rose from the surface of the sea. Through the twilight they could see the Beast in all its dark-green ugliness as it towered over the ship. Its eight tentacles waved in the air, and its fiery eyes scanned the seemingly empty deck.

The Sea Beast roared as it looked for its dinner, but there were no poor mortals there! I can only imagine how odd it must have seemed for the Sea Beast to come across a sailing ship with no sailors to sup upon! It roared in anger! Its tentacles waved even more frantically and with more vigor.

Just then, as planned, the sound of one single pistol shot came across the water, from the north, where the sailors in the rowboat floated. The Sea Beast reacted quickly to this sound, and turned its massive, scaly, green body toward the direction of the sound. But all it could see—for now darkness had almost fallen—was the light from the North Star.

And yes, dear reader, the legend was true. The Sea Beast was afraid of the North Star! It roared as it recoiled from the light of the star. It bellowed in pain, lamenting that it had looked to the north. The Beast covered its fiery eyes with two of its terrible tentacles.

“Now!” shouted Molly Merriweather to Somewhat. “Do it! Believe in yourself. I believe in you!”

Somewhat grabbed a bow and arrow that he had hidden behind the mast earlier that day. Holding the weapon in hand, he jumped from behind the mast. “I know I can do this,” he said to himself, “I know I can.”

Somewhat pulled taut the string of the mighty bow, and let fly his arrow. And dear reader, his aim was true! In the near darkness, Somewhat could barely see the arrow slice through the air and strike the Sea Beast. The Beast roared in pain again as the arrow struck its neck. The fire from inside the Beast erupted through its skin! Mortally wounded, the once vicious Sea Beast of the East Sea collapsed back into the ocean. Somewhat quickly lit a torch and leapt to the side of the boat.



With the torch, Somewhat could see the Beast's lifeless body floating in the water. All was silent. "Victory!" shouted Somewhat across the silent water. In response, a cheer erupted in the darkness from the nearby rowboat.

"You did it!" shouted Molly Merriweather, giving Somewhat a warm embrace. All was well.

EPILOGUE

(Or, The End)

The rowboat returned to the ship in safety. When the crew of the *Golden Fleece* saw the Sea Beast from the East Sea floating lifelessly in the water, they cheered and cheered and cheered. “Let us celebrate!” shouted Sarafina Strongbow. “Three cheers for Somewhat the Simpleton!”

“Hip, hip, hooray!” shouted the crew three times. And, dear reader, the crew had a wonderful feast aboard the ship, as they danced and sang through the night.

The next morning, Sarafina Strongbow addressed Somewhat. “Mr. Somewhat,” she declared, “in honor of your confidence, belief in yourself, and true aim, we would be honored if you would consider becoming our captain from now on. We, the crew of the *Golden Fleece*, would love nothing more than to serve you, Captain Somewhat.”

Somewhat smiled the broadest smile anyone had ever smiled. He raised his hand to silence the cheering crew. “I will serve as your captain, but only on one condition,” said Somewhat. “I will do so if my oldest and dearest friend, Molly Merriweather, will join us. For it was her belief in me that led me to believe in myself.”

Molly Merriweather nodded her head. “I’ll have to find someone else to run the Public House back home, but yes, dear Somewhat, I’ll serve with you.”

“Three cheers for Captain Somewhat and Captain Merriweather!” shouted Sarafina Strongbow.

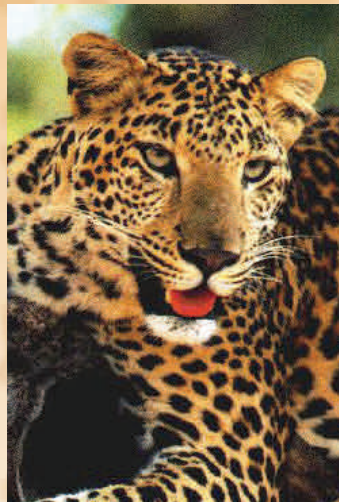
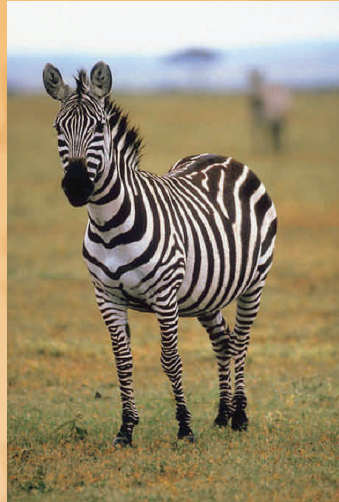
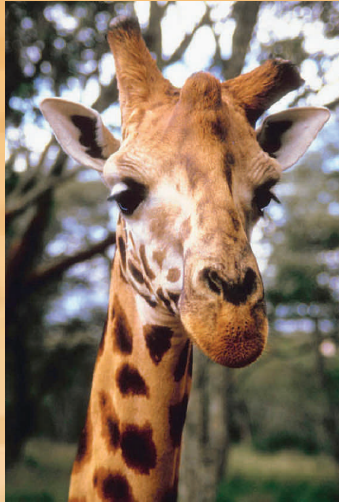
“Hip hip hooray!” shouted the crew three times.

And dear reader, when the *Golden Fleece* sailed into Crete to meet Sinbad the Sailor, Sinbad was pleased to meet his brother, Somewhat, and his brother’s faithful friend, Captain Merriweather.

Captain Merriweather and Somewhat the Sailor (for he was no longer known as Somewhat the Simpleton) sailed the Seven Seas for years to come. Perhaps one day, dear reader, I'll have time to sail with you again and tell more tales of the brave duo. But for now, anchor has dropped, and our voyage together has come to an end. I hope that you have enjoyed how Somewhat the Simpleton, with self-confidence and his friend's belief in him, defeated the vicious Sea Beast of the East Sea and became known as Somewhat the Sailor. And with that, I wish you, Somewhat, Sinbad, Molly Merriweather, and all other sailors on the Seven Seas, happy sailing.

THE END





Leopards

by Dr. Nick Brown

Where to find a leopard

Leopards are very adaptable animals. They can be found living throughout parts of Africa, Asia, India, China, and Russia. Their adaptability has helped leopards to survive. When humans take over land where leopards are living, leopards simply move on to another location. They can live in both warm and cold climates and in many different types of environments, including mountains, forests, jungles, grasslands, and even deserts. Because they use trees for protection, leopards especially like to live in or near a forest.

How to spot a leopard

Leopards come in different sizes, depending on where they live. They can range from five to nine feet in length and weigh from 60 to 140 pounds. Even though this sounds huge (imagine having a pet cat that large), leopards are actually smaller than other types of big cats like lions and tigers. All leopards have spotted fur, but not all leopards look alike. The color of their fur can range from yellow to tan to dark brown to blend in with the color of their environment. Leopards that live in forests, for example, have darker fur than those that live on the grassy plains. Even their spots are different. Some leopards, like those found in the Samburu Wildlife Reserve in Kenya, have round spots, while in other places, the spots are square.



