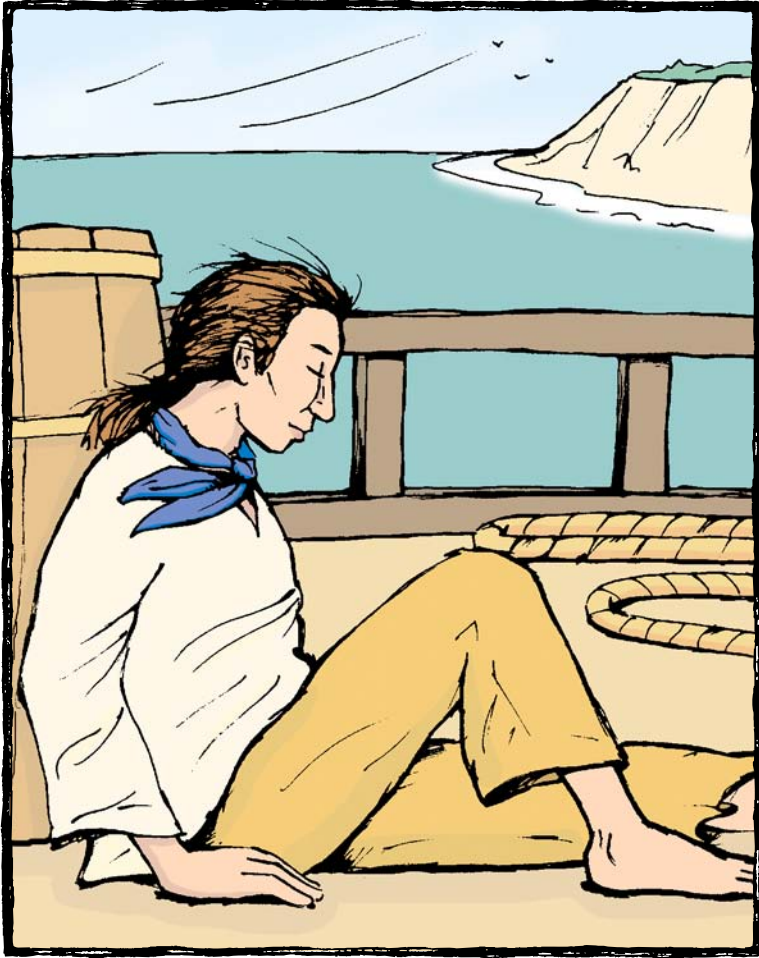


# The Reef

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book

Word Count: 3,861

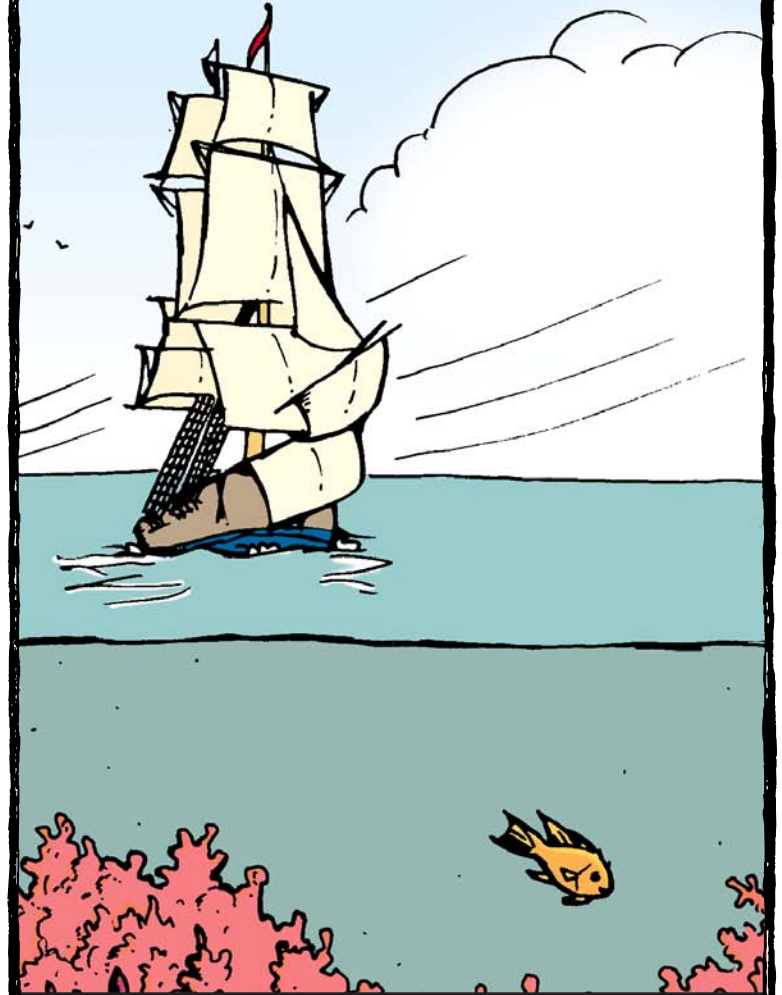


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LEVELED BOOK • X

