

ENGLISH



K-3
Foundational
Skills



GRADE 3
FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS UNIT 1

Campfire Tales | Reader

EDITION 1

Grade 3

Foundational Skills 1

Campfire Tales

Reader

Acknowledgement:

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Introduction: Friday Stories

“Everyone join me down at the firepit!” our camp leader Jen sang out. We were so eager we almost jumped from our seats. It was Friday night. Even Jack, the pickiest eater in the group, cleaned his dinner plate without grumbling on Friday nights. It was the night when we didn’t bother to check the time. Instead, we watched our shadows sink into the ground. We shared stories around the campfire past our bedtime, marshmallows dripping from sticks onto our shirts. The stories always changed. There were stories of whales that used soap. There were stories of singing chipmunks.

The sky turned a dark shade of purple in Texas's Big Thicket National Preserve. The first stars began to appear. We ran to the firepit. As we ran, we searched the ground for long sticks to roast our marshmallows.

"I win!" Matteo shouted, holding up a thin, knobby branch.

"It's not a race," Sadie said as she looked for her own branch.

Winnie and Asha were a few steps back. "I wonder what the theme of tonight's story time will be," Winnie said.

"Whatever it is, I hope the stories aren't scary again," Asha said. She shivered a little bit, thinking about the frightening stories they shared at the campfire the Friday before.

“Argh!” Jack yelled, jumping in front of the two girls. “I hope the theme is pirates!” he smiled.





We finally reached the firepit. Jen was waiting with a fresh bag of marshmallows at her side. Matteo sat on a rock next to Winnie on one side of the firepit. Asha, Sadie, and Jack sat on the other side. It was so quiet. We could hear the wind in the trees.

“Welcome,” Jen began, just like every Friday night, “to Friday campfire stories. The theme for tonight is . . .”

We moved to the edge of our seats. We hung on Jen’s every word.

“Family stories.”

We were all puzzled.

“Family stories? What’s a family story?” Matteo asked.

“Is it like a family tree but where you tell stories about each family member?” Sadie asked.

Jen smiled. “Good guess. A family story is a story passed down by a family member. I will share a story my grandmother told me when I was a little girl. Before I begin, does everyone remember the rules we created for listening during story time?”

“Don’t talk over the storyteller,” Winnie said.

“Don’t talk to other friends during the story,” said Jack.

“Don’t make fun of someone’s story,” Asha said.

“Remember that everyone’s story is important to them,” said Sadie.

Jen beamed. “Good work, campers! I think we’re ready to start. The story I’m going to share takes place in Poland, the country where my grandmother grew up.”





Chapter

1 Jen's Story: “The Golden Peach”

“Once, in the middle of a forest in Poland, a peach tree grew with the most enchanting golden peaches. A wish would be granted to anyone who ate one of the peaches.

“Outside the forest, rain had not fallen for many months. The ground was cracked and the crops **withered**. Food was hard to come by. People in the town no longer ate big plates of meat for dinner. The children didn't drink tall glasses of milk. Instead, they ate a few small pieces of bread each day. They drank from the creek, but it was drying up.



“Everyone’s bellies rumbled with hunger. The hunger would attack them most at night while trying to sleep. The children **sulked** and cried. Some had heard the tale of the tree with the magical peaches. They were waiting for the peaches to ripen in the fall.

“One very **bright** girl named Kat wanted to find the peach tree herself. When the leaves began to change color, she made a plan. She waited until the sun was high in the sky, quietly went into the forest, and **embarked** on her quest. As Kat went deeper and deeper into the woods, she could hear whispering in the trees. She stopped to listen. The trees were whispering tales of the peach tree’s power! Woodland animals helped her find her way along the path.

“Finally, she reached the golden peach tree. It matched all of the stories she had heard about it. Its branches hung with enchanting fruit shining in the sunlight. She fidgeted as she thought, wanting to make the most of this gift. Then she finally made her wish. Instead of being greedy and wishing for something for herself, Kat wished no one in the town would ever go hungry again.”

