

The Great Gallardo's Books

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book

Word Count: 2,063



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The Great Gallardo's BOOKS



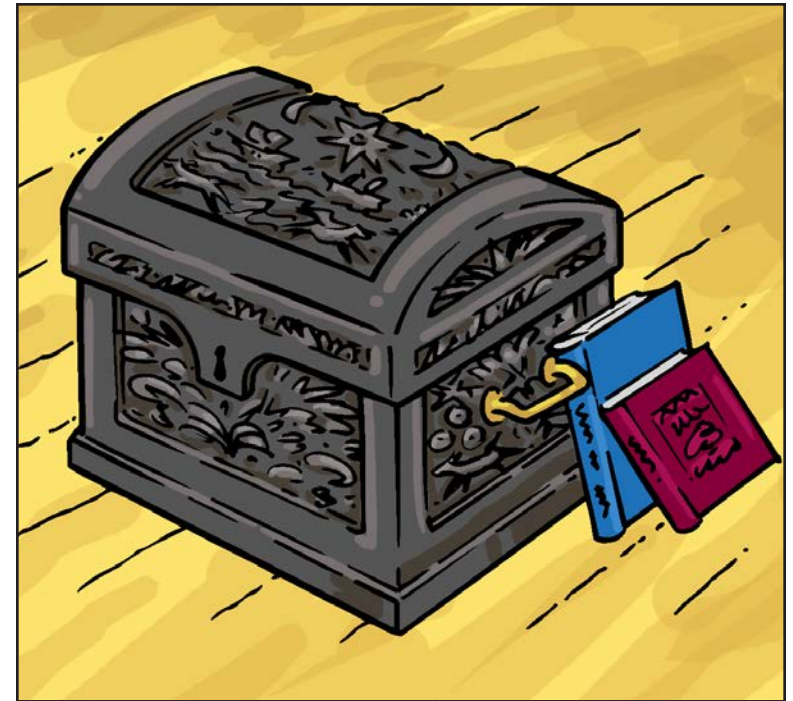
Written by Lori Polydoros
Illustrated by David Cockcroft

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Glossary

awe (<i>n.</i>)	feelings of wonder and respect (p. 12)
biography (<i>n.</i>)	a true story about a person's life written by someone else (p. 8)
breeches (<i>n.</i>)	pants, especially short pants that end around the knee (p. 13)
confetti (<i>n.</i>)	small bits of colored paper thrown in celebration (p. 6)
contraptions (<i>n.</i>)	interesting, unfamiliar devices (p. 15)
crater (<i>n.</i>)	a hole or hollow formed by an impact often made by a meteor (p. 17)
high-tech (<i>adj.</i>)	technologically complex (p. 15)
intimate (<i>adj.</i>)	most personal, private (p. 10)
laboratory (<i>n.</i>)	a place where experiments are done (p. 15)
lasso (<i>v.</i>)	to throw a rope or leather strip tied with a slipknot to catch animals (p. 12)
perilous (<i>adj.</i>)	dangerous (p. 9)
plastered (<i>v.</i>)	fastened on or pasted on to cover (p. 7)
resort (<i>v.</i>)	to seek relief (p. 10)
sagebrush (<i>n.</i>)	a woody shrub with silvery leaves found in the dry, western United States (p. 12)
science fiction (<i>n.</i>)	fiction having to do with some actual or imagined scientific phenomenon (p. 15)
skeleton key (<i>n.</i>)	a key with teeth filed away so that it can open different, simple locks (p. 7)
transported (<i>v.</i>)	carried from one place to another (p. 10)
western (<i>n.</i>)	a story about life in the western United States, particularly in the late 1800s (p. 11)

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Note: *The Great Gallardo's Books* is the first in a continuing series written by Lori Polydoros. Travel with Miguel Ventura and his family as they experience classic adventures.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Maybe I was waiting for the right time.” Miguel’s mom winked. “You know the most magical thing about him?”

Miguel’s heart raced. “What?”



“He loved to read more than anything else.”

Miguel smiled.

His mom smiled back.

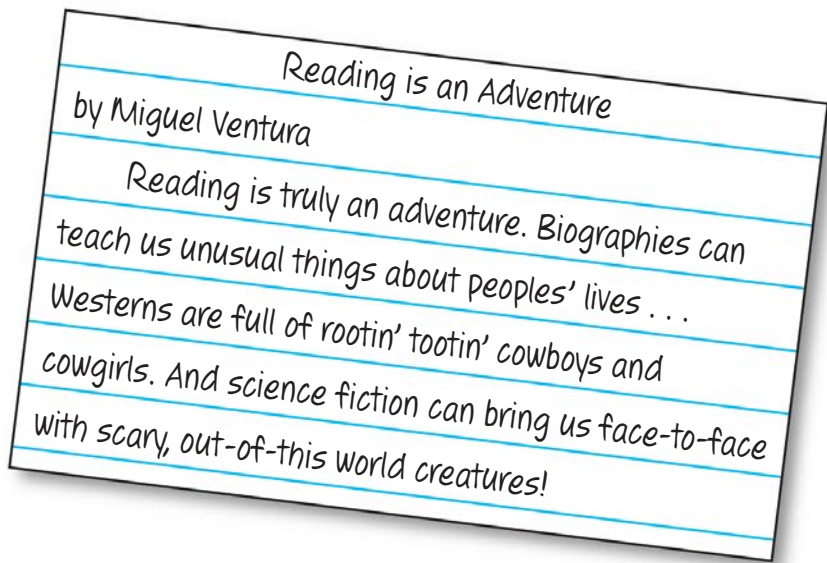
Thanks to *The Great Gallardo's books*, maybe Miguel did too. He couldn’t wait to find more adventures in the glittery black chest in the loft.

The Great Gallardo’s Books
Level U Leveled Book
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Miguel finished his outline and read it to his mom.

“Not bad for someone who thinks reading is boring,” she said.

“I found some stuff up in the loft back there . . .”

“Your great-grandpa’s stuff?” his mom said.

“Great-Grandpa George?”

“Yes, he was a magician called the Great Gallardo!”

“Really?”

“He performed all over the world,” she said.
“And he ran his magic shop right here.”

