



# Questioning

Level 6

**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—Questioning, A Collection of Readings***

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# Sir Robert's Treasure



Elisabeth Bennet



# Map of Garren



Castle

Village



Cremaine

Estate



## Chapter One

**S**ir Robert Tremaine of the kingdom of Garren walked briskly into his stables.

"Ah, young Jackson," said Sir Robert to his stableboy.

"Is my horse, Lightning, ready?"

"Ready and waiting for a hard, two-week trip, sir.

Just as you asked, sir," Jackson answered.

"Very well," said Sir Robert. "Young Jackson, may I confide in you?"

"Of course, sir!"

"I am on a quest for a most precious treasure. I expect my journey to be very dangerous. I've not told this to my wife and children. I don't want to worry them. They think I am going to visit my brother. But someone should know the truth in case I fail."

At first, Jackson was troubled by this news. There were so many questions he wanted to ask: Where are you going? Why? What treasure do you seek? How can I help you? He knew Sir Robert would not answer these questions now, but perhaps he would when he came back. In the meantime, Jackson couldn't help feeling somewhat proud and just a little smug. Sir Robert had shared a secret with him!

Jackson loved Sir Robert as a father. He wanted to do well in Sir Robert's eyes and make him proud. Orphaned when he was four, Jackson had spent the last ten years living in Sir Robert's stables. He spent his mornings caring for the horses. In the afternoons, he read books, worked math problems, and practiced sword fighting. Sir Robert wanted Jackson to have an education. He also paid Jackson well to be his stableboy.

Sir Robert's two-week journey stretched into four. Journeys often took longer than expected, so no one in the family really worried. Keeping in mind what Sir Robert had told him, however, made Jackson begin to feel uneasy the longer Sir Robert was away.

Five weeks and three days after Sir Robert left, Charlotte walked purposefully into the stables. She was Sir Robert's youngest daughter, about Jackson's age, and Jackson did not particularly like her. She always thought she knew more about everything than anyone else. Today she carried several bulging saddlebags and a heavy cloak wrapped around some odd-shaped things. Looking around, she spied Jackson.

"Jackson!" she exclaimed. "I need my horse. Can you please saddle her up for me? Someone around here has got to do something."

Does she mean what I think she does? Jackson wondered. "Do something?" he repeated.

"Jackson, I know you can't be a total idiot. Father must have gotten into some trouble. I intend to find him and bring him home."



This did not sound like a good idea to Jackson.  
“What about your brothers?” he asked her.

“I know where my brothers are. I don't need to find them,” Charlotte snapped.

Jackson sighed. “I mean, it seems to me that they should be the ones to go after him.”

Charlotte rolled her eyes. She liked Jackson as little as he liked her. “My brothers have no sense. Look, it's not your job to stop me from doing what I need to do. Either you saddle up my horse, or I will.”

Jackson knew when he was beaten. He saddled up her horse, Elvira, and watched the two gallop away. Then he quickly threw a saddle on his horse, Pepper, and went after her. Soon he caught up with her. “Hey, miss,” he said. “Do you even know where you're going?”

If Charlotte was surprised that he had followed her, she didn't show it. “Where do you think?” she asked.

Jackson rolled his eyes and shook his head. “You want to ride unarmed into the Doomed Forest? Are you crazy?”

Charlotte gave Jackson a smug little smile. “Who said anything about being unarmed? I've got a bow, arrows, and a sword wrapped up in my cloak. We'll be fine.”

Jackson had to admire her courage. Still, she hadn't thought of everything, and he was determined to let her know it. "You know, if we ride into the Doomed Forest with the weapons wrapped in your cloak, they won't do us any good." Charlotte was angry, but mostly because she knew Jackson was right.

Ten minutes later, with Jackson wearing the sword and Charlotte carrying the bow and quiver of arrows, the pair entered the Doomed Forest.

The trees there were large and dense, allowing little sunlight to filter through. The forest had a stale, musty smell, and it was full of strange rustling and slithering sounds, deadly plants, wild beasts, and dangerous thieves in hiding. It was home to dark and dangerous things.

As they rode deeper and deeper into the forest, the light grew dimmer, and it became harder to look for Sir Robert. Suddenly Elvira whinnied in fear and began to buck and rear. Charlotte tried to control the frightened horse, but she slipped off Elvira's back, and the horse galloped away. Jackson looked around and heard a piercing scream as he saw a giant black panther drop from a tree, just missing Charlotte. She tried to run, but she tripped over her long skirts. The panther crouched, ready to spring.

Jackson jumped off his horse and drew his sword. He was terrified, but he knew he had to try to save Charlotte. He ran to the panther and hit it over the head with the flat of his sword. Jackson and the panther lunged at each other, each just managing to fend off the other.

Jackson heard a whistle in his ear and felt something graze by. Too busy to worry about it, he kept fighting. Without warning, the panther gave a great scream and fell, shaking, to the ground. Then it lay still with an arrow in its side. Jackson looked up. Charlotte stood tall and pale, her eyes large and round, her bow at the ready. Jackson realized what had happened. Relief spilled over into shaky laughter.

"You know," he said, wearily dropping to the ground, "you almost hit me."

Charlotte plopped down next to him. "Yeah," she said. "Sorry about that. I never said I was a good shot."

"Good thing or you'd have been lying." He looked over at the dead panther.

"Hey, let's get away from here."

Charlotte smiled. "At last we agree on something."

As they walked away from the panther, Jackson put his sword back in its sheath and led Pepper by the bridle. Before they got very far, Elvira came trotting back.

Charlotte stroked Elvira's nose and spoke softly to her. Then, patting one of the bulging saddlebags, she turned to Jackson and said, "Hungry?"

Jackson grinned. "I thought you'd never ask!"

## Chapter Two

**A**fter they cared for their horses, Jackson cleared away loose sticks and dead leaves and built a small campfire. Charlotte took bread and cold meat from one of her saddlebags and handed some to Jackson as the two sat down by the fire.

"Thanks," he said to her. "Actually, I really wanted to thank you for saving my life. You were incredible back there."

Charlotte smiled shyly and looked at the ground. "Thank you," she said. "You were pretty good with the sword too, you know." She looked up at Jackson. "I guess those lessons Father gives you paid off."

Now it was Jackson's turn to smile shyly. He and Charlotte talked well into the night. Jackson thought about telling her about Sir Robert's quest for his treasure, but he decided against it.

They set out early the next day. When they came to a particularly dense part of the forest, they had to work their way through the trees, vines, and brush. Suddenly, Charlotte gave a startled gasp.

She had brushed up against some Deadly Ivy, one of the most dangerous plants of the Doomed Forest. Deadly Ivy looks like ordinary ivy growing on ordinary trees. But when a person touches Deadly Ivy, the plant snakes itself around its victim, pulling tighter and tighter. It kills within seconds.

"Jackson, quick, cut it off!" Charlotte screamed. "I have a dagger in one of the saddlebags. Quick!"

Jackson ran to the saddlebags and frantically searched through them. Grabbing a small leather pouch, he turned to Charlotte. She started to protest when she saw he didn't have the knife, but the ever-tightening Deadly Ivy silenced her. Jackson opened the pouch and began to pour salt on the Deadly Ivy. Immediately it loosed its grip, and Charlotte fell to the ground.



"Thanks Jackson," she said gratefully as he helped her up. "How did you know to use salt to stop Deadly Ivy?"

"It was in one of the books I read. I never thought knowing that stuff would be helpful."

Jackson and Charlotte continued their search. As dusk began to fall, Jackson thought he heard a familiar whinny in the distance. He and Charlotte tied their horses to a tree and checked for all of their weapons. Quickly and silently they crept toward the sound, and, sure enough, there was Lightning, tied to a tree.

Jackson and Charlotte continued on. They came to the edge of a clearing and spied three people around a campfire. Two were dirty, wild-looking men, surely two of the dangerous thieves who lived in the Doomed Forest. The other, who was tied to a tree, was Sir Robert!

Silently, Jackson and Charlotte waited until the three men fell asleep. Then Jackson motioned for Charlotte to give him the dagger. As she did so, she leaned forward and kissed Jackson on the cheek, startling him. "For luck," she whispered. Jackson ran to Sir Robert and, putting his hand over Sir Robert's mouth, gently shook him awake. Jackson quickly cut through the ropes, and then he and Sir Robert ran back to where Charlotte was waiting.

## Chapter Three

Charlotte threw her arms around Sir Robert. In a whisper, Jackson told Charlotte to take her father back to their horses. He meant to go get Lightning. For once she didn't argue with him.

Getting Lightning took longer than he had expected, but finally he returned to Charlotte and her father, who had made camp. Charlotte ran over to Jackson and grabbed his arm. "I was getting worried about you," she said. "Come over to the fire. You must be starved."

As the three began to eat, Charlotte asked, "So, Father, why are you here in the Doomed Forest?"

"As I told young Jackson, I'm on a quest to find my precious treasure."

Charlotte turned to Jackson. "You knew about this? Why didn't you tell me?" she demanded.

Jackson was sorry that he had angered her. "It was your father's secret," he said.

Still angry, Charlotte turned back to her father.  
“Is your quest over? Can we go home now?”

Sir Robert shook his head. “But it will be soon. I’ve learned that the leader of the thieves, Fearsome Joe Walsh, keeps my treasure in a leather pouch in a chest he keeps with him at all times. I’ve also learned where Fearsome Joe Walsh and his thieves live in the Doomed Forest.” He looked at Jackson. “Tomorrow young Jackson and I will go to their camp, take my treasure, and return home. You, young lady, will go home as soon as morning comes.”

Sir Robert raised his hand as Charlotte opened her mouth to argue. “No,” he said before she could say a word. “A den of dangerous thieves is no place for a girl.”



“Please, sir,” Jackson heard himself say. “It may not be my place to say this, but I think Charlotte should come. She’s the reason why we’re here. It was her idea to come after you. She thought to bring food, weapons, and warm clothes. She saved my life from a panther attack. She’s the bravest person I know.”

Sir Robert looked at his daughter for a long moment. “Very well,” he said at last. “You may come with us. But no fighting for you. Young Jackson and I will surprise the thieves with an early attack. While we fight them, Charlotte, you will sneak into the camp and take back my treasure. Give us a signal when you have it and we’ll follow. Now, let’s get some sleep.”

Jackson had trouble falling asleep. He was glad that Charlotte was coming with them, but he worried about her. She had no sword. What if one of the thieves attacked her? She can take care of herself, Jackson reminded himself. But what if she got hurt? What if she couldn't find the treasure? Finally, as the questions swirled in his head, Jackson drifted off to sleep.

Early the next morning, Jackson and Sir Robert ran into Fearsome Joe's camp, startling the sleepy thieves as they ate breakfast. Jackson raised his sword and began fighting three thieves at once, while Sir Robert began dueling with Fearsome Joe himself.

In the confusion, Charlotte sneaked in and hunted for the treasure chest.

Jackson, finished with his first three thieves, began fighting two more. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a thief run up to Sir Robert and Fearsome Joe, who were still battling.

"Behind you!" Jackson shouted. Suddenly, he heard the owl's hoot that was Charlotte's signal. He and Sir Robert nodded at each other. With a last, fierce jab at their opponents, Jackson and Sir Robert fled the camp to their waiting horses.

## Chapter Four

After riding for what seemed like hours, the light finally grew brighter and the trees less dense. At last Sir Robert, Charlotte, and Jackson came out into the open sunlight.

"Whoa," said Sir Robert, reining in his horse. Jackson and Charlotte reined in theirs. "Fearsome Joe and his thieves never leave the forest," said Sir Robert. "We're safe now. Let's give the horses a rest."

Charlotte handed the leather pouch to her father.

"What treasure was worth all this trouble?" she asked him.

Sir Robert opened the pouch, and a single silver coin fell out into his hand. "That's it?" Charlotte said in surprise. "You went missing for that? I don't understand."

"This single coin means everything to me," Sir Robert answered. "The only thing that means more is my family."

"But why, Father? Why is this coin so important?"



"My grandfather was not a wealthy man, my dear Charlotte," began Sir Robert. "He was like young Jackson, here, a stableboy. He wanted his sons to be their own masters, instead of working for someone else. He divided the little money he had between his sons. He told them to go into the world and make what they would of it. He gave each of them a single silver coin. My father took his coin and came to Garren. He worked hard and saved his money. In time he became a wealthy man with a manor house of his own, our house. This," he said, holding it up, "was his single silver coin."

"He never spent it?" Charlotte asked. "Why?"

"It's a reminder. This coin reminds us of where our family came from and gives us hope for the future. It is our most precious treasure."

They were silent for several minutes, thinking about the coin. "Please sir," said Jackson. "How did Fearsome Joe Walsh get the coin?"

"When I was a boy, the manor house was robbed. We didn't know then who had robbed us, but I have tried to find out over the years. Some weeks ago, I heard something that made me think Fearsome Joe had the coin."

"What did you hear, Father?"

"I heard that Fearsome Joe kept a silver coin with him at all times, thinking it brought him luck. My father had kept the coin in a special wooden box, so it would not be confused with any other coins. Fearsome Joe must have realized that this one coin was special, so he always kept it with him."

Now, Jackson thought, Sir Robert's quest is over and things will go back as they were before. He glanced over at Charlotte. Well, he thought, maybe not everything. Sir Robert was grateful for Jackson's help in restoring his precious treasure and gave Jackson a large sum of money. Jackson saved the money and worked hard to earn more. In a few years, he had enough money to buy a large stable with many horses. He now had several stableboys working for him and was his own master.

Not long after that, Jackson married Charlotte in a large, happy ceremony. After all the guests had gone home, the couple opened Sir Robert's wedding gift. It was a small wooden box with a single silver coin. Sir Robert's treasure was now theirs.

**The End**

# Lady Fiona, the Knight

Lady Fiona was a beautiful young woman from the kingdom of Frankfort. She was from a very wealthy family who was greatly respected throughout the land. However, Lady Fiona did not always enjoy her title. She was what some peasants and townspeople called a tomboy.