“As soon as she made her wish, the wind picked up. A great storm churned in the sky. Rain showered the fields for the first time in four months. It fell on all of the crops that had been drying up. Vegetables, wheat, heaping servings of meat, and sandwiches filled everyone’s plate. Everyone ate and ate until they were full.



“Kat brought a big basket of peaches to share with all the other children in the town. Thanks to her kindness, no one in the town would suffer from hunger again.”

“Is there anything we can learn from the story of the golden peach?” Jen asked.

We all munched on our s’mores as we thought about the story’s lesson.

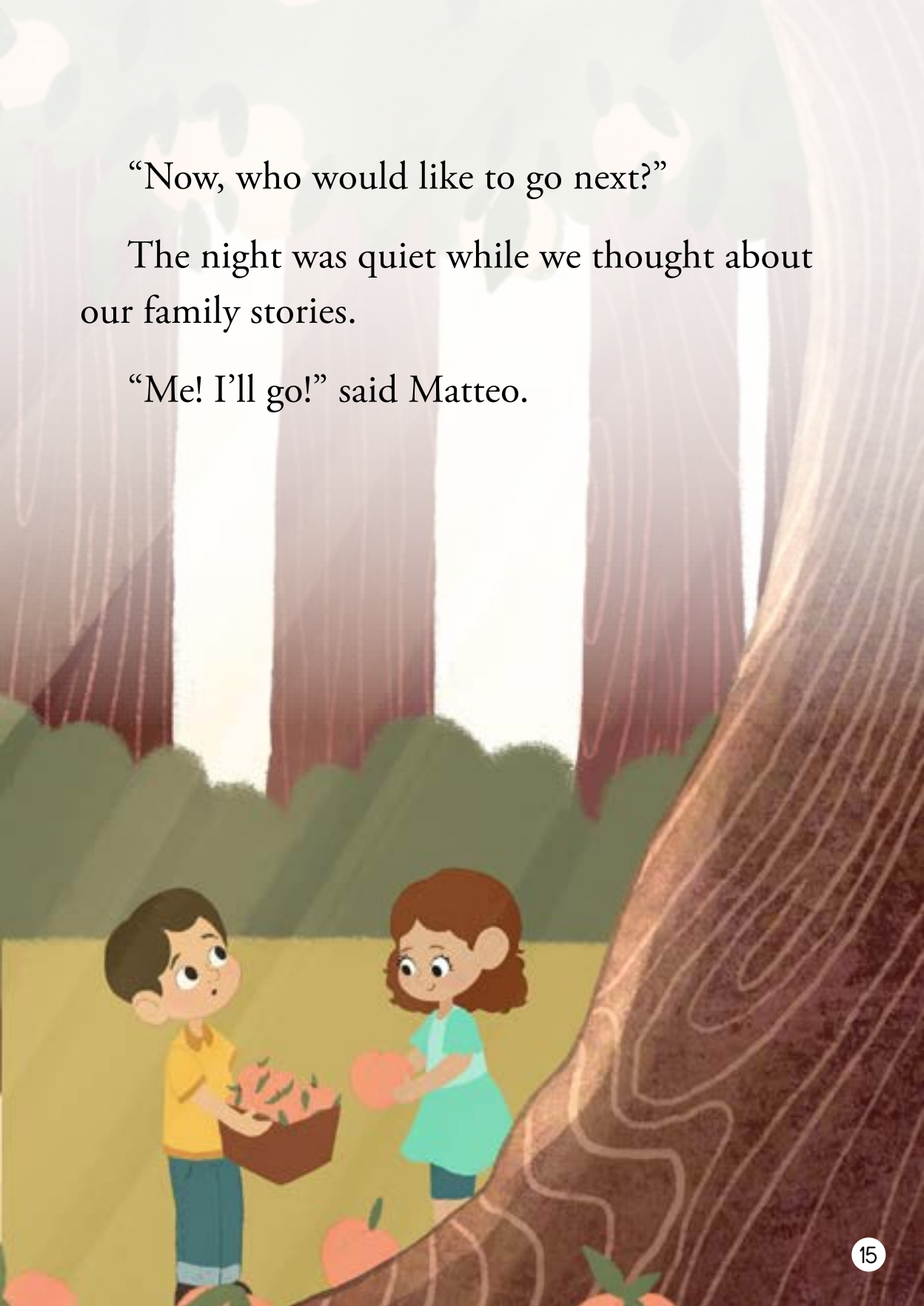
“Always be kind and share with others,” Sadie said. She saw Jack’s marshmallow fall to the ground and get smudged with dirt. She nudged his arm, passing him the one on her stick so he could make his s’more.

