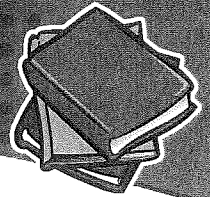
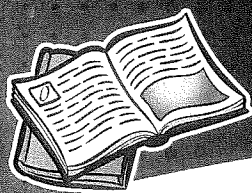




Harry Houdini, Escape Artist



- When people say, “That guy’s a regular Houdini,” they mean the person can do amazing things. That old saying refers to a real magician. 11 24
- At one time, Harry Houdini was the world’s most famous magician. He performed all over the globe from 1893 to 1926. 35 45
- One of Houdini’s most amazing tricks was to make an elephant disappear onstage. Although hundreds saw it happen, no one could ever figure out how he did it. 56 67 73
- Houdini is best remembered for being an escape artist. He boasted that he could escape from any handcuffs ever made. He even offered a huge reward to anyone who could escape from the same handcuffs. No one ever collected the money. 84 97 109 114
- As the years went by, his escapes became more and more daring. Houdini’s most famous act was “The Water Torture Cell.” In the act, he was tied up and hung upside down in a tank full of water. He had to hold his breath for three minutes to free himself. 126 139 155 164
- During his career, Houdini escaped from chains, ropes, jail cells, locked crates, and coffins sunk in water. 174 181
- Houdini died in 1926. Some say that a fan caused his death. Houdini bragged that he could take any blow to the abdomen. A young man challenged him, hitting Houdini three times in the stomach as hard as he could. A few days later, Houdini was dead of a ruptured appendix. 194 207 219 232



Hurricane Warning!



The weatherman had been warning of the approaching hurricane all day. 9 11

Emily helped her dad place tape across the windows in big “X’s.” If the glass broke, her dad said, the tape would prevent it from shattering. 24 37

Her mother was in the kitchen, filling jugs with clean water. There were several flashlights on the kitchen counter. 49 56

Last night, Emily and her mom stocked up on food that didn’t need to be cooked. Her mom also purchased bags of ice. Ice would help keep the food in the refrigerator cold for a while when the electricity went out. 69 83 96 97

When all the preparations were completed, Emily observed the gathering storm. The wind picked up, blowing in violent gusts that bent the trees over. The rain came in great sheets. All of a sudden, an enormous tree limb came flying by, narrowly missing the window. 106 118 132 142

“That’s it,” her dad said. “Everyone into the hall.” 151

They sat in the windowless hall, motionless, for hours as the storm raged over them. 163 166

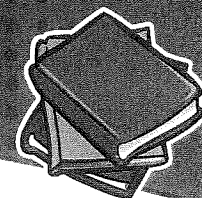
When it was silent again, her father opened the front door, and they all surveyed the damage. A big tree had toppled over, making the street impassable. Tree branches, roof shingles, and other debris littered the street. 179 192 202 203

After walking around the house, her dad said, “A few shingles blew off, but no real damage.” 215 220

Looking around, Emily thought it was a narrow escape. 229



Transcontinental Railroad



Chinese, Irish, Mormons, and Native Americans are all part of the transcontinental railroad story. Built in the 1860s, the railway linked the tracks of the East with those in California.

The Eastern section was built by the Union Pacific Railroad. It started in Omaha, Nebraska. The job would take an army of workers. Many of those hired were Irish immigrants from big Eastern cities.

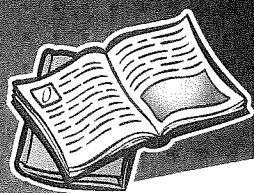
At first, work across the flat Great Plains went quickly. Trouble began when the railway entered Native American territory. The Native Americans believed the railroad violated their treaties with the U.S. government. They sent war parties to raid the labor camps. The railroad then called in the U.S. Army. Many Native Americans lost their lives in these battles. Many more lost their way of life.

The track from the West was built by the Central Pacific Railroad. The company hired mostly Chinese laborers. Work started in California and climbed through the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Blasting out mountain tunnels was dangerous work. The powerful explosions killed many workers. Winter avalanches added to the danger.

The Utah territory was home to Mormon settlers in the 1860s. They were eager for work after grasshopper swarms destroyed their crops. Hundreds joined the railroad crews as they crossed Utah in the race to the finish.

Finally completed in 1869, the railroad tied the two coasts together.



One Rotten Day



Amber knew it was going to be a miserable day before she got out of bed. She could see the water streaming down the window. It was pouring. She couldn't wear her new shoes. When she went to take a shower, her mom called up to her, "No hot water—the water heater's broken."

Her brother had eaten all the Cheerios®—the only cereal Amber could tolerate, and then she couldn't find her homework.

When she finally found it, she raced out the door only to see the school bus disappearing around the corner. Her mom drove her to school, but she was still late. Her hair was all frizzy from the rain, and she looked like a wet poodle.

In the cafeteria line, Amber realized she had forgotten her lunch money. Her friend Janine gave her half a jelly sandwich.

Afterward, there was a surprise geography quiz, and, of course, Amber had mistakenly read the wrong chapter last night.

Dinner was something she despised—tuna casserole.

Finally, after dishes and homework, Amber settled down to watch her favorite TV show, "Megan McGee"—only it wasn't on. There was a news special instead.

"That's it!" she shouted.

"Good grief, what's wrong?" asked her mother.

"This rotten day can't end soon enough for me. I'm going to bed," Amber growled.

