

LEVELED BOOKS

The Wall



Written by Elizabeth Austin • Illustrated by Jack Voris

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Focus Question

What is the story trying to teach about conflict?

Words to Know

despise
fluently
hideous
intelligent
invade

kingdoms
paradise
regretted
ruffians

The Wall
Level S Leveled Book
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Correlation

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Once upon a time, further back than anyone can remember, two **kingdoms** got into an argument. No one could recall what it was about, for it was ages upon ages ago, but everyone was so furious about it that they decided to build a wall between their lands. It was taller than anyone could climb and longer than anyone could travel.

The wall kept the two kingdoms utterly separate, though no one could remember just why they couldn't stand to be neighbors anymore. Nonetheless, when cracks appeared in the wall, people repaired them, and when streams wore away holes under the wall, the people quickly filled them in with earth and stones. "We don't want those scoundrels from the other side coming over here," they said.





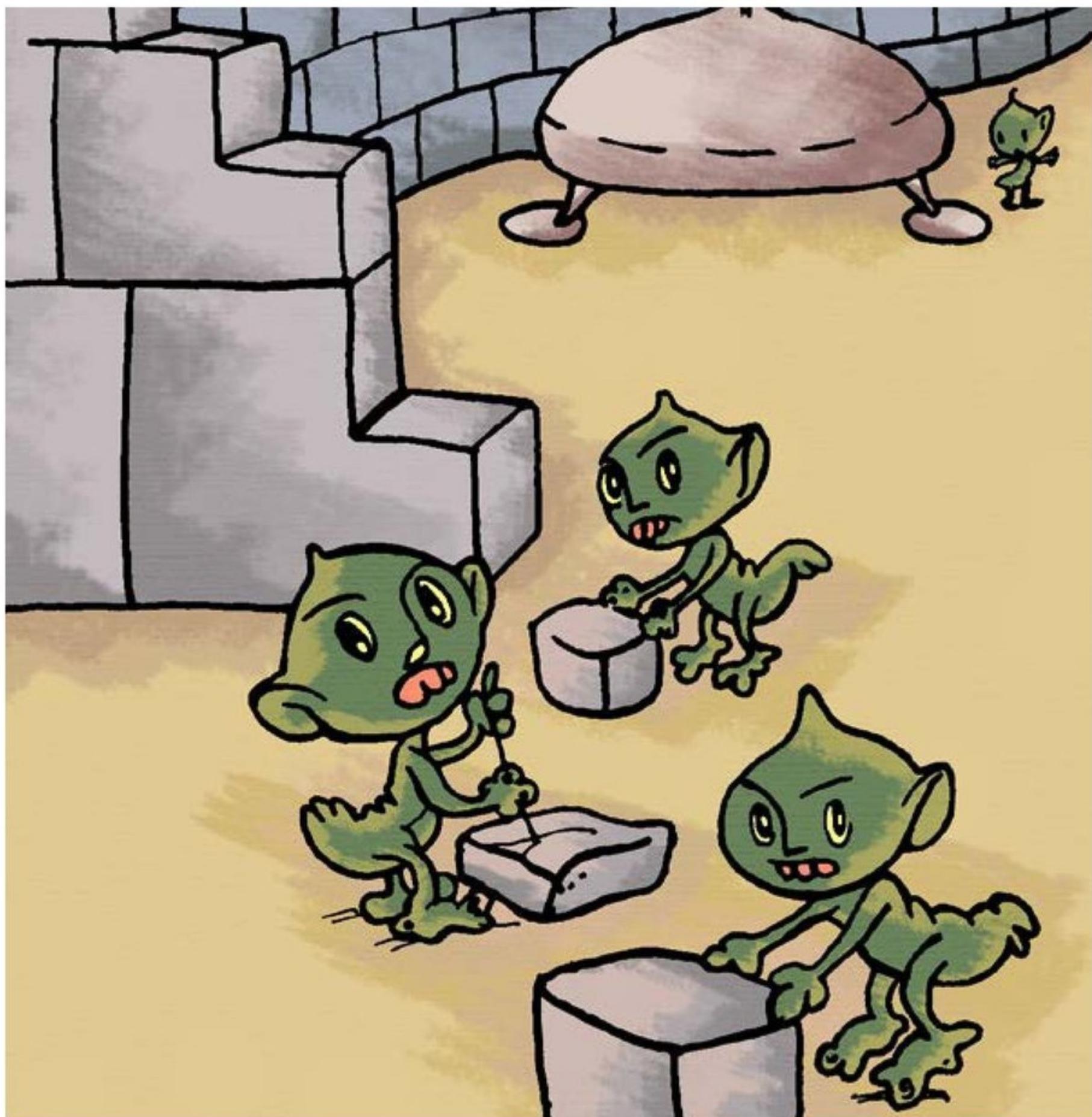
Since so much time had passed since anyone had seen the other kingdom, no one was sure what it looked like anymore. But they assumed there must be some reason for the wall being there. *There must be something about the people of that other kingdom, either good or bad, if the wall was needed to keep them out. Or is the wall there to keep us out of their kingdom?* the people wondered. Eventually, people began to tell stories about what had become of the other kingdom.