“That’s right! My grandmother told me that story when I was a kid. She wanted me to learn to be kind and give back to others like Kat,” Jen said.

“Now, who would like to go next?”

The night was quiet while we thought about our family stories.

“Me! I’ll go!” said Matteo.



Chapter

2 Matteo's Story: “Melody of the Desert”

“When my brother and I visit my uncle in Mexico, he tells us this story. He’s tough on us but gives great advice.”

“Once upon a time, a small cactus named Melody lived in the desert. Melody had a gift. Whenever the wind whispered through the desert, Melody burst into song. Everyone in the desert wondered about the **phantom** song rising over the sand.

“One day, a wise old tortoise named Pedro and a playful jackrabbit named Lola discovered Melody’s enchanting music. They approached the cactus and stood still. They were spellbound. Her needles were rough, but her voice was airy.”



“Lola and Pedro told everyone about Melody’s gift of a beautiful voice. Soon, desert animals of all shapes and sizes traveled to listen to her sing every night under the moonlit sky.

“A raven named Rascal grew jealous of Melody’s songs. He wanted to steal her gift and fill the night sky with his own music. One night, he tried to sneak over and pluck all Melody’s needles while she was sleeping. He would fly away **triumphant**, knowing she could not sing without her needles.

“Lola, the jackrabbit, saw him before he could complete his plan. She jumped quickly through the desert, leading Rascal on a wild chase after her. Melody awoke and sang as Rascal flew through the air.





“Her voice was so **soothing** that Rascal forgot about the chase and his jealousy. He began to glide through the sky, listening to the music. He was tired and felt ashamed for being so jealous.

“Rascal landed on the ground next to Melody. Pedro, the tortoise, walked over to him. ‘There’s no need to be jealous,’ the tortoise said. ‘Everyone has their talents. Melody can sing, but you can soar through the sky.’ Rascal thought for a moment and began to laugh. Pedro was right. Not every animal could fly like he could. The tortoise couldn’t fly, but he could carry his home on his back. Lola, the jackrabbit, couldn’t fly, but she could run and hop very fast. Every animal had their special gift.”

Matteo finished. He looked at the faces of the other campers in the firelight.

“That was a great story, Matteo!” Asha piped up.

Matteo smiled.

“Does anyone know the lesson of Matteo’s story?” Jen asked.

“We all have our special gifts,” Jack said.
“Like my gift of pretending to be a pirate!” He waved his stick in the air. The marshmallow on it flew over the campers and into a tree.
“Oops,” he said.

“Who is our next volunteer?” Jen asked.

“Me!” Sadie shouted.



Chapter

3

Sadie's Story: “The Clever Rabbit”

“This is a story my grandfather tells me when it’s past my bedtime, and he wants me to sleep.” Sadie laughed. “I never want to sleep . . . so he tells this story a lot!”

“In the African **grasslands**, there lived a clever rabbit named Kwame. Kwame was known for his sharp mind. He was smart and **persistent**, ready to overcome any problem that came his way. One summer, a **drought** swept across the land. The animals became very thirsty. The plants withered and died.





“Kwame decided to find a solution, no matter what. He wouldn’t **resign** himself to watching his friends and family suffer. He visited the wise snake, Amina. He found her resting on the branch of a large **baobab tree**.

“Kwame explained that rain had not fallen for many weeks. He told Amina the animals were weak from thirst. Amina shared her wise words: ‘With hardship comes opportunity.’

