

LEVELED BOOK • T

Captain Morty Commands the Sky



Written by Kathy Hoggan • Illustrated by David Opie

www.readinga-z.com



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Focus Question

How do Morty's feelings about flying
change by the end of the story?

Words to Know

abuzz
checking
descending
indicator
passengers

schedule
security checkpoint
transport
turbulence

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Level T Leveled Book

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Correlation

LEVEL T	
Fountas & Pinnell	P
Reading Recovery	38
DRA	38



The airport was **abuzz** as mice scurried frantically in every direction to catch their flights. Grandma held Dad's arm, and Morty followed them to the ticket counter. "Where are you traveling today?" a smiling agent asked, and Dad turned to Morty.

Oh, Morty thought, Dad really expects me to be in charge. He cleared his throat. "San Jose, California."

"That flight departs in one hour," she said. "May I have your tickets?"

"Yes," Morty replied while Dad handed the tickets to the agent.

She inspected the tickets. “Morty and Mabel, are you **checking** any luggage?”

“Yes,” Morty answered.

“Set them on the belt, please.”

Morty heaved Grandma’s suitcase and his Mega Mouse duffel onto the belt, and the agent put tags on the bags before the belt moved them out of sight.

“These are your boarding passes. The **security checkpoint** is around the corner, and your flight departs from Gate C33.” Morty’s paw was shaking when he took back the tickets. “Have a nice flight!” chirped the agent.

Dad walked them to a long winding line under a sign that read: *Security Checkpoint—Ticketed Passengers Only.*

Dad wrapped Morty in a hug. “You’ll do fine,” he assured. He hugged Grandma, too. “Have a good trip, Mother, and say hello to everyone for me.”



Morty guided Grandma into the line. *I haven't been this nervous since the all-state spelling bee,* he thought as his paws began to sweat.

Grandma had moved in with Morty's family years ago when she lost her eyesight. She never asked for much, but she longed to attend her granddaughter's wedding. Dad trusted Morty to accompany her. "You are to be her eyes," he had instructed.

"You know," Morty whispered to Grandma, "I'm ten and this is my first time on an airplane."

"You know," Grandma replied softly, "I am eighty-four and this is my first time, too."



Morty gulped. “Grandma, you’ve never flown before?”

“No, sweetie. This will be a first for both of us. When I was your age, we didn’t even have a car. Can you believe we will be in California tonight?”

Morty observed the other passengers as the line inched forward. When it was their turn, Morty placed Grandma’s purse on the moving belt to be scanned. Then he took off his shoes and bent to help remove Grandma’s.

“She can keep her shoes on if she’s over seventy-five,” the security officer hollered.

Morty stood and led Grandma ahead; she passed through the metal detector and waited on the other side. The officer motioned Morty through, but an alarm blared the moment he stepped forward.

“Stand over here,” the officer directed. He waved a wand over Morty’s pants pocket.
“Something in there?” he asked.



Morty pulled a paw full of coins from his pocket, the officer held out a bowl, and Morty dropped his savings in. “Now, try again,” the officer said.

This time there was no alarm. Morty scooped his money from the bowl and handed Grandma her purse. He grasped her paw hurriedly and rushed away, embarrassed.

“Grandma, do you have our tickets?”

“No, honey, I thought you had them.”

Morty panicked. “Stand right here and don’t move. I’ll be right back.”

Morty scampered back to security where the officer stood, waving the tickets in his hand. “Did you forget something?” he asked.

“Thanks! Which direction is Gate C33?” Morty tried to act as if he traveled all the time.

The officer examined the tickets and pointed Morty in the direction of his gate. “Hurry along or you’ll miss your flight.”

Morty scurried back to Grandma. “Don’t worry. I found our tickets and I know where we’re going.”

She squeezed Morty’s paw. “I knew I could count on you.”