A leopard's fur helps it blend into its environment.

2

What's for dinner?

Leopards are meat eaters that hunt other animals for food. Some of the leopard's favorite foods are medium-sized animals like monkeys, but it will also attack and eat animals much larger than itself like zebras and giraffes. If it's very hungry, or if it can't find animals to hunt, leopards will eat birds, fish, or even insects. Every leopard sets up a zone where only it is allowed to hunt called its territory. The leopard marks the boundaries of its territory with scents that warn other leopards to stay away.

“Leopards are meat eaters that hunt other animals for food.”



“There's a cat stuck in that tree!”

Even though leopards are very large, they are very good at climbing trees. After a leopard kills an animal, it often carries the food into a tree to eat. This way, other animals, like lions, can't steal any of it!

Night life

Leopards are usually nocturnal animals. They sleep for most of the day and hunt at night. Leopards can see in the dark, giving them a huge advantage over the animals they hunt. Even if an animal has some ability to see in the dark, the leopard's spots camouflage it, so its prey can't see it coming until it's too late.

Baby leopards

Baby leopards, or cubs, live with their mother until they are two years old. For the first three months of their lives, their mother feeds them. Once they reach the age of three months, cubs start hunting with their mother. Cubs practice their hunting skills by pouncing and jumping on their mother's tail. The mother leopard also cares for her cubs by cleaning them with her tongue and carrying them to safety when there is danger.

Leopards in danger?

Although leopards are not an endangered species, they still need human protection—from hunters who kill leopards for their fur, from farmers who set out poisoned food to kill leopards so they won't eat their cattle, and from people who destroy the leopard's habitat by cutting down forests and building on the land where leopards live.



A leopard cub starts hunting at age three months.

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“Usually leopards are nocturnal, but in Samburu they can be seen out and about during the day!”

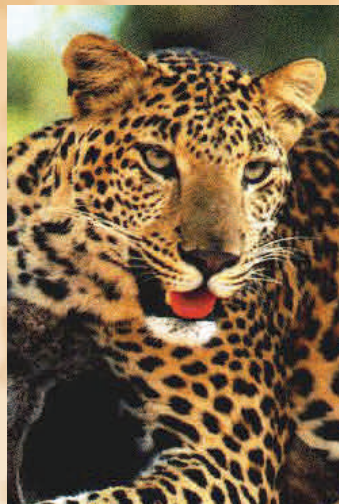
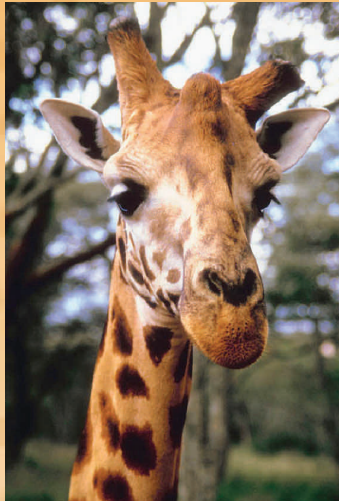
Samburu leopards

Leopards thrive in the Samburu Wildlife Reserve. The reserve has a mixture of environments for leopards to live in, including a scrub desert (a desert with some small bushes and trees), a savannah (dry grasslands), and small hills. There are many animals for the leopard to hunt, such as monkeys, zebras, and antelopes. Samburu leopards are special.

Usually leopards are nocturnal, but in Samburu they can be seen out and about during the day! The reason for this may be that the color of their fur blends in so well with the colors of Samburu that leopards can hunt there both day and night. The Samburu Wildlife Reserve is very important because it is a place where leopards can live freely in a natural, protected habitat.



In the African language Swahili, the word for leopard is *chui*.



There's a Wild Thing in My Bedroom!



Bakiri's Challenge

There's a Wild Thing in My Bedroom!



Range:

Africa

Description of Assassin Bugs:

The assassin bug is a predatory insect. It is about 1" long and mainly black with bright yellow legs and two white spots on its wing cases. Although it has wings, the assassin bug cannot fly. It catches its prey by a combination of stalking and ambush. It leaps on the prey, grasping with its two front legs, and follows by stabbing with its sharp, needle-like mouthparts and injecting a venom, or poison, which paralyzes the prey. The male and female assassin bugs look just about the same.



The African two-spot assassin bug has wings but cannot fly.

To Keep Assassin Bugs You Need:

Use a small glass or plastic aquarium with a well-ventilated lid. Line the floor with paper. Put moist vermiculite in a clean margarine tub in the aquarium. The assassin bugs should use the tub for egg-laying. Pieces of wood and plastic plants can be added to the set-up to give the assassin bugs places to climb and hide, and to make the set-up look pretty. Add a heating pad to keep the atmosphere warm.

Feeding Assassin Bugs:

Assassin bugs are predators of other insects and will tackle anything they can subdue. They can be fed live crickets, mealworms, giant mealworms, and small locust hoppers. Baby assassin bugs, which are called nymphs, should first be fed smaller insects, such as fruit flies, aphids, micro crickets, and buffalo worms (tiny mealworms), and can be offered larger insects as they grow. They can be given a light spray of water each evening and will drink from droplets that accumulate. Also a shallow water dish in the set-up will allow constant access to water as required.

Handling Assassin Bugs:

Assassin bugs should not be handled, because they can give a very painful bite. Also, they can shoot their venom up to a distance of 12" with great accuracy (even backwards over the shoulder), which can cause skin irritation and even temporary blindness if the venom hits the eye.

Ancient Giants: Galápagos Tortoises

Range

Galápagos (guh-LAH-puh-gohs) Islands

Description of Galápagos Tortoises

Galápagos tortoises are the largest tortoises in the world, reaching about four feet in length and weighing more than 350 pounds. The tortoises are usually a dull brown color, but lichen growing on their shells may give them a mottled appearance. These tortoises have short toes and no webbing because they spend their lives on land. Galápagos tortoises can live to be well over one hundred years old in the wild.

Like their smaller relatives, these tortoises have large, hard shells that protect their bodies. Some species of Galápagos tortoise have domed shells; while others have saddle-backed shells. The shape of the shell depends on the kinds of foods that the tortoises eat. Saddle-backed tortoises can reach food from higher branches because the shells allow their necks to stretch further.

Steadfast and Predictable

Galápagos tortoises lead simple lives that revolve around eating and sleeping. The tortoises graze on food for most of the day, following the same paths to and from food sources every day. These paths are worn into the landscape from generations of tortoises. The tortoises gather in groups to travel to the volcanic highlands to feed or wade in pools of water or mud. They may nap in the warm sun for up to sixteen hours a day.

Despite their size, Galápagos tortoises react to danger the same way that smaller tortoises and turtles do. They pull their legs and heads into their shells until they feel the danger is past. On the other hand, when tortoises feel they need a good cleaning, they will stretch themselves out of their shells so finches can land on their heads to pick off ticks and parasites. This is an example of a symbiotic relationship. The tortoises are cleaned of pests, and the finches get a meal.