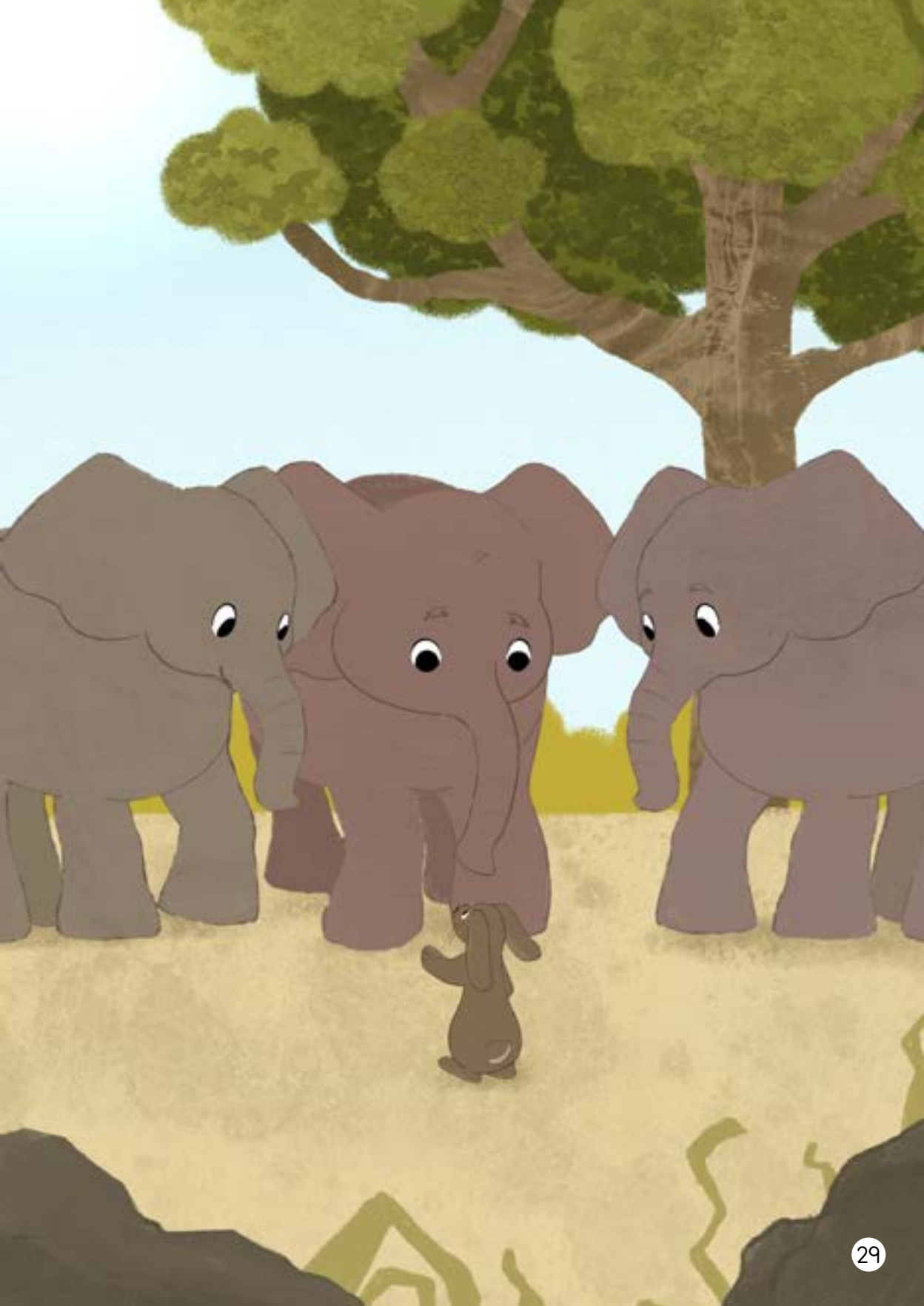
“‘This is just one moment. One knob on the large branch of the baobab tree,’ she said. ‘You must not think of it as forever.’

“With these words in mind, Kwame got to work. He designed a plan to solve the problem.