One story said that the other kingdom had bred an army of **hideous**, fire-breathing monsters. They treated the monsters very cruelly, and kept them angry all the time.

“The monsters will cross the wall and **invade** us any day now,” the people shouted. “The other kingdom is evil and cruel.”

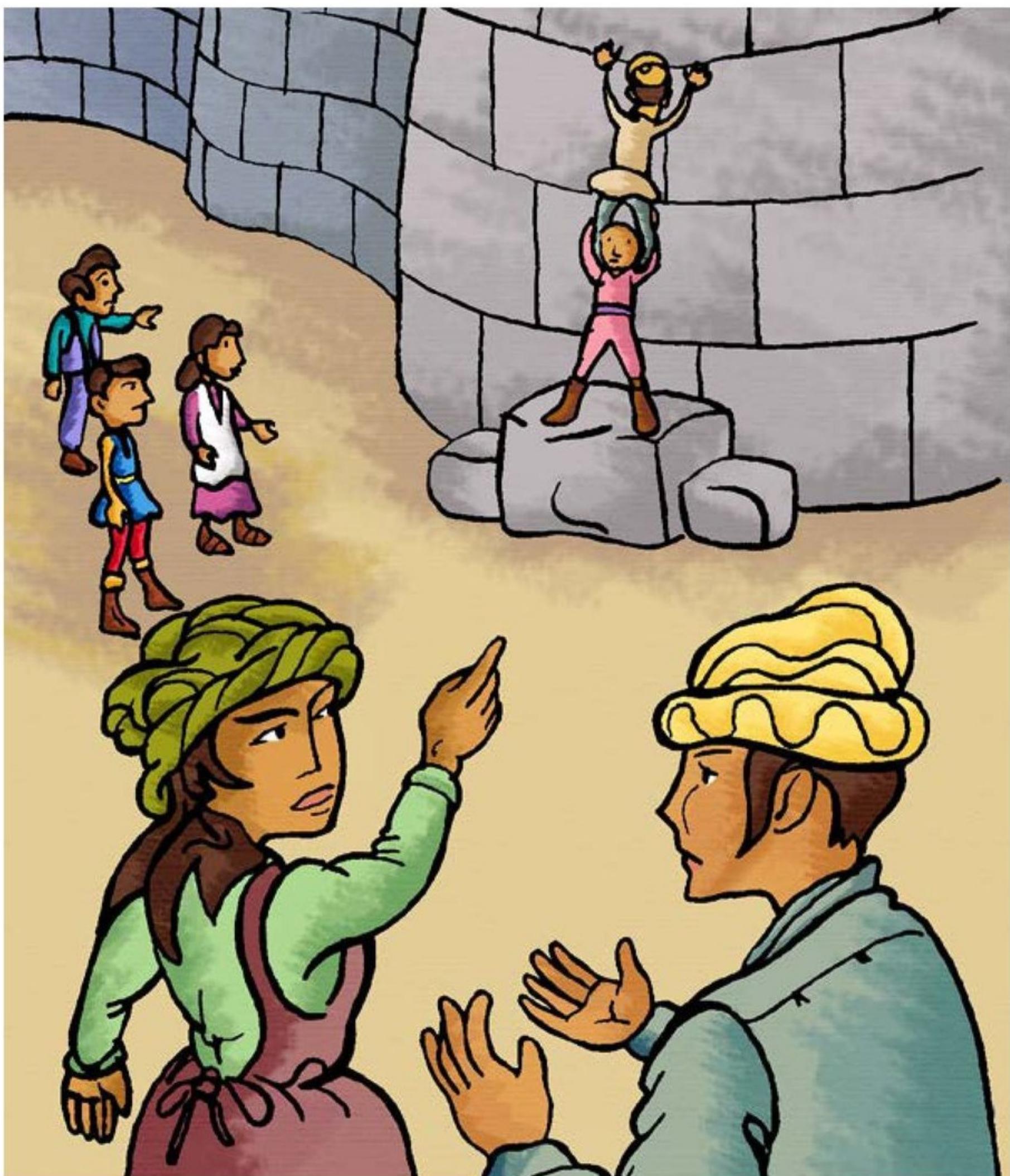
Another story said that aliens had come from the sky one day and blasted the other kingdom to powder. Then the aliens took everything that remained, loaded it on their ships, and flew away, leaving an open land. “The aliens are on our side,” said the people. “They have destroyed the other kingdom and left the land for us. The aliens are all-knowing, and they obviously proved us right about that other kingdom.”