Threatened Tortoises

When Charles Darwin, the famous naturalist who studied animals and plants on the Galápagos Islands, arrived in the Galápagos in 1835, he studied fifteen species of giant tortoise. Now there are only eleven species remaining on the islands. They were hunted for food by sailors, pirates, whalers, and merchantmen that passed the islands. The introduction of nonnative animals has also caused harm to the tortoises. Cats, rats, and dogs destroy nests and eat eggs. Feral pigs and goats compete with the tortoises for food and often strip bushes of the leaves that once hid tortoise nests.

The tortoises are now protected by strict laws that prevent people from hunting them for food. The Charles Darwin Research Station has also set up a program to help tortoise eggs hatch. Eggs that are found in the wild are brought to the station. The eggs are incubated there until they hatch. The hatched tortoises live at the research station until they are big enough to survive attacks from other wild animals. The station also has programs charged with eradicating the islands of nonnative species that damage the animal and plant life.

Many zoos also have successful breeding programs that allow populations of Galápagos tortoises to thrive outside the islands. Occasionally, eggs from these populations may be sent back to the Galápagos to introduce the babies into the wild.

Seagoing Marine Iguanas

Comprehension Questions

Read *Seagoing Marine Iguanas*, and answer the following questions.

Range

Galápagos Islands

Description of Marine Iguanas

These seagoing reptiles have been noted for their striking appearance ever since sailors first sailed by the Galápagos Islands. They are mostly gray or black, though some species may have red or green coloring on their backs. This coloration comes from the seaweed that the iguanas eat. Marine iguanas may appear to have a light-colored patch on their heads, but this is actually salt.

The iguanas have spikes that run down their backs from their heads to their tails. Unlike land iguanas, their faces and snouts tend to be short and smashed-in looking.

Origin of Marine Iguanas

Scientists believe that marine iguanas originally came from South America. The Galápagos Islands have never been attached to the continent, so iguanas could not have spread there on foot. Researchers think a common iguana ancestor drifted to the islands over water at least ten million years ago. At that time, there were more islands in the Galápagos archipelago; these islands are now under water.

Marine and land iguanas can breed together; however, this rarely happens. Marine iguanas have developed many features that are different from land iguanas.

Specially Built for the Water

Marine iguanas have many adaptations that help them survive in the cold waters in which they feed. Their dark skin absorbs heat from the sun when the iguanas sun themselves on the rocks. Since they are cold-blooded, iguanas need this warmth to stay active, and they usually need to sun themselves after feeding in the cold water.

Their flattened tails help them swim the same way that crocodiles or alligators swim. Marine iguanas can spend half an hour under the water, and some reports show that they can spend up to an hour without resurfacing. Their long claws help them grip rocks to prevent themselves from being pulled away by rough waves.

Marine iguanas have short snouts and razor-sharp teeth that allow them to scrape algae from rocks. Special glands help them rid their bodies of salt that they ingest while feeding. These glands excrete salt into their noses, which causes them to sneeze salt.

Life for Marine Iguanas

These reptiles live together in large groups on the islands. They feed and sunbathe together, and they may huddle close to one another while sleeping to preserve warmth on cool nights. Male iguanas only become territorial during the mating season. When male iguanas fight for their territory, they bob heads and engage in pushing matches. The loser submits and leaves the winner his territory.

Marine iguanas have few natural predators on the Galápagos Islands. Hawks, owls, snakes, and crabs originally preyed upon eggs or smaller iguanas, but nonnative rats, dogs, and feral cats now eat adults as well as eggs. These nonnative animals cause many iguana populations to suffer, making the marine iguana an endangered species.

World Capitals: Europe

By Min Ha Li



World Capital Populations (Estimated): Europe



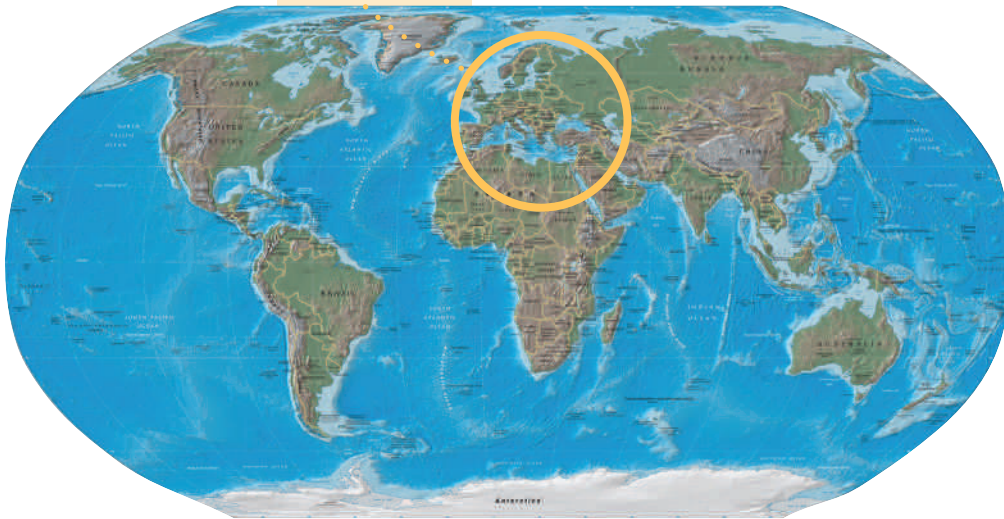
ESTIMATED POPULATION IN MILLIONS OF PEOPLE 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Introduction: Do you know?

A capital is the town in a state or country where the government is located. We all know that Washington, D.C. is the capital city of the United States. You may know that Mexico City is the capital of Mexico. You might also even know that Ottawa is the capital of Canada. But do you know other capitals? What are the capital cities of some faraway countries?

Learning about capital cities is a good way to learn about the world. This book focuses on the capitals of the nations of Europe.

Learning about capital cities is a good way to learn about the world. Every country in the world has its own interesting history and culture. When we say culture, we mean what the people are like in a certain place. Cities throughout the world also have their own interesting cultures and history. The stories of how these cities came to be capitals are interesting ones. Some capitals are important business centers. Some capitals are centers of art and literature. Some capital cities are just heavily populated. Regardless, every capital city in the world is an interesting place. You could spend years learning about all the capitals of the world. This book focuses on the capitals of the nations of Europe. Let's begin our trip around Europe's capitals!



A Dutch Fishing Village: ★ Amsterdam ★

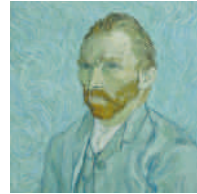
Our first stop is Amsterdam (AM-ster-dam), the capital of the Netherlands. The Netherlands is in northwestern Europe. The Netherlands is also known as Holland. The capital, Amsterdam, is a big city near the center of the country. Amsterdam is the Netherlands' most populous city. More than 1 million people live in and around the city.