“He called all of the animals to a meeting. He explained they would work together to dig wells deep in the ground to bring water to the land.

“As they worked, Kwame saw a group of elephants passing by. He had an idea. He asked the elephants to help the animals reach the water beneath the ground. The elephants were impressed by Kwame’s plan. They joined the effort, using their strong tusks to dig deeper wells.

“Word of Kwame’s plan spread, and soon the once-parched land became dotted with wells where the animals could find cool, clean water. They were proud of their hard work. They had aligned their forces to do what they had thought was impossible. Kwame the clever rabbit became well known for his leadership.”





“That’s a great story!” Jen said. “Does anyone know the lesson from Sadie’s story?”

“The animals worked together. But they also needed a leader to show them the way,” Winnie said.

“That’s right,” Asha said. “Kwame didn’t give up. He worked really hard and learned hard times can be opportunities for making the world better.”

“Smart thinking, girls!” Jen said. “Now, who would like to go next?”

“Can I go?” Asha asked shyly.

“Of course!” Jen called out.

Chapter

4

Asha's Story: “The Distracted Boy”

“This is a story my great-aunt tells us during family parties.”

“Once upon a time, there was a very distracted boy named Arjun. Instead of doing his chores, he would stay in bed. He often sat at the window, daydreaming. He was so lost in his imagination he sometimes forgot to eat or drink. His parents were puzzled. Even when they asked him to help with an easy task, they knew it would not get done.

“Arjun’s parents needed help. They could not understand why he was always so distracted.”





“One morning, Arjun’s mother noticed a leak in one of the rooms. She knew Arjun had the day off from school. ‘Arjun!’ she called. ‘Since you have the day off, and we will be working all day, can you fix this leak? Here is some **caulk** to fix it. Knead the caulk over the hole, and let it dry.’

“She explained the task in great detail so Arjun wouldn’t forget. But Arjun was distracted while she was speaking.

“Soon, she left. Arjun tried to remember what his mother had told him to do, but he couldn’t. He went downstairs and looked out the window at the flowers and birds. The birds pursued each other, flying back and forth around the fruit trees. He watched the garden and daydreamed for hours. Soon, he grew sleepy.

“Suddenly, he noticed there was water rushing around his feet. He jumped up, scared. A flood was coming down the staircase toward the chair where he was sitting.

“He began to cry for help. A group of neighbors with buckets came and helped him dump the water outside, but it was too late. The small leak his mother had shown him had grown into a large crack, and the burst pipe had flooded the entire house.

“Arjun knew what he had to do. He worked after school and on weekends. He saved all his money to help repair the house. He had learned his lesson. He would never again let his daydreaming get in the way of things he was trusted to do. He would be careful, pay attention, and work hard.”



Everyone looked thoughtful.

“I understand, Arjun,” said Matteo. “I daydream a lot, too.”

“I don’t think there’s anything wrong with daydreaming,” said Jen. “As long as you also take care of your work and take responsibility for your actions.”

“I think I know the lesson for that one,” Jack smiled. “Beware of leaks!”

Everyone laughed.

“I think it’s also about making sure you’re taking care of the most important tasks first and not getting distracted,” Asha added.

“That’s such a great lesson. Thanks for sharing, Asha!” Jen said, smiling. “Jack, would you like to go next?”

“Sure,” said Jack.



Chapter

5

Jack's Story: “The Selfish Deer”

“This is a story my aunt and uncle told me when I visited them last summer.”

“Once upon a time, there was a selfish deer named Luna. If an animal tried to speak to Luna, she ignored them. If anyone asked her for help, Luna would walk away. She only cared about herself.

“One day, Luna was walking through a meadow to the river. She wanted to spend a few hours admiring her stunning reflection in the water. On the way, she heard a bird’s sharp cry coming from a bush.

“As she got closer, she noticed a small bird with a broken wing on the ground next to the bush. The bird was crying out and was very much in pain. ‘Help me!’ the bird called to her. ‘Please lift me, and put me in the nest above you. I will repay you for your selfless act.’ Luna looked up and saw a nest just above her head.