Fiona liked to travel the land exploring and finding adventures. She liked trudging through the forest and climbing trees, but more than anything, she loved riding horses. She dreamed of defending her country and gaining the respect of her peers. Fiona dreamed of becoming a knight. Of course during this time, women were not allowed to become knights, especially women with titles who were from wealthy families. Nevertheless, Fiona was determined to become a knight. She often practiced in a secret clearing in the middle of a distant forest. She practiced carrying a lance. She practiced wearing heavy armor. She even practiced sparring with a few unfortunate trees.

Finally, after months of practicing, Fiona decided to ask for help. She approached a page named Patrick.

“Patrick, you know me. You know I’m as tough and strong as any boy. Isn’t it unfair that I cannot be knighted just because I’m a girl? Will you help me?” Fiona asked pleadingly.

Patrick’s eyes bulged, and he stifled a laugh. “Fiona you cannot be serious. Not just anyone can become a knight and certainly not a girl! It’s unheard of!” Patrick walked away shaking his head and chuckling. “I have work to do. I’m sorry I can’t help you with this nonsense,” he called over his shoulder.

Fiona's blood boiled. She was more determined than ever to become a knight. "I'll show you!" she screamed as Patrick kept walking.

Over the next few months, Fiona practiced even harder. She became quite graceful and flexible and was often amazed at her progress. Fiona became quite good at target practice and handling a sword. Each night, sore and exhausted, Fiona returned to the castle and replaced the weapons she had borrowed. She went to bed each night, dreaming of becoming a true knight.

Finally Fiona's chance came. It was spring, and she knew the king was looking for young men who could be dubbed knights. Fiona dressed in armor and disguised herself as a young man. She prepared her horse and headed off to the king's castle. Fiona's heart beat as quickly as the clip-clop of her horse's hooves.

After arriving at the castle, Fiona tried to calm her nerves. She looked at the other prospective knights and realized they were probably just as nervous as she. When her turn came, Fiona took a deep breath and stepped forward. It was as though time stood still. Her sword felt twice as heavy as it normally did. Fiona mounted her horse. She knew this was her one and only chance. She couldn't wait to see Patrick's face when she was dubbed a knight!

"Squires ready!" yelled the man directing the events. Fiona saw her competition mounting his horse. Her heart felt like it was beating in her throat, but Fiona was ready. At the sound of the man's shrill voice, Fiona spurred her horse and was off.

She maneuvered her horse around the obstacles with ease. She hit every target, and she never dropped her sword. Fast as lightning, she rode her horse to the finish line. She was well ahead of the competition.

“You will move on to the next round!” the man bellowed as he pointed to Fiona. Under her armor, Fiona beamed with pride. It took all of her restraint not to pull her helmet off and shout at the sky. Fiona wasn’t sure what would happen in the end when her secret identity was discovered, but she knew she was one step closer to her dream. Above all, she knew that with hard work and determination, anything was possible.

# Lady Fiona Rides Again

Lady Fiona of Frankfort was well accustomed to the harsh training endured by young men seeking knighthood. She had once trained in secret and disguised herself as a young man in an attempt to become a knight. Although she passed the tests, she was not dubbed a knight because, alas, her identity was revealed. However, she proved that she could stand up to the rigors of knighthood. Few people disputed this fact, but women were not allowed to be knights, so Lady Fiona settled for training young men how to become knights.

Although this was unconventional, Lady Fiona was respected for her talents. It was, in fact, considered quite an honor to be accepted into Lady Fiona's classes. She was very strict, indeed, but she often produced the best-trained knights the kingdom had to offer. This idea was put to the test one fateful fall when the King of Frankfort's castle was under siege.

"Lady Fiona! Lady Fiona! The king's castle is under attack! We need every available page, squire, and knight at once!" cried Patrick, a loyal friend and page to the king. By the time he reached Fiona, he was panting like a dog on a hot summer's day.

"Slow down, Patrick. Catch your breath. Now slowly explain what's happening," soothed Fiona.

"It's just terrible, Lady Fiona! Knights from the kingdom of Sardon are approaching from all sides. The king is preparing for battle! He sent me here to ask you to send any available men," sobbed Patrick.

“Not to worry, Patrick. Report back to the king, and tell him I have quite a few exceptional men that I can send. They’ll report at once.” Fiona gave Patrick a reassuring pat on the back.

As soon as Patrick was out of sight, Fiona made an announcement. “Suit up and report to the king’s castle at once!” she commanded. At the sound of Fiona’s urgent voice, the young men scrambled for their armor. Fiona slipped out of sight.

Once the area was relatively clear, Fiona slipped into her own suit of armor. She grabbed her shield and sword and mounted Dusty, her bravest steed. With a gentle prod, the horse set off toward the king’s castle.

As Fiona neared the castle, she lowered her helmet and fell in among the knights who had already arrived.

“Men, we have a tough battle ahead of us,” the king’s voice boomed like thunder. “As you may have heard, we are about to face an attack from the kingdom of Sardon. Prepare yourselves for what lies ahead. First thing tomorrow morning, we begin battle.” The men surrounded the king and gave shouts of support. Fiona’s heart raced as fast as the birds flew overhead. At last, she would fight as a knight to defend her kingdom. Fiona slipped away while the others gathered to feast and plan their defense.

The next morning, she was dressed and ready to join the group. The anticipation was as thick as pea soup. Even the horses seemed on edge. Finally, the sound of a distant horn signaled the beginning of battle. The horses, with knights firmly seated, charged ahead.

The battle lasted well into the night. At times, Fiona led the knights, and she fought as well as any man. Finally, exhausted and outnumbered, the knights of Sardon began to retreat. Fiona and the men cried out with excitement. The kingdom of Frankfort was safe for now.

As the men gathered back at the castle to celebrate, the king rode alongside Fiona. When the two were alone, the king softly said, "It was an honor to serve with you, Lady Fiona. You are as much of a knight as any man who fought today."

Fiona struggled to take her helmet off and tried to ask the king how he knew her identity. But the king rode off toward the castle as Fiona smiled in bewilderment.



THE LEGEND OF PENELOPE SPENCER


# *The Voyage of the Antelope*

Story by Sam R. McColl  
Illustration by Gina Capaldi



## PROLOGUE

---

ong ago and far away, dear reader, lived a wise, old teacher. Some say she was the wisest woman in the whole world and the wisest the world will ever know. Her name was Penelope Spencer, and she taught many of the world leaders. Her school for young people was famous the world over. Penelope knew all there was to know about everything. Difficult mathematics? She knew how to solve the hardest problems. Astronomy and physics? Mere child's play for her. People would travel the world over just to spend a semester with her at the Academy of Learning. Penelope devoted her life to teaching young people the ways of the world. Some say that when she finally passed away, the relative IQ of the population of the world dropped a few points. Penelope was indeed special.


Now, you may not know it, but when Penelope was a young girl, it was highly unusual for girls to receive the education that boys received. The world is not always fair, dear reader, and this was yet another example of its unfairness. Imagine not being able to study reading, or science, or social studies, just because you were a girl! It wasn't right. However, Penelope changed all that. How, you ask? Well, dear reader, that is where our story begins. So, find your favorite chair, and sit down and learn the beginnings of the legend of Penelope Spencer and her voyage on the *Antelope*.



BOOK THE FIRST

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Chapter 1

he clarion blast of the royal trumpets echoed through the early morning air. Penelope, the potter's daughter, carefully put down the beautiful bowl that she was painting at the simple table in her kitchen. She cocked her head to the side and listened. Usually, trumpet blasts were followed by some announcement. Penelope wanted to know what was going on.

A second trumpet blast was then followed by the sound of a loud, clear voice calling from somewhere. "Attention, people of Spyridonia! Your presence is required in the village square!" Penelope looked over at her father, who was gently shaping a lump of clay into a vase. He shrugged his shoulders and wiped his hands on his checkered apron.

"I suppose I should go then, eh?" Penelope's father said to her. "Although I hope whatever it is doesn't take too long. I don't want this piece of clay to harden before I can finish this vase. Old Mr. Haroldsen wants this vase completed as soon as possible so he can give it to his wife as an anniversary present."

"Shall I come, too, Father?" Penelope asked. The presence of children was usually not required at these town meetings. Penelope thought this unfair, for she believed children were citizens too.

Penelope's father surprised her when he said, "Certainly, my dear. Just wipe the smudge of clay off of your face, and straighten your frock."

"Really, Father?" Penelope said excitedly.

"Yes, my dear," her father responded. "I think you've become old enough to engage yourself in the circumstances of our little hamlet. Besides, as you know, my hearing's not as sharp as it once was, so perhaps you can be my ears."

"Hooray!" Penelope exclaimed and did a little jig across the kitchen floor, over to the simple mirror hanging on the wall. She wiped the smudge of clay from her face, smoothed out the ruffled front of her smock, and even tied up her hair in a simple bow. Her first town meeting!

Penelope looked over at her father. He removed his apron and tucked in his shirt. Then he ran his hands through his thinning gray hair, smoothing it out. "You look quite handsome, Father," she said.

"And you yourself are the very picture of beauty, my dear," he said with a smile. Penelope blushed. He continued, "So now let us see what awaits us in the village square."

## Chapter 2



enelope and her father walked out into the gray morning air. As was typical of summer mornings in Spyridonia, a light fog hung in the air, covering things in a slight haze. Drops of the morning dew clung to the wood panels on the dais in the center of the town square.

Penelope looked around. She recognized most of the townspeople who were coming out of their homes and shops. There were Mrs. Mallory and her daughter Molly, who sold baked goods in town. There were Old Buck Mulligan and his son Stephen, who ran the cooper's shop. And there were Leopold and Luis Bloom, the boys who had run the shipwright's shop since their parents had passed.

"Avast, there, Captain!" called Leopold to Penelope as he and his brother spotted her.

"And a fine greeting to you two gentlemen," Penelope smiled back, giving both boys her finest curtsy.

Penelope's father turned to face the approaching boys. "Well, good morning Mr. Bloom and Mr. Bloom."

"Indeed, sir, it is a good morning," said Leopold.

"Indeed, indeed," said Luis.

The four of them had to dispense with the pleasantries abruptly, however, for a commotion from the far side of the village square caught everyone's attention. The growing crowd on the far side began to part, as if to get out of the way of something. And, sure enough, through the crowd and into the center of the square rolled the most beautiful horse and carriage Penelope had ever seen.

The four horses were the darkest, deepest black, and each had a shining white star across its forehead. The carriage itself was a sight to behold, as well. It was white, but adorned with shiny gold trim. The wheels sparkled, as if there were a bed of emeralds inside each hub. Penelope's breath was taken away.

The carriage rolled to a stop in the center of the square. Across the crowd, people were murmuring and mumbling. Penelope grabbed her father's hand and asked, "Whose carriage is that?"

"That, my dear," said her father, "is a part of the Royal Carriage Fleet, in which the king and members of the royal establishment ride. Dukes, earls, barons, and ministers all use the RCF as they travel and conduct their royal business, usually on behalf of the king."

"Well, who's in it now?" Penelope asked. But she didn't need the answer. Slowly, the door to the carriage opened.

## Chapter 3



he audience of townspeople fell silent as a man emerged from the gilded carriage. He was dressed in a beautiful silken robe of yellow and purple, the royal colors of the kingdom, that cascaded from his shoulders and gathered loosely at his waist. On his head, the man wore a soft, velvet hat. The hat had a long green peacock feather protruding from it.

“Who’s that, Father?” Penelope asked, pointing to the man.

Penelope’s father studied the man as the man walked up to the dais in the square. “Well, judging from the color of his royal feather, he’s some sort of scholar. Most of the king’s scholars wear green feathers.”

“Very interesting,” Penelope said, to herself just as much to her father. She watched as the man produced a scroll from his robe. He unrolled the scroll, studied it, and cleared his throat.

The man then addressed the crowd. “Greetings, citizens of Spyridonia. My name is Sir George Futura, and I come to you as the Minister of Education for King Hector the Wise.”

“Greetings, Minister Futura!” shouted a few members of the crowd.

Minister Futura continued. “Citizens of Spyridonia, I come with a wonderful announcement from the king. The king has decided to open a new Academy of Learning. This Academy will serve to educate the best and brightest young people from all over the kingdom.”



The beginnings of a thought, like a flickering candle, began to burn in the depths of Penelope’s mind. She gripped her father’s hand as she listened to the minister continue.

“As such, I bring an edict, or important statement, from the king. It reads as follows: ‘Be it known to all citizens of the kingdom that one bright student from each village shall be invited to matriculate, or enroll, in the new Academy of Learning. Each village shall be allowed to decide which student is their brightest in any manner they see fit. The student is expected to arrive on the Royal Isle of Ithaca, at His Majesty the King’s Castle, in a fortnight. The education shall be free of charge to each student, but each village will be expected to ensure safe passage for the student. Signed, His Majesty King Hector the Wise.’ ” And with that, Minister Futura rolled up his scroll, stepped down from the dais, climbed into his carriage, and rode away.

## Chapter 4



he crowd was abuzz with the exciting news. “A new academy!” exclaimed Mrs. Mallory.

“I’ve always said that education is the key to the future for our young people,” said old Buck Mulligan.

Then Mr. Mgumbo, the mayor of Spyridonia, stepped up on the dais. The crowd turned its attention to him. He cleared his throat and began to speak. “Fellow citizens of Spyridonia,” he said, “this is a time of great celebration for us. While we are proud of our small and humble schoolhouse, and most proud of Ms. Travers, our dedicated schoolteacher, this is also a wonderful opportunity for our young people. It is the opportunity to send one of our bright, young people off to see the world and to learn from some of the king’s wisest scholars. Thus, I suggest that all the families with young people go home tonight and discuss this opportunity together. I hereby proclaim that we shall meet upon this spot tomorrow, at noon, to decide which of our students shall compete for this opportunity, and how I shall discuss with Ms. Travers some appropriate ways of deciding which of our students is the brightest. Since many difficult discussions are to be had today, I declare all the businesses in Spyridonia closed for the day. Good luck, citizens.”