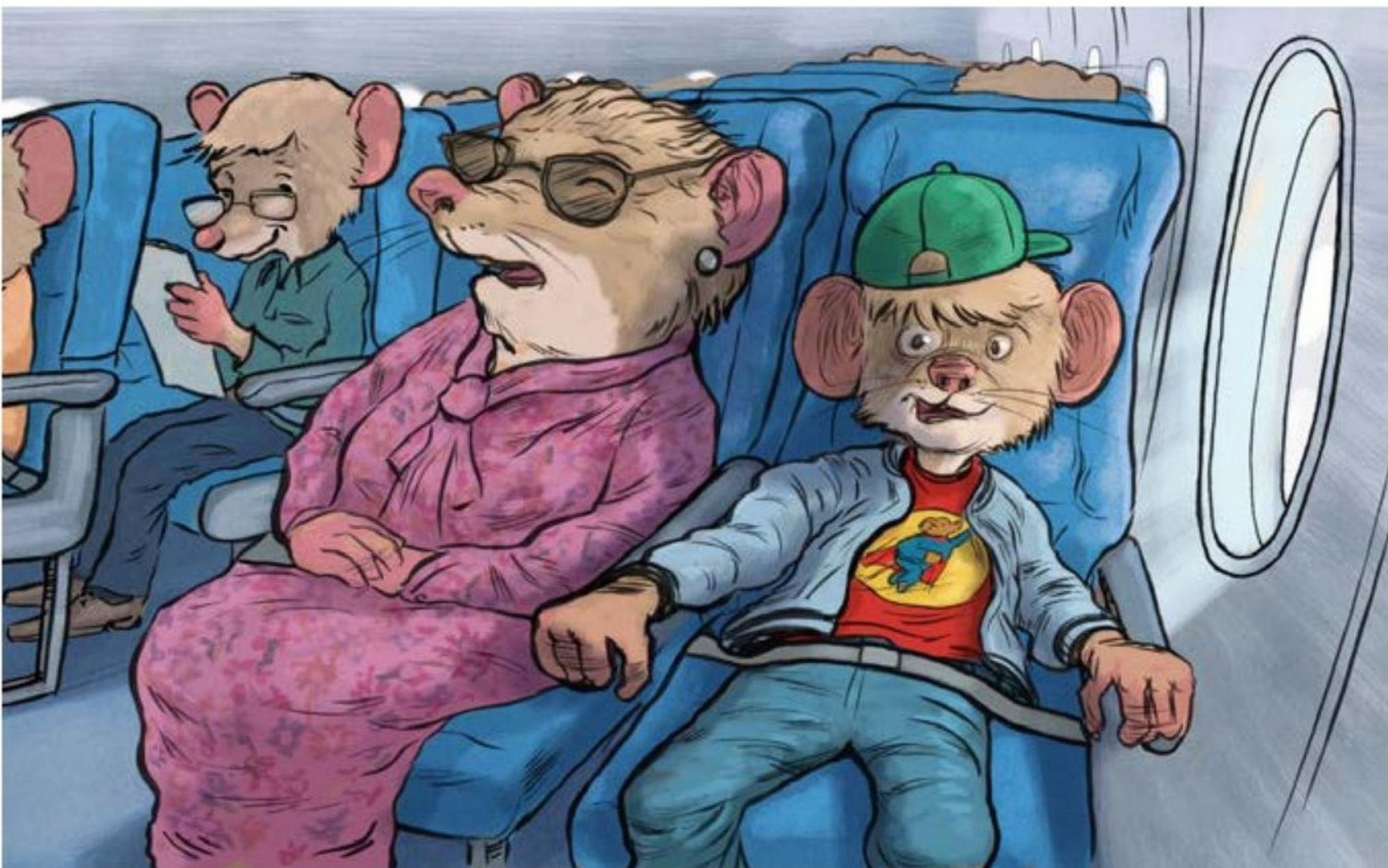
They arrived at Gate C33 right on **schedule**, and soon Morty and Grandma boarded the plane. The flight attendant helped them to their seats, where Morty buckled his and Grandma’s seat belts.



Morty clutched Grandma's paw and gazed out the window as the plane lifted off. His stomach dropped as he felt himself being pressed into the seat.