“‘Sorry, I’m busy,’ Luna said. She hurried on toward the river to see her fantastic reflection.

“As she walked away, the bird kept calling out for help. The sound echoed through the forest, but Luna paid no attention to it.

“Luna spent hours at the river, looking at her face in the water. She felt sleepy when she suddenly realized the sun was already setting. She jumped up in fear, wondering how to find her way home in the darkness.

“The forest was full of dangerous shapes and sounds. Luna’s happy mood turned to fear. The sounds of the trees scared her. The darkness seemed to get darker as she moved deeper into the forest. ‘Help me!’ she cried, but no one responded.



“She had never helped them, so why would they help her now, in her time of need?”

“‘Help me!’ she cried again. This time, she heard a small voice call out in the darkness. ‘Follow my song!’ it said. It let out a sharp trill, and then another, and another. Luna followed the sound until she made her way out of the forest and found the path home. She could see a bird in the moonlight. It had a hard time flying because of an injured wing. She saw it was the same bird that had asked her for help earlier that day. She had ignored the bird because she wanted to look at her own reflection. Luna felt awful about how she had treated the bird and vowed to change her ways.

“From that point on, Luna helped every animal she could.

“She had grown from a selfish deer to a selfless helper because of the caring bird who helped her in her time of need.”



“What a fantastic lesson!” said Jen.

“The same thing that happened to Luna happened to me,” Asha said. “My older sister fell and hurt herself, but I was so busy playing I didn’t even ask if she was okay. Later that day, I fell, and she insisted on helping me up. She showed me what it means to care for someone. It made me think of how selfish I had been.”

“These things happen,” Jen said. “The important thing is to learn from our mistakes and act differently the next time.”

Stars glittered in the sky. Matteo let out a big yawn. He had a habit of yawning near the end of story time on Fridays.

“I think we still have one more story to listen to,” Jen said. “Unless we’re too tired and ready to finish.”

“No!” we all shouted.

Jen laughed. “Okay. Winnie, I think it’s your turn.”

Winnie looked unsure. “I’m not sure I can remember all of it,” she said, “but I’ll try.”



Chapter

6

Winnie's Story: “The Brave Little Fish”

“This is a story my mother tells me.”

“Once upon a time, there was a little fish named Mei. Mei lived in a little river in the south of China. A large rushing waterfall bordered a little river that led to a bigger river with pure, clear water. On the other side of the river was a dock where many people would come to catch fish to sell at the market.





“Mei’s home was near the middle of the river. It was not too close to the waterfall’s currents and not too close to the dock and the fishermen. Mei became very bored with swimming back and forth in her tiny part of the river. She longed for the freedom to swim past the limits of her corner and into the deep water on the other side of the waterfall, but she was too afraid.

“‘I’m too small,’ Mei thought to herself, shaking with fear. ‘I’ll be thrown out of the water and onto a rock.’ So she stayed in her spot and grew more bored each day.

“One day, another small fish named Li joined her. She wasn’t sure where he was from, but he had shining scales like hers. He chased her playfully to the edge of her part of the river and kept going, almost to the waterfall’s edge. ‘Come on!’ he shouted. Mei stopped. She didn’t want to be **candid** with him and admit she was afraid. ‘There are many more fish like you and me on the other side!’ he called out.

“Mei was shocked. She thought she was the only fish like herself in the entire river. She realized she knew nothing outside of her small part of water. Why did she want to keep swimming in the same small pool of water every day? There was a whole world to explore on the other side of the waterfall. Mei knew she had to face her fears.





“Come on, you can do it!’ Li shouted with **encouragement**. And for the first time, Mei believed it. She swam through the hectic current, the roaring water, and the waterfall. Nothing had changed other than the fact that she believed in herself. And, of course, she had made a friend.

“Mei went on to make many friends. She relished chasing them through the clear water of her new home. She was not bored anymore. Every day, she found a different corner of the river to explore. The best part was that Mei was no longer afraid of anything in the river. She had become so brave, she even helped other small fish travel over the waterfall, just like Li had helped her.”