With that, the crowd began to disperse. Leopold and Luis said farewell to Penelope and her father. Penelope turned to her father. In just a few short

moments, Penelope had realized that she wanted this opportunity more than she'd ever wanted anything else. Thoughts of traveling the seas, having adventures, and learning the ways of the world from some of the king's brightest scholars filled Penelope's brain. She opened her mouth to say something to her father. But he spoke first.

"Silence, for now, Dear One," he said. "I know you too well, and I know what you were about to say. But, I insist that we adjourn to our home, where we can discuss this in depth, and more important, in private. These are important issues, issues that may very well have long-lasting effects on my life as well as yours. So, it is best we deal with them seriously. Do you understand that, Penelope?"

Penelope nodded, a bit sheepishly. "Yes, Father," she said. "I understand."

"Very well, then," he said. "I believe there is the remainder of a mutton pie in the ice box. Let's have lunch and talk about this inside." Penelope's father smiled and took her hand.

## Chapter 5

It was a long and in-depth conversation. Over lunch of mutton pie and milk, Penelope and her father discussed the royal edict sent down by the king. Penelope's father did a wonderful job of keeping his opinions to himself. He insisted that Penelope list all the reasons she might want to compete for the spot at the Academy. Penelope talked about wanting to see the world and go on adventures. She talked about learning from some of the wisest men and women in the kingdom. She discussed being able, in the future, to pass on what she had learned to other young people.

"Those are all good points, Dear One," her father said. "But now, I'd like you to think about the cons of the issue." Penelope didn't understand. "Cons are the reasons why you might not want to do something. When you're trying to make a difficult decision, it's best to be able to see both sides of the issue. Do you understand that?"

Penelope did understand. She thought long and hard. She then realized that winning the spot would change her life almost categorically. She would have to say farewell to everything familiar to her. She would say farewell to her friends, her father, her home, and her simple life. Penelope realized that she might, at times in the future, become homesick and afraid. She also realized that she didn't know how well she might do at the Academy, were she to be accepted. And that was one more thing; how would she feel if she chose to compete and didn't succeed?

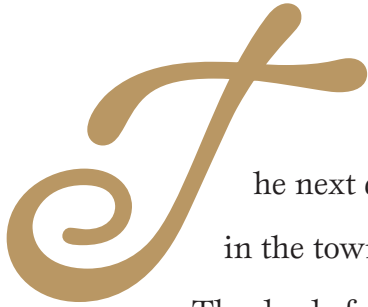
Penelope listed all of these possible concerns to her father. “Very good, Penelope,” he said. “I’m very proud of you for not letting all the possible benefits cloud your vision.”

“So, Father, what do you think?” Penelope asked.

Her father said, “Well, Penelope, I believe that I shall go for a walk and mull this idea over. I shall return in an hour or so, after a long walk. Then, I shall give you my decision.”

“I understand, Father,” Penelope said. “I shall await your return.” Penelope’s father grabbed his walking stick and walked out the door. Penelope bustled about the small kitchen, cleaning up after the midday meal. The hour passed slowly and seemed like days. Penelope was not sure what her father would say. Eventually, though, her father returned. Penelope looked at him with expectant eyes. Penelope’s father sat down at the small table and stretched his legs. Then, to Penelope’s delight, a smile broke out across his face.

## Chapter 6



he next day, sharply at noon, the people of Spyridonia gathered in the town square. Penelope was quaking with anxiety and excitement.

The day before, she had thanked her father for allowing her to compete; she'd thanked him with a wonderful hug and a kiss on his whiskery cheek. The rest of that day, Penelope had tried hard to concentrate on her pottery, but it had been difficult. Now, here she was. Who would her competition be? Would Leopold and Luis compete? What about Molly? Penelope wasn't sure. She stood at her father's side, near the corner of the dais in the square.

Mayor Mgumbo and Ms. Travers stood on the dais. Mayor Mgumbo addressed the crowd. "Citizens of Spyridonia," he began, "who has decided to allow their young ones to compete in this most hallowed of competitions?"

Penelope's father stepped forward, "I have, sir," he said, holding Penelope's hand in the air.

"Ah, Mr. Spencer," the mayor addressed Penelope's father. "I am not surprised. Your wisdom is known throughout the land, and I assume that wisdom runs in the family. Young Penelope," he continued, addressing Penelope, "please come and join Ms. Travers and me on the dais." The crowd clapped as Penelope walked with trembling legs up onto the dais.

Mayor Mgumbo turned to the crowd. "Is there anyone else?"

From the left side of the crowd Mr. Piper, the local shepherd, stepped forward, holding his son Thomas's hand in the air. "If it pleases you, sir," said Mr. Piper, "my son Thomas should like to participate."

Mayor Mgumbo nodded. "Yet another obvious candidate, wise Mr. Piper. Young Thomas, please join us here." Thomas walked with what seemed like the utmost confidence up onto the dais. He smiled at Penelope, and Penelope weakly smiled back.

Once more, Mayor Mgumbo addressed the crowd. "Is there anyone else?" The crowd was silent. Mayor Mgumbo turned to Leopold and Luis Bloom. "Surely one of you young lads would care to compete?" he asked them.

"No sir," said Leopold. "My brother and I are happy in the shipwright's shop, carrying on our father's work."


"Very well, young sirs," the mayor said. Then he turned to Mrs. Mallory and her daughter Molly. "Not you, young Molly?" he asked.

Molly curtsied, and said, "No thank you, sir. I'm quite content here with my mother. But I think Thomas and Penelope would both be most excellent candidates."

"I agree," said Ms. Travers, "though I shall regret losing either one of them from my classroom." The audience chuckled.

"Very well, then," said the mayor. "Let us begin."

## Chapter 7

 Ms. Travers addressed the crowd. “Ladies and gentlemen, students and friends, the mayor and I have decided how to conduct this competition. Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, a wise man named Oedipus (ED-ih-puss) was faced with a very difficult riddle. For centuries before that, the wisest of wise men and women had struggled with the answer to that riddle. Oedipus, in all of his wisdom, knew the answer. Now, since the mayor and I hold this competition very seriously, we have decided to put forward the same riddle to our young contestants. Whoever answers the riddle correctly shall win! I hold in my hand two pieces of paper and two quills. I shall ask Penelope and Thomas the riddle and give them a short time to try to figure it out.” She turned to her students. “Are you ready?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am,” said Thomas with a bow.

“Yes, ma’am,” said Penelope with a curtsy.

“Very well,” Ms. Travers said. She handed them each a paper and a quill. “Listen carefully,” she continued, “for the riddle is as follows: What walks on four legs in the morning, on two legs in the afternoon, and on three legs in the evening? That is the riddle you must answer. You may both adjourn to your homes for half an hour and then return with your answer written down.”



Penelope curtsied and said, “Thank you, ma’am.” Thomas said the same thing with a bow, and the two of them walked down from the dais. Penelope’s mind was spinning. What could the riddle mean? She wasn’t sure. Penelope thought and thought as she walked toward her home. This is a tricky riddle indeed, she thought to herself. What could it mean? As she walked, she barely noticed her father walking beside her, placing his hand gently on her shoulder. When they entered their home, Penelope sat down with a sigh at the kitchen table.

## Chapter 8



Penelope thought long and hard about the riddle. She said it again to herself. “What walks on four legs in the morning, on two in the afternoon, and on three in the evening?” The riddle made no sense. Or, did it? Maybe it was a trick. Penelope thought of all the things that walk in different ways at different times. Sometimes dogs stood on two legs. Could that be it? Penelope knew the same held true for prancing horses. But what about the three legs?

Penelope was confused. She felt a sense of disappointment begin to creep in. What was she to do? She looked up from the table where she sat, and looked around the room. She noticed her father sitting across the room, gazing at her. Her father held his walking stick between his feet, and rested his chin on the ivory handle. Then, all of a sudden, the idea hit her! “I’ve got it!” she cried, and started furiously scribbling her answer down.

After half of an hour had passed, Penelope and her father walked back to the dais in the village square. Mayor Mgumbo, Ms. Travers, and Thomas were already there, but Penelope took her place next to them with confidence. “Do both of you have an answer?” Ms. Travers asked them. Thomas and Penelope both nodded. “Very well,” Ms. Travers continued. “Thomas, please read your answer.”

Thomas unfolded his paper and cleared his throat. “The answer,” he began, “is a table. When a carpenter builds a table, it has no legs at first. Then, after it is finished, it has four legs. However, as the years go by, a leg might fall off. So, the answer is a table.”

Penelope turned to Ms. Travers. The schoolteacher said, “I’m sorry Thomas, but that is incorrect. In the riddle, we asked what started with four legs, then walked with two, and then with three.” Thomas hung his head, and Penelope could see the pain on his face. Her heart went out to him. Then Ms. Travers turned to Penelope. She said, “Now, young Penelope, read us your answer.”

Penelope unfolded her paper, cleared her throat, and read what she had written. “The answer is a person. In the morning of our lives, we crawl on our hands and feet, as though they were four legs. Then, as we grow through the afternoon of our lives, we learn to walk on but two legs. Then, as the afternoon turns to evening, we often turn to a cane or a walking stick for support, as a third leg. So the answer is a person!”

Ms. Travers’s mouth opened in happiness. A silent moment went by. Then Ms. Travers said with seriousness, “Penelope, that is correct!” A roar of applause came up from the crowd. Penelope had done it! She had solved the riddle! She would travel to the Isle of Ithaca to study at the Academy of Learning! The crowd kept applauding, and no one clapped louder than Penelope’s father did.

## INTERLUDE

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Now, dear reader, you may think that this is the end of the story. But no, the legend of Penelope Spencer has only just begun. Indeed, Penelope Spencer had won the competition. And indeed, if all were to go well, Penelope would soon join other students from across the kingdom at the king's new Academy of Learning. But, dear reader, many things would happen between that afternoon on the dais and when Penelope would take her seat at the Academy.

According to legend, Mayor Mgumbo offered one of Spyridonia's finest sailing vessels, the *Antelope*, for the journey. Also, according to legend, Mayor Mgumbo immediately asked for volunteers from the audience who would offer to join Penelope on her voyage across the sea. Of course, dear reader, her father offered to take the journey. So did the young Bloom boys, Leopold and Luis. And, in a show of sportsmanship and kindness, so did Thomas Piper. The Mayor awarded all four of them Citizens of Honor medals, for their devotion to the citizenry of Spyridonia.

The town of Spyridonia was abuzz with activity for the next few days. Supplies had to be drummed up from all over the place. Fortunately, Mr. Spencer, Penelope's father, had been somewhat of a sailor in his younger days, so he knew how to sail. But there was still much work that needed to be finished before the wonderful celebration and send-off of the *Antelope*.

When the preparations were complete, what a celebration it was! The entire village of Spyridonia held a banquet in honor of the *Antelope*, Penelope Spencer, and the rest of the crew. The mayor made a long and moving speech. So did Penelope, in which she thanked everyone in Spyridonia for their support.

Finally, it was time for the *Antelope* to set sail. And set sail she did. But, alas, dear reader, the voyage would turn out to be one of the most dangerous journeys ever known. And, dear reader, the adventures of Penelope Spencer and the *Antelope* crew will fill the rest of our story. So come along as we set sail with the *Antelope's* crew and sail into history.

## BOOK THE SECOND

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### Chapter 9



The *Antelope* set sail early in the morning, as cheers and applause from the crowd followed the *Antelope* out of Spyridonia harbor. Luis and Leopold manned the ship as Penelope and her father stood on the bow, looking out toward the open sea. Penelope breathed in the fresh sea air and felt the light tingle of salt spray on her skin.

“You have just taken your first step into a larger world, Dear One,” her father said, standing by her side. “How do you feel?”

Penelope turned to her father. “Oh, Father,” she said with a sigh. “I feel such a range of emotions. I’m anxious about the uncertainties that lie ahead, though I wish I were not. However, I’m excited and eager to see what awaits me, especially in Ithaca, at the great Academy.”

Penelope’s father looked at his daughter. “Do not think of Ithaca yet, Penelope,” he warned. “Any journey across the open sea must not be taken lightly. Many dangers could possibly await us. I have no qualms placing trust and faith in our young crew, but we must be ready and alert for anything the great sea throws our way. Vast numbers of ships, a great many of them from our own harbor at Spyridonia, have been lost in white squalls, hurricanes, and other dangers.”

“A white squall?” Penelope asked. “Whatever is a white squall?”

Her father explained that a white squall occurs when a seemingly calm breeze immediately whips up into gale force winds. “When a squall strikes,”

he said, “if you are not prepared, all may be lost.” Then, under his breath, he sang part of an old merchant sailor’s song about the white squall. Captain Spencer did not remember all the words, for it was an old song that had suffered the fate of forgetting through the sands of time, but he remembered that a few of the lines were:

*Believe in the squall, don’t take the chance.*

*To fall overboard is a dangerous dance.*

“That’s both haunting and beautiful, Father,” Penelope said as a shiver crept slowly up her spine.

“Haunting and beautiful,” her father said with a gentle smile and a faraway look in his eyes. “Never before have I heard a better description of the sea.” Penelope wrapped her arms around herself and stared down at the calm waters lapping at the coursing bow of the *Antelope* as they sailed farther and farther away from the harbor.

## Chapter 10



he first day of the journey was filled with wonder and joy.

After the small crew had enjoyed a small luncheon of duck sandwiches,

Captain Spencer taught the crew how to lash the mast ropes to the helm of the boat, thus letting the boat sail in a single direction without the need of a helmsman. The crew of five sat on the deck of the *Antelope*, sharing stories about what Ithaca might be like.

“Will we at least get to stay in Ithaca awhile, Captain Spencer?” asked Leopold Bloom.

