Princess Helen and the Chase for the Rabbit Robber

Cover Art: Picture of a very large rabbit, in Helen’s arms

A person holding a rabbit

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Standards:

Problem 1: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.C.7

Problem 2: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R1.3.1

Problem 3: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D.8

Problem 4: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.A.3

Problem 5: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R1.3.7

Problem 6: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D.8

Problem 7: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.C.7

Problem 8: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R1.3.1

Problem 9: CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D8

Characters:

Helen- Daughter of the Lord of the town of Mistral

Joseph-Astrologer to the town of Mistral in the Kingdom of Provence

Heather- Helen’s magical Rabbit that brings prosperity anywhere it travels

Oats- the old pony Helen normally has for the buggy when travelling in Provence

Gallagher- the “merchant”, he changes his name again to Robert later

Stephen- Tutor, teacher, census taker to the town of Mistral and Helen

Mr Paul- a hunter and tracker for the town of Mistral known for his field craft and bush skills.

Adam- Squire to the 3 knights of Mistral and a young adventurer.

Robert- the merchant who was robbed.

Spinnaker- the fastest horse of the town of Mistral and past champion in the horse races of Provence

Sparky- a young mare and foal of Spinnaker, known for stealing apples, jumping corrals, and making trouble, but strong and swift.

Places:

Mistral: hometown to Princess Helen

Provence: the growing Kingdom that Mistral is part of. Many new people are immigrating there for a safer life and because it’s a place where hard work isn’t paid off with abusive tax collectors, or gangs taking security payments.

Zephyr: A coastal town famous for it’s seaweed and fish market, it shares the same valley as Mistral

Seaside: A port across the mountains, it is a city state, and not part of the Kingdom of Provence. Many people immigrate from Seaside to Provence. Seaside is also famous for it’s explorers and merchant Captains who have navigated further than anyone in Provence, and even seen new stars.

In a faraway castle in the land of Mistral in the Kingdom of Provence there once lived a little girl named Helen and her giant Flemish Rabbit named Heather. The people far and wide were blessed with good fortune and bounteous harvests. The court astrologer Joseph once surveyed the harvests, and stars, and calendar, and discovered an amazing fact. After a visit by the Helen and Heather, to any farm, creamery, windmill, or fishing village, in short, a visit to anywhere associated with the growing and harvesting of nature’s bounty, that place would flourish in the coming year. In fact, Helen spent most of her time trotting her mother’s elderly pony and buggy to and fro to visit these sites. She even helped in moving important tools, the mail, and inventions to these places, but she always left enough space for Heather to come along. Before long the fame of Helen, Heather, and Oats (the pony) spread beyond Provence and visitors came with offers to purchase Heather’s kits. Physically, Helen, despite being a princess was a strong girl, much of this had to do with her upbringing. Helen’s chores, which were not princess like in the least, included chopping firewood in Fall, milking two goats in the morning for breakfast, and using the tread pump filling the castle water tank daily (this involved pumping 300 liters up 3 meters) so that the kitchen and bathrooms had pressure. Also, Mistral was a hotbed of invention, as Joseph and Papa, the lord of Mistral, were always looking for ways to improve life, sometimes Helen would be directed to help on the newest idea.

One adventure, or is it misadventure?, spread Helen and Heather’s fame even further afield, not all of which was to the benefit of Provence or Mistral. They were travelling in their buggy on the way to the coastal village of Zephyr. It was famous as a destination spot for chartered fishing, pearl diving, seaweed. A tiny stone lighthouse stood at the top of the cliffs overlooking the sea, and the town itself was carved into the cliffs with docks and floating barges providing an open air market. The town of Zephyr was particularly well appointed with inventions thought up by the Astrologer Joseph (such as the waterfall elevator), and herbal plants such as Rosemary, Thyme, and Basil hanging from the windows of the warren of tunnels in the stone cliff face, making up the villager’s homes. There was a narrow path, leading steeply down the cliff to the village from the light house and Helen having previously visited the town, felt comfortable following the path as she had delivered some of the gears making up the waterfall elevator. As she turned down the path the lighthouse keeper shouted something, but she did not stop as she was in a hurry and wasn’t going to waste her time as Princess on an unimportant light keeper. As she drove the buggy, the old pony Oats momentarily started to gallop, probably at relief in having the weight of the buggy temporarily lifted. In any case Oats, Helen and heather were quickly out of control with Helen furiously pulling the brake lever to no avail, other than making a thin trail of smoke. Helen saw a boulder that had recently crashed from the cliffs above blocking most of the narrow cliff path…Helen’s thoughts flashed through her head; they were going to either smash poor Oats into the rock, or fly off the path into the sea. Suddenly she found Heather in her lap on the left hand side of the buggy and Oats had dodged around the boulder to the outer right hand side, where she still had firm footing at a gallop. The only problem was that the buggy wheel on the right was swinging through mid air, off of the path, and slowly tilting down the cliff face. For a brief moment it looked like the three of them would make it but as the dropping left wheel reached the path she heard a violent “CRACK!” and suddenly felt herself launched like stone from the catapult. Heather was still floating in her lap as she sailed down through the air. Their trajectory flew them towards the open air market and the kelp nets. Everyone in the market had turned their head towards the loud noise and gazed up in amazement as the Princess and her Rabbit crashed down into the kelp splattering it over several of the Sunshades protecting the stalls beneath. Oats wasn’t much luckier, she couldn’t slow her decent and the path made a sharp turn to the left, the centripetal force pulled the unlucky pony and her cart into the air also, and Oats with cart in tow, came splashing down beside a fishing boat being fitted out with nets. Fortunately, a young strong lad jumped into the tangle of traces and the splashing sinking pony, he quickly cut the traces and the buggy sank below but Oats swam to a nearby beach and began munching kelp after calming down. The lad then dove with a line to the buggy, made it secure and the crew laboriously dredged it up from the bottom . In all the confusion, no one was injured, but the spectacular entrance was unforgettable. The fishermen, in the telling, embellished the tale further saying the buggy was a conestoga wagon, the rabbit was as big as a bear, and the pony was a Clydesdale. At this point the fame of Mistral and Provence’s prosperity grew to such an extent that unscrupulous but enterprising types took notice. That was also the day Helen learned to listen to everyone, from the humble to the great. In hindsight, if she had simply stopped for a moment and heard the lighthouse keeper, she wouldn’t have spent several days in apprentice to the cartwright fixing the buggy axle.

The following Fall, before the first snow but during the rainy cold, a Merchant arrived at Castle Mistral. Arrivals of merchants were now so common (given the large exports of staples flowing from this productive region) that the previous tradition of lodging strangers in the barn or stables had been relaxed. The fellow was odd in many ways, his merchant’s cloak (by tradition, trimmed in green) was poorly fitted and several sizes too small. His knowledge of the herbs and spices he was selling was negligible. In fact, Jospeh the Astrologer bought out most of the product at excellent prices by pretending the materials were commodities of Provence and already in stock at the castle. Furthermore, the merchant, who stated his name was Gallagher, had numerous scars on his right arm, it was normal for merchants to have frequent fights with the highwaymen of this era (in distant places far from Provence), but even then, the marks on Gallagher indicated a life of conflict. After the happy transaction, Papa allowed Gallagher to sleep in the great hall, and through the night many songs were sung, Helen fell asleep with Heather in her bed, which wasn’t allowed but happened often, especially in Winter.