We sat quietly, looking at the stars, as Winnie finished her story.

“I wish I were as brave as Mei,” Sadie whispered.

“You are brave, Sadie!” Winnie said. “We all are. It takes a lot of bravery to share a story with everyone. Especially when the story is important to you.”

“That’s true. You all shared wonderful stories with important lessons,” said Jen. “Lessons about sharing, listening, and treating others with respect.”

“And about golden peaches, singing cactuses, and brave fish,” said Asha, smiling.





We were all sleepy. We had eaten too many marshmallows.

“Time to put out the fire,” Jen said. We groaned.

“Until next time,” Matteo said as he helped Sadie **dump** water over the flames.

The wind in the trees blended with our footsteps as we headed back to our cabins. We all dreamed that night about the stories we had heard.

Glossary

B

baobab (BAY-oh-bab) tree: a very large tree that can live for over a thousand years, found in parts of Africa

bright (BRITE): very smart

C

candid (KAN-did): truthful, honest

caulk (KAWK): a waterproof paste used to fill in holes and repair buildings

D

drought (DROWT): a long period of time without rain, leading to a lack of water

dump (dump): to throw, pour, or toss something out

E

embarked (em-BARKT): started out on a journey

encouragement (en-KUR-ij-muhnt): support that shows someone that you know they can do their best

G

grasslands (GRASS-lands): large areas covered with grass, found in many parts of tropical Africa; sometimes called a savanna

P

persistent (per-SIS-tent): trying even when something is difficult and not giving up, no matter what

phantom (FAN-tum): to have the qualities of something in the imagination, not real

R

resign (reh-ZINE): to accept something that can't be changed

S

soothing (SOO-thing): relaxing, causing sleep

sulked (SUHLKT): acted upset and disappointed

T

triumphant (try-UM-fant): feeling happiness and pride after doing a good job

W

withered (WIH-thurd): to become dry and wrinkled from not having enough water

About this Book

This book has been created for use by students learning to read with the program. Readability levels are suitable for early readers. The book has also been carefully leveled in terms of its “code load,” or the number of spellings used in the stories.

The English writing system is complex. It uses more than 200 spellings to stand for approximately 40-odd sounds. Many sounds can be spelled several different ways, and many spellings can be pronounced several different ways. This book has been designed to make early reading experiences simpler and more productive by using a subset of the available spellings. It uses *only* spellings students have been taught to sound out as part of their phonics lessons, plus a handful of Tricky Words, which have also been deliberately introduced in the lessons. This means the stories will be 100% decodable if they are assigned at the proper time.

As the students move through the program, they learn new spellings and the “code load” in the decodable Readers increases gradually. The code load graphic on this page indicates the number of spellings students are expected to know in order to read the first story of the book and the number of spellings students are expected to know in order to read the final stories in the book. The columns on the opposite page list the specific spellings and Tricky Words students are expected to recognize at the beginning of this Reader. The bullets at the bottom of the opposite page identify spellings, and other topics that are introduced gradually in the unit this Reader accompanies.

TRICKY WORDS:

baobab, caulk, desert, drought, encouragement, flooded, pirates, solution, tortoise

HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS:

night, about, tree, story, thought, every, began, hard, important, river, small, near

Code Knowledge added gradually in the unit for this Reader:

- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the following digraphs: *wh, sh, th* (including voiced and unvoiced), *ng, nk* (including *ang, ing, ong, ung, ank, ink, onk, unk*).
- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the digraph *ck* vs. *k*.
- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the digraph *ch* and the trigraph *-tch*.
- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the trigraph *dge*.
- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the /f/ sound spelled *ph* or *gh*.
- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the digraphs *kn* and *gn*.
- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the trigraphs *igh, ear, eer, ore, ere*(here).
- Decoding single-syllable and multisyllabic words with the trigraphs *ere* (there), *ear, air*, and *are* (care).
- Decoding multisyllabic words with closed syllables.
- Decoding multisyllabic words with knowledge of VCCV, VCV, and VCCCV syllable division patterns.

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