“Indeed, sir,” said the self-styled captain of the *Antelope*. “We’ll stay for a few days at least, I’m sure, before we sail home again, minus one passenger, of course.” He smiled at his daughter, and regaled the rest of the crew with tales of earlier trips he’d taken to the Isle of Ithaca, when he’d been a much younger man. “Ithaca, dear Ithaca,” he mused. “’Twas where I met Penelope’s mother.” He told the crew about watching a play at the Grand Royale Theater, the largest theater in the entire kingdom. At the Grande Royale, he explained, Ithacan actors would stage moving dramas, sprightly comedies, and heart-rending tragedies for the audience and the king, who usually presided over the Grande Royale from his Royal Box in the balcony. Captain Spencer continued, “But on the day that I was there, there was

no story so haunting, so lovely, as the young Lady Laertes, who was sitting just a few rows away from me.” A faraway look came over Captain Spencer’s face as he remembered the story.

“And who was the young Lady Laertes?” asked Thomas. Luis nudged him in the shoulder.

“Don’t be so dense, you goose,” Luis scolded. “She was the lady who would one day be Penelope’s mother. Isn’t that right, Captain Spencer?”

Before Captain Spencer could reply, the crew heard Penelope shout from near the starboard side of the *Antelope*, “Oh look! Dolphins!” Everyone except Captain Spencer ran to the side. Indeed, a group of dolphins was swimming alongside, and in front of, the *Antelope*. It was as though they were leading the ship along.

“Aye, crew,” said Captain Spencer. “Dolphins are a good omen for sailors on the open seas. A good omen, indeed.”

## Chapter 11

W

hen Captain Spencer said something was a good omen, one had good reason to believe him, for Captain Spencer was wise and knowledgeable about such things. But even the wisest and most knowledgeable are fallible; although Captain Spencer was seldom wrong, sometimes he was. This was one of those times.

The white squall struck after dinner on the first night. Penelope's father and Luis Bloom had been above deck on the bow of the boat, battening down some hatches for the night. Thomas Piper, who was to have the last watch that night, was getting some early sleep. Penelope and Leopold Bloom were cleaning up the cabin area, prepping it for slumber.

Then, a roaring sound came from up above on the deck. Through the roar, Penelope thought she heard her father shouting. She and Leopold looked at each other and then sprinted up the galley steps to the main deck. They ran to the bow of the ship. The wind was roaring harder than anything Penelope had ever heard or seen. What was most terrifying was the way the wind seemed to change directions. A blast from the east knocked Penelope to her knees, and then a gust from the west dropped Leopold on his back.



“What’s happening, Father?” Penelope shouted as she and Leopold sprinted to the bow of the ship. Through the howling gale, she heard her father shouting, “Squall! Squall! Squall!” Through the darkness, rain, and roaring waves, as lightning briefly lit up the night air, Penelope could see her father and Luis scampering madly around the main deck, tightening ropes and securing beams and hatches. Leopold, who’d also done some sailing in his earliest years, started shouting orders at Penelope. As the wind began to blow harder and harder, the four of them ran around the main deck, tightening every rope they could find.

Then, it happened. A giant wave, taller it seemed than the *Antelope* herself, slammed against the side of the ship. The ship lurched starboard. Steeper and steeper the tilt grew, until the deck was nearly vertical. The four crew members on the deck started sliding toward the starboard side. “Grab onto something, tightly!” shouted Captain Spencer.

The ship continued to tilt. Soon, almost half the starboard side of the ship was underwater, and the port (or left) side of the ship stood high in the air. Oh, no, we’re going over! Penelope thought to herself. Then, like some great wet dog, the *Antelope* shook herself and roared upright again, stabilizing herself. And, as quickly as the wind had started, it died down.



## Chapter 12



efore anyone could even think about what had happened, Captain Spencer started shouting, “Are all hands present and accounted for?” He called for Penelope. As the storm had died down, the lightning had stopped and the night was as black as night could be.

“I’m here, Father!” she shouted, weakly.

Then Captain Spencer called for Thomas Piper. Thomas had come to the main deck during the squall. “I’m here, sir!” he shouted.

“Leopold!” Captain Spencer shouted.

“Present, sir!” he shouted.

“Luis!” the Captain shouted in the darkness. Silence answered them. “Luis!” he shouted again, “Luis Bloom! Answer!” A feeling of dread crept over Penelope.

Everyone started shouting Luis’s name. But he answered no one. Thomas Piper leapt into action, running to the galley and fetching four oil lanterns. He lit them, ran up to the main deck, and passed them out. Captain Spencer, Penelope, Leopold and Thomas fanned out to the four corners of the ship, calling into the darkness.

“Brother! Answer! Answer me, Brother!” Leopold shouted into the darkness. Penelope could hear the fear in Leopold’s voice. They all continued calling for Luis, shouting his name into the darkness. But there was only silence. Penelope’s father hauled the giant anchor over to the aft end of the *Antelope* and threw it overboard.

“We’ll stay right here, for now,” he said. Penelope carried her lantern over to Leopold. He was sitting on the starboard side of the boat, his head in his hands.

“My brother, my brother,” he kept repeating, over and over again. Penelope’s heart went out to him. She was trying to think of something to say when a small voice called out in the darkness.

## Chapter 13

“If someone could perhaps throw me a rope, that would be quite wonderful, if you please,” someone called from overboard. It was a familiar voice. Leopold leaped up and leaned overboard, holding his lantern out into the darkness.

The small sphere of light only lit up a tiny area of the sea around the ship. Then, to everyone’s great surprise, Luis came floating into the light.

“Luis!” Leopold shouted as Captain Spencer grabbed a rope and tossed it overboard. Luis grabbed the rope and Captain Spencer hauled him out of the water and onto the deck. Thomas Piper ran below deck to fetch Luis some hot cocoa and some dry clothes as Luis and Leopold gave each other a brotherly embrace. Penelope herself threw her arms around poor, wet Luis and gave him a peck on the cheek.

“Oh, dear Luis,” she said, choking back tears, “we thought we’d lost you.”

“Bah,” he said, “It’ll take more than a white squall to do me in,” he said, confidently. Then he laughed and said, “But I learned an important lesson. When you feel you may be tossed overboard into the brine, and the captain tells you to grab onto something, it’s wise to grab onto something nailed down to the ship, and not to a small piece of rope that has nothing tied to it on the other end. I’m just happy I know how to swim!” Then he laughed about the whole thing.

Captain Spencer looked deep into Luis's eyes. "I'm quite sorry, son," he said. "I don't know what I'd have done if I'd lost a sailor on the first night."

"No reason to think of it, Cap'n," Luis said, standing tall and saluting the Captain. "At any rate, Ensign Luis Bloom is reporting for duty, sir!"

Everyone laughed at the picture of Luis, completely drenched from head to toe, yet still standing tall and saluting the captain. "Well, we've all had enough excitement for one evening, I do believe," Captain Spencer said. "While Luis changes into his dry clothes, why don't you make up a batch of cocoa for all of us, Thomas? Luis can tell us all about his short dip in Nature's swimming pool."

"Aye, aye, Sir!" Thomas said, and ran below decks. Although it had been a close call, the *Antelope's* crew had survived their first real adventure.

## Chapter 14



For the next several days, the *Antelope* and her crew sailed without problems across the sea. One morning, Penelope and her father were sharing a cup of cocoa on the main deck. Penelope sipped her cocoa and said, “Since that first storm, when we almost lost poor Luis, we’ve had an easy go of it, haven’t we, Captain?” Penelope had taken, over the last few days, to calling her father “Captain.” It made her feel more like a member of the crew, instead of just her father’s daughter.

In response to her calling him Captain, her father had started addressing her just as he did the other crew members. “Aye, Miss Spencer, we have,” he said.

“Shall it be like this for the duration of our voyage, do you think?” Penelope asked.

“Well, that was something I wanted to discuss with you and the rest of the crew. In fact, could you assemble everyone, Miss Spencer?” he asked.

“Aye, aye, Captain,” Penelope saluted and ran off to fetch Luis, Leopold, and Thomas. The crew all met on the main deck, near the bow of the boat.

“What do you have to tell us, Captain?” Penelope asked.

The Captain began talking. “Mates, we have nearly reached the end of our journey. The Royal Isle of Ithaca is almost at hand. But, the Royal Harbor of Ithaca is an unusual place. One of the main reasons the Kingdom of Ithaca has been so untouched by war for so many years is because of the harbor’s location. The harbor is guarded by the Mighty Oracle, a wise man who only lets a ship past if someone onboard can answer a riddle.

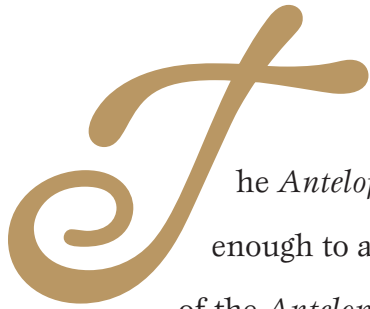
“Another riddle?” cried Penelope, “I don’t know if I could stand it!”

“Well, Miss Spencer,” said the Captain, “you must. The *Antelope* has carried us this far. We cannot turn back now.”

“I’ll do my best, Captain,” said Penelope, bravely. Penelope hoped she wouldn’t let her shipmates, her father, her village, and her king down. But it was a difficult burden to bear. Penelope’s thoughts were heavy all that day.

Later that afternoon, the Captain called from the bow of the main deck. “All hands on deck! All hands on deck! Mr. Piper, drop anchor! We’ve arrived at the Mighty Oracle!”

## Chapter 15



he *Antelope* coasted to a stop at a giant rock wall. A crevice, just wide enough to allow a ship to pass through, split the wall in two. From the deck of the *Antelope*, Penelope gazed through the crevice. On the far side, she saw the most beautiful harbor she'd ever seen. The most majestic boats, with sails of gleaming white, crisscrossed the harbor waters. Along the shore of the harbor the most beautiful docks and piers jutted out into the sparkling blue water. It was the Royal Harbor of Ithaca.

Suddenly, a deep, rumbling voice came from the rock wall. It seemed to come from everywhere, from every inch of the wall. "Who dares pass into the Royal Harbor of Ithaca?" boomed the voice. The sound shook the timbers of the *Antelope*, and the crew covered their ears. Penelope searched for the sound, and saw a man with a megaphone high atop the wall.

Captain Spencer shouted to the man. "It is I, Captain Spencer of Spyridonia, the captain of the *Antelope*. I bring my daughter Penelope to study at the Great Academy of Learning!"

"Anyone who shall pass into the harbor must answer a riddle, as is the age-old custom!" boomed the man. "Who onboard shall answer the riddle?"

"My daughter shall!" Captain Spencer called. Penelope stepped forward.

"Very well!" boomed the voice. "An incorrect answer shall mean certain doom for the *Antelope*!" Penelope's heart pounded. "Are you prepared, young Penelope?"

Her voice quaked, but she called, “I am ready.” She tried to sound brave, but Penelope was frightened.

“Very well!” boomed the voice once again. “Here is the riddle: ‘What is the broadest water, yet is also the safest to cross?’ ”

Penelope was stunned. She didn’t know the answer. The riddle didn’t even make sense. Penelope was about to fail. She was leading her friends and father into certain doom. Suddenly, Penelope wanted to be back in Spyridonia more than anything else. She wished for the days of working with her father in his potter’s shop. She wished she could be singing songs with Molly Mallory once again. She wished she could be running once again with her friends in the dew-covered hills above the harbor in Spyridonia. Tears welled into Penelope’s eyes. But then, she figured it out. Her memory of running through the dew-covered hills had helped her. Dew is water! And in a bright summer morning, dew can cover miles and miles of hills! Further, dew is the safest water to cross!

Confidently, she stepped forward once again. “The answer, O Mighty Oracle,” she shouted confidently, “is ‘the morning dew!’”

The Oracle boomed, “Very good, young Penelope! The *Antelope* shall pass.” Cheers from the crew of the *Antelope* erupted into the air.

“Three cheers for Penelope!” shouted Thomas Piper.

“Hip, hip, hooray!” shouted Luis and Leopold Bloom.

“Mr. Piper, haul in anchor! Mr. Bloom, let loose the sails! Into Ithaca’s harbor we sail!” shouted Captain Spencer. Penelope curtsied to her shipmates, her father, and to the Oracle. The *Antelope* sailed into the beautiful, sunny Royal Harbor of Ithaca. From the main deck, Penelope saw the Royal Carriage, flanked by hundreds of the king’s men, awaiting the *Antelope* on shore. Penelope smiled.

## EPILOGUE

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And that, dear reader, is how Penelope Spencer came to the Great Academy of Learning on the Royal Isle of Ithaca. It is but the first chapter in the Legend of Penelope Spencer, who would one day be known as the wisest woman in the world. Penelope took her seat at the Great Academy of Learning. She learned astronomy, physics, and biology. She studied art history, classical literature, and philosophy. Penelope excelled in many ways. Soon she was tutoring her fellow students. Before she knew it, she was teaching her own classes at the Academy.

But what, you ask, happened to the rest of the *Antelope's* crew? After a few days' rest, Captain Spencer, Luis and Leopold Bloom, and Thomas Piper all set sail for Spyridonia. Indeed, it was a tearful good-bye for Penelope. Legend has it that Captain Spencer told his daughter he'd see her again someday. And, according to legend, that came true. Captain Spencer closed his potter's shop, and became a full-time sailor. He would travel the seas, having adventures.

Once a year, he would bring another wise and brave Spyridonian student to the Great Academy of Learning. So, once a year, Penelope would reunite with her father. In fact, the very next year, Thomas Piper won the competition and joined his old friend Penelope at the Academy. Leopold and Luis Bloom returned to Spyridonia and resumed working their father's trade. All was right with the world, and it all began with the voyage of the *Antelope*.



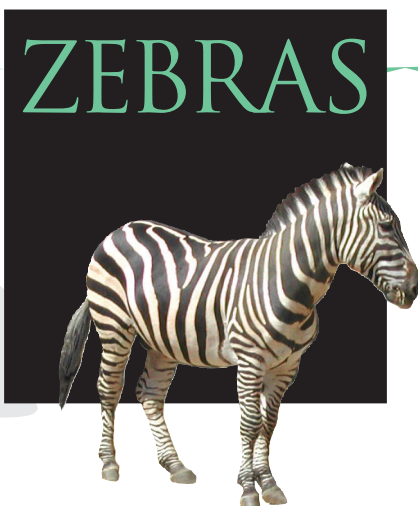
# ZEBRAS

## 1. Looking for a zebra?

In the wild, zebras roam the length of eastern Africa—from the northern country of Ethiopia to the southernmost country of South Africa. They live on the grassy plains, in the woods, and even on mountainsides.