"Tomorrow will be better," her mom said.

And it was.



A Close Call



Adam Gold checked the telescope again. There was no doubt: the enormous meteor was on a collision course with the Earth. Adam and other astronomers had been following it for weeks. It would hit Earth in two days. 11
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Astronomers called the meteor Loki, after the Norse god of destruction. It was a tenth of the size of the moon. Scientists predicted it would land in the North Atlantic, sending huge tidal waves across the eastern United States. The meteor would then bury itself hundreds of feet deep in the Earth, throwing dust and rocks high into the atmosphere. Nothing—plants, animals, or humans—would survive the impact. 48
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The world's leaders and greatest scientists had been told, of course. Together they came up with Earth's last best chance. Tonight, an unmanned rocket was racing through space, armed with the world's most destructive bombs. 118
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At last, the rocket came into view through the telescope. The same view was also being broadcast to all the people in the world. 154
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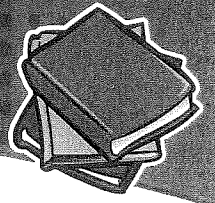
Suddenly, there was such a brilliant flash of light that Adam jumped back from the telescope, momentarily blinded. But what happened next could be seen with the naked eye. 178
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The world witnessed fantastic fireworks in the sky. Shooting stars tore outward from the blast, and huge clouds of dust signaled a direct hit. 205
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Adam was sure he could hear all the people on Earth cheering. 231



Who Really Discovered America?



Quick, who was the first European to come to North America? If you said Columbus, you are wrong. The evidence shows he was not the first. 13
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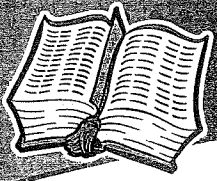
We now know that Vikings were here hundreds of years before Columbus. Vikings, as Norsemen were called, were known to be excellent sailors. They sailed their longships across the Atlantic from Scandinavia. In their stories, many describe the faraway lands they found. We know they went to Iceland and Greenland. 37
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About 1,000 years ago, the Vikings set sail from Greenland to a land they called Vinland. Old writings tell us Leif Erikson and his crew of men settled there. Vikings built houses, traded, and fought with the native people. 89
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113
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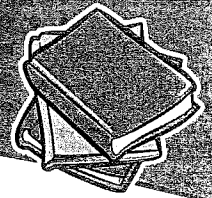
In 1960, the ruins of ancient sod houses were found in Newfoundland, Canada. A small stone lamp, a bone needle, and jewelry were also uncovered. These were items used by the Norse. Later, scientists found nails used in Viking ships and pieces of old wood that could only come from Europe. 126
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This was Vinland, where Norse sailors built the first European settlement. Because no burial grounds were found, scientists believe the Norse stayed for only a few years. They had no permanent colony in North America. 176
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By the time Columbus arrived in 1492, the Vikings were long gone. History would record that he was about 500 years too late to be the first European here. 213
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Rachel Carson



Rachel Carson was born on a small Pennsylvania farm in 1907. From childhood, she was interested in both nature and writing. Her mother shared her love of wildlife and taught her about the animal life in the local ponds and woods.	12 23 37 41
When Carson grew up, she studied marine biology—plant and animal life in the sea. After college, she wrote for radio and newspapers and taught science. Her first job was to write for a radio show called “Romance Under the Waters,” which explored sea life. She spent 15 years working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.	51 64 78 90 98
In 1951, she published <i>The Sea Around Us</i> . The book quickly became a best seller and won the National Book Award in 1952.	110 121
During the 1950s, Carson studied how chemicals were dangerous for birds and other wildlife. A new pesticide called DDT was being used at the time. Carson thought DDT was poisoning birds. Her book <i>Silent Spring</i> , published in 1962, was about how pesticides harm wildlife. This book also became a best seller.	131 144 155 166 172
Because of the book <i>Silent Spring</i> , President John F. Kennedy asked scientists to study pesticides. Later, the government made chemical companies prove their products were safe. By 1964, many states had laws restricting the use of pesticides.	183 192 204 209
She received the Audubon Medal for conservation near the end of her life. Many people say Rachel Carson began the movement to protect the environment.	220 232 234

Ghost House



By Robert Frost

I dwell in a lonely house I know	8
That vanished many a summer ago,	14
And left no trace but the cellar walls,	22
And a cellar in which the daylight falls,	30
And the purple-stemmed wild raspberries grow.	37
O'er ruined fences the grape-vines shield	44
The woods come back to the mowing field;	52
The orchard tree has grown one copse	59
Of new wood and old where the woodpecker chops.	68
The footpath down to the well is healed.	76
I dwell with a strangely aching heart	83
In that vanished abode there far apart	90
On that disused and forgotten road	96
That has no dust-bath now for the toad.	105
Night comes; the black bats tumble and dart;	113
The whippoorwill is coming to shout	119
And hush and cluck and flutter about:	126
I hear him begin far enough away	133
Full many a time to say his say	141
Before he arrives to say it out.	148
It is under the small, dim, summer star.	156
I know not who these mute folk are	164
Who share the unlit place with me—	171
Those stones out under the low-limbed tree	179
Doubtless bear names that the mosses mar.	186
They are tireless folk, but slow and sad—	194
Though two, close-keeping, are lass and lad—	202
With none among them that ever sings,	209
And yet, in view of how many things,	217
As sweet companions as might be had.	224