After they had been flying for a while, the flight attendant pushed a cart down the aisle of the plane, offering drinks and snacks. Morty was sipping his juice and munching peanuts when he heard growling noises coming from Grandma. She was asleep—and *snoring!* Luckily, no one seemed to notice. Some passengers were reading, a few were typing on their laptops, and others had earphones in and their eyes shut. Morty relaxed when he heard other passengers snoring, too.



I'm like Mega Mouse, flying through the clouds over millions of mice, he mused. Suddenly, the plane jolted. "The captain has asked everyone to return to their seats and fasten their seat belts. We are experiencing some turbulence," announced the flight attendant.

Morty checked his and Grandma's seat belts to make sure they were secure. The plane bumped up and down. It felt like he was riding his skateboard on gravel. *Is this what turbulence means? Is the plane going to crash?* Morty gripped the armrests. Moments later the jostling stopped, and Morty was astonished to see that Grandma was still snoozing. Soon, Morty's eyelids drooped, and he dozed off.



Grandma woke Morty. “Sugar, they just announced that we are **descending** into San Jose. Can you see anything?”

Morty looked out the window and saw thousands of little lights sparkling below; some were clustered in squares, while others formed long straight lines with moving lights between them. “I can see streets,” Morty told Grandma, “with very small cars.” The lights grew bigger as the plane approached the ground.

THUD! The plane landed and immediately slowed. Morty kept a firm grip on Grandma’s paw, just in case she was scared.

After the other passengers left, Morty got up from his seat and led Grandma forward to where the pilot stood in a crisp uniform. “Nice landing,” Morty said confidently. “Thanks for the ride!”

The pilot grinned. “My pleasure. Thank you for flying with us. Is this your first time?”

Morty had wanted her to think he was a frequent flyer who knew a good landing from a bad one. “Yes,” he admitted, “I came along to help my Grandma.”

“Looks like you’re doing a fine job,” the pilot said as she turned to the flight attendant. “Do we have wings for this flight escort?”

“Yes, Captain,” she said and presented Morty with his very own gold wings.

“Thanks!” Morty dropped Grandma’s hand to pin the wings on his jacket.





"Would you like to peek inside the cockpit?"
the pilot asked as she stepped aside.

"Wow!" Morty squeaked. There were knobs, buttons, gauges, dials, levers, and colorful **indicator** lights everywhere he looked.
"You have to be really smart to fly a plane. It isn't like Mega Mouse at all."