## 2. Yipes, stripes!

Zebras belong to the same family of hoofed animals as horses and donkeys, but unlike these animals, zebras are striped. Why? No one knows. It's a mystery. There are three different types of zebras, each with its own pattern of stripes. In fact, not only does each type of zebra have distinctive



stripes, but if you look closely, you'll see that each zebra has a different striping pattern.

## 3. Eat your greens.

Like sheep, cows, and horses, zebras are grazers. This means they eat grass, along with a few leaves and twigs.

## 4. A Zebra's Life

Zebras are very sociable animals that usually live in small family groups made up of a male (stallion), one or more females (mares), and their babies (foals).

The size of the family depends on how much food and water is available. If attacked, males

defend their families by kicking and biting. At night, one family member stays awake to watch for predators. Zebra families can come together to form a larger group called a herd, but within the herd, each family sticks together. Zebra herds often share their living area with other animals, such as gazelles and antelopes. If the food runs out in one area, zebras will migrate hundreds of miles to search for a new food source. When zebras



These are Burchell's zebras, which are also called plains zebras. They have broad stripes that range in color from black to dark brown on a white or light tan background.



travel, one of the older females leads the family to the new area, making sure that they don't wander too far from water.

### 5. Zebra Foals

Zebra babies can stand on their own within fifteen minutes of birth and run within a day. Their mothers feed them until they are about one year old and they begin grazing on their own. Although zebra mothers try to protect their babies, many zebra foals are killed by lions and hyenas.



### 6. Endangered?

The Burchell's zebra is the only type of zebra that is not endangered—although their numbers are decreasing in the wild. The zebra's greatest danger is from humans, who hunt them for sport and for their beautiful striped hides. Human settlements also reduce the zebras' habitats, or living areas.

# RHINOCEROS

## 1. Where are the rhinos?

The rhinoceros lives in Africa and Asia. The rhinos at the zoo are white rhinos from Africa. You're probably thinking that these rhinos look gray not white, and you're right! But their name comes from the Afrikaans (an African language) word *weit*, which means wide and refers to the size of the rhino's mouth, rather than to its skin color.

Rhinos are huge—up to 6 feet tall, 15 feet long, and weighing as much as 8,000 pounds! They also have a large, curved horn, which they use to protect



themselves against lions, tigers, and hyenas and to fight with one another for land and females.

## 2. Ancestors

Rhinos have been on earth for about 34 million years! A relative of the modern rhino first appeared just after the age of the dinosaurs. Rhinolike animals once roamed Europe, Africa, and even North America. Many were covered with thick fur and can still be seen in the cave paintings left by early humans.

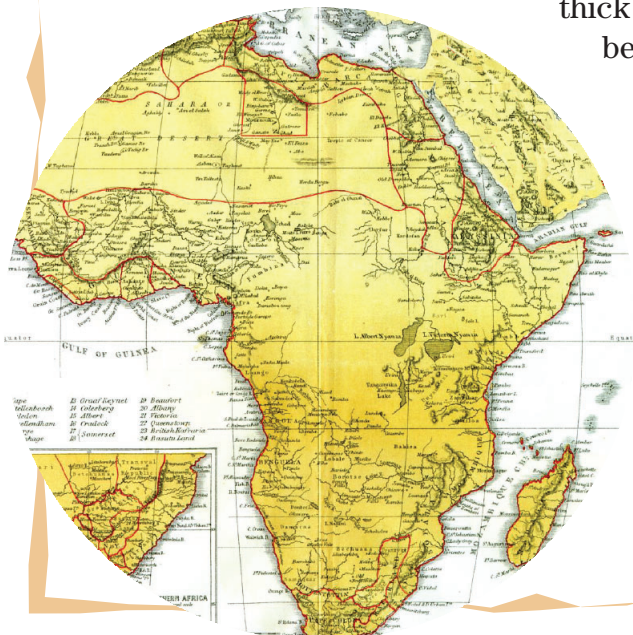
## 3. Don't bother me, I'm eating.

Even though they look scary, rhinos are herbivores, meaning that they only eat plants. White rhinos prefer grass. Other rhinos eat the leaves of trees or bushes.

## 4. In fact, don't bother me at all.

Rhinos like to live alone. Both male and female rhinos establish territories—land that they consider theirs alone. Males mark and defend their territories to keep other rhinos away. They will even attack cars and trucks that drive through their territory.

Even after male and female rhinos mate, they go their separate ways. Female rhinos give birth about once every two or three years. The babies, called calves, stay with their mother until the next baby is born.





### 5. Endangered?

All species, or kinds, of rhinos are endangered from loss of habitat and hunting. The rhino's horn, which is ground up and used as medicine, is especially prized. The horns are also used as handles for knives. Sometimes poachers will kill the animal and walk off with nothing but its horn. Unless they are protected, the rhinoceros, which has lived on Earth for millions of years, could die off and become extinct.

# GIRAFFES

## 1. Standing Out in the Crowd

Giraffes are the world's tallest mammals. Adult males, called bulls, can be up to 19 feet tall and weigh up to 3,000 pounds. Adult females, or cows, can reach 16 feet and weigh up to 2,600 pounds.

It's easy to spot a giraffe because of its long neck and patchy coat. In fact, each giraffe has its own, uniquely shaped patches—no two giraffes look exactly alike!

## 2. Home Turf

Giraffes live on the grassy plains of central, eastern, and southern Africa.



## 3. Eat your leaves.

Giraffes eat leaves—up to 75 pounds of leaves every day. Their height, and their very long—18-inch—tongue enable them to reach the tops of small trees and pluck the best leaves. Females spend more than half their day eating, males slightly less. If they need to, giraffes can go for several days without water.

## 4. Please, share my turf.

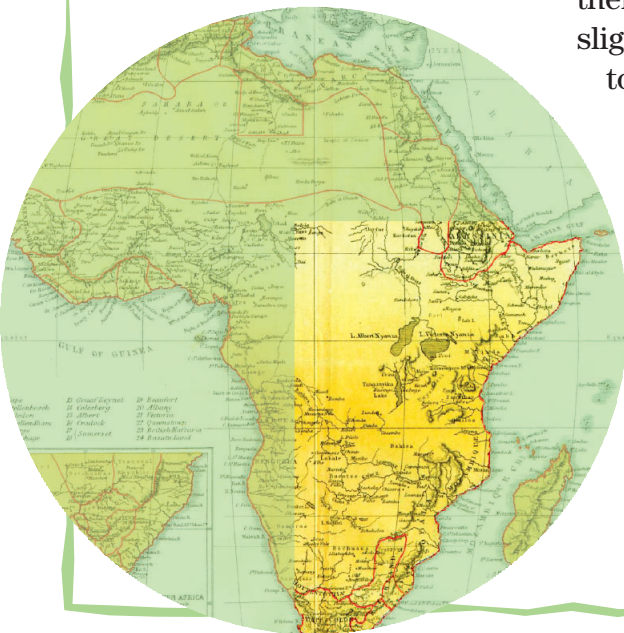
Giraffes are sociable. They live together peaceably with

other animals. Giraffes live in loose herds that can be made up of all males, all females, or a mix of males and females, old and young. Sometimes they travel alone. Even in a herd, giraffes scatter themselves around the grassy plains looking for food. They rarely cluster together unless they're attracted to the same tree or are nervous about nearby lions. Because they're so tall and have very good eyesight, giraffes can keep each other in sight, even over long distances.

## 5. Baby Giraffes

A giraffe mother carefully guards her baby for the first week of its life. If a calf gets lost, its mother bellows for it. When a mother goes off to look for food or water, she often leaves her baby in the care of another female.

Female giraffes spend over half their day eating, males slightly less.



It's common to see an adult female caring for several babies at a time in a sort of nursery. This care is necessary because baby giraffes cannot defend themselves, and as many as 75% of them are killed by lions or hyenas in the first months of life. Giraffes that survive to reach adulthood can live about twenty-five years in the wild and even longer in a zoo.



#### 6. Endangered?

As adults, giraffes have no regular predators. They are threatened by hunters, who kill them for their meat or coat, and from loss of habitat due to increased human settlement. The population of giraffes in the wild is stable but at its lowest level ever.

# WARTHOGS

## 1. Where Warthogs Live

Warthogs live in the warm, dry savannahs (grasslands) of Africa. They do not live in the desert, the mountains, or in rainforests. They appear throughout Africa, south of the Sahara Desert, from the west to the east coasts.

## 2. Not a Pretty Picture

Warthogs are piglike animals. They can be brown or black. Like pigs, they have a snout and hooved feet. However, a warthog's snout is much longer than a pig's, and a warthog also has two curved tusks on the front of its face. The males are much larger than the females. A female



warthog weighs up to 150 pounds, while a male warthog weighs up to 220 pounds. Their name comes from the wartlike bumps on their faces.

## 3. Moo?

Like cows, warthogs are grazing animals. They eat short grasses, and they dig in the ground for roots and bulbs when grass isn't available.

## 4. Working with Others

Warthogs get along well with many other animals. For example, warthogs let birds sit on their bodies and eat bugs off their skin. This helps the warthog get rid of annoying bugs and provides the birds with food.

Warthogs also benefit from the work of burrowing animals, such as aardvarks, which dig tunnels and small dens in the ground. Though warthogs are also able to dig, they prefer to live in burrows dug by aardvarks. These burrows give them a safe place to sleep at night. However, lions sometimes stay outside the burrows and wait for the warthogs to come out. The warthogs are too clever for that trick though. They back into the burrow at night so their head is facing the outside. This allows them to use their tusks for protection. Then, in the mornings, they run out of the burrows at top speed, which is an amazing 34 miles per hour, before the lion can catch them!

In the wild, warthogs live about eighteen years.



### 5. Young Warthogs

Warthogs have two to five baby warthogs at a time. Since warthog females only raise one litter of babies at a time, she chases her last litter away when she is ready to give birth to the next. Warthogs become self-sufficient very early in life. They begin grazing at two months old and stop getting milk from their mother entirely at four months old.



### 6. Endangered?

Warthogs are not endangered at all. They are able to survive with very little water, and their preferred habitat, or living area, is plentiful. Because warthogs do not bother humans nor are they considered valuable, they are seldom hunted.

# CHIMPANZEES



## 1. Habitat

Chimpanzees are native to the forests and grasslands of Central and West Africa. There are two types of chimpanzees: common chimpanzees, such as those at our zoo, and their smaller relatives called bonobos.

## 2. Great Apes

Chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans are all part of the great ape group. Fully grown chimpanzee males weigh 85 to 175 pounds, females from 65 to 130 pounds. They are covered with thick, dark fur except on their faces,

fingers, toes, palms of their hands, and soles of their feet.

## 3. The Wild Life

Chimpanzees live in groups, called troops, consisting of twenty to about 100 individuals, but they travel most of the time in small groups. They spend time both on the ground and in the trees, using their long arms to climb and swing from the branches. They usually sleep in nests that they make in the trees. On the ground, chimps usually walk bent over, using the soles of their feet and their knuckles to walk, but they can also walk upright, like humans, for short distances.

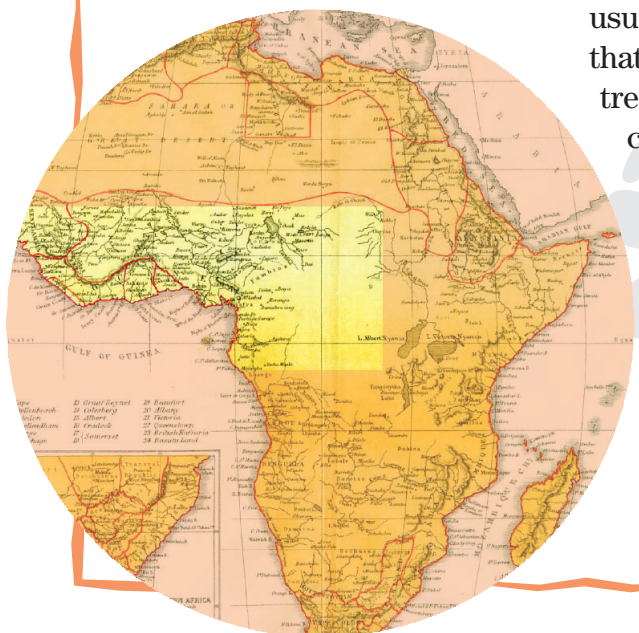
## 4. Eat your veggies.

In the wild, chimps mostly eat fruit, leaves, nuts, and seeds. They also eat insects, and they will hunt smaller animals, such as monkeys, for meat.

## 5. A Lot Like Us

Chimpanzees have many humanlike characteristics. Like us, they have opposable thumbs, which means that they can touch their thumbs to their other fingers, allowing them to get a good grip on things. Chimpanzees make and use tools. For example, they use twigs to pull termites out of their holes. They also use rocks to crack open nuts, and they squeeze drinking water from leaves.

Chimpanzees play, and they show care and affection for one another by grooming one another and hugging. But they can also be aggressive and mean—especially males who are trying



to be the boss of a group. Chimpanzees use different facial expressions to show their feelings. They also speak to one another, using more than thirty different vocal sounds. In captivity, chimps have been taught how to communicate with humans through sign language. As they age, chimps even turn gray and go bald!



#### 6. Baby Chimps

A female chimpanzee has one baby at a time. A baby chimp stays with its mother until it is about three years old, but young chimpanzees often maintain close relationships with their mothers for years. In the wild, chimps can live up to fifty years. In captivity, they can live even longer.

#### Endangered?

Sadly, chimpanzees—like all great apes—are an endangered species. There are only about 15,000–23,000 chimps left in the wild, and their numbers decrease every year due to loss of habitat, as human populations grow and need more land for farming, and disease—including illnesses that chimps get from humans. Chimps are also killed for their meat and captured to sell as pets.