Long ago, Amsterdam was founded as a fishing village. It is located on one of the Netherlands' most important rivers, the Amstel (AM-stell) River. The village of Amsterdam officially became a city in 1300. From that point on, Amsterdam thrived. Many people came to this fishing port to trade their crops, livestock, and other goods with people.

Today, Amsterdam is one of Europe's artistic and cultural centers. Many famous artists and painters have lived there. Two famous Dutch painters, Vincent van Gogh and Rembrandt, lived there. There is a museum dedicated to each of them there. There are also three important schools in Amsterdam. The University of Amsterdam, the Free University, and the Institute of Social History are all important places of learning in the city.



Rembrandt (1606–1669) painted during the Dutch “Golden Age.”



Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) influenced modern art.



The Amstel River provides views of the now bustling Amsterdam and the famous fields of tulips outside the city.

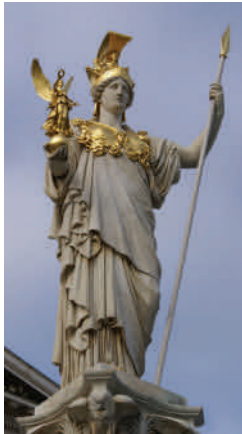


An Ancient City: ★ Athens ★

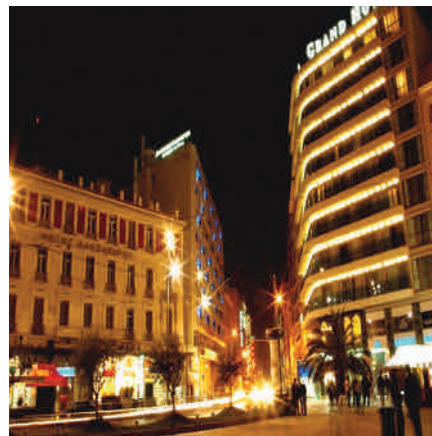
Now let's visit one of the oldest cities in the world—Athens, the capital city of the nation of Greece. Like Amsterdam, Athens is a huge city. Nearly 4 million people live in and around the city.

But Athens has been a powerful city for three thousand years. In the ancient world, Athens was one of the most important and powerful cities in the known world. Athens, known as a city of learning, was named for Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. Ancient Athenians believed that Athena looked down favorably upon their city. To this day, ruins of many of the buildings of ancient Athens can be seen. Now these ruins draw millions of visitors to Athens each year. These visitors want to experience what life was like in the ancient world.

Athens is also a modern city. In 2004, Athens hosted the Summer Olympic games. Many considered the 2004 Olympic games a return to the birthplace of the Olympics. This is because thousands of years ago, the first Olympics were held just outside the city of Athens. But the 2004 games were also a chance for Athens to show its modern aspects. Athens has some beautiful modern architecture, an excellent bus and subway system, and the beautiful National Library. Athens truly is a city of past and present.



Ancient myths say Athens was named in honor of Athena because she gave the new city the gift of the olive tree.



Athens has been lived in continuously since 3,000 BCE, making it the oldest city in Europe. The buildings of the Acropolis were not built until 1400 BCE, when Athens became a political and cultural hub in Greece.

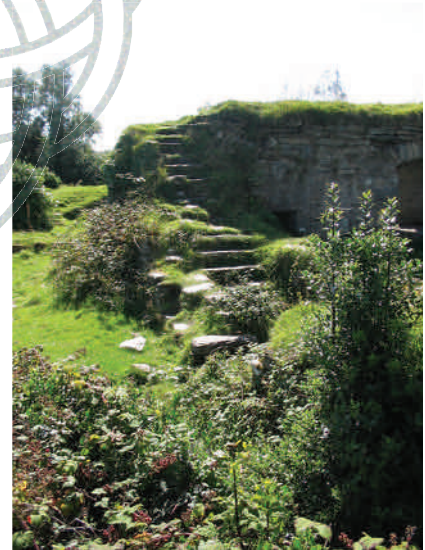
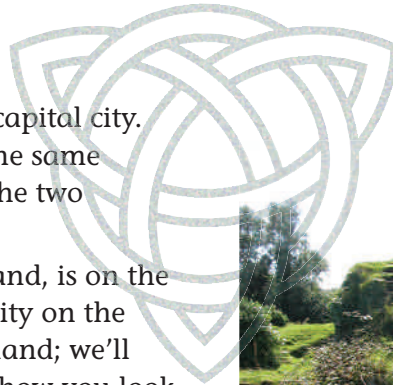
An Irish Neighbor to the North:

★ Belfast ★

Now let's go north. Let's visit Northern Ireland and its capital city. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are not the same place, though they are both on the island of Ireland. The two countries border each other, but they are different.

Belfast (BELL-fast), the capital city of Northern Ireland, is on the northeast coast of the country. It is the second-largest city on the island. The only larger city is Dublin, the capital of Ireland; we'll visit Dublin later. How big is Belfast? That depends on how you look at it. Only 275,000 people live in the city of Belfast. But almost 1 million people live in and around the city. So it's big, but not nearly as big as some cities. New York City, for example, has millions of people. The name Belfast comes from the Irish Gaelic *Beal Feirste*, which means mouth of the sandbanks or mouth of the Farset. The Farset is the river that flows through Belfast and made it a good place to start a settlement.

Belfast was founded by the English in the early 1600s. However, people have lived in and around the area since the Bronze Age, more than four thousand years ago. For a long time, the English controlled Belfast. Since it became a European city, Belfast has grown to become an important industrial center in Europe. Do you know what a dry dock is? A dry dock is a place where ships are taken out of the water to be repaired and repainted. Belfast has the largest dry dock in the entire world! Belfast really is an interesting place, full of excitement and history.



The first records of Belfast are from the mid-600s, when a battle took place in the area.

Many cruise ships, including the famous RMS *Titanic*, were built at the dry docks in Belfast.



The Wall Came Down: ★ Berlin ★

Now we're off to Germany. Did you know that Germans don't call Germany by that name? In the German language, Germany is called Deutschland (DOITCH-land). The capital of Germany is Berlin. The city is in the northeast part of the country.

About 3.5 million people live in the city of Berlin. That makes Berlin the most populous city in the entire country of Germany. In fact, the city of Berlin has about twice as many people as Germany's next most populated city, Hamburg. But this wasn't always the case. You may know that the nation of Germany was an enemy of the French, English, and Americans in World War II. And you may know that the Germans were defeated in that war. Well, from the end of the war in 1945 until 1990, the city of Berlin was actually divided into two cities, East Berlin and West Berlin, which were separated by a giant wall. People could not travel freely between the two cities. But that all changed in 1990. Now the city of Berlin is one of the most important cities in Europe, and the world. Berlin has helped Germany become the fourth largest economy in the world behind the United States, Japan, and China.

Industries such as computers, medicine, and environmental technology are big in Berlin.



People join hands on top of the Berlin Wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate to celebrate the opening of East and West Germany in 1989.