# The Reef



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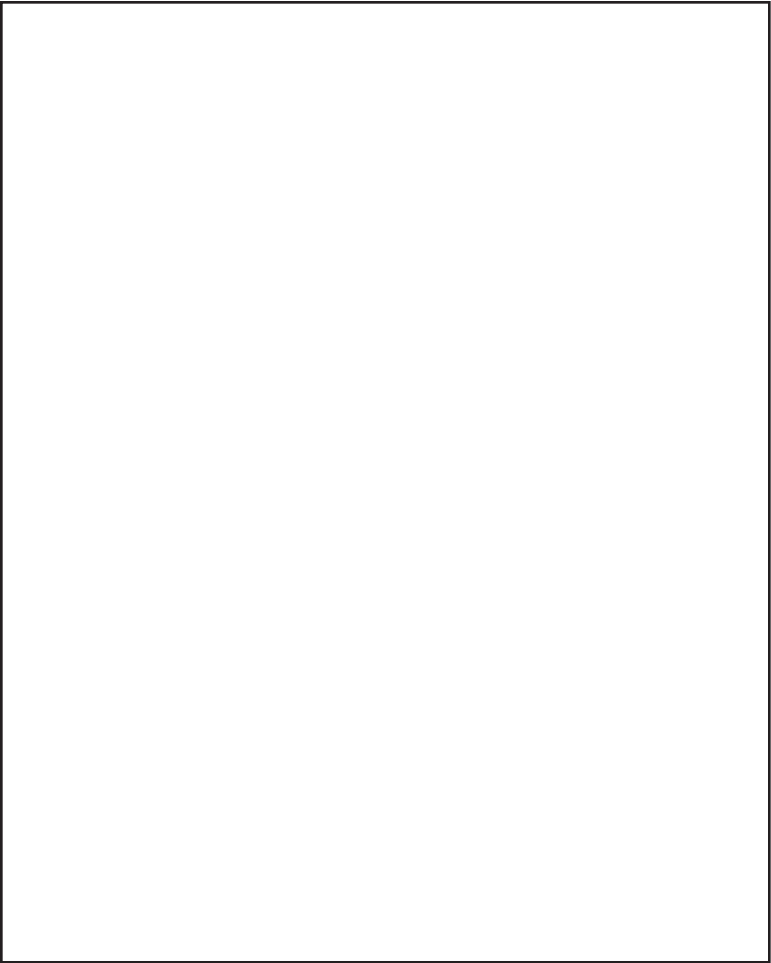
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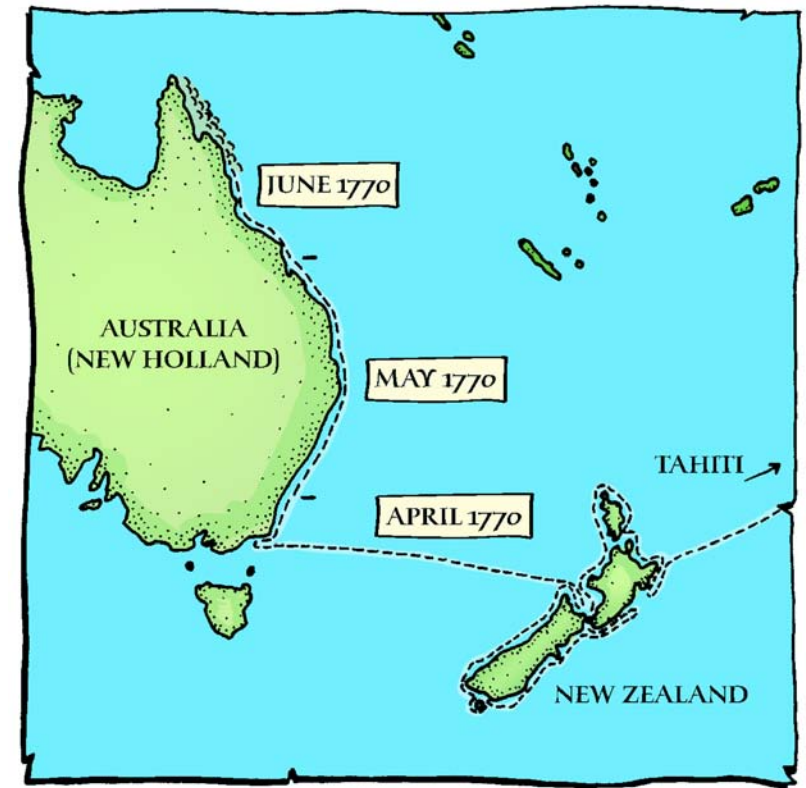