As Helen woke and dressed, she noticed a few pieces of carrot on the floor, one of which was by the rabbit door. Also, Heather was nowhere to be seen, but this was normal enough given the Heather was housebroken and would wander the green lawns with the call of nature, or when ready for a snack. The first indication of trouble came almost immediately when the stable master John shouted that Spinnaker (the fastest horse in the castle) and a saddle were missing. However, Gallagher’s cart was present, but there was no sign of him. A chill went through Helen’s heart that Heather may have been stolen. In the uproar, Papa ordered everyone to meet in the hall, still a mess from the previous night’s dinner and provided direction to the staff to inventory for other missing items, and direct any information to the great hall if they discovered anything. Otherwise, the staff continued their duties, with the exception of the Chef and cooks, to make up a 3 day pack of provisions and oats for a horse. Heather was nowhere to be found, and before long Joseph the Astrologer developed the theory that Gallagher, if that was his real name, lured Heather out of the Helen’s room with a trail of carrots pieces thrown through the rabbit door, then bundled Heather in a sack and quietly saddled Spinnaker and walked through the castle gate. The gate was unfortunately left open most times, given the lack of theft in these prosperous times. Several years before Joseph had advised Papa to stop wasting a perfectly good farmer’s skills on watching an idle gate) especially when harvest time had often been so busy that everyone had been mowing hay or wheat. It showed that even a genius like Joseph made mistakes at times, and that a right decision at one point could become a wrong decision later. As Helen stood beside Papa and he managed the incident in the great hall, she saw her old tutor Stephen approach. Papa quickly said “go to your studies” we have enough hands and effort on this task. Helen felt a surge of anger at being sent to do something as unimportant as studies, especially given all the math that Stephen constantly spouted, and tested. Helen knew from Papa’s tone that he wasn’t going to accept any discussion and that he was already angry at the insult dealt to their house, so she simply said “yes papa”. As she walked to the family library with Stephen Papa said “we will send for the hunter and he will track down this bandit, we think he is heading East since the Horseshoes are marked”. As Helen walked with Stephen she thought, I could say I need the bathroom and then run with the buggy to chase this Gallagher.

1. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.C.7 Does Helen Runaway?
   1. If yes then the following narrative opens. Helen ran to the stable and hooked up Oats, she whipped Oats cruelly to go as fast as she could on the path East following Gallagher. Her slow old Pony was quickly winded and the Hunter, Mr. Paul caught up to her and thus had to escort Helen home before continuing to track the thief. Heather was never found again and the brief time of Helen’s early childhood was a golden age that the people fondly looked back on before the poverty and crime heralded by Gallagher swept across Provence and Mistral.
      1. Picture of Helen and Sparky returning to the castle. Helen looks sad.



* 1. If no, she does a bank of multiplication and division problems then Tutor Stephen says ”I am very proud of you, when I was a young boy I would have run off, but that is why you are a Princess and I am an elderly tutor”. His eyes sparkled “I have some news fit for a princess, I heard late at night hooves galloping past Lisbon road to the west, it was a strange time to hurry, but the galloping quickly slowed to a canter as the horse must not be too fit. What if Gallagher switched horses knowing the horse shoes were marked? I also asked the post office if they had a delivery that night but no express mail came through so there is no reason for galloping at night. The bandit is probably hoping to cross the mountain passes ahead of the pursuit but before the first snow comes in, which is usually about now up there”
     1. Picture of a map with Mistral in the near the end of the peninsula., Lisbon to the west on a road and mountains further west with the road then the coastal city of Seaside. On the map is a horseman riding west towards the mountain with the name Gallagher.

Graphical user interface, application, Word

Description automatically generated

After Stephen the tutor had released Helen from her studies, she thought to herself “how can I capture that rascal Gallagher and get back Heather”? Just then Adam the squire turned the corner of the stone hallway and said “are you done with math yet? The actual merchant just arrived, that Rogue shot him and stole the cart then sold all the supplies to us”. Papa is planning on letting the merchant recover here at the Castle but is sending me in the buggy with another horse after Gallagher. The Merchant’s name is Robert’, and he said he heard a horse coming down the path at a gallop, when he saw a cloaked rider, which may have been Gallagher riding towards the NorthWest with a sack. I am getting ready to go, just picking up my bow and a cloak for the ride”. Helen realized she was in another decision point. Pretend that Papa had let her go and ride along with the squire? or ask Papa’s permission to go but maybe not be allowed? What to do, what to do?

1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R1.3.1 Does Helen bluff her way out of the castle with Squire Adam or ask Papa permission to go?
   1. If Helen bluffs her way out of the castle, as Adam and she ride up the mountain slope they run out of food and stop at a Shepherd’s hut to buy potatoes, lamb, and carrots which make up a delicious meal, but the snow begins and they can’t make it through the now impassable pass.
      1. A picture of the horse and buggy trying to plow through a meter of snow.

A child and a horse in the snow

Description automatically generated with low confidence

* 1. If Helen asks permission from Papa, he sends the court page to get another rucksack of provisions, gives Helen his favorite hatchet for making fire wood, and a bow. Then tells Adam to teach her how to use the bow and hatchet while they go.
     1. A picture of Papa handing Helen the bow as she sits on her harnessed buggy.

A picture containing indoor, wall

Description automatically generated

Helen and Adam are sitting in the buggy, as everyone helps them to get ready. The court page Lenny runs up with the ruck sack of supplies and an armful of kindling. Then the stable boy brings over a sack of oats. Before long the buggy looks lower in it’s springs then normal. Cold weather clothing is brought down too. Its still safe though as the buggy had on occasion been called for moving farmers and lumber jacks around to work sites, and had sat even lower on the springs on those occasions. Papa, the Lord of Mistral, looked from the patio as Helen and Adam departed through the gate to the west road at a trot. Adam told Helen how to hang her hatchet to quickly bring it to hand, where to wait if they needed to hunt. When the road turned to clay, Adam jumped out and checked for the arrow shaped horseshoe that indicated Spinnaker and Gallager were still on the road. He remarked that he wished his brother Paul the hunter was along rather than chasing East. Since Paul was on horseback it was possible that he could turn around and make up ground on the buggy. Paul’s skills at tracking might be decisive later on. After conversation died down, the sky turned grey and as the sun set behind the clouds it quickly turned dark. The horse Sparky was often muttering and obviously unhappy to be away from her friends and the stable. Helen could almost read the horses mind “why are we out this late in the cold and going further even now?” The constant trot for several hours was telling on Sparky who was more frequently having to slow to a walk. As the last light fell from behind the Western mountains Helen, Adam, and Sparky came to a stream cutting through the road, fortunately it looked shallow. Adam stopped the horse then pulled a handful of oats from the buggy. And held them to Sparky’s nose, then untied her from the traces to drink water. Sparky looked happy to be free from the buggy and even splashed through the dark stream briefly then drank deeply. Adam said “fill your water bottles and put a splash of wine in, but don’t drink it for a bit, that will help sterilize the water”. Sparky was reluctant to get back in the traces but Adam’s holding back the oats finally got her back to work. After the last of the sunset Helen and Adam could tell it was going to be very dark, no moon given the clouds. It was dangerous to ride at this time but Adam and Helen took turns walking beside Sparky, who seemed to enjoy the company. The road rose up in the air and the temperature dropped but by taking turns walking that helped to warm back up, and even if it started raining, the buggy provided good protection from the elements. Only Sparky would be wet, and those horses when working stayed warm even down to subfreezing. As the long night progressed slowly up the dark mountain road, sleepiness would come but then disappear with walking beside Sparky and peering at the inky road. At first a fine cold mist enveloped Helen but it slowly turned colder and into a thin snow which mostly melted on the ground. The heavy wool coats came out, and Adam and Helen exchanged the wet one for walking beside Sparky then the dry one while driving in the shelter of the buggy. Around 3 AM the three of them came to a stream and couldn’t clearly see across it or the depth so Adam unhitched Sparky and the two tried to sleep fitfully. Helen was so cold at one point she climbed on Sparky’s warm back (steaming in the light snow) but even though this was warmer, the discomfort of sitting bareback was too much. Then Adam and Helen took turns on guard sitting on Sparky or snoozing comfortably in the warm dry buggy with the dry wool coat.