# POLAR BEARS

## 1. Tracking the Polar Bear

Polar bears live in the far north at the Arctic Circle. They are at home on the ice, on land, and in the water. Strong swimmers, polar bears can stay in the water for hours at a time. They use their front paws to paddle and their hind legs and feet to steer.

Polar bears travel around in search of food and shelter within a home territory that can be up to 135,000 square miles in size.

## 2. How You'll Know When You Find One

Polar bears are the largest land carnivore, which means meat eater. Males (boars) are



8 to 9 feet long and can weigh over 650 pounds. Females (sows) are 6 to 8 feet long and weigh up to 250 pounds. The largest polar bear ever recorded weighed in at 2,200 pounds!

The bear's twelve-inch-wide paws act like snowshoes, evenly spreading its weight out so it doesn't fall through the ice.

To survive in the Arctic, where winter temperatures average 29 degrees below zero, the polar bear has a coat that's 1½ inches thick. It's made of a layer of wooly underhair and stiff, shiny, clear guard hair that reflects

sunlight. This makes the bear look white. The coat is oily and water repellent so the bear can easily shake off water and ice after swimming. The bears molt, or shed, their coats and grow new ones once a year.

## 3. Not a Picky Eater

In the wild, polar bears mainly eat seals, but they will also dine on walrus, some whales, sea birds, fish, ducks, eggs, reindeer, berries, vegetation, and human garbage. They will even eat humans if they are nearby and no other food is available.

Polar bears can smell a seal up to twenty miles away. They hunt in several ways. One is called still hunting. This is when the bear sits perfectly still beside a hole in the ice, sometimes for hours at a time. When a seal appears, the bear flips it onto the ice and kills it. On land, polar bears stalk their prey and then suddenly charge it at a speed of up to twenty-five miles per hour.



#### 4. A Polar Bear's Day

When they're not hunting, polar bears mainly rest or sleep. In the summer, they dig a pit in the ground to lie in. In the winter, they dig dens out of the snow or use a natural shelter, such as a small cave, to keep warm.

They live mostly alone. Only mating pairs and mothers and cubs travel together.

#### 5. Baby Bears

Females usually give birth to two cubs at a time. The cubs are born between November and January in a sheltered den where they stay with their mother until spring. At birth, polar bear cubs are hairless, helpless, weigh only 16 to 24 ounces and are just 12 inches long. But they grow quickly: they grow fur and begin walking at about two months. By the time they come out of the den, the cubs weigh 22 to 33 pounds and will playfully chase and tackle each other.

A mother bear nurses and protects her young, often touching and

grooming them. She also leads them to the ice—sometimes by carrying them on her back. Cubs learn how to hunt by watching their moms, but they don't become good at it until they are at least two years old.

Cubs stay with their mothers for thirty months. By then, the

mother bear is ready to give birth again, so she chases the cubs away to fend for themselves. Sadly, some cubs are eaten by wolves or other polar bears, or they die of starvation because they're not skilled enough at finding food.



#### 6. Endangered?

In the wild, polar bears live for twenty to thirty years. They live even longer in zoos. Because the United States and Canada have passed laws to limit polar bear hunting, and Norway and Russia have stopped polar bear hunting altogether, polar bear numbers have increased. But there are still environmental dangers such as oil spills, which damage the bear's fur so it loses protection from the cold and poisons its food sources. Young bears and old, weak bears also sometimes die of starvation.

So, while they are not endangered, polar bears are considered vulnerable, or at risk.

# HYENAS

## Is that a hyena?

A hyena looks like a mix between a wild dog and a wolf. It usually has a spotted coat and short ears and a small snout. That's how a hyena resembles a dog, but its actions are more typical of a wolf. Hyenas live in packs and hunt in much the same way wolves hunt.

One distinctive trait about hyenas is the way they laugh. They have a very high-pitched call that sounds a lot like laughter. This call is used to signal prey to other clan members. The call can be heard up to three miles away.

## Where do hyenas live?

Hyenas live in Africa. They are found in a variety of places, including grasslands, woodlands, and even desert areas and mountains. Hyenas are found in many different places because they travel great distances in search of prey. Sometimes they travel many miles in a single day.

Hyenas live in groups called clans. Some clans can have as many as forty members. Others have had as many as eighty, but this is rare. The oldest female in the group is usually the clan leader. Interestingly, females are often hard to tell apart from males. Researchers think this may be a way for females to dominate and protect their young from males who may try to take over the clan.

### **What do hyenas eat?**

Hyenas have a reputation as lazy scavengers that only look for leftover game other animals have hunted and killed. But, this is not entirely true. Researchers have discovered that hyenas are actually very skillful hunters. Typically, hyenas hunt at night in packs. They chase prey until it is too exhausted to fight when they attack. But as their reputation suggests, hyenas are also excellent scavengers. Whenever possible, they steal food from other big game hunters such as lions or cheetahs. Some examples of prey for hyenas are antelope, zebras, and other big game animals.

Another interesting thing about hyenas is that they eat their prey almost in its entirety. Hyenas have very strong jaws and teeth, which allows them to eat hide, flesh, and even bones. This helps hyenas find food when scavenging because they can literally eat whatever is left over.

### **Are hyenas endangered?**

Hyenas are plentiful in Africa, so they are not endangered. However, like many animals, humans do pose a threat as they build and use land where hyenas once roamed. Also, hyenas are notorious for killing livestock, so many farmers target hyenas to protect their farm animals.

# LEOPARDS

## What is a leopard?

A leopard is a very large cat, similar to the lion and cheetah. It is considered the strongest of the big cats and can easily kill prey larger than itself. This is surprising, especially since the leopard is the smallest of the big cats.

Leopards are usually a tan or orange color with black spots. The spots are either circular or square. These unique spots are called rosettes. They help conceal the leopard when it's hiding in trees or brush.

Leopards can run very fast for short periods of time. They are also very good climbers and swimmers. They can jump ten feet high and twenty feet vertically. All these traits make the leopard a very good hunter.

## Where do leopards live?

Leopards live in Africa, particularly in the eastern and southern regions. Leopards are also found in parts of Asia. They like to live in rocky areas with thick brush, which helps them hide. Luckily, leopards can live in both warm and cool climates. This has helped them adapt to new areas as their natural habitats disappear. They can even live in deserts and mountain regions, and they are one of the only big cat species that can survive even in a rainforest.

Unlike some other big cats, leopards are not pack animals. They prefer to live and hunt alone. Cubs stay with their mothers for a fairly short amount of time, generally only 18–24 months.

## What do leopards eat?

Like other big cats, leopards eat big-game animals such as gazelles, deer, and wildebeests. However, leopards also eat smaller prey such as rabbits, rodents, reptiles, and birds. Although it's rare, leopards have even been known to eat baboons. One challenge for leopards is that other animals, such as hyenas, often steal their prey. For this reason, leopards often hide their food in trees where they can return later to eat it.

### **Are leopards endangered?**

There are different species of leopards. Some specific species of leopards are endangered. As with many endangered species, the biggest threat to leopards is humans. Leopards are hunted for their fur. Also, the leopard's natural habitats are disappearing because of human development.

# OKAPI

## 1. Where to find an Okapi (Good luck!)

In the wild, okapi live in only one place: the Ituri forest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in central Africa. Okapi need to live in a thick rainforest, though they do sometimes go out into more open areas. Okapi can be very hard to find. Their coloring and size allow them to blend into the forest. And, since they like to be alone, they stay away from other animals, even other okapi.

In fact, okapi were one of the last large mammals to be discovered—in 1900.



## 2. Recognizing an Okapi (You'll know when you see one.)

Imagine an animal with the legs of a zebra, the body of a horse, the head of a giraffe, and a 14-inch-long tongue. Sounds like something you might find in a fairy tale or a fantasy book, doesn't it? Well, that's what an okapi looks like. Okapi are between 5 and 6 feet tall, and they weigh between 465 and 550 pounds. You can tell a male okapi from a female okapi by looking at their heads. The male okapi has small horns; the female has no horns at all.

An okapi's legs have black and white stripes,

like a zebra, while its body is very dark brown or black. Their giraffelike necks and faces (though their necks are much shorter than a giraffe's) are lighter in color than their bodies, though the exact color varies greatly.

Okapi are hoofed mammals. Originally, scientists thought okapi were related to horses, but it is now known that the okapi's closest relative is the giraffe. In fact, okapi are the only relatives of giraffes.

Fun fact: Okapi are the only mammals that can clean their ears with their tongues.

## 3. Tree = Yum

Okapi are herbivores, meaning that they don't eat any meat at all. They use their long, long tongues to strip bark, twigs, leaves, and berries off the lower branches of trees in the forest. They also eat clay from riverbanks to get extra minerals.



#### 4. What Okapi Do

Okapi lead fairly quiet lives. They are usually active in the daytime. However, they have to be alert at night, too, because leopards, which love to eat okapi, are nocturnal (night hunters). Okapi are solitary animals, tending to live either alone or, for young okapi, with a small family group. In the wild, okapi live for about thirty years.



#### 5. Mini-Okapi

Okapi mothers have only one child per birth, and a baby okapi weighs about 35 pounds. Okapi give birth in the thickest parts of the forest to keep the babies safe. Unlike other mammals, okapi do not imprint to their mothers. In other words, okapi young don't seem to have any sort of special relationship with their mothers. In fact, young okapi have been seen nursing from more than one female.

#### 6. Endangered?

The okapi is an endangered species. It is difficult to estimate how many okapi are living in the wild because of the thick forests in which they live. Okapi are not threatened by hunters. The biggest threat to okapi is a loss of forested land.

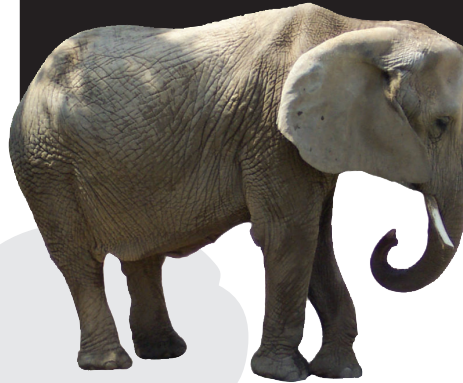
# AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

## 1. Where does a 10,000-pound African elephant sleep? Anywhere it wants!

African elephants have many different habitats. They live in countries south of the Sahara Desert, in grasslands (savannah), forests, and scrub and semi-deserts. However, their habitat has been greatly reduced by humans, so many elephants are now limited to living in wildlife preserves.

## 2. World's Longest Nose

African elephants are the world's largest land animals. They are 10 to 13 feet tall and 19 to 24 feet long (not including a 4-foot-long tail). They



weigh between 7 and 14 thousand pounds!

Besides its size, you can tell an elephant by its ears, tusks, and trunk. Elephants use their large ears as a fan to keep them cool and keep insects away. Their ears are much more sensitive than those of a human, and they can hear sounds over much greater distances. They use this ability to communicate with one another.

An elephant's tusks are really teeth that have grown outside the mouth. The elephants use their tusks to uproot plants to eat and to dig holes to find

water. The tusks are made of ivory, which is very precious and rare. Because of this, African elephants were once hunted for their ivory tusks.

Elephants' trunks are long extensions of their noses and upper lips. They draw water into the trunk to then spray either in their mouths for a drink or on themselves for a shower. The tip of the trunk has two knobs that act like fingers to help the elephant bring food into its mouth.

## 3. Big Eaters

African elephants are herbivores, or plant eaters. They will eat almost any plant, fruit, or vegetable that they can find, and they do! Elephants need to eat 300 to 600 pounds of food per day. Wild African elephants sometimes uproot whole trees just to eat their leaves and inner pulp. African elephants drink between thirty and fifty gallons of water per day.



#### 4. Families stick together.

African elephants live in family groups called herds. A herd consists of ten or so related mothers and their children under the leadership of one female, usually the oldest and largest one. Once they mature, the male children are sent away to live in separate bachelor herds, and males only join the females for mating. Related herds tend to stay close together, and, in times of danger, herds can come together to form clans of 200 or more elephants.

African elephants need to keep cool in the hot African climate and to protect their sensitive skin from the sun. To keep cool, they try to take a bath every day. This also washes off any annoying insects. Then, afterwards, they roll in the dirt to provide a layer of protection from the sun and insects.

Because elephants are so large, they have very few predators besides poachers—human hunters who kill

elephants for their ivory. Sometimes lions and tigers will try to attack baby elephants, which are smaller and less able to protect themselves. When predators are near, the herd will form a circle around the younger elephants to protect them. The older elephants will also trumpet to scare the

predators away. African elephants live for about seventy years in the wild.

#### 5. Not-So-Little "Little" Elephants

Female elephants usually give birth to just one calf, or baby, at a time. Elephant calves weigh between 175 and 250 pounds at birth.



#### 6. Endangered?

African elephants were once considered endangered because ivory poachers were killing so many of them. However, stricter ivory-control laws are now in effect, and African elephants are now only classified as threatened. Humans remain the biggest threat to African elephants by moving into their habitat. To protect wild African elephants, humans are going to have to find a way to peacefully co-exist with them.

# AFRICAN PENGUINS



## 1. Where to Find an African Penguin

African penguins are found along the coastline and on the small, rocky islands of southern Africa. Even though southern Africa has the coldest temperatures on the continent (because of the closeness of the South Pole), the temperatures are still much higher than that of other penguin habitats. Because of this, African penguins spend a lot of

time in the cold water. When they do have to rest on land, they stay sheltered in the shade.

## 2. What African Penguins Look Like

African penguins have black backs and white chests, except for a black band that goes across their upper chests. Their faces are ringed with white, while the area around their eyes and beaks is black. The shape of their bodies is very streamlined, which makes them very good swimmers.

## 3. Go fish!

African penguins live almost entirely on small fish. They are very effective

predators in the water, able to swim at speeds of up to 12 miles per hour.