**Friday, June 22:** The ship was fully out of water today as the tide fell. We could see the hole was big enough to have sunk a ship with twice our pumps. But by some stroke of luck a piece of coral the size of a large rock had broken off in the hole and slowed the water coming in. It may take many days, but we will be able to patch the hole and get back to sea.

The Captain has decided that we will return by way of the Cape of Good Hope. There is hope we can find a port to get more extensive repairs along the way.

We are not home free, but we are alive to make our way home. I so look forward to seeing my family again.



*The following is three months of a journal kept by Will Reynolds, a fictional crew member of The Endeavour, a ship commissioned by the King of England and captained by the famous English explorer Captain James Cook. Captain Cook made three voyages to the Pacific Ocean, mapping the islands and exploring New Zealand and Australia.*

**Sunday, April 1, 1770:** I am now beginning the second book of my journal. Should the first book be lost, these are the facts.

My name is Will Reynolds and I am a crewman on His Majesty's Ship, *The Endeavour*, captained by the honorable James Cook. We set sail from Plymouth, England, on August 25, 1768. I am an assistant to Mr. Joseph Banks, an esteemed naturalist whose job it is to collect samples of plants and describe any animals we see.

We reached Tahiti on April 13, 1769. The Captain and the scientists made some observations of the planets. They were also supposed to make observations that would help determine the distance of the Earth from the Sun.

The crew tried to make friends with the natives, which was very easy. The natives are extremely friendly. Some of the men wanted to stay with the women they had fallen in love with. We were treated well and made to feel welcome. They willingly shared food and taught us what was edible and what was poisonous.

We also surveyed the island and built a fort that future British sailors could use.

So far, we have lost only six men, and none to sicknesses such as scurvy. Two men have drowned. One died of too much rum. One jumped overboard. Two men died during bad weather in Tierra del Fuego, where we had stopped for supplies and water

paste it over with a mixture of finely cut rope fiber, wool, and tar. The mixture is to be sunk beneath the ship with the thought that where there is a hole there will be suction. One or more of the lumps of the mixture should be sucked into the hole and act as a stop to the water coming in.

The men were so tired that they could no longer keep up with the water entering through the hull. The water was filling the hold again. Everyone was eager to try the fix. In the afternoon it was done and was lowered by ropes, then pulled quickly back against the ship. In about two hours the hold was pumped dry, and to our great surprise, only a small amount of water still leaked in. We went from despair to hope that we could get ashore. We will live.