Small Town Capital: ★ Bern★

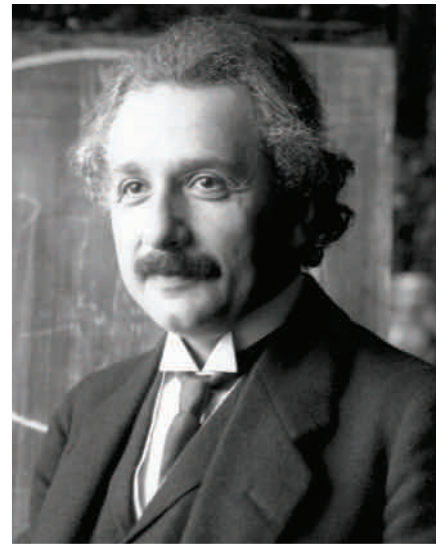
From Berlin, we just have to travel southwest to reach Bern, the tiny capital of Switzerland. Located on a peninsula formed by the Aare River, Bern is near the center of the country, in the canton of Bern. A canton is like a state. Bern is one of Europe's smaller capitals, with a population of about 130,000 people.

Bern was founded in 1191, when Berchtold V, Duke of Zähringen, chose it for his new city. According to legend, he chose the name Bern after he went hunting in his new home. He decided to name the city in honor of his first kill, a bear (*Bär* in German). Bears are still very important to Bern. They appear on their flag. The city has also had a *Bärengraben*, or "bear pit," since the 1500s, where residents and visitors could see the city's namesake. The city recently constructed a larger, more comfortable park for its bears.

Bern is a lot smaller and less modern than some of the capitals we've visited so far. In fact, much of the city still looks like it did in medieval times! This is part of the charm of Bern. It became the capital of Switzerland in 1848, after the country had a brief civil war.

Famous scientist Albert Einstein lived in Bern. He came up with some of his most famous theories while living here.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) named Bern one of their World Heritage Sites in 1983 because of its medieval buildings.



A Small but Important City: ★ Brussels ★

Now we're off to a small country in northern Europe. That nation is Belgium (BEL-jum). Its capital, right in the center of the country, is the city of Brussels (BRUS-sulls). Brussels is another small capital. Only about 140,000 people live there.

Brussels is also known by a French name. That name is Ville de Bruxelles (VEEL duh broo-ZELLS). That simply means city of Brussels in French.

Why should Brussels have a Dutch name and a French name? Belgium is bordered by the Netherlands in the north and France in the south. The northern part of Belgium speaks Dutch, while the southern part speaks French. Since Brussels is in the middle of these regions, the government declared that it should be *bilingual*, or have two official languages. People who live in Brussels learn both Dutch and French!

Brussels is a very important European city. Have you ever heard of the European Union, or the EU? The EU is a collection of many European countries that work together, trade goods with each other, and share the same currency, or money system. Many official EU buildings are located in Brussels. People consider Brussels to be the capital of the EU. When important matters that affect all of Europe are discussed, people in Brussels get involved!

Every country in Europe used to each use a different currency. Now most of them use the Euro, making travel between countries easier.



The Paul-Henri Spaak building, right, holds the debating chamber for the members of the European Union.



Are You Hungary? ★ Budapest ★

Now let's travel south to the very center of Europe and visit the nation of Hungary (HUNG-gah-ree). In the north of Hungary is its capital: the city of Budapest (BOO-dah-pesht). At nearly 1.9 million people, Budapest is the largest city in Hungary. It is also the nation's most important business and transportation center. Almost all the important business that occurs in Hungary happens in Budapest. Also, almost all the important Hungarian highways eventually lead to the city. Furthermore, the subway system in Budapest is the second-oldest subway system in Europe. The only older system is the London Underground, which we'll learn about later.

Budapest has been a city for thousands of years. Heroes' Square honors the early founders of the city.



Budapest has an interesting history. Modern Budapest was made from three cities. The Romans founded a city called Aquincum during the first century BCE. When the Hungarians arrived in the ninth century CE, they renamed Aquincum *Óbuda*. They also built two other cities nearby on either side of the Danube River; Buda and Pest. In 1873, the three towns were made into Budapest.

Budapest saw its share of trouble in the twentieth century. It was occupied by Germans in World War II, and then became a Soviet Bloc nation after the war. This led to an unsuccessful revolution in 1956. Despite the troubles it has had, many consider Budapest to be the most beautiful city in Europe.



The Danube, which flows right through Budapest on its way to the Black Sea, makes Budapest a key trading post.

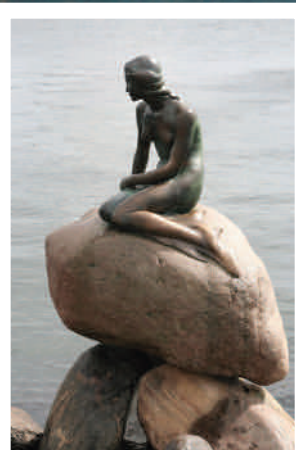
A Great Dane: ★ Copenhagen ★

Tivoli is the world's second oldest amusement park and a popular destination for tourists and residents of Copenhagen alike. It is in the middle of the city!



Now we're off to a tiny country in the north of Europe, the nation of Denmark. Denmark juts out into the North and Baltic seas, and on its northern tip is its capital. That city is Copenhagen (KO-pen-ha-gen). Copenhagen, with 500,000 people, is Denmark's most densely populated city. In Danish, the official language of Denmark, *Copenhagen* means the merchant's harbor.

Copenhagen was founded and built into a city between the years 1160 and 1167 by Bishop Absalon. He was commissioned to build a fort in the small town of Havn to protect it from invaders. Under the bishop's rule, Copenhagen grew and became a successful trading center. Because of its beautiful harbor, Copenhagen (like Budapest) has grown steadily. The city has been controlled by different people during its history. Also, like Budapest, Copenhagen was occupied by the Germans during World War II. As with most European cities, Copenhagen has many museums and galleries devoted to its past. In fact, many people consider it to be one of the best and most interesting places to live in all of Europe. A clean and friendly place, Copenhagen's biggest flaw is its cost. It is one of the most expensive European cities in which to live. But that doesn't make it any less beautiful.



A small statue of the Little Mermaid sits on a rock in the Copenhagen harbor and is a symbol of Copenhagen. Hans Christian Andersen, a Danish author, wrote the fairy tale.



A Gem of the Emerald Isle: ★ Dublin ★

Let's return to the island of Ireland, which we visited when we learned about Belfast in Northern Ireland. Now we'll learn about Northern Ireland's neighbor to the south, the Republic of Ireland. Ireland borders the Irish Sea, which separates the island from England. Halfway up its eastern coast lies Ireland's capital, the city of Dublin (DUB-lin).