## 4. Everyone in the water!

When African penguins aren't sleeping or eating, they like to spend time in the water. They are very skilled divers. A usual dive is about 100 feet, but they have been seen diving as deep as 420 feet. African penguins walk very slowly on land, so they have to be very careful not to get eaten by their predators. For this reason, penguins try to only come on land to rest and to mate. When they do come on land, they generally stick to islands to avoid mainland predators like leopards. To escape the heat, African penguins sleep at night, are most active at dawn and at dusk, and stay in the water during the hottest parts of the day. African penguins only fear one predator in the water, the Cape fur seal.

Although they are birds, penguins can't fly. They walk on land, and they are very strong swimmers.



### 5. Valuable Nest Eggs

African penguin babies are called chicks. Young African penguins are extremely vulnerable to predators, especially sea birds that eat the eggs and the young chicks. For this reason, and also as a protection from the heat, African penguins lay their eggs in sheltered burrows, where the chicks stay when their parents hunt for food.



### 6. Endangered?

Since 1900, African penguins have declined in number greatly, about 90 percent. Though not yet considered endangered, the African penguin is listed as a vulnerable species.

# Alaska: The Last Frontier



By Adrian Mathenia



## Introduction

Of America's fifty states, none are as vast or as wild as Alaska. The last frontier, so called because it was the last great American expansion into mostly unsettled land, is bursting with natural beauty, from snowcapped mountain ranges to sprawling forests and emerald lakes. Those who call it home must face challenging winters, but they are rewarded with breathtaking views. There is a wide range of lifestyles, from rugged villages that are only accessible by helicopter to larger cities, such as Anchorage and Fairbanks, that offer all the modern comforts amid the beautiful backdrop of Alaska's landscape. But this incredible state hasn't always been part of the United States.

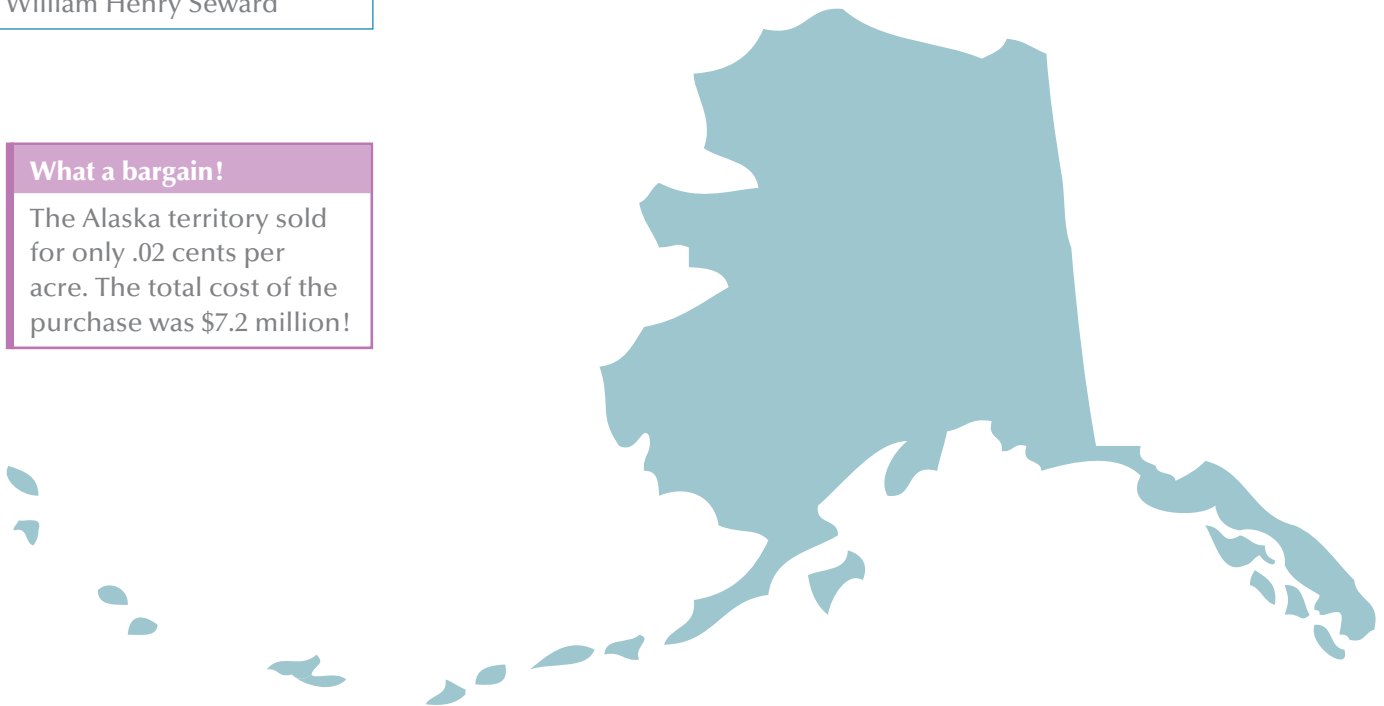
When Abraham Lincoln became president, the U.S. government referred to Alaska as "Russia's America" because Russia had explored and settled the territory and now owned it. President Lincoln's secretary of state, William Henry Seward, organized the purchase of the territory from Russia; he believed in the great potential of the land and convinced his colleagues in Washington, D.C., to agree by inviting them to his home for dinner and telling them stories about Alaska's beauty. After six years of negotiations, the two countries agreed on a sale. The Senate approved the agreement, and the official land transfer occurred in Sitka, Alaska, on October 18, 1867.



William Henry Seward

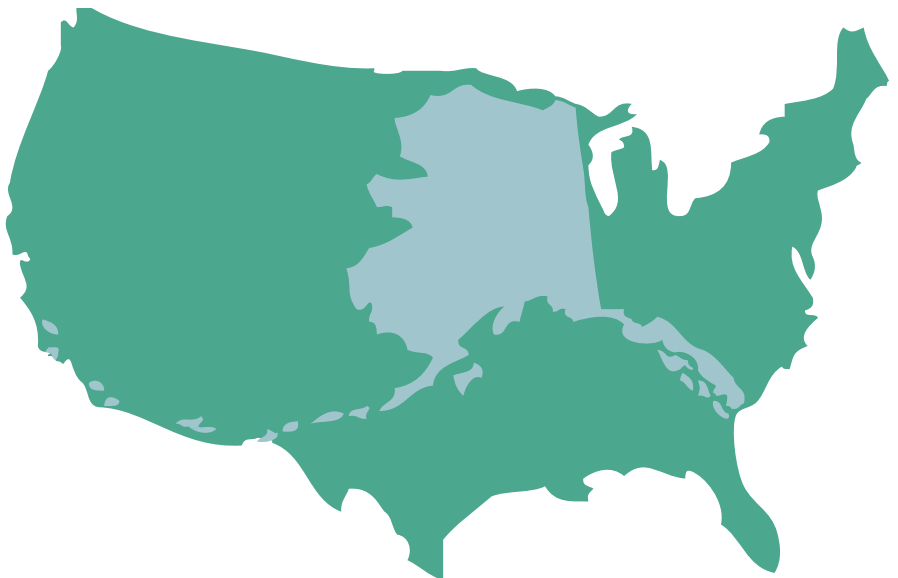
### What a bargain!

The Alaska territory sold for only .02 cents per acre. The total cost of the purchase was \$7.2 million!



At first the American people did not welcome the new American frontier. They largely misunderstood the importance of the purchase and gave Alaska a few harsh nicknames, calling it “Seward’s Folly” and “Seward’s Icebox.” The nicknames reflected the popular misconception that Alaska was a frozen wasteland. When early settlers discovered gold there in 1890, however, thousands rushed to the new territory, and the national attitude rapidly shifted. Word quickly spread of a gorgeous land full of natural riches. Even so, Alaska did not join the union until January 3, 1959, when it became the forty-ninth state.

Alaska stands out from the other forty-nine states mostly because of its size and geography. Alaska is the largest state, spanning 663,867 square miles. Texas is less than half that size. Though Alaska has more land than any other state, it has one of the lowest populations. The majority of the state’s land is rugged and difficult to manage, making large development impractical. Another unique aspect of Alaska is its location. Alaska sits in the northwest corner of North America with nearly half the state inside the Arctic Circle. Many people don’t realize that Alaska also reaches farther west than any other state. At initial glance, Hawaii seems farther west than Alaska, but there is a long chain of islands, called the Aleutian Islands, off the southwestern coast of Alaska that reaches even farther west. The state is so long that if it sat in the center of the United States, the eastern tip would touch the Atlantic coast and the western tip would touch the Pacific coast.





## Life in Alaska: The Challenge of the North

As Barrow, Alaska, moves deeper into another cold winter, the days become shorter and drearier. Two brothers decide that yesterday was their last day to play outside; today is simply too cold. It's about noon on this frigid day in November, and as they chow down on peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches for lunch, the brothers look out the window and grimace at the pitch-black sky and two feet of snow. The winter blues are settling in, and they know it will be a long, dark winter before the sun shines bright and warm on their backyard again.

Alaska's climate and location present a number of challenges to its residents. Because of Alaska's location and the tilt of the Earth's axis, the sun is only visible for a short time in the winter and shines brightly for very long periods of time during the summer. Anchorage, which is Alaska's largest city and located on the southern coast, only sees the sun for five and a half hours in the middle of winter. In Barrow, America's northernmost city, the sun sets near the beginning of winter and won't rise again for 51–67 days; that's about two months of total darkness. The opposite is true during Alaska's summer. Around the time of the summer solstice throughout most of the state, nighttime only lasts a few hours. The daylight lasts long into the hours of the night. Visiting Alaska can be confusing for those stepping off their flights under bright skies but seeing clocks that read 10:00 p. m.

**Average Temperatures by Season and Location**

	December–February	June–August
Anchorage (southern)	25° F	63° F
Barrow (northern)	–15° F	37° F

People may find Alaska’s winter weather daunting because of the large amounts of snowfall and extremely low temperatures. Just getting to school during the winter is a challenge for many kids in Alaska. In some areas, heavy snowfall makes the roads too dangerous for busses to travel, so snowmobiles may be a student’s only option. Parents drive their kids to school by letting them ride on the back of the snowmobile or by pulling a large sled that can carry more than one child.

Alaskans have to get creative to deal with the long nights and days that come every year as the seasons change. Bright light, especially sunlight, can be uplifting, and a lack of sunlight for months is hard on people’s moods. During the long,

cold nights of the winter, many Alaskans put an emphasis on fun indoor activities for the family to keep everyone’s spirits high. Many try to get outside during the few hours of sunlight and enjoy outdoor activities, such as snowmobiling or cross-country skiing, to stay active and soak up the sun. During summer, the seemingly endless days often seem fun to those visiting Alaska who enjoy barbecuing or playing sports outside late into the night with the sun still shining. But when it’s time to go to bed, the sunlight is more annoying than fun. While some Alaskans get used to sleeping with sunlight peeping through the windows after ten o’clock, many cover their windows with cardboard or very dark curtains to simulate the typical darkness that their bodies want to sleep in.

Alaska has cities and small towns, but its biggest city is relatively small compared to the largest cities in other states. Anchorage has the largest population in Alaska with 279,243 people. Like most cities, there are malls, bustling streets, and a busy airport, but there are no giant skyscrapers in the city skyline or major sports stadiums.



**Did you know?**

Cars in Alaska are equipped with engine heaters that must be plugged in overnight to keep the car from freezing.

Other cities in Alaska are Fairbanks, near the center of the state, and Juneau, the capital, located on the southeastern side. Cities like these are the exception in Alaska because most towns are fairly small. A lot of towns, like Kobuk, Alaska, have populations of only about one hundred people. Kobuk is so isolated from other major cities that it can't be reached by car. To get to Kobuk and many similar towns, visitors must travel by boat down the Kobuk River or take a small plane from larger cities.

Like other states with Native American populations, Alaska is home to the indigenous Eskimo people. Eskimos were the first human inhabitants of Alaska when they arrived 15,000 years ago. There are a lot of misconceptions about Eskimos, the most popular being that they all live in igloos. This simply is not true. Eskimos are divided among different tribes across the state and have different ways of living depending on their location. The Inuit tribe of northern Alaska did use igloos, but only in the winter months. During the spring and summer, they lived in tents because the weather was too warm to support the ice-and-snow structure of the igloo. Their villages were located along the coast, and they were skilled whale hunters. The Aleut tribe lives in the Aleutian Islands that stretch out from the southwest corner of Alaska. Because their people were spread among several islands, they built their villages mainly on bays to make it easier to travel from village to village by boat. Today the Eskimos of Alaska are thriving in their native lands, and they work to teach new generations about their culture and history as the original pioneers of rugged Alaska. Even though most have access to modern conveniences such as supermarkets and modern tools, they still celebrate traditional techniques that are thousands of years old.



An Inuit woman



## Life in Alaska: Wild Fun

Chunks of ice the size of basketballs bob up and down with the ocean waves. A girl is wading in waist deep, and the frigid waters sting her skin, even through the wetsuit. Strands of her hair turn into icicles, and her hands and feet start to go numb. Nevertheless, she tightly grips her surfboard, and with a smile on her face, she paddles deeper into the ocean to catch the next big wave.

Alaska's northern location provides a lot of opportunities for some unusual ways to spend a day. Many coastal states like California and Florida have popular surfing beaches, but would you expect surfing to be a hobby in the frigid waters of Alaska? Surfing is actually one of Alaska's most popular outdoor activities along the coast. In the summertime, surfing in Alaska isn't much different from surfing in other states. The water never gets as warm in the north Pacific as it does in the south, but when the sun is shining on an 80-degree summer day, the cooler waters don't hinder surfers.

Adventurous surfers wait until the cooler months to hit the water for a more extreme surfing experience. Arctic surfing is a new phenomenon in Alaska that requires a little more courage and a lot more tolerance for the cold. Surfers travel to remote islands to catch swells that have traveled across the Pacific. It's not uncommon for surfers to walk through a foot of snow to get to the water. The beauty of the Alaskan wilderness is not a typical backdrop to a day in the water with a long board, but it's certainly proving to be a popular attraction.