No matter how dreadful things looked, each man obeyed orders and worked with enormous energy. The officers were most professional and calm.

**Sunday, June 17:** The Captain found a harbor in which we might drop anchor and perform repairs. It has everything we need. We cannot believe our luck. The calm weather has kept us out in the bay until today. The crew took advantage of this delay to get some much-needed rest. There will be much work to do in the next few days when we enter the harbor.



home with some of the most savage natives on Earth. We would have no way to support ourselves. It might be better to drown.

**Evening:** The time has come and everyone is very anxious. Fear of death stares us in the face. At 10 o'clock our ship floated and was quickly dragged into deep water. We still can only remove as much water as comes in. Our only hope is to get her into land for repairs as soon as possible or to salvage what we can and build a new craft.

**Tuesday, June 12:** The crew has been working for more than 24 hours and is exhausted. But news came from the hold that we are taking in more water than we can pump out. There is four feet of water in the hold. The wind is blowing out to sea so there is no chance of getting ashore any time soon.

The crew dragged in all the small anchors, but had to cut loose one of the small bow anchors, as it is least needed. The men have managed to remove the water from the hold faster than thought, and it was found that the depth was not so much as thought.

One crewman proposed a fix that no one has seen used. By using his fix, he said he managed to get home from America with a more badly damaged ship than ours. He was given five men to work on his idea. His fix is to take a smaller, heavy sail and

before beginning the journey across the Pacific Ocean. These last two were friends of mine, as we were all assigned to serve Mr. Banks.

We have been circling New Zealand, creating coastal maps for nearly six months now. The men have enjoyed the chance to collect fruits from the land. When we are at sea for longer periods, we must eat the Captain's regimen of onions, salted cabbage, marmalade of carrots, sauerkraut, and other things of which we know nothing. The stuff tastes terrible, except for the lemons. He insists these things will stave off the scurvy. And if we don't eat some of them daily we get a lashing.

On the Captain's orders, we have raised anchor and are leaving this land. The men believe we are heading home, at last, though no word has come from the Captain. I would like to return to my wife and little girl. It has been such a long time since I have seen them.

**Thursday, April 5:** The winds are calm today, but we are still making progress.

Few of the crew can read or write. I am often lonely. Mr. Banks talks to me about his work, and lends me his books to read from time to time. There isn't a lot of time to rest, but when there is, most of us sleep for lack of any amusement.

I have been writing letters to my daughter, Chelsey, throughout the voyage. When last I saw her she was three years old. I want her to know about the years I was away from her, and that I was thinking of her.

**Thursday, April 12:** We tried to catch fish using bits of salted meat for bait. We didn't catch anything.

The sea was smooth and calm today. Mr. Banks went to shore in his boat to collect samples. He shot several birds, including a red-tailed tropical bird that we have seen each of the last few days. From the sea, he netted a bluish jelly-like mass called a Portuguese man-of-war. These creatures are known for their powerful stings, so he handled it carefully, lest he be stung. An albatross that Mr. Banks shot seems to eat these bluish stinging creatures. I am at a loss to understand why anything would eat these hideous blobs. Their stings are worse than those of a wasp.

We work mostly in four-hour shifts. The Captain has provided the men with woolen trousers and jackets to keep us warm. He believes there is no reason to lose a man to any kind of sickness on a voyage. He takes care of us, and the men are very loyal because of his kindness.

We do sometimes object to his need for everything to be cleaned so often, but it gives us something to do for the hours we aren't on deck.

During low tide the ship settled into the rocks and did not heave so much. But from the front holds we could clearly hear the rock grating on the hull. There is no doubt it will tear a hole in the ship. We have set all four of the pumps working.