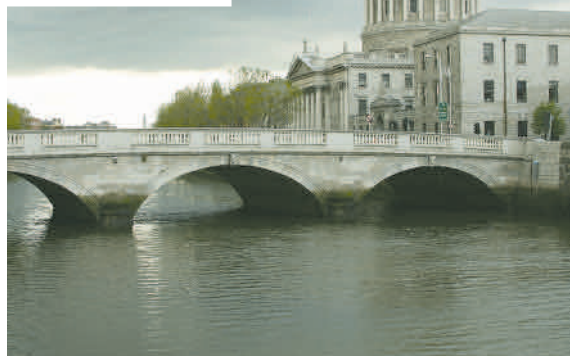


Dublin, also the largest city in Ireland, boasts a population of about 500,000 people. The nation of Ireland is broken up into twenty-six counties, just as many of our states are broken up into counties. The city of Dublin is the largest city in the county of the same name. When people think of Dublin's population, they usually include the smaller towns near Dublin. Including those, Dublin has a population of well over one million people.

Irish is the national language of Ireland, and the city of Dublin has two Irish names. One is *Dubh Linn* (Doov-leen), which in English means black pool. The other is *Baile Átha Cliath* (Bal-yeh Awe-hah clee-au), which has an interesting

Dublin was a hotspot for Viking invaders from Norway and Denmark. Vikings created the city of Dublin so they could trade easily with other Vikings and the Irish.

English meaning. In English, *Baile Átha Cliath* means the town of the ford of the reed hurdles. But that's quite a mouthful. Maybe that's why people just stick with Dublin. Dublin has been a city for at least 2,000 years. Throughout this time, England and Ireland have disagreed about whether Ireland was under English rule. Ireland has in its past been part of England, but it is now its own nation.



The River Liffey runs through the middle of Dublin, dividing it in half. It takes an easy walk to enter a different part of Dublin!

Trading Town to Capital: ★ Helsinki ★

Now we will travel northeast of Dublin to reach Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Finland is in the far north of Europe. Helsinki is the largest city in the country with more than 500,000 residents. It and its neighboring cities also have the bulk of Finland's total population.

Helsinki was officially made a city in 1550 by King Gustavus Vasa of Sweden. At the time, Sweden controlled Finland. King Gustavus wanted a harbor city to be a major trading center for his kingdom. When Russia took over Finland in 1809, it moved the country's capital to Helsinki. The slow-growing trading town boomed into a great city, which remained the capital when Finland declared independence in 1917.

One of the most popular sites to see in Helsinki is the magnificent sea fortress, called *Suomenlinna*, which was built in 1748 to protect Sweden from Russian attack. The fort was built on six islands off the coast of Helsinki. Now, the fort and the islands are open for tourists and are popular picnic spots for residents. People even live on the islands!

The *Gabriella*



Small cruise ships (above, left) sail in and out of Helsinki's harbor (above, right) to carry passengers to Stockholm, Sweden and other cities in the Baltic sea in comfort.

Steep Hills on the Ocean: ★ Lisbon ★

Let's now travel down to southwest Europe, onto what's called the Iberian (EYE-beer-ee-an) peninsula. This is a piece of land on which you'll find the nations of Spain and Portugal (POR-choo-gall). We'll start our Iberian visit with Portugal. Portugal juts out westward into the Atlantic Ocean, and on its west coast is the port city of Lisbon (LIZZ-bun). In Portuguese (POR-choo-geeze), which is the official language of Portugal, Lisbon is known as Lisboa (LIS-bo-ah). Lisbon is the capital city of Portugal. Half a million people live in the city itself, while more than 1 million people live in the suburbs of the city.

What's really interesting about the city is its geography. Lisbon is built on a series of seven hills. At many points, these hills are too steep for cars to drive up. This makes many parts of the city inaccessible, or impossible to reach, by car. Lisbon has public elevators that take people up these hills! Also, because it's so close to the ocean, Lisbon has one of the best climates in all of Europe. Lisbon is one of the warmest of all the European capitals. Visitors flock to Lisbon during the warm summer months to experience the beautiful ocean breezes. Also, it never gets that cold in the fall and winter there. All in all, Lisbon is a really beautiful place to visit.

Lisbon has experienced a lot of earthquakes, the worst of which struck on November 1, 1755. It destroyed most of the city. That didn't stop residents from rebuilding their city almost immediately.



Phoenicians were the first to settle Lisbon 3,000 years ago. They were immediately attracted to its climate and beautiful shores.



Shakespeare, Kings, and Queens: ★ London ★

No book about European capitals would be complete without one of the most famous and vibrant cities in the world. That city is London, and it is the capital of England, just off the coast of mainland Europe. It is also one of the most populated cities in the world; a whopping 7.2 million people live in or near the city itself! For 100 years, from 1825 until 1925, London had the largest population of any city in Europe.

As the capital of England, London is the home of all of London's government and royalty. Queen Elizabeth II, the monarch who oversees countries on every continent in the world except Antarctica, resides in London. But so do the members of Britain's Parliament, the group who actually make the laws that affect the lives of everyone in England.

But London is much more than that. It is also one of the most important cultural cities in the world. Have you ever heard of William Shakespeare? Hundreds of years after his death, Shakespeare is still regarded as perhaps the best writer the world has ever known. He lived, worked, and wrote his plays in London. Hundreds of world-famous authors and artists came from London. London, as we briefly mentioned earlier, is home to the oldest subway system in the world. It was originally built in 1863 and used steam-engine trains. The oldest tunnels are still used by thousands of people every day. These are but just a few of the things one can say about London.



Queen Elizabeth II is the second longest reigning queen of England. Queen Victoria, who reigned for nearly 64 years, is the longest.



It is estimated that 1,073 million passengers ride the Underground each year.



The Globe Theatre, where Shakespeare's plays were first performed, was located in London. It was closed by Puritans in 1642 and later burned to the ground.



The Doors of Europe: ★ Madrid ★



The world-famous Prado Museum is in Madrid. You can see paintings and sculptures from famous Spanish artists such as Velázquez, Goya, and El Greco there.

Let's now travel inland to the country of Spain, or España (eh-SPAHN-yeh) as it is called in Spanish. In the central area of the country lies the city of Madrid (MAH-drid), the nation's capital. Madrid is a huge city, one of the largest we'll learn about in this book. About 4.7 million people live in the city itself. If you include the areas surrounding the city, that number climbs to more than 5.5 million.

Madrid is not a Spanish word. In fact, it is an Arabic word bestowed upon it in the ninth century by a ruler from the Ottoman Empire. *Madrid* means source of water. As with many of the other capitals in this book, Madrid has been fought over. The Moors, Spaniards, the French, and the Romans have all controlled the city at one point or another. Spain and Madrid have been controlled by Spanish royalty since Spain won independence from France in the 1800s.

Madrid is a popular attraction for tourists from around the world. In Madrid, you'll find one of the world's most popular bullfighting rings: Las Ventas (LAS VEHN-tas). The world-famous Prado Museum is in Madrid too. Some of the best known artists in the world showcase their work there. Also, tourists flock to see the Gate of Europe. These are two towers that tilt toward each other at an angle of fifteen degrees. These are but a few of the amazing things that you can see in the Spanish capital.

The buildings that make the Gate of Europe were the first inclined skyscrapers in the world.