### Arctic surfing checklist:

1. Thick rubber wetsuit, preferably with a hood
2. Thick rubber gloves and booties
3. Jug of warm water to drink and to pour into the wetsuit
4. A healthy amount of bravery

**swell:** A long, unbroken series of waves.

For a summertime adventure in the water, many of Alaska's rivers are prime locations for whitewater rafting. Those willing to brave the treacherous waters climb into a large inflatable raft with a river guide and paddle down fast-flowing river rapids with water crashing and splashing all around them. The term *whitewater* comes from the effect of the water appearing white when it splashes into the air. Most whitewater tours include sections of the river that are suitable for beginners and children to enjoy because of milder conditions. Some of the riskier areas of the rivers are recommended only to more experienced rafters who are willing to assume a fifty percent chance of flipping the raft over during the course.

Whitewater rafting is a unique and exhilarating way to see some of Alaska's more remote scenery. The canyon rivers take visitors through beautiful landscapes that are unreachable by any other means of transportation. When the rapids are calm enough, guests can focus less on avoiding sharp rocks and take in the gorgeous canyon walls, hills, and mountains that are nearly untouched by human hands and sometimes even an eagle's nest or two.

Another great way to have fun in Alaska is to take a ride through the gorgeous landscape on a dog sled. This sport is called mushing, and it involves a team of dogs pulling a sled that usually carries only one person and his or her equipment. Dog teams became a major source of transportation in Alaska during the gold rush of the early 1900s. The type of dog most commonly used to pull a sled is the husky. Huskies are bred to be light, strong, and eager to pull. The best huskies weigh less than fifty pounds and can pull almost twenty times their body weight. They need to be relatively small to make it easier for blood and oxygen to flow through their bodies and keep them warm and energized.

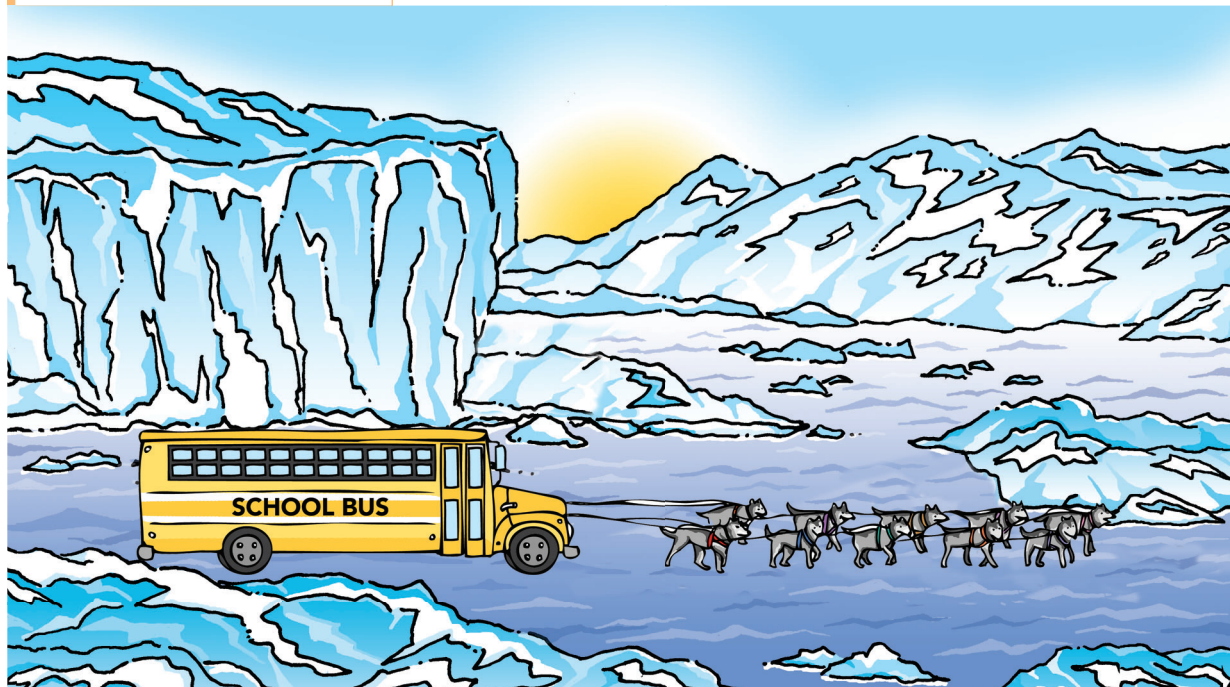


Since the 1960s, mushing races have become more popular in Alaska. The most popular race is the Iditarod. The Iditarod gets its name from the Iditarod Trail that was used during the gold rush and to carry mail throughout the state. The race began in 1973 as a project to reintroduce Alaskans to a lifestyle and way of transportation that was a vital part of the state's settlement decades before. The race begins in Anchorage and finishes in Nome, a total distance of 1,112 miles. The trail is long and challenging, and only the best trained dogs and mushers attempt to make it to the finish line.

In 1925, part of the Iditarod Trail was used by mushers to carry lifesaving serum to Nome, Alaska, during a diphtheria outbreak. One musher traveled eighty-four miles in one day!



**Need a ride to school?**  
A dog team with sixteen dogs is strong enough to pull a school bus!



# All-Natural Alaska

## Glaciers and Icebergs

The captain of the cruise ship announces to the passengers that they have reached the face of the glacier. Travelers abandon the dining rooms and swimming pools and make their way to the deck. The ocean waves seem tiny as they crash into the towering cliffs of solid ice, the jagged edges shimmering in the sun. The sound of the cracking ice roars like thunder. The gathering crowd on the ship's deck gasps and cheers as an iceberg one hundred feet high and forty feet wide breaks free from the face of the glacier and plummets into the sea with a great splash. Water bursts into the air and settles back into the ocean, mimicking the sound of rain as it falls.

### Did you know?

Ten percent of the world is covered in ice.

Alaska's beautiful landscapes attract tourists from around the world. One of the major attractions is Alaska's wealth of glaciers. Glaciers are massive ice formations that move along a path very slowly. Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve in Alaska is home to sixteen tidewater glaciers, all of them remnants of a small ice age that began 4,000 years ago. Tidewater glaciers are glaciers that extend from the mainland all the way into the ocean. When explorer George Vancouver traveled through Icy Strait in 1794, Glacier Bay didn't exist because the ice extended much farther into the ocean. Since that time, the ice has gone through a process called glacial retreat and moved more than sixty-five miles back into the mainland, uncovering a beautiful bay. This is the farthest any glacier has retreated in the world. It's all part of the process that makes glaciers and their movements so interesting to researchers.



Alaska is a popular destination for cruise ships, and Glacier Bay is a common stop on the trip. Ships can get within just a few hundred feet of the massive walls of ice, giving tourists an extraordinary chance to get an up-close look at a powerful force of nature. The walls of ice visible from the ocean stand as tall as 200 feet above the ocean's surface. Icebergs continually break away from some of the glaciers in a process called calving and drift into the ocean, prohibiting ships from getting too close.

## Aurora Borealis

On a clear winter night, a brilliant light show appears in the sky over Alaska. Dazzling bands and curtains of color twist and dance through the sky. Streams of yellow, orange, blue, and dark red swirl between the mountains and the stars. The aurora borealis, named after the mythical Roman goddess of dawn, is a spectacle reserved mostly for places in the far north, but it can sometimes be seen further south in the continental United States. Alaska is one of the best places in the world to view the aurora because the nights are so long and dark.

The aurora is caused by solar particles colliding with gasses in the Earth's atmosphere. These collisions create the glowing colors that we see dancing in the sky. Scientists who monitor the sun have noticed that when the sun is extremely active, a very vibrant aurora shows up two days later. That's because it takes two days for the solar winds to reach the Earth. When the winds come, they create a natural spectacle that bewilders and amazes those lucky enough to view it.

### When? Where?

The aurora is most likely to occur around Fairbanks or farther north within three or four hours of midnight. Don't forget, the sky must be clear, and it helps if the moon isn't too bright.



## Mount McKinley

A group of visitors caravans through the winding roads of Denali State Park. The early morning fog hangs just above the tall spruce trees and conceals the nearby mountains. As the group reaches the crest of a hill, the sun warms the sky, and the fog disperses, revealing a colossus of a mountain. The white snow-covered giant towers in stark contrast against the bright background of the clear blue sky. Cameras click, and children gaze in awe at the highest peak in North America.



### Did you know?

The traditional Native American name for Mount McKinley is Denali, meaning “great one.”

Roughly halfway between Anchorage and Fairbanks is North America’s highest peak, Mount McKinley. The impressive mountain stands 20,320 feet above Alaska’s interior. A truly fantastic quality of McKinley is that it stands nearly alone, with only one nearby mountain reaching relative heights. Because the summit is not surrounded by smaller mountains, it is clearly visible from top to bottom in Denali State Park. From there visitors can look across a shimmering blue lake and see where the trees stop and the snow starts as McKinley, covered in a nearly solid blanket of white, rises far above the snowline.

Climbing McKinley is technically easier than other peaks of great height because the common pathways are less steep and well mapped. However, it is one of the coldest mountains in the world and has infamously bad weather all year. The temperature near the top of the mountain is almost always below 0° Fahrenheit. Blinding snowstorms coupled with fierce, constant winds can hold climbers in their tents for a week or longer, forcing them to wait for the skies to clear before they can continue. On average, only half of those brave enough to attempt climbing McKinley make it to the summit while the other half are forced to turn around and return to the base of the mountain.



## Alaskan Wildlife

The quick blue waters of a shallow river tumble over moss-covered rocks. A group of salmon battle against the current, smashing into rocks and logs as they try to make their way upstream. A nearby Kodiak bear knows this is the season for the salmon to make this trip, and he can smell his food nearby. Walking carefully through the rapid waters, he perches on a large rock that juts out from the middle of the stream. Watching carefully for a moment, he slaps into the water with his giant paw. With one quick swoop, he retrieves a delicious red salmon. The fish flaps and wiggles, but the jaws of the Kodiak hold fast to its dinner all the way back to the shore.

With a small population and few major cities, the vast majority of Alaska remains a sprawling habitat for many kinds of wildlife. While many states struggle with shrinking habitats and declining animal populations, the majority of Alaskan wildlife lives comfortably in its natural landscape. One exciting animal that stands out is the Kodiak bear, the largest bear in the world. Kodiaks can weigh more than 1,000 pounds and grow more than ten feet long. They have a thick, fluffy coat of brown fur and gigantic paws with long sharp claws. Their claws are perfect for catching fast-moving salmon and bending blueberry trees so the bears can shovel the fruit into their mouths. While they do like meat, such as salmon and other fish, these bears mostly eat fruits and other wild vegetation. This varied diet makes Kodiak bears omnivores rather than carnivores, which only eat meat, or herbivores, which only eat plants.

The Kodiak is only found in a group of islands in southern Alaska called the Kodiak Archipelago, with the largest population located on Kodiak Island. While the numbers of other bears are decreasing around the world, the Kodiak bear population is actually at its peak and continually growing. Much of this is due to very closely monitored hunting and the bears' natural seclusion on the archipelago.

### Man-eaters?

Not likely. Only one person has died from an attack by a Kodiak bear in the last seventy-five years.



### Hungry Bears

Kodiaks can eat up to ninety pounds of food per day.



**“Are you going to finish that?”**

Sometimes arctic foxes follow polar bears so they can snack on the leftovers from the bears' meals.

The arctic fox is a much smaller mammal that lives in the colder regions of Alaska. It has a coat of snow-white fur that works wonderfully as camouflage during winter months when the fox's surroundings are covered in snow and ice. When summer comes and the snow starts to melt, the arctic fox's fur changes to a brownish color that continues to provide camouflage among the new colors of its surroundings. Like the Kodiak bear, the arctic fox is an omnivore. They like to eat wild vegetables during the summer months, and they also hunt small prey such as rodents and fish.

The bushy tail of the arctic fox is important not only for balance but as a blanket that it wraps around its body to keep it warm. Crossing the frozen ground of Alaska's northern regions is hard on even the most resilient animals, but arctic foxes manage thanks to the fur on the soles of their paws. This fur insulates the fox's feet, keeping the warmth in and the cold out. Arctic foxes also have shorter ears and muzzles than most foxes, which makes it easier for the blood to circulate and keep their bodies warm.

**Brrrrr!**

Arctic foxes can survive in temperatures as low as  $-58^{\circ}$  F.

Alaska's marine life is also distinct from that found in other states. The bowhead whale is an example of an animal that can only be found in the far north. Bowheads have a crownlike feature on the top of their skulls that gives them an odd appearance. The thick bony crown is used to break through ice up to nine inches thick so the whales can reach the water's surface to breathe. The bowhead's jaw is also shaped differently than that of most whales, with a long



**Did you know?**

Bowheads hold the record for longest-living mammal in the world. Researchers studied one whale that could be 211 years old!

shovellike scoop in the middle that helps steer food into the whale's mouth. Instead of using teeth to grab on to large prey, they use 600 bristly plates called baleen that filter plankton from the water. These are not the largest whales in the world, but they still grow to an impressive sixty feet and 120,000 pounds, on average.

Bowheads have been an important part of the Alaskan native Eskimo lifestyle for thousands of years. Eskimos in the coastal regions are skilled whalers, and the bowhead is their main catch. The whaling lifestyle continues to this day in Barrow, Alaska, where many Eskimos still live. While whaling is illegal in most parts of the world, the federal government allows this particular group of people to continue the practice because they only catch what they need for survival and do not hunt whales for profit. The Eskimos of Barrow only kill an average of forty bowheads per year, a very small amount that does not threaten the species.

Eskimos traditionally hunted bowheads and other whales in small canoes.



## Summary of the Alaskan Experience

There are few places in the world that have such a successful blend of undeveloped nature, gorgeous scenery, sprawling wildlife, and human populations. The beautiful but often rugged terrain of Alaska requires a certain toughness from those who inhabit it. The daunting vastness of the untouched land creates a sense of adventure and exploration. With dog teams racing through snowy trails under the deep red glow of the aurora borealis, the forty-ninth state of the union is an exhilarating and dazzling wonder and truly the last American frontier.



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