Eventually the snow stopped and as the sun rose in the morning in the East the clouds were now stretched apart with sunlight streaming to the ground. In the distance a Conestoga wagon with two oxen was slowly coming down the road. The wagon was full of wooden products, axe handles, poles for rakes and brooms, cutting boards, chairs, even some bats for baseball. The driver was a young lady with a taciturn angry looking man holding a bat in his lap. He staired suspiciously at the buggy and its occupants but the young lady driver smiled and waved. Helen smiled back as the Wagon Driver shouted “hello! My name is Betsy and this is Don, Don, don’t’ worry about them! Who has ever heard of highwaymen riding a buggy, now that other fellow, in a hurry with his mysterious sack, and hood, he was suspicious! Everyone knows that people wearing hoods are just trying to conceal their identity, because they did something bad or are planning to do something bad, unless it’s super cold”. Before long the conversation revealed a few things to Helen and Adam. First was the fact that they were almost certainly on the right track of Gallagher. Also, Betsy told them about the logging operation they were all part of. The company would purchase new claims from the Provincial government then be allowed to harvest the trees, they also had a lathe and rotary saw for cutting out boards, that’s why they had the load for sale in the town and would load up with wheat for pancakes through the winter on the way back. Just over the next ridgeline and down about halfway one team was lowering logs to the stream in preparation for the snow melt in Spring, to flume the logs down stream to town. After saying their goodbyes Helen, Adam and Sparky picked up the pace and crested the ridgeline. The road was rougher, the higher they climbed, and Adam commented “I don’t like all this wear on the axle, and the heavy load we’re carrying”. As he said this a hard grinding noise came from the hub of the wheel. They continued and as they crested the ridgeline they could see the logging operation underway. The team was arguing over how long the rope would be as the buggy approached but they quickly stopped, and commented on the “dying bearing grinding away the last of it’s life” and asked “who they were in the buggy?” After introductions all around Helen said “we’re in hurry trying to capture my rabbit back. Could you repair it?” Randy answered from the logging team, sure thing, we keep spares on site for common repairs and fortunately the bearings are only two sizes, which we keep, I’m pretty sure your Papa will be good to cover the replacement part, but to lower the price we could use some help. First off, please provide the deciding vote for these dunderheads, that I am right in that we should cut the rope to 220 meters”.

1. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D.8 How long should the rope be to allow 5 people and Spinnaker to lower by hand the rope tied to the logs? The distance from the bottom where the log will stop, to the top where a tree will be looped as a break is 20 M. The 5 people and Sparky who will belay the logs down require 2.5 M total for handholds. The circumference of the braking tree that will be looped one circle is 1 M. Additionally the rope is rated to 2000 kg but the log is 4000 kg.
   1. If the answer is correct then Helen, Adam and Spinnaker help lowering the logs without incident, Randy returns and repairs the bearings on the buggy and tells them Helen and Adam that the fellow with the Rabbit stayed with them the last night and that he called himself Gulliver, not Gallagher. Also, he still had Heather. He was going to head to the Schott dairy farm next to feed the Rabbit and horse, because the turf on dairy farms was always the best, then he’d be on his way.
      1. Helen, Adam, and Sparky the horse are pulling up the pass and waving back to the lumberjacks.

A picture containing snow

Description automatically generated

* 1. If the answer is incorrect, there is an accident with the lowering and Sparky’s leg is broken. Helen has to kill Sparky out of mercy, and Gallagher gets away with Heather which is never seen again.
     1. Sparky lays in a puddle of blood with her leg bent at an unnatural angle.



Following the assistance from the loggers in repairing the buggy and lowering the logs, the lumberjacks gave Helen a gift of pancakes for their trip, and a couple of additional tattered wool saddle blankets to help Spinnaker stay warm through the passes, Lastly they give a bundle of 21 split logs for fire saying “you will take three nights to reach the Schott farm, you need to make a fire each night to melt snow for drinking and warm up, make sure you use exactly the right amount each night or else you will run out of water before reaching the farm. Gulliver or Gallager, whatever his name is, is only a day ahead, he was looking a little worn out already, passing through these mountains with only saddle bags, you may catch him with the better food and supplies you are carrying, but don’t rush. That is when accidents happen, especially on snowy icy passes. With a little luck he will stay too long at the Schott farm and you will catch him there, which will give you extra hands since the Schott’s will want to help when they find out a thief has been staying with them.”

1. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.A.3 The cook for the loggers said “I worry about you young’uns in the passes, turn around if the snow is too deep, from here to the Schott farm, its 21 kilometers, and if you aren’t making 7 miles a day turnaround and come back here, the back trail will be faster since you will have trampled the snow. Here is a set of snow shoes so you can trample it down a little for Sparky so your horse doesn’t collapse.” How many sticks of wood can you use per night if you make it too the Schotts within 3 nights?
   1. If the answer is correct the following narrative opens up.
      1. Picture of Helen holding a pot of water for Sparky to drink from

A person standing next to a horse

Description automatically generated with low confidence

* 1. If the answer is incorrect, the following narrative opens up. You don’t have enough water because you used your wood up inefficiently, and you don’t have water for Sparky.
     1. Picture of Helen sitting in front of a fire with her feet up, one foot is missing two toes due the frostbite.

Diagram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Going up the pass was tough, the snow grew deeper, fortunately it only reached a half a meter at the deepest. By taking turns snow shoeing in front of Sparky the team was able to barely keep up the 7 miles per day, just barely. On the first night, Sparky ate all the oats, about 10 kilograms, and they were amazed at the heat Sparky threw off. Forage for Sparky would be a problem, but the cart was a little lighter with the provisions dropping. Starting the fire was difficult with cold weather but the dry sticks burned merrily when they started. The fire was short lasting though and the last of the coals were burned out in an hour and a half, then the chill multiplied. Fortunately, the hot water warmed everyone some more before falling asleep in the buggy. Sleeping in a sitting position was tough, but better then shivering outside on the frozen ground. Sparky, who was used to sleeping standing was probably the most rested, especially after putting the saddle blankets on to cover her back. The second day, staring up the trail, Helen saw the peak of the ridgeline. After that it would be all downhill and only 7 miles to go, “so the third day should be easier” she thought. As they woke the sun rising in the East clearly showed the cairn at the ridgeline. The cairn had been made many years ago and who had built it originally was unknown. It was also a bit spooky, the loggers and drovers travelling this road had always used it as a burial site, so through the years the cairn had grown quite large. In the setting sun the night before the cairn had been difficult to see but now it was perfectly clear and pretty in an austere way. Adam handed Helen a biscuit and said, “we need to get going as soon as possible, today we reach the point of no return, when we make that cairn, it will be safer to go to the Schott’s dairy than back tracking all this way. Looks like we are very lucky on the weather. Usually, this pass is shut by now given the snows piling up. My cousin was working for the loggers before he married and settled down to farming. He said that 3 years ago they had a storm and decided to see how deep it was up here, they mountain skied up, and dug down 20 feet without finding the bottom of the snow, then gave up on finding out how deep it was, they skied back, and after 8 hours of going up they were back to the camp in 15 minutes. Pretty fun, maybe we should do it sometime. Wish we had some skis here but we’re already pretty heavy coming up with all the provisions and gear.” Helen drank the rest of her now cold water to wash down the biscuit and started trampling the snow down a little for Sparky. She marveled at how the cairn seemed to stay still on the ridge and not come closer despite their steady progress. They stopped briefly every hour to catch their breath and take turns snowshoeing but could tell that Sparky was growing temperamental at the short rations, cold weather and heavy work of pulling a buggy through the shallow snow. At lunch the only way Adam could convince the horse to keep going was to share his apple with Sparky, who always appreciated a good apple or piece of fruit. In fact, she seemed to make up her mind that she would show Adam and Helen how strong she was and the three of them picked up the pace. The cairn crept closer and closer, the wind picked up as they approached but the sky still was clear as dusk then night fell in the cold. It was an hour after night and a bright moon was out illuminating their way. The wind whistled through the cairn and rocks and made spooky moaning noises but the stars lit up and they could see the milky way spread out above them, even a shooting star just as they stopped at top of the trail where they could see into the distance East and West, if only the sun was up. It was a relief to stop the climbing, but a terrible sleepless night.