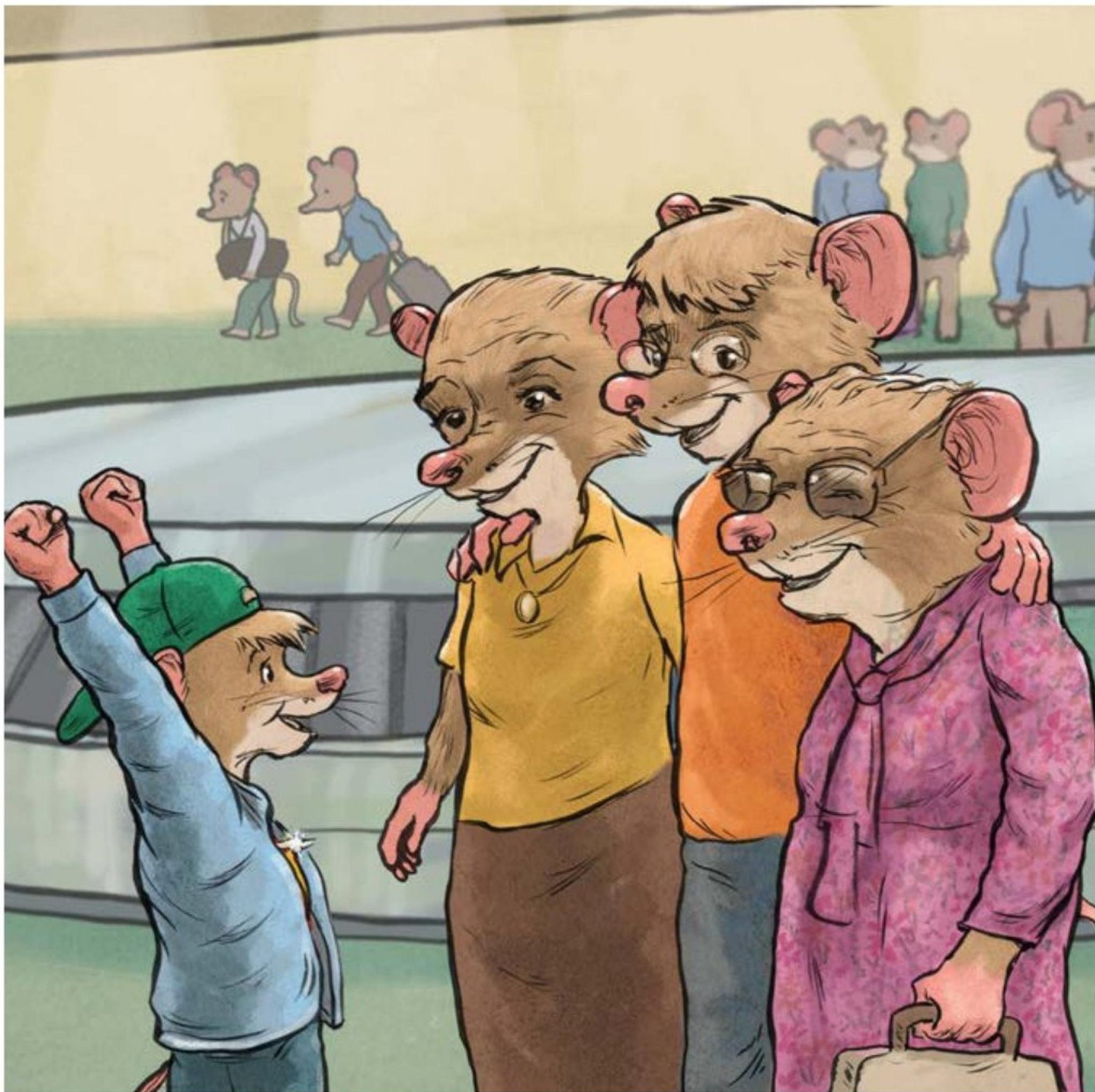
The pilot laughed. "Mega Mouse only flies himself," she said. "I have to safely **transport** 168 passengers."

Morty told Grandma what he had seen in the cockpit as they walked through the bustling San Jose airport. He guided her paw so she could feel his wings.

He remembered Dad telling him, "Just follow the *Baggage Claim* signs."

Morty was searching for their suitcases on the moving belt when he heard scampering behind him. His uncle caught him in a big hug while Grandma embraced his aunt, tears of happiness in her eyes.





"How was your trip?" his uncle asked.

"Great!" Morty said.

"What's this?" his uncle wondered, squinting at Morty's new pin. "Your first time flying, and you already earned your wings?"

Morty smiled from ear to ear and threw his paws in the air. "I am Captain Morty Mouse, commander of the skies!"

Glossary

abuzz (<i>adj.</i>)	busy with talk or excitement (p. 3)
checking (<i>v.</i>)	handing over one's ticketed luggage for loading onto a vehicle such as a plane, bus, or train (p. 4)
descending (<i>v.</i>)	moving downward (p. 11)
indicator (<i>n.</i>)	a gauge or other measurement device (p. 13)
passengers (<i>n.</i>)	people who are traveling in a vehicle, not driving or operating it (p. 4)
schedule (<i>n.</i>)	a plan that tells when and where an event or events will take place (p. 8)
security checkpoint (<i>n.</i>)	the place at a facility, such as an airport, where people are checked or searched before being allowed to move on (p. 4)
transport (<i>v.</i>)	to carry from one place to another (p. 13)
turbulence (<i>n.</i>)	sudden, violent, and irregular movements of fluids such as water or air (p. 10)

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A Reading A-Z Level T Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,272

Connections

Writing and Art

Write a letter to Morty about what to expect when traveling on an airplane.

List all the steps in sequential order and include illustrations.

Social Studies

Compare flying on an airplane with another mode of transportation. How are they alike?

How are they different? Create a Venn diagram to show your answer.



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