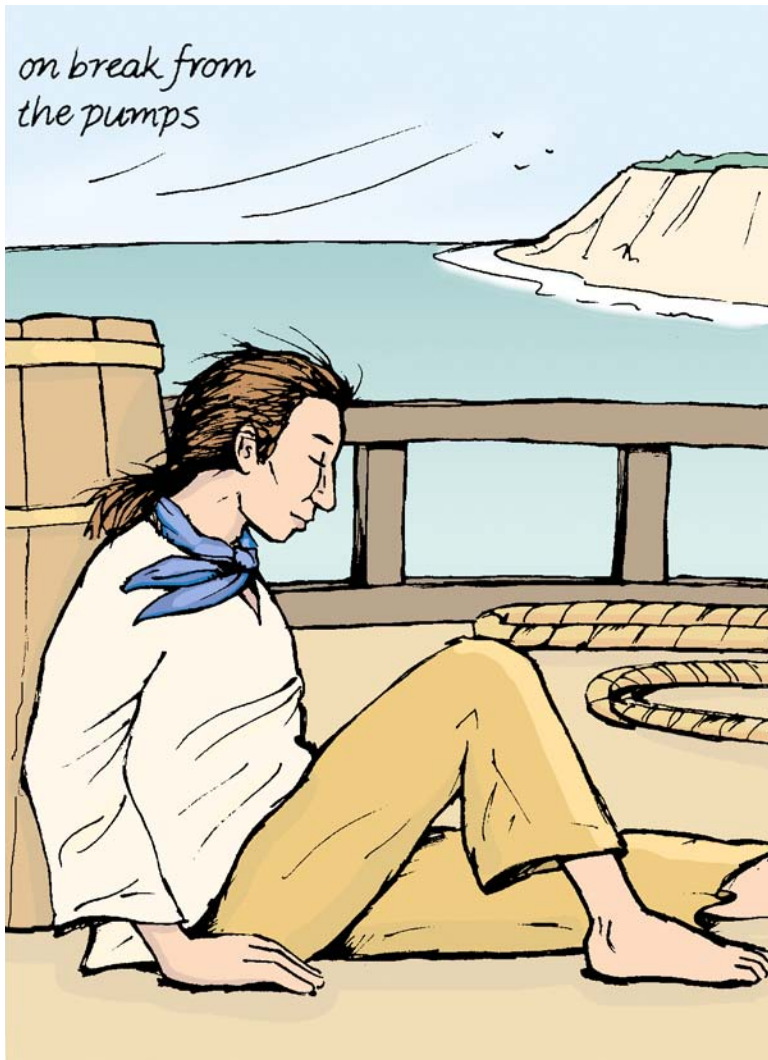
I am sitting on deck, since I am too tired to stand. The men are lowering the anchors. The breeze is blowing south right now, and we have raised the sails, hoping the wind will help drag us free.

It didn't work, again. We are stuck. The night tides are higher and we will have to wait until midnight to try again. This feels hopeless. I am afraid I will never see my wife and daughter again. We might well die here, thousands of miles from our homes and families.

**7 o'clock PM:** We are taking on water quickly as the tide begins to rise again. One of the four pumps has failed and cannot be made to work. The men continue to work in 15-minute shifts, working cheerfully.

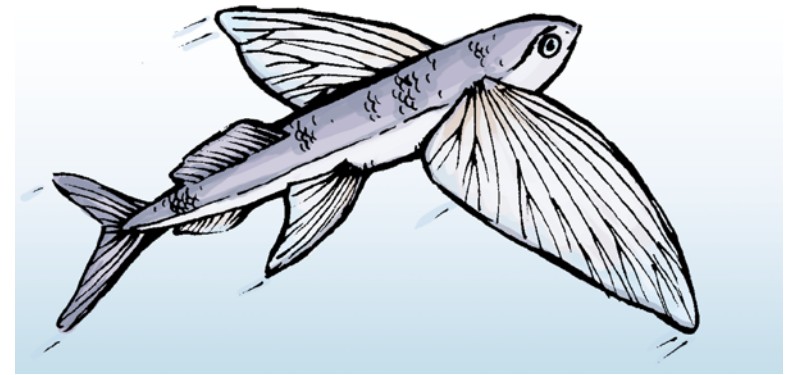
Mr. Banks has asked me to help him gather all that we can save and be ready should we need to abandon ship. He fears the worst. He mentioned the fear that most of us will be drowned. This might be a better fate than those who survive might endure. There would be little to live for, stranded so far from





**11 o'clock AM:** It is nearly high tide. I am currently on a rest break from the pumps. Everyone puts in fifteen minutes then rests until it is his turn again. We have kept the water from rising much higher, but not in lowering the level too much.