In the morning the wind finally died down after buffeting the buggy all night and moaning through the rocks of the Cairn. Even Sparky, who slept well in any conditions was frazzled in the morning and even more surly now that all the oats were gone, with no breakfast. Helen shared her last apple with Sparky, whose eyes said “where is the rest of my breakfast”. Adam remarked on the beautiful view East and West but then noticed a grey patch of sky to the Northwest in the direction they were heading. Adam said “that patch of grey just may be what closes this pass for the rest of the year, we need to get a move on” Sparky’s eyes followed his pointing hand and she quickly moved to the traces for buggy as if understanding what Adam and Helen were thinking. Progress at first was fast despite the headwind, the gale from yesterday had blown most of the snow up and over the ridgeline to the East side where they had climbed through already, so there was no longer a need to snowshoe, in fact the only concern was making sure they didn’t go too fast downhill. The grey clouds steadily expanded across the sky during the descent. Helen looked forward then a look of concern crossed her face. There was a fork in the road but no one had told them which direction to take when approaching.

1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R1.3.7 To the North, the right hand fork of the path was steeper and appeared wider with another smaller cairn a few hundred feet ahead, the steepness was slowing their progress, as they were frequently having to dismount to slow the cart. The fork curving to the West, the left fork of road, followed a flat stretch that was narrow and barely passable for the buggy. Adam looked at her with a shrug showing he didn’t know which way was correct. The grey clouds now completely clotted out the blue skies of before and large snow flakes started falling. Also the Western trail had a tree line, the first tiny ancient trees, more like shrubs, radiated out across the mountain.
   1. If Helen chooses the path to the right the narrative continues correctly.
      1. Picture of buggy travelling down the road, clear of snow, with rain falling and stone walls on the right.

Map

Description automatically generated

* 1. If Helen chooses the path to the left they continue flat around the mountain and into another valley, the snow becomes so thick that they can’t see what is below but continue down until they reach a tiny cabin on a partly frozen pond. The snow is accumulating quickly and the return back up the way they came is blocked; they are trapped at the cabin. Fortunately, it is a high meadow and has provisions for the Winter. Helen, Adam, and Sparky survive but all are gaunt and it takes months of the Spring for them to recover at the Schott farm. Gallagher is long gone and Heather is never returned to Mistral.
     1. Picture of the buggy parked under 5 feet of snow by a snow covered cabin with smoke coming up from the chimney.

A cabin in the snow

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Fortunately, as the path turned steeper the rising snow helped to prevent the buggy from overrunning Sparky, also the trees steadily grew on the path around them, in some places making a tunnel of dense branches and leaving the path almost bare of snow. As the buggy emerged from one of these tunnels they were surprised by a complete change, the snow was melting at the rain line and the road was clear of snow, and simply wet the rest of the way. Furthermore, the road was of higher quality, moss cobbled stones made up the surface and stone walls bracketed their way, the rain was easier to see through than snow, and the tall trees reached skyward with thick grassy meadows and stone walls, segmenting the pastures indicating cultivation. At the wall of the first pasture a sign stated “ Schott Farms, room and board available, water and pasture free to travelers”

Everyone’s mood improved greatly as the weight of concern at being stranded in the passes lifted. Even Sparky who had done yeoman’s work in hauling a heavily loaded buggy up a pass, through snow and rain, showed signs of happiness by flicking her tail playfully at Helen and Adam as they came up to take turns walking beside him. The party, as Helen and Adam began to call themselves, passed through the pastures and harvested fields of hay, corn, root vegetables, arrived at the Schott Farm center. Several impressive barns bracketed a very large house of at least 20 rooms. Three chimneys framed the house, one on each side and one in the center with smoke rising from the center. The smell of wood smoke and baking bread filled the air. A stable boy, more of a stable lad, shouted loudly “Ha! I won!, here are more guests from the High Road”. The stable lad approached and said “I’m Don, I owe you one, if you hadn’t come through those passes I’d have lost my bet and had to clean the milking barn all on my own. Now at least I’ll have some help.” The stable lad unharnessed Sparky, and led her to a paddock where other horses were eating hay, then helped bring some of their supplies to the house. After passing up the stairs to the porch and through the double doors Helen and Adam found themselves in an open area, almost more of a pub with the central wood stove warming the room. It was an ingenious design that had numerous cubbyholes for placing bread to bake. Tables, chairs and benches were spread throughout the room but only one person occupied it. Mrs. Schott was cleaning up the tables but also was watching the ongoing baking. She looked up and said “you must have just come down the high road, you’re lucky to have made it this late in the season. Normally our guests have all stopped two weeks before, other than some possible hunters, all they are likely to take here are some pheasant or rabbit, the boys tend to get most of the larger game.” She paused then continued “Take the upstairs room in the left wing, the fire has been going and the room won’t be so cold. Freshen up, then come back down in an hour or so after you’ve unpacked. Helen and Adam’s rooms had a Franklin stove which was about to die down but was quickly topped back up and the vents shuttered to slow the fire. Also, the rooms were full of bunk beds with a curtain that could be drawn through the middle. After unpacking and making their beds Helen and Adam returned to the main of the pub and found the stable lad peeling potatoes. Don said “help me with the potatoes if you want dinner. What brought you over the pass so late? I thought I’d lost that bet on the barn”. Helen started in on her story of Heather missing, to which Mrs Schott grew pale then spoke “That man is now calling himself Roger, it was strange coming through the passes so late with a rabbit of all things, when I offered to cook it, he turned angry and said “not after everything I’ve gone through to get it”. His horse was worn out, but he only stayed one night even though both of them looked like thy needed more time, we offered room and board for work but he insisted on being on his way. He ate like a wolf in winter, we should have charged him double but thought better of it knowing we had plenty to spare”. Mrs Schott continued “when we asked where he was heading and what was his reason, he answered Seaside but wouldn’t say much other than he had to catch a ship, wouldn’t say which one though or where to. Don then said “He left only yesterday but I’m afraid he will make better time. With the rains the “road” to Seaside will have numerous washouts and a horse is much better for that sort of travel than a buggy bouncing over ruts and channels. We can load you down with more provisions, the only advantage you have is “Roger” is running light with nothing but a loaf of bread as of yesterday, slow and steady with better feeding of yourself and horse might be faster in the end. We will settle up with your dad, he has an account with us to handle some of the grain and fruit shipments out of Seaside. It won’t be much anyways, one night, room and board, as well as stabling isn’t too much of a burden on us, although…now that I think of it you could help us with something, before you leave, and the stay will be no charge. I know that would please your father, he is a mighty hard negotiator, it’s almost like he was the one who sewed and reaped”. Mrs. Schott looked like she had exactly the same thought. She looked up and said “we need a solid number on how much cheese to ship over the pass to your town, I don’t want a repeat of what happened in Seaside, we brought in too few cheese wheels, then people bought them up at higher prices and would only sell them overpriced to people who missed the market that day, so when we send the first wagon train over the pass in Spring how many cheese wheels should we send?

1. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D.8 Don then spoke up “Each cheese wheel weighs 20 kilograms, your average person will eat a quarter kilogram of cheese per day for 180 days. We will make two trips over the pass for the year, one in Spring and one in Fall. All you need to do is calculate the right amount of cheese, so we don’t waste it or run short”. Fortunately, Helen had been at the census which was a duty of Stephen, and he had used the time as another opportunity to tutor her and build an accurate town count. Helen thought “who would have thought that stuffy old teacher would be good for something in these travels?” Stephen had settled upon a number of 1056 permanent town residents and another 944 that regularly came for church and market, although he constantly complained about how the number was fluctuating with new births, people moving into town, and sadly those people “called to their forefathers”. He guessed his count was right for about 5 minutes, but it was the best they had without hiring a fulltime census taker and wasting tax in constant tabulation. Round the permanent town residents and regular visitors to the nearest hundred before solving.
   1. If the answer is incorrect, the town of Mistral goes short on its cheese, everyone in town is angry with Princess Helen, they think she was trying to control the market of the cheese and make more money for Father. Even though she recovered Heather, townspeople revolt after her return, evict Papa and Helen, and keep Heather for the prosperity the Rabbit brings.
      1. Picture of Papa and Helen taking the buggy into exile as they depart Zephyr, a guard holds a spear pointed at Papa.