A Viking Home: ★ Oslo ★

If we travel by sea from Madrid, we can sail up the Oslofjord and reach Oslo, the capital city of Norway. It is one of Europe's largest capitals, as many forests, lakes, and islands are part of the city. Not many cities can offer hiking, biking, sailing, and skiing all within the city limits! About 580,000 people live directly in Oslo, so while the city is very large physically, it is one of the smaller capitals in population size.

The area around Oslo was originally settled by Vikings around the year 1,000. The city of Oslo was officially founded in the year 1049, and was originally located in a different place! A great fire broke out in 1624 and destroyed most of the city. King Christian IV of Denmark and Norway decided to move the town to a better location nearby and rebuild it. It was a major trading center and is currently one of the most important maritime, or ocean shipping, centers in the world. More than 900 companies that are a part of the maritime industry make their home in Oslo.

Oslo is the place to go if you are interested in learning about Viking history. You can visit the *Vikingskipshuset* (Viking Ship Museum) to see the three best preserved Viking ships ever found. They were each found in Oslo. In addition to the ships, you can see other objects from the Viking age and learn about these seafaring people.

What's in a name?

Oslo has had three names! King Christian IV renamed the city after himself when he rebuilt it. It became Christiania. Then the spelling was changed to Kristiania. Oslo became its official name again in 1925.



The Gogstad Ship is a 9th century Viking boat.



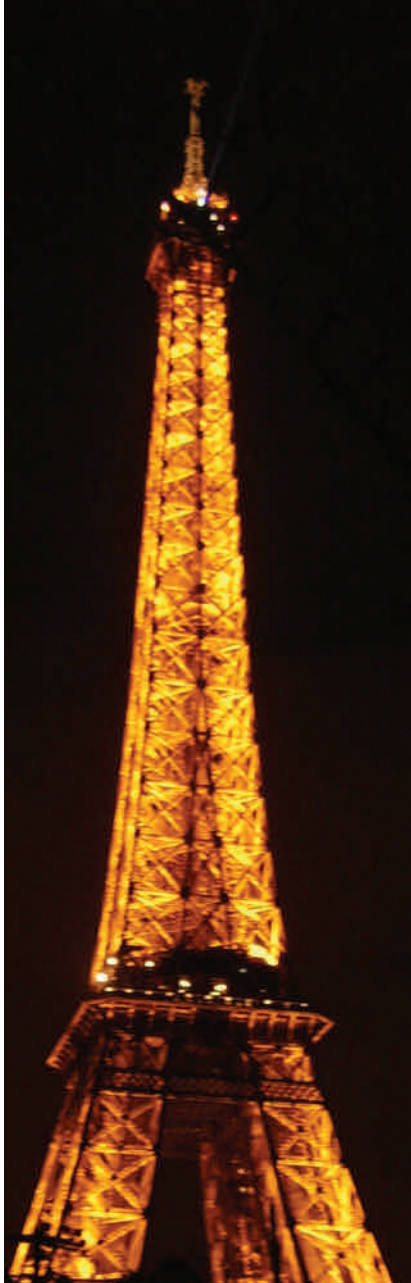
Akershus Fortress was built in the 1290s to protect Oslo from attack.

The City of Light: ★ Paris ★

Just as London must be included in this book, so must the other of Europe's most famous capitals. This time we travel to France, and to its capital, Paris. For centuries, artists, thinkers, scientists, and tourists have thought of Paris as the world's true must-see city, the one that cannot be missed. Paris draws many people and some refer to it as the City of Light.

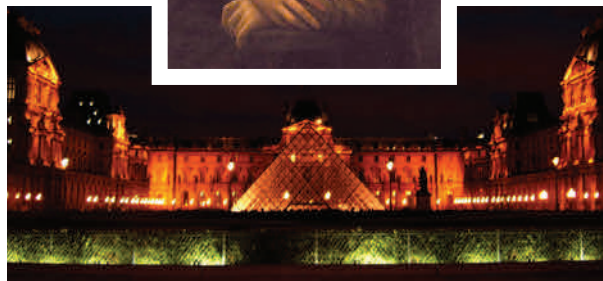
The capital and largest city, Paris is home to more than 2 million people. Known as *Ville de Paris* (VEEL de pah-REE) to the French, Paris is in the northern part of central France. Although many people live there, Paris is not very large in area. So Paris is one of the world's most densely packed places.

Among thousands of other things, Paris is home to perhaps the world's most elegant museum, the Louvre (LUVE). In it you'll find the world's most famous painting, Leonardo da Vinci's *La Joconde*, or the *Mona Lisa*. Paris also has some of the most notable buildings in the world, including the *Arc de Triomphe* and the Eiffel Tower. You've probably seen pictures of these. Also, running through Paris is the river Seine (SEHN), which cuts the city in half. The Right Bank is the northern half of the city, and the Left Bank is the southern half of the city. Right in the middle is an island, called the Island of the City. There you can find one of the most famous cathedrals in the world, Notre Dame (NO-trey DAHM). Maybe you have heard of a famous book called *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. It was written by French author Victor Hugo. This island is known as the heart of the City of Light.



A City of Enlightenment

You might wonder how Paris became known as the City of Light. Paris was well known to be a center for education and philosophical thought. It was home to the Age of Enlightenment, a time of new ideas. It also refers to the city's use of lights. It was one of the first cities in Europe to use gas lamps to light its streets.



Many Nicknames: ★ Prague ★

We've got one more stop in central Europe. This time we'll travel to the Czech (CHECK) Republic. The capital city of this country is the city of Prague, which is simply pronounced PROG. Prague has had dozens of nicknames over the years. Because of its many churches, people have called it the city of a hundred spires. Because of its tourist business lately, people have called it the Paris of the 1990s. It's also been called the mother of all cities and the heart of Europe. Just over 1 million people call Prague home. However, many experts say that an additional 300,000 people work there, but don't consider it their home.

Prague Castle is the city's most popular tourist spot and the largest medieval castle complex in Europe.

Since its founding in the ninth century, Prague has also been ruled by many forces. It was at one point the center of the Holy Roman Empire. German forces occupied it in World War II. The Soviet Union invaded Prague as recently as 1968. But all of these stories add up to Prague's amazing history. In fact, in 1992, the United Nations officially declared Prague as a world heritage site. This means that they considered the city to be one of the most historically important places on Earth. And those who travel to Prague, and experience all that it has to offer, usually agree.



The Vltava (VUL-tah-vah) River flows through the middle of Prague and was an important trading route in its history.



The Northernmost Capital: ★ Reykjavik ★

Let's swing way out northwest to the North Atlantic Ocean and stop in Iceland to visit Reykjavik (rey-KYUH-vik), Europe's northernmost capital. Reykjavik has a population of about 120,000 people, and combined with the surrounding area, a population of nearly 200,000 people. More than half of Iceland's population lives in and around the capital!

Night and Day

Iceland is just south of the Arctic Circle, which means the sun doesn't set for three months in summer, and it doesn't rise for three months in winter.