*flying fish*  
April 13, 1770



**Friday, April 13:** Every man was on his best behavior today. They are superstitious of this day being bad luck. No one was willing to climb to the crow's nest today. There were no accidents.

We spotted a large group of flying fish today, confirming that we are in tropical waters. A larger fish that we could not see was chasing the flying fish. Mr. Banks tried to net the creature that was chasing the fish but without success.

**Monday, April 16:** Some thunder just after sunset tonight. First sign of bad weather in days. Many birds visited the ship this evening, including a small land bird the size of a sparrow. The men tried to catch it, for amusement I would guess, but lost it in the rigging and never saw it again.

**Wednesday, April 18:** We sighted a group of porpoises today, at least eight. They threw their whole bodies several feet above the water's surface as they swam alongside our ship.

**Thursday, April 19:** We sighted land today just after dawn. In the afternoon the crew were called up on deck to witness three waterspouts moving between the land and us. We are nearly five or six leagues (about 17 miles/28 km) from shore. One of the spouts lasted a good quarter of an hour, with a thickness near that of the ship's mast. It seemed to descend from a mass of gray cloud and was surrounded by mist and rain. The ocean beneath it was very agitated.

Captain Cook believes we are on the Eastern Shore of New Holland. He intends to map this coast, since it is the only unmapped coast of this land. The Captain decided to sail north along the coast, without dropping anchor to gather fruits and allow the men some time off the ship. We are all disappointed, but there is work to do and we will do it.

**Friday, April 20:** Several clouds of smoke were spotted rising from the forests beyond the coastline. In the evening several more were spotted. Maybe it is good that we have not gone ashore.

to get home. We had been sailing for at least three or four hours since the sight of land, so we know we are not very close.

The waves are beating us against the reef and we can hear the wood cracking. We are being tossed like a cork on the waves, so that we can barely keep our feet beneath us. The tide has ebbed (gone down) and we did not get the anchors dropped as the captain ordered. We will be stuck here for at least 12 hours at the mercy of the waves and the rock.

**Monday, June 11:** We are facing NE but the waves threaten to turn us. The sails are all down on Captain's orders last night. No one slept last night, but the officers are all calm and rational.

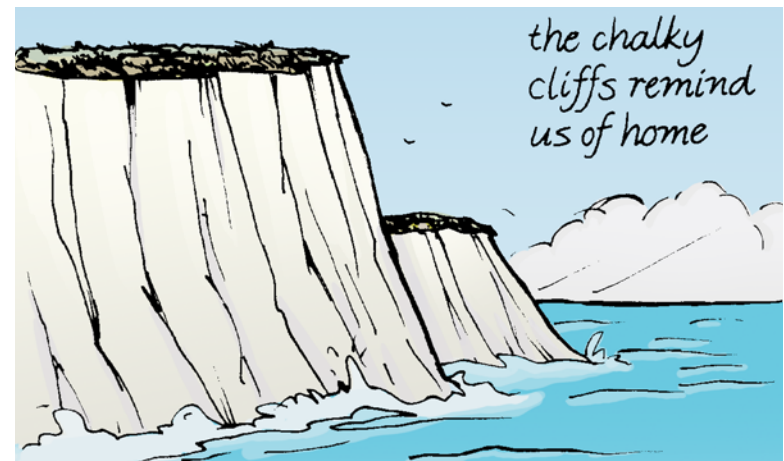
We will drop anchors off the aft deck near noon to take advantage of the high tide. We hope to drag ourselves free and refloat the ship.