A picture containing text

Description automatically generated

* 1. If the answer is correct the narrative progresses correctly to the next chapter.
     1. A wagon full of cheese wheels arrives at the gate of Zephyr.

Map

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Don exclaims “2000 people now! Mrs Schott, didn’t you say when you were a girl the shipments to Mistral and Provence fit on one wagon? At this rate we may need a full time wagon running to keep them supplied. Well as Mr Schott says, better too many customers than not enough”. After the calculations Helen visited Sparky, the horse was well groomed but she brushed Sparky anyways, given the horse enjoyed it and that Helen and Adam were very dependent upon this beast. Sparky, grew impatient and moved around avoiding the brushing, after stopping Sparky kicked the stable door and Helen let her return to corral where a younger foal was. The two started playing, and Helen’s worries about the fitness of her horse evaporated. If Sparky was this playful after a day of oats, alfalfa, and hay then they had no need to worry about pulling up lame someplace. When Helen returned to the farmhouse it had transformed, the farmers and milkmaids all returned, their fore arms were very strong from the constant milking, and the Pub room was now loud with numerous conversations. She picked up parts here and there “we finished two more walls on the outer paddocks, that will give the cows more field, may be able to push up the milk per day another 100 liters or so” “that bull has it in for me, every time I cut through his field he chases me, makes me want to be a matador” “I hope you practiced the fiddle some more, the last dance you sounded like a dying cat”. The last order of business for the night was to pack up everything not needed, in the buggy to make a quick start in the morning. That night Helen and Adam slept the sleep of the just. The gnawing hunger and exhaustion at the turns of walking with Sparky had left them more tired than they thought, but the rest of a warm clean bed and a grand farmer’s dinner made for a quick recovery.

The morning came, and Helen was surprised to see the Sun up so far, the rooster had woken them, but both Helen and Adam had slept in accidentally. She was angry because she wanted to hurry along, and be on the road at first light, they’d missed two hours at least, probably 3 by the time they could leave. As she dressed, brushed her teeth and hair, she worried that she was losing ground on that bandit Gallagher or was it Roger now? Helen and Adam skipped stairs rushing down, then were brought up by the breakfast waiting them and seeing Sparky outside eating from a feedbag. There was porridge, pancakes with butter, and of course a pitcher of milk. They ate in a hurry but left the table full. Mrs Schott smiled and said “that’s the way we do it here, break fast like a king, lunch like a prince, and supper like a pauper! That way you’re mind and body are ready for hard work or problem solving, and you don’t go to fat in your sleep. You won’t be hungry for a while now and your quarry is probably not doing so well, the next stop along the way is the terrace farm project, and they are just starting out. In fact, drop one of the cheese wheels with them on the way, the other two wheels go to the constabulary at Seaside’. Helen looked at the buggy and it was even more heavily loaded than departing Mistral. Fortunately, the rest of the trip would be downhill until they reached Seaside. Sacks of oats hung from the outer luggage rack, along with three giant cheese wheels tied down. There was no longer room for Adam and Helen inside the buggy not that the springs would be sure to handle two passengers plus all the supplies. As Helen went to walk beside Sparky and pulled away the feed sack, Adam had jumped back in the coach’s seat and cracked the whip in the air. Sparky started with enthusiasm and Helen could see how the stop at the Dairy had set them all up right. As they said their goodbyes Mrs Schott gave one last piece of advice, use those last two cheese wheels at Seaside, the hotel you want is the Shepherds cabin, it’s an ironic name, it’s pretty nice but more importantly it’s safe and trustworthy and right by the city precinct and government district. As far as I can tell the city police are pretty trustworthy, when some rustlers stole a cow, the police found who butchered it, and we were paid back a portion on it.”

As the party continued to the West the road slowly descended, at first more stone walled fields of pasture lined the road, but after a bit the fields turned to forest with breaks in the towering trees where the Schott farm or some other enterprise had cut one down. As the sun rose to it’s peak sometimes they would see a beam illuminating a spot deep in the dark woods. In a glade, they saw an Elk bull and cow. Adam said “this is a good sign, seeing the hart of the forest means we are on the right path, that’s what the legends say anyways, this forest is much thicker than the East face since most of the rain falls on this side, I would get tired of the constant rain though. I like it compared to the scrub pine of the East face, the only benefit on the East face is the pine smell. We’re going to have an easier time finding water as well. Don’t forget to use a half glass of wine per liter to sterilize the water. You must wait 30 minutes after treating it though.” After an hour of the road passing through the trees they reached the first washout. Two logs with planks made a bridge but a flood must have come at some point because the two logs and planks were thrown sideways. The floor of the bridge was now 90 degrees in the air. Fortunately, out in the woods but visible from the road was a downed tree spanning the rush of water. Adam guided the process. First Helen and Adam started portaging the supplies on their back by way of the log and back to the distant side of the road. After several hours of trying to wrestle 20 kilogram cheese wheels over a slippery log they completed this task. Next they used a rope to pull the buggy across the freshet which held up quite well, they were thankful that the buggy was designed for wet weather, the seats materials were all impermeable and there were drain holes in the floor to let the water quickly drain. The final step was leading Sparky across the log. Sparky true to form, did not shy away at the new experience, however with the broad chest and shoulders of the horse Sparky’s hooves tended to step wider than human feet, after stepping too wide and balking they thought better of this approach and took Sparky to cross the stream. It was nerve racking to watch the beloved horse in the rocks and strong water but after a mad scramble Sparky triumphantly drew up the rocky gulch and was rewarded with a carrot, apples being out of season. Helen said to Adam “I hope this is the worst washout we cross, this probably slowed down Gallagher even without the buggy. Hopefully he was soaked in the water and has hypothermia, maybe we will find him around the next turn.” Adam responded “hopefully”, and they continued their journey. As they descended the trees seemed to grow even taller then Adam commented to Helen “can you imagine how hard it is to put each field into pasture up at the Schott’s? They must have a small mill to cut out planks for the barns and house, that farm is practically a small town all on it’s own. Digging up the stumps too must be back breaking, pick axe, spade, and breaker bar work, then finally after you cut a hundred trees and uproot a hundred stumps, you can start pulling the stones to the outside to make the wall to keep the cows in. I wonder how many years they’ve been up there doing this”. As Helen and Adam talked they followed the road around a ridgeline and were met with a magnificent view. Twinkling in the distance was the sea with the sun approaching the horizon, sunset was coming fast, and the land sloped more steeply here downward, further on they could see what looked like some type of work camp. A series of A frames made from whole logs faced out from the steep hill with a flat patio in front of each. What looked like narrow roads radiated out from the camp but all of them ran perpendicular to the slope of the mountain on the same elevation, and they petered out in the distance. Drystacked stone walls supported each of the roads. Helen smiled and said “this must be the terrace farms the Schott’s told us about, they’re magnificent, like giant’s steps!”. As they approached the camp large fires were being made in front of each of the A frames, the people were wrapping large wet leaves around potatoes, vegetables, and corn then throwing them on the fire to cook. It was very rustic, there were no glass windows and only thick wooden shutters and doors on the A frames, one of the doors was open and Adam saw that the A Frame attached to a tunnel, the patios were each fill from excavating into the mountain. A short man, wiry man approached and said “late in the season for travelers” this seemed to be a recurring theme. “We’re hoping to avoid a snow down here but the rains will still be very cold, and our bedding situation could be better, the A Frames are dry and secure if you’d care to sleep there tonight but we have no blankets or beds for you, did you come from the Schott farm?” Helen replied “of course, and they said one of these wheels is yours”, she was excited to be rid of it as a lighter load could be helpful in going faster. The wiry man looked up brightly “the Schott’s inspired this idea, the step farm that is, they started 40 years back with a 5 cows and a bull on a tiny pasture they barely had enough to feed the cows, lean times from what they said. We asked the Mayor in Seaside for a permit to stead the land up there with another dairy farm but they said no, the forest had to be kept for ship stores, but we don’t quit easy. We thought some more and asked about the steep land where only a few trees held on and were stunted by wind. That jackass of a Mayor laughed and said good luck to you scrambling around on those cliff edges, he’s not laughing now though, he pretends this was all his idea, we’ve been at this five years now. Lost a few to accidents, it’s certainly not the safest work and we’re always trying to figure out the right proportion of stone wall to… then he stopped, I apologize, we lose our manners up here, you’re a guest bringing a gift and we haven’t even sorted out dinner yet for you”. To this Adam said “thank the Schotts, it’s their cheese they sent you”. The wiry fellow then said “by the way I’m Jim, but really this food isn’t charity, we take turns going up to dairy to help out with walls or milking and the Schotts pay us in cheese. Typically, it’s a good fit and we’ wouldn’t have gotten as far as we have without them, you’re the only person who helped here out of your heart, you brought us the cheese without even asking about the payment.” Helen was becoming hungry and said “not to be abrupt, but could we have some of your vegetables and have you seen a man travelling on a single horse, carrying a rabbit?” The wiry fellow then said “do you always start a conversation that way?” Then he guffawed, and said “I haven’t even introduced myself properly yet. My name is Peter but call me Pete, of course we will share dinner young lady, in fact you may make yourself some” while he pointed at a pile of potatoes and vegetables then another pile of the leaves. By now smaller members of the community were arriving and curious about Sparky, and even more so, the marvelous the buggy. Pete then said, “we did see a fellow carrying a rabbit, I offered to cook it up for him but he kept on his way after eating some potatoes while sitting in the saddle. He was here yesterday morning”. This confirmed to Helen that they were losing ground. At this point Adam and Helen looked at each other knowingly, realizing they needed to make up lost time but Pete noticed this as well. He said “I know you are in a hurry young lady, but I do have one urgent question for you before you leave. We had a recent collapse on a terrace, fortunately no one was hurt. Being from the low lands of Seaside we have no experience in building terraces, and now I’m worried our construction may have been shoddy. This work is meant for generations and it would break my heart to learn in my old age that all these years of toil were upon a flawed design. You live in a castle in Mistral so I’m hoping you can help us.” Helen initially balked at providing such important engineering advice but through conversation she soon learned that her limited work on the masonry team at Mistral did give her more experience than anyone else present.

1. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.C.7 Pete tells Helen, we’re using dry stacked stone for the terrace walls and after the last collapse were changing the terrace heights to every 1 meter. It will make for narrow planting areas but it is still plenty of space for one person to till, plant, and reap. Besides if anyone falls down it will be a lot less painful than going over the edge and 5 meters down. Helen recalled that Joseph the court astrologer had been inspecting the retaining walls at the castle while construction was underway. He had come from the hanging gardens as a youth and had built the walls until he realized he enjoyed his studies far more than the fitting dry stone walls together like an eternal jigsaw puzzle. Joseph insisted that the retaining wall be ¼ the ratio of the height, in width of stone, if you wanted to be certain it would last indefinitely. Furthermore, the dry stone was preferable as it allowed drainage rather than creating a dam, blocking the water and overloading the stone. How many centimeters thick must the stone portion be to retain a one meter tall wall?
   1. If Helen answers incorrectly, she hears of a terrible land slide where the terraces collapsed down the mountain. People recall the young Princess’ advice and come demanding restitution. A court is created between Seaside and Mistral for the trial and they find Princess Helen guilty of the landslide and sentenced to repair the terraces. It takes many years and she misses her family over the holidays.
      1. Picture of Helen stacking stones on the edge of a landslide.



* 1. If Helen answers correctly, the narrative progresses towards the rescue of Heather.
     1. Picture of beautiful short terraces stacked up to 30 high, and a mule pulling a plow on one.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Following answering Pete’s question, Helen and Adam have dinner and everyone takes turns washing up at the waterfall. The night is cold and the water even colder, first the boys go then the girls. After changing into dry clothing Adam and Helen are taken to one of the A frames. The darkness is difficult to adjust to especially knowing the terraces drop off. The night is cloudy so the walk is pitch black. Pete guides then into the A frame and says, “I know this is rustic, but that is all we have here, I can see what it will be like for my children and children’s children, it will be a beautiful vista of the ocean with endless strips of farms almost like bands or steps. The A frames will have been carved so far back that there will be separate houses for everyone and we will start growing grapes to make wine for sale to distant areas, definitely to the port of Seaside for the sailors. That’s what we are building here, to give our children something permanent. Before you go to sleep, I apologize that all we have are these mats, I wanted to tell you that I wasn’t sure of you. I thought you would be petty and spoiled but I see that even the nobility of Mistral are noble. You can always come here if you’d like, I wish you good luck in your Rabbit hunt and wanted to say that Roger, while he ate bragged that his cousin’s ship is far better than this “hovel”, he said the ship’s name is the Argenter. If you stop at the Cape fear river you may be able to travel by riverboat to Seaside. The boats are large enough to take the buggy on as well. You will need to portage but I think that will catch you back up to that bandit. Goodnight and Godspeed, if I don’t see you in the morning”

Despite the spartan conditions the party all slept well again, the stone floor with nothing but mats and warm blankets were not conditions one would expect to find a Princess in, but there you have it, and exhaustion helps to make for the deepest sleep. In the morning a fog on mountain valleys was gloomy, but the kids told Helen not to worry, the fog clears as soon as the sun passes the mountain top. Pete was there again and offered roasted vegetables from the night before for breakfast and moved off with a quick and sure pace to the masonry work after a quick goodbye and handshake. Adam and Helen departed in the fog on the switchback road descending the steep part of the mountain. The mist quickly melted away as the sun crested the Eastern ridgeline and the Sea again sparkled in the distance. It was strange to know that Seaside was at least another 80 kilometers away but seemed so close they could touch it, through the clear skies. The road was well maintained here and showed signs of diligent repair. As conversation petered out they saw a waterfall in the distance and as they stared at it in a lazy stupor of steady walking, Helen and Adam were jarred back to the wakefulness by a sharp order “Get out of the buggy! We’re road agents and we have you covered!” Two stocky men with bows and hatchets stepped from behind the tree. To Adam and Helen’s eyes they looked like simple bandits. They both were stocky and of medium height, one with dark hair and intelligent eyes, the other with light hair. The dark haired one said “finally one that can pay the road tax, all we’ve had lately are terrace farmers and that stranger with his rabbit. None of them have two coppers to rub together”. Adam spoke up, “you two look like a couple of common bandits, how do we know you aren’t going to rob us of everything, and drop are bodies in the woods? I bet I can get one of you before those arrows finish me off”. The fair haired one replied “if you could shake our hands you’d know we’re the road agents, we’re brothers and we’re the ones who fixed the road you’ve been riding. Our hands tell the story that it’s true we’re tasked to maintain this stretch, but I’m not shaking hands with someone who already threatened us. Keep heading down and we will follow with the bows. Up ahead is the toll house and we will settle up there. You’re going to pay your fair share or else my name isn’t Will”. The two bows at their backs made for a tense ride but it ended shortly at a flat space on the mountain. A very small cabin of very rough hewn timbers and a stone chimney was the tollhouse. Adam laughed “ this isn’t a tollhouse, it’s a shack, and you are robbers” too this the dark haired one said, “not all of us are so spoiled we can travel by buggy, this was the best work we could get after our ship broke up on the sholes, no one would hire us after that, they said we were a pair of Jonahs. The chief of police found us this job, but there was a lot he didn’t tell us. I guess it’s better than begging, but just barely. We had no transport, carried our pioneer tools the whole way up here, and ran out of provisions in a week. Seaside doesn’t send us anything. We’re still doing repairs but most of our time is now spent on hunting, foraging, and gardening. If it wasn’t for the Schott farm, the terrace farmers, and the travelers we’d have starved out long ago. That wheel of cheese will do nicely to cover the road tax”. Silence falls as Helen is posed with the question of whether or not to argue against it. Adam looks at Helen and asks “Princess, should we give the wheel of cheese to these “good” men and lighten our load or should we keep it as the Schott’s asked for delivery at Seaside?”. Helen can’t help but notice the road crew are better fed than the terrace farmers, and well muscled, presumably from the work with spade, axe, and stones.