According to legend, a Viking fugitive named Ingólfur Arnarson became the first Icelander around 870 CE when he settled Reykjavik. He named the area *Reykjavik* because it means smoky bay. The area around Reykjavik has a lot of steamy hot springs that made the bay look smoky. Iceland lies right over the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, which is where volcanic activity in the Atlantic Ocean creates new crust for Earth. Because of this, Iceland has many volcanoes and hot springs. Since Iceland is so far north, some of its volcanoes are covered by ice and glaciers. Reykjavik puts its hot springs to work by using geothermal energy, or heat from the earth, to power the city.

Reykjavik has a lot to offer. You can take a dip in one of the many geothermal pools that are warm all year. If you didn't learn enough about Vikings in Oslo, you can visit the Culture House and learn some more about the Vikings and how they settled Iceland. You can also catch a Volcano Show, which shows more than fifty years worth of video footage of Iceland's volcanoes erupting.

In a painting by Dutch artist Johan Peter Raadsig, Ingólfur Arnarson tells workers where to build his high seat in the new settlement of Reykjavik.



The Capital of the Boot: ★ Rome ★



The Roman Coliseum could hold as many as 55,000 spectators. That's only 15,000 fewer people than professional football stadiums in the United States hold!

Let's hop over to the nation of Italy, in southern Europe. Italy is a boot-shaped country that juts out into the Mediterranean Sea. On the southwest coast of this boot is Italy's capital, the city of Rome. Rome, a huge urban center, is home to about 2.5 million people. In Italian, the national language of Italy, Rome is called *Roma*.

Rome was founded nearly 3,000 years ago as the capital city of the ancient Roman Empire. During its long history, Rome has been controlled by the ancient Romans, the Holy Roman Empire (which followed the ancient Roman Empire), the Kingdom of Italy, and now the Republic of Italy.

As an old city, Rome has some of the oldest still-standing structures in the world. Perhaps the most famous is the Coliseum (call-uh-SEE-um). The Coliseum was where people in ancient Rome staged grand chariot races and gladiator fights. Although it's in disrepair because of its age, you can still see its basic shape. Many of today's modern football stadiums are copies of the Coliseum.

Within its boundaries, Rome also has the Vatican, or Vatican City. The Vatican is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, one of the largest religions in the world. Pope Benedict XVI, who heads the Church, lives there. The Catholic Church and Rome's long history are important parts of the city's draw to tourists from around the world.



Pope Benedictus XVI, above left, lives in Vatican City, above far left, and many tourists come from around the world to see its fascinating buildings, including Saint Peters Basilica, left.

An Island City: ★ Stockholm ★

From Rome, let's travel north to Sweden and stop to see Stockholm, its capital and largest city. Stockholm was built on a chain of fourteen islands called an archipelago. Its founder, Birger Jarl, ordered that a fort be built on one of the small islands in the archipelago in 1252. Soon, Stockholm boomed as a large city and center for trade between Sweden and mainland Europe.

The oldest part of Stockholm is called Gamla Stan and still has a lot of its medieval charm. It has tall buildings and narrow streets. One of its alleys is just over three feet wide. Imagine that! You can probably stretch your arms and touch the buildings on either side of you there. Gamla Stan is also home to the royal palace, the official home of Sweden's monarchs.

You can imagine that sightseeing by boat is very popular in Stockholm, since the city is surrounded by crystal clear water. Tourists can take a number of boat tours around the city to see different parts of it and learn its history. You will also get to see the more than 30,000 tiny islands that make the archipelago. Don't like boats? Try a hot-air balloon ride to see the city from a bird's eye view!

Gamla Stan is also home to the royal palace, the official home of Sweden's monarchs.



Music and Theater: ★ Vienna ★

We are off to our final two stops. First, we'll go over to the beautiful nation of Austria (AWS-tree-uh). In the northeastern corner of Austria, you'll find its capital, the city of Vienna (vee-EN-ah). At a population of more than 2 million, Vienna is the largest city in Austria. Vienna is hundreds of miles up the Danube River from Budapest, the capital of Hungary. Vienna is an old city as well. It was first founded in 500 BCE as a Celtic settlement. In 15 BCE it became part of the Roman Empire.

Vienna is an important cultural city. Drama, theater, and music are big parts of Viennese life, culture, and history. The Burgtheater and the Akademie Theater are considered two of the finest theaters in the German-speaking world (German is the official language of Austria). The famous composers Johann Strauss (YO-hahn STRAUS) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (WOLF-gang ah-mah-DAY-oos MOTE-zart) wrote many of their famous waltzes and symphonies in Vienna. Vienna also has a children's musical museum called the Museum of Sound. If you love music, theater, or museums, Vienna's the place for you!



Andante grazioso. (♩ = 120)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had extraordinary musical gifts. He was composing his own music by the time he was five years old.

The Burgtheater, above, is considered one of the finest theaters in the German-speaking world and the Albertina Museum, top, houses thousands of fine art drawings, old master prints, as well as more modern graphics works.

A Polished City: ★ Warsaw ★



Above, a statue dedicated to Polish pianist, Frederic Chopin. Below, Warsaw's Old Town Market Place was rebuilt in the 1950s after the original site was bombed in World War II.

Our final stop is in the eastern European nation of Poland. Its capital is in the eastern section of the country. The city is Warsaw (WAR-saw). Warsaw is a huge city. Residents of Warsaw number more than 1.6 million. If you include the areas right around the city, the population climbs to around 2.4 million. That's a lot of people.

Warsaw, like a few of the other cities in this book, sits astride a river. The river in Warsaw is the Vistula (VIST-yoo-lah). Warsaw is about 360 miles from the rugged Carpathian mountains, a huge European chain. It's also about the same distance from the Baltic Sea, an important European waterway. It never gets very warm in Warsaw. In January, the average temperature is 26°F. In July, it rarely climbs over 75°F.

Warsaw was massively damaged by bombs during World War II, and it was controlled by the Soviet Union for most of the late twentieth century. Recently, however, Warsaw has made quite a rebound. In 1995, the Warsaw Metro opened. The Metro is a grand subway and bus system that serves the city. Also, Poland entered the European Union in 2004. Now Warsaw is a thriving and successful city. It's a great place to finish our tour of European capitals.




Other Cities:

Conclusion

These capitals are not the only important cities in Europe. Nor are they even the only capitals. They are just a selection of interesting cities. If you wanted to learn about other cities and capitals in Europe, there are plenty more. There's Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein. There's also Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. You could learn about Moscow, the capital of Russia, or Ankara, the capital of Turkey.

Many countries also have important cities that aren't capital cities. For instance, Manchester and Liverpool are important cities in England. Hamburg is an important city in Germany. Barcelona is one of Spain's great cities, as is Pamplona. And Krakow is another great Polish city. Simply put, there are hundreds of interesting places to visit, learn about, or study in Europe. Learning about other places helps people know a little more about what the world is like. It also helps people know a little more about what other people in the world are like. In a way, learning about faraway places makes the wide world seem just a little smaller.



Learning about other places helps people know a little more about what the world is like.