The vessel is heaving and shifting very badly. Water has entered the ship through the damaged hull. The Captain has ordered us to lighten the load. We threw overboard our ballast, firewood, some of our stores, our water casks, all our water, and six of our cannons. We have started two of the pumps to working in the hold, trying to lower the water level in there. Everyone is pitching in to work the pumps, including the Captain and the other officers.



**Midnight:** We have run aground! Maybe an hour ago, or so, the ship got stuck on a reef and we can't get her loose. The Captain ran on deck in his nightclothes. We are firmly stuck. We floated a small boat to check the damage and found ourselves stuck upon a coral reef. This is the worst, as it is sharp and can destroy a ship's hull. There are maybe 12 wooden strips torn from the ship's false keel floating around the bow of the ship.

The men are afraid the ship is badly damaged, and that we might be stranded here with no way



**Sunday, April 22:** This morning we spotted five men on the beach. On the hill beyond the beach we could make out several small houses. The men all appeared to be very black. They looked at us as though they had never seen white men before. Perhaps they have.

**Thursday, April 26:** The land today appears more barren than any we have seen before. The shore consisted mostly of chalky cliffs, not unlike those of old England. The site made more than a few of the crew members feel homesick.

**Friday, April 27:** Mr. Banks, the Captain, and Dr. Solander tried to go ashore in the ship's small boat called a yawl. *The Pinnacle*, our longboat, was judged too leaky to float. We did not get to land, fearing the surf too rough for our small boat.

**Saturday, April 28:** We spotted several small canoes

carrying two men each. They landed and met with their friends on shore. All of these appeared to be men, and well armed with swords and spears. They were all naked, but their bodies were painted with broad white stripes on their faces, chests, and legs.

*The Pinnacle*, patched up overnight, was sent ahead to scout. Upon returning, the officer said that the natives had invited them ashore with many words and hand gestures that were not understood.

Later in the afternoon, we sailed by a small village consisting of six or eight houses. An old woman, followed by some children, was seen coming out of the woods and entering one of the houses. Some other women were spotted working at the surf's edge, and having seen our ship, paid no attention to us as we passed. A little later some native men came ashore in canoes and a fire was lighted with which to cook their dinner. It was observed, especially by some of the crew, that all the people, men and women, were naked.

In the evening, we loaded up our boats and went ashore, hoping to be little noticed by the natives. Two men, warriors by appearance, came to meet us with harsh language we could not understand and waving lances at us. Although we outnumbered them greatly, they made great protest at our desire to come ashore. We tried to assure them we only wanted some water

**Thursday, May 31:** Because of the number of sandbars and shoals, we have sent the longboat, *The Pinnacle*, ahead to scout a route. We will continue to drop anchor each night.

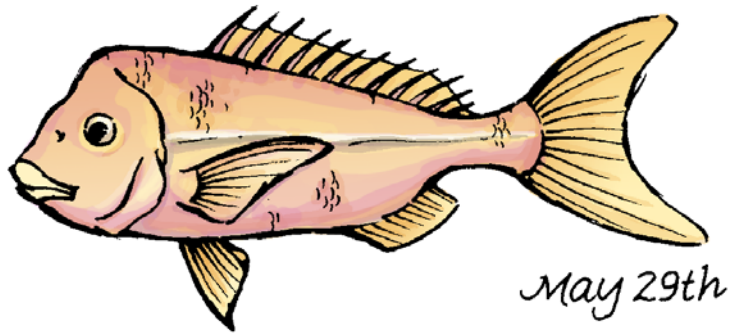
**Friday, June 1:** A crewman today complained about swollen gums. He said they had been bothering him for a fortnight, but not knowing the cause, he said nothing. The doctor prescribed lemon juice in all his drinks.

**Friday, June 8:** We went ashore yesterday thinking we had spotted coconut trees, but we were wrong. Mr. Banks did collect some more plant samples.

We continue to sail between the mainland and several small islands and shoals. The anchor is dropped most nights, which is slowing our progress.