But there was another story, one that was much more disturbing. Most people claimed that they did not believe it, but in their hearts, they wondered whether it might be true. Over the unnumbered years, the other kingdom had become a **paradise**. The streets were paved with candy, the trees were made of chocolate, and everyone was blissfully happy. “And we sit here working all day, with nothing but regular bread, meat, and vegetables to eat,” grumbled the people. “That greedy kingdom just wants to keep the paradise to themselves.”

No matter which story people told, it only made them **despise** the other kingdom more and more. “Evil attackers will come any day now!” cried some. “The supreme alien race proved that they were terrible and deserved to die,” shouted others. “They look down upon us as poor **ruffians**,” muttered others. But no one knew for sure.





But the children of the kingdom were tired of hating. "How can we hate something if we don't know what it is?" asked Richard. "I say we discover who's on the other side of the wall. Once we learn about them, maybe we can figure out what the argument was, and we might even be able to end the fight. Then we can finally get rid of this ugly old wall."

"But how would we find out?" asked Mary. "No one can see over the wall or travel around it."



"I've got it!" shouted Frederic.

"We'll buy a parrot, the smartest one in the land," explained Frederic. "We'll teach it to speak and send it over the wall with a message for the people on the other side."

“Let’s ask them why they have monsters coming to kill us,” suggested Mary.

“We can only ask them something if there’s someone to ask,” objected Richard. “But what if the aliens demolished them?”

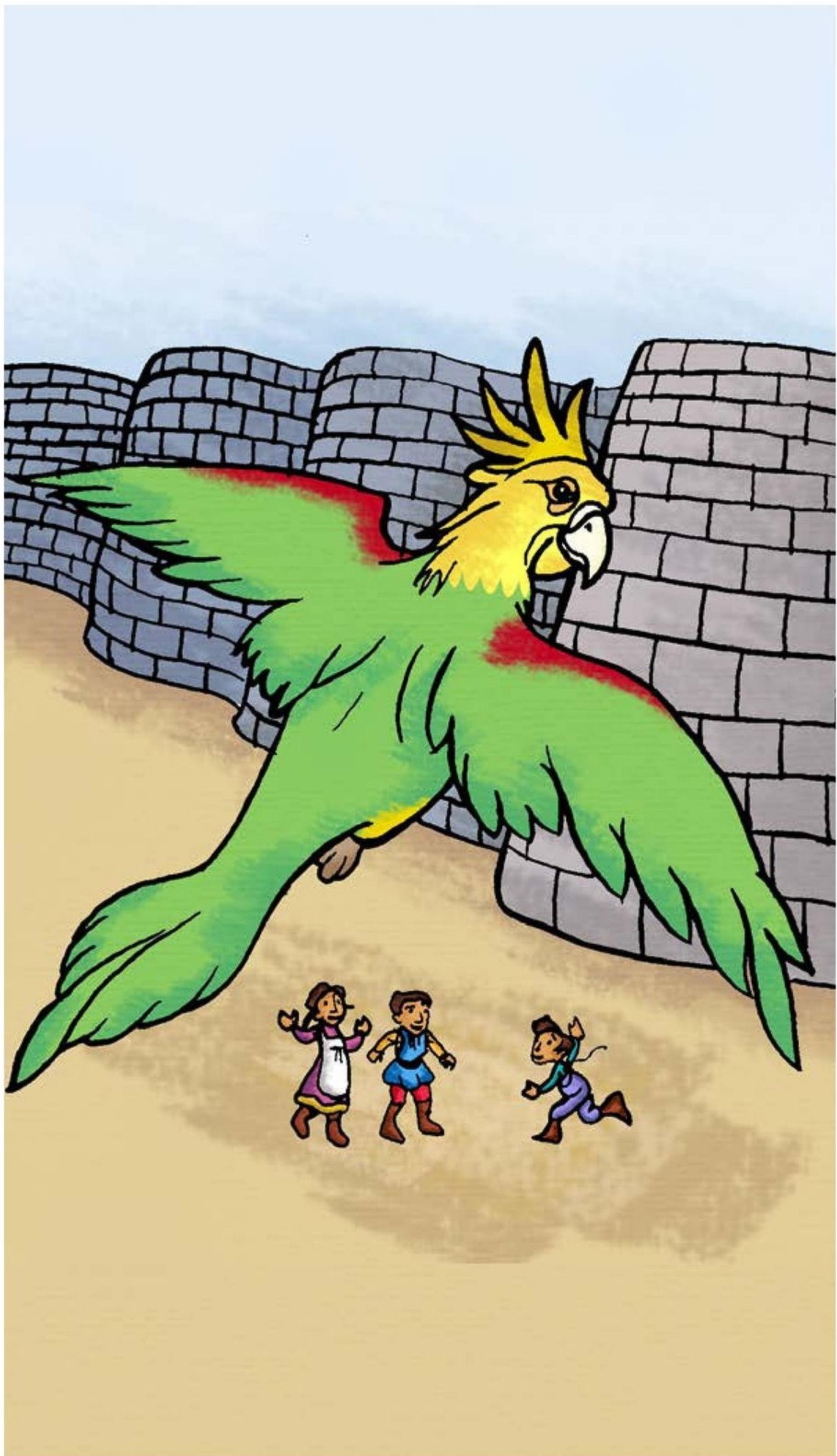
“Yeah,” said Mary, “and if it’s a perfect paradise, they’ll only shoot the parrot for being from the poor, ugly side of the wall.”