1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.R1.3.1 Does Helen give the cheese wheel to the road crew or argue against it?
   1. If Helen gives the cheese wheel away, when Helen arrives in Seaside the police chief comes out to introduce himself and offer help. After introductions he says “I think you have something for delivery to me, the Schott’s should have sent a large cheese wheel along with you to us. When Helen explains that she gave it away to the road crew she senses the Police Chiefs’ disappointment, and he says “that’s too bad, we divide that up for the officers, and it’s the only dairy we get down here in Seaside, we have plenty of fish but no milk or cheese for my policemen.” No matter who she asks for assistance in Seaside they brusquely send her away and she is unable to find Gallagher/Roger.
      1. Picture of Helen giving cheese wheel to the two road crew.

A picture containing text, doll

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* 1. If Helen says no then the narrative progresses toward the rescue of Heather.
     1. Picture of the two road crew, on the side of the road, gesturing for Helen, Adam and Sparky to go through.

Diagram

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Helen looks at the two men and her eyes become cold and expressionless, she says “perhaps my father in the next caravan from Mistral will send a letter to your supervisors in Seaside asking why the road crew are acting as toll men.” The two road crew look away from the cheese and back at Helen, the light haired one puts his floppy hat back on his head then says “no offense meant lady, it simply requires a hearty breakfast to keep this road in repair, the rocks for cobbling the road don’t move themselves and the fill for washouts is heavy”. Helen responded saying “how you are paid is between your employer in Seaside and yourself, the road is in good repair so perhaps a pay raise is in order, you should address this with the officials there, instead of with us, here.” As Adam, Sparky, and Helen depart she hears the light haired one say “you’d think she had worked the dairy herself”.

After the unpleasant negotiation Helen was disappointed that she couldn’t help them as she wished, but she also didn’t want to forego the task the Schott’s asked after they had helped so much. The mood lightened when Sparky defecated to say goodbye in her own way to the road crew. Adam then said “you can’t please everyone Princess, and some that wish to be pleased don’t deserve it anyways. In my town we had a town wood stack that was kept near the town hall, which ironically was cold all the time except the Christmas and New Year’s party. There was a tax where all the young men of the town had to cut and split the wood, which then was sold by the town clerk, or in rare cases donated to the elderly. The town clerk, although a young man also was never seen chopping wood. This must have forewarned the new Mayor that something was wrong in the accounting of the wood pile. The clerk was famous for accusing the young workers of shirking and failing to meet the proper allotment to cover their tax. The mayor was not an official who looked at his position as a benefit, but instead viewed it through the lens of duty. He was also famous for his intolerance of those who broke trust, with himself or others. The clerk who was a large man, and had grown accustomed to always having his preference was very disagreeable to the Mayor when he insisted upon seeing the ledger. After being put off, the mayor returned the next Sunday when all of the town was in for Church and following service asked the young men to come as witness to the clerk’s office, even the police chief came. The clerk was enraged, but town opinion had turned against him in the years of his tenure, he was shoved aside while the Mayor and two town councilmen reviewed the ledger. It was poorly maintained and provided no clarity as to if embezzlement was happening, or even if anyone had completed their season tax quota. The fraud was only uncovered by sending to the nearby register of deeds, it was discovered that the clerk had been purchasing quantities of land that were unaffordable on a clerk salary. The town was able to claim the lands for it’s own, and leased to nearby farmers to reduce the cost of the tax burden.” Adam concluded “That’s a long way of saying that those who have the most to hide, often are the most demanding”.

Helen then wondered how Heather was doing and if Gallagher had gained time on them or not. Her party was constantly slowed by the buggy, and the frequent meetings of people on the road provided useful information and supplies but also time to Gallagher. If Gallagher reached Seaside and travelled by ship it would be very difficult to catch up to him in the next port. As the day progressed the state of the road worsened further from the road crew. Nothing was insurmountable but Sparky frequently needed to be assisted to pull the buggy over a washout or a deadfall blocking the way. The deadfalls were fortunately smaller trees and could be chopped out of the way through turns by Adam and Helen wheeling the hatchets. At one deadfall, while resting on her turn Helen noticed horse tracks going off the road, around the deadfall and then coming back into the road on the lower side. She wondered how long ago Gallagher and Heather had passed. With a little luck she would capture him in Seaside. The path flattened out as the departed the hills, they passed abandoned farmhouses and fields lying fallow. The occasional corn stalk grew from these fields and Helen forayed out to pick corn for Sparky who enjoyed the snack as they progressed. Finally approaching a bridge they were heartened to see a group of farmers at a low slung stone bridge. Most of them were below resting their feet in the water and some were rinsing their sweaty clothes out while others passed refreshments around. One fellow looked up, with an expression of surprise but otherwise Helen’s party passed without event. They could see that the population was increasing as active farms soon passed by as well as mills on the river. Eventually the town of laFayette came into view, the town had grown past it’s walls and it was split by the river. laFayette was famous as the place where the boatmen travelled their barges carrying loads of grain down to Seaside, and dried fish or other imports up from the port city into the interior. The boatmen used giant oxen for the ride upstream and long poles as well as the current to navigate downstream with the heavy loads of grain. Upon reaching the town wall a guardsman stopped them and asked “what is your business here?” Helen responded, I am searching for robber named Gallagher who stole the town mascot from Mistral, over the mountains”. The guardsmen stared briefly, obviously surprised by the unusual reason, then called back “Sergeant! I am sending these people to you” as he gestured for Helen’s party to come through the gate and pointed at the second guard. As the Sergeant approached he remarked “and another odd immigrant. What brings you to laFayette” After explaining again the Sergeant looked surprised and stated “not a day ago we had a hard worn traveler on a hungry horse pass through this gate carrying a rabbit. When we asked his business he said none, just passing through. But assuming he took the road you may have a chance to catch him. The riverboats depart daily, assuming he took the road you’d think he would travel faster, but the road is much longer than the river, he didn’t look well fed and was dirty, and even his horse was showing signs of exhaustion.

1. CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.3.OA.D8 Does Helen book passage on a riverboat or follow on the road? The road to Seaside is 93 kilometers (much further than the river which is 72 kilometers given that the road detours a large swamp). A man on a horse usually makes 31 kilometers per day, if he’s worn out like Galagher, but the riverboats travel 2 kilometers per hour, all day long. Gallagher came to the gate only 4 hours ahead of Helen’s party. How much earlier will Helen arrive, assuming she catches the riverboat departing now?
   1. If Helen answers incorrectly then she fails to catch him on the road, the buggy is a little slower than one man on a horse. Helen’s party arrives at Seaside but the trail goes cold. No one has seen Gallagher and after a week of searching she realizes there is no further information to go on, so they start the long disappointing trek back to Mistral without Heather. They are delayed even longer, waiting for Spring to be able to cross High pass.
      1. Picture of a letter telling Helen she has searched to long for Heather and she must come home, signed by Papa.

Text, letter

Description automatically generated

* 1. If Helen answers correctly (37.5 hours) the story continues on unimpeded.
     1. Picture of Helen riding on the river barge pulled by an oxen, and Sparky in the bow looking over the edge at the passing forest.