**Sunday, June 10:** Captain Cook has been hugging the coastline as we move north, trying to avoid the reef and the small islands that we have found. At nightfall we spotted a sandbar ahead and during supper passed over it in about seven fathom (42 feet/13m) of water. The Captain and his lieutenant assumed we had passed over the tail end of the shoal and that we could rest easy. We did not drop anchor so as to take advantage of a brisk breeze.





this evening, resolved to go ashore tomorrow in search of plants.

**Saturday, May 26:** We found ourselves in a channel between two strips of land. The water became very shallow and we dropped anchor to check things over. We set afloat in two of the small boats to scout a passage.

**Sunday, May 27:** The boats returned today with word that there is no passage through and we are to turn back. We retraced our course and again fell in with the main coast.

**Tuesday, May 29:** Mr. Banks went ashore with the Doctor. My assistance was not needed, so I stayed on board and fished with the crew. We caught several large fish and many smaller ones.

**Wednesday, May 30:** Went ashore looking for fresh water today. No luck. It seems this land is subject to a severe rainy season, and this is not that season.

and fruit, but they were unmoved. So we fired a musket over their heads. At this the younger man dropped his lances and ran, but then returned and began to yell some more. The Captain then ordered a load of small shot to be fired at them. It hit the older man in the legs, but did not seem to bother him much. He ran to a house and returned with a shield.

Two more loads were fired and this was enough to scare the men away. We went ashore and walked up to one of the houses. There were several small children huddled behind a shield. We tossed some beads, ribbons, and clothing through the window and continued on our way. We collected as many lances as we could find, nearly 40 or 50, and they were all tipped with very sharp fish bones.

The people here are darker than any we have seen. They seem lean and quick and healthy. We can only imagine what they might think of our straight hair, pale skin, and heavy clothing.

**Sunday, April 29:** We went ashore again today for water. The sky is very blue, and it is still warm here. It feels like the season is starting to turn, though, so I hope we will be heading home soon.

The natives approached as we collected water, but retreated as soon as we sent two men to meet them. They watched us from a safe distance. After a while

they collected their canoes, moved them above high tide, and carried two others away with them. We approached the houses and found all of our gifts just as they had fallen.

**Monday, April 30:** More encounters with the natives, but no real contact. They try to scare our men with yelling and display of weapons. There seems to be nothing we can do to assure them we mean no harm.

**Tuesday, May 1:** Ten of us went ashore today, including the Captain, Dr. Solander, and Mr. Banks. We resolved to walk until we were exhausted, to see as much as possible. Much of the land is either swampy or sandy soil. Few species of trees, and a lot of grasses. We passed many native houses, all empty, and left beads and ribbons in each. We saw an animal about as tall as a young man, which looked like a rat that stood on its hind legs. It had a large tail that it used to support its weight as it stood. We also saw tracks of a creature about the size of a weasel and tracks of a wolf-like creature.

**Friday, May 4:** I had each of the last two days off from serving Mr. Banks. Wednesday was rainy and yesterday he devoted to cataloguing plant samples. I spent time with other members of the crew. We caught a variety of fish that were well enjoyed for dinner. We also collected many berries of the Jambosa variety, much like a cherry, but not as sweet.

We ate as many of the berries as we could pick and took more back to the crew on board ship.

**Sunday, May 6:** We are back to the ocean today. We hear the mapping of the coast is going well.

This afternoon we burned some gunpowder in the hold to clean the air. The Captain then ordered us to build a fire in an iron pot to dry the area. Don't know that it works, but the gunpowder and smoke smell better than the usual stench.

I had only one shift on deck today. I was quite without amusement for much of the day. I wrote another letter to my daughter, Chelsey.

**Sunday, May 20:** As we have moved away from shore, we have encountered a reef where the water is very shallow. The captain has told everyone to be alert for it, and to yell warning if we see it in our path. The water is very clear and we can see the color of sand on the bottom with no trouble. We also have a fine view of creatures swimming around the ship, including several sharks, dolphins, many fish, and a large turtle.

**Monday, May 21:** Quiet day, little to report. We dropped anchor tonight at 8 to avoid drifting toward the reef in the darkness.

**Tuesday, May 22:** Dropped anchor in a large bay