“Hold on a minute,” said Frederic. “The whole point of this is that we don’t know what’s over there. We’re sending the parrot to find out. Perhaps we should send a simple message, something like ‘Who are you?’ Then we can’t really get into trouble.”

So the three children purchased the most **intelligent** parrot they could find. In no time, it spoke **fluently**, and they sent it to see what had become of the kingdom behind the wall.

“Don’t let the other kingdom know that you come from our side,” Richard said.

“Yeah, I don’t want those people knowing who we are,” Mary said.



“They’ll only come over and kill us,” said Richard. Frederic just sighed.

But the bird was even wiser than the children supposed. It understood that the people feared and hated what was on the other side of the wall, even though they weren’t sure what it was.

Off it flew over the wall, and after three very long days, it returned.

“Tell us what you saw,” Frederic asked, anxiously.

“I saw people,” said the parrot, “and they all looked very sad. I flew down into a tree and listened to them. They said they **regretted** ever having the argument, and they wished they had never built this wall. They only hoped that they could be friends with your kingdom again.”

The children were astonished and a little ashamed. They had never suspected that the people on the other side of the wall might want to be friends.

"Send a message to the other kingdom," Mary said, quickly. "Tell them that we want to be friends, and that we're also really sorry about the argument, whatever it was."





The parrot seemed to wink to itself. You see, it had already told the other kingdom that the children were sending a message asking for peace. The people there were just like the people in this kingdom—they did not know what lay beyond the wall, but they hated it anyway. The other kingdom had been as shocked and ashamed of their hatred as the children had been. In no time, the wall was gone, and the two kingdoms were friends again. They forgot all about their argument, whatever it was.

Glossary

despise (<i>v.</i>)	to dislike very much; to hate (p. 8)
fluently (<i>adv.</i>)	speaking or writing a language easily, smoothly, and correctly (p. 11)
hideous (<i>adj.</i>)	horribly ugly and revolting (p. 5)
intelligent (<i>adj.</i>)	smart or clever (p. 11)
invade (<i>v.</i>)	to enter aggressively to conquer, weaken, or injure (p. 5)
kingdoms (<i>n.</i>)	countries, states, or other communities that are governed by a king or queen (p. 3)
paradise (<i>n.</i>)	a perfect, beautiful place where people are believed to be happy forever (p. 7)
regretted (<i>v.</i>)	felt sadness or guilt (p. 13)
ruffians (<i>n.</i>)	violent, lawless people (p. 8)

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A *Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book*

Word Count: 1,040

Connections

Writing

How would you solve the problem in the story? Write a new ending for the story with your solution.

Science

Research to learn more about talking birds. Create a poster about one of the birds that includes a picture and interesting facts.

The logo for Reading A-Z features the word "Reading" in a large, bold, red sans-serif font. The letter "R" has a small sun-like icon above it with rays extending to the right. To the right of "Reading" is the letter "A-Z" in a smaller, bold, red sans-serif font.

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