A group of people riding camels

Description automatically generated with low confidence

The river boat was long and shallow and named the Sardine (for the dried fish it often carried upstream), it was only 6 feet deep and 4 feet above the water (to avoid grounding on the shallow parts of the river) but it was still spacious, enclosed, and carried up to 30 tons of grain. A space in the back was open and typically reserved for moving livestock but is only filled with more grain on this voyage, and a space is left for Sparky and the buggy. Helen and Adam sleep outside given there is only one tiny cabin and that is reserved for the crew. The way seems terribly slow as Helen watches the trees and fields slowly slip past. The men steadily poll the long boat downstream and Helen falls asleep to the sounds of the river and the starscape. To pass the time and avoid worrying about Gallagher and Heather the two of them played cards and Helen wrote a letter to papa. Also the boatmen lent the fishing polls to Adam and Helen. With a little tutoring on how deep to fix the bobber and hook they caught numerous catfish, several sunfish, and a beautiful trout using worms as bait. Sadly the mascot (Hopper the cat) ate the sunfish and the crew informed Helen they had a tradition of giving the work crews cutting the canal straight through the river’s loops any trout, since the work was very hard and it cut the voyage from what would be 150 kilometers to the much shorter 65 kilometers now, it was a little way of showing their appreciation. Also, the engineering party had the job of removing any trees blocking the canal and dredging silt. Needless to say everyone from the farmers to the boatmen respected the engineers for the hard work they did, and the fact it kept commerce flowing. Everyone from farmers, to fishermen, to boatmen, to drovers would be much poorer if they couldn’t move goods efficiently to markets and buyers. Adam even took turns poling the barge and marveled that with a steady slow pressure it was possible to keep the boat on course despite it’s amazing weight. The crew remarked that they should come again in Summer, and Adam could build his experience and become a true boatman. Also, the fireflies were worth seeing and you could swim anytime you felt hot. Although there were some predators to worry about.

Given this relaxed atmosphere Helen forgot her concerns but soon enough she saw more signs of civilization, stone bridges crisscrossing the river became more frequent. The farms became denser on the side of the river, with fewer spaces of forest and even in a few stands they saw teams of boatwrights building out the spine and ribs of newer riverboats, and even a brig. They also passed other riverboats carrying other goods, in one case a boat was full of pigs and chickens and they were glad to be past it. The crew made a large meal for themselves and the passengers of sausage, corn and apples for desert with the corn and sausage boiled in the same pot, the meal was finished shortly before arriving at the riverside of the Port of Seaside. Long wooden docks stretched from the shore with warehouses on some of the docks and many more on the shore. A rain had begun and the Captain of The Sardine pointed out the customs house which shared a compound with a precinct. It even included what looked like a little lighthouse but was actually a platform so the customs office could watch the traffic of the port more effectively. After pulling the buggy off the Sardine, accompanied by many stares from strong stevedores and sailors they made the quick trip to the nearby government building where they were stopped by a corporal of the guard and told to wait after a brief inspection. After a half hour the corporal was surprised to see the police chief Captain Wilson approach. He saluted, then Captain Wilson remarked “I believe you may be in possession of something from the Schott farm for us. Ah there it is, best cheese in the city there and the letter from the Schotts, the inspectors and junior officers will be glad of that.” In explanation he went on “I’m afraid that our entry pay leaves something to be desired, especially compared to the sailors and engineers, but then they are far from home longer than us, I think our jobs might be equally dangerous though, especially when we are dealing with smugglers or other criminals”. This was just the opening Helen was hoping for and she asked “I know of a criminal, in fact that is why Adam and I are here. We are tracking a thief who stole our rabbit from Mistral. This wasn’t just any rabbit, it’s Heather and she is a symbol of our prosperity, which is probably why she was stolen, either as a ransom or to bring prosperity some place else, although thinking about it, a place full of thieves will probably never have prosperity, no matter how many magical rabbits they have. There’s only one real way to prosperity and that is through long, steady, and productive work”. Captain Wilson answered “wise beyond your years, you are the Princess from Mistral right? I’ve heard good things about that region, prosperous beyond expectations, I even heard of a Princess and her buggy crashing into a fish market, but that is a side road, tell me about the robber.” After a long description of Gallagher, the theft of Heather, and their following him CPT Wilson offered to provide instructions to the gate guard to assist in the apprehension if Helen promised to bring Gallagher to the precinct after. When the three of them walked to the gate Helen met the Sergeant of the Guard first who was equipped with a chainmail shirt, a small shield on his arm, an open faced helmet, a club hanging from his belt, and in his alcove two loaded crossbows in what appeared to be perfect condition. Meeting the guard, they noticed he was identically equipped.

The next day was tedious beyond measure at the gate, and Helen grew to appreciate the importance of the gate guard. It was a slow but unforgiving, given that any crime happening in the city, but perpetrated by a criminal passing your gate might extend your duty if you were found responsible (for instance a contraband crossbow smuggled in resulted in a guard being assigned another 6 months of duty just a week ago). Many of the people coming through the gate gave a respectful nod and greeting to young man, and Helen gained the impression that most travelers were small merchants and drovers bringing product to market, just as the Sardine had done but on a much grander scale. During the day, Helen learned a lot from him. His name was David and he was a baker’s apprentice to his father although currently doing his civic duty, thank god there was no war going, probably given Seaside’s reputation of excellence in maritime arts. He was 6 months done out of a two year stint, but he was able to visit mom and dad, his girl and even many of the town dances. In fact, his father came through daily with a cart of flour for their bakery, and his Sergeant loved him given the fresh bread his father always brought when leaving for the day. As for his duty, he inspected the carts coming through the gate and reported any new persons arriving to the Sergeant, who would process them based upon their circumstances. In fact David was excited at the idea that he would be capturing a criminal today, even if it wasn’t something as serious as smuggling or murder. Even with the conversation the day stretched out and night fell, fortunately they were able to purchase something to eat from the continuous flow of carts coming through. When Helen was exasperated at the 9 hours of waiting, the sun had set, the moon had climbed and was waxing large. She saw in the distance a single rider approaching the gate. Her heart skipped a beat, could it be Gallagher? The shape and build were right. If nothing else Gallagher had been a fit man when he had masqueraded as the merchant to steal Heather. Adam and Helen left David and entered the gate to wait for the apprehension. As he came into the light of the lantern Helen peaked around the gate at her hoped for prey just as the two spoke. It was Gallagher! And he had a sack. Gallagher was thinner and trail worn, then trying to be approachable with David, Gallagher said “the mosquitos drained me as I skirted the dismal swamp. I’m surprised I even made it and didn’t leave a shriveled drained cadaver out there “ While speaking he dismounted what an exhausted Palomino horse. David said nothing in reply, then demanded Gallagher open his saddle bags and show all his supplies, last a large sack was pulled out and Helen briefly saw Heather for the first time in weeks. Adam and the Sergeant were waiting on the inside of the gate in the dark with crossbows ready. David said “you can pass with a dead pan expression.” To which Gallagher responded, you’re the first to not ask why I’m travelling with this rabbit” then lead his horse through the gate. From the dark the Sergeant said loudly “stop, hands up! I have a bow on you. You’re being detained for theft, Adam do the honors of putting the manicles on him”. The rest went perfectly, which was to be expected since Heather was returned, Helen spoiled Heather with vegetables of every type for the next day. Gallagher was sentenced to 6 months civic duty, helping to build the next wall on the ever growing city of Seaside, then returned to Mistral where he worked as a farmer, he often said that he chose Mistral because it was the town strong enough to catch him. Helen returned to the town of Mistral and her papa then had many more adventures.

Concluding Picture: Helen holding her Bunny rabbit and looking at a fire in a large stone fireplace.

A person sitting in a chair in front of a fireplace

Description automatically generated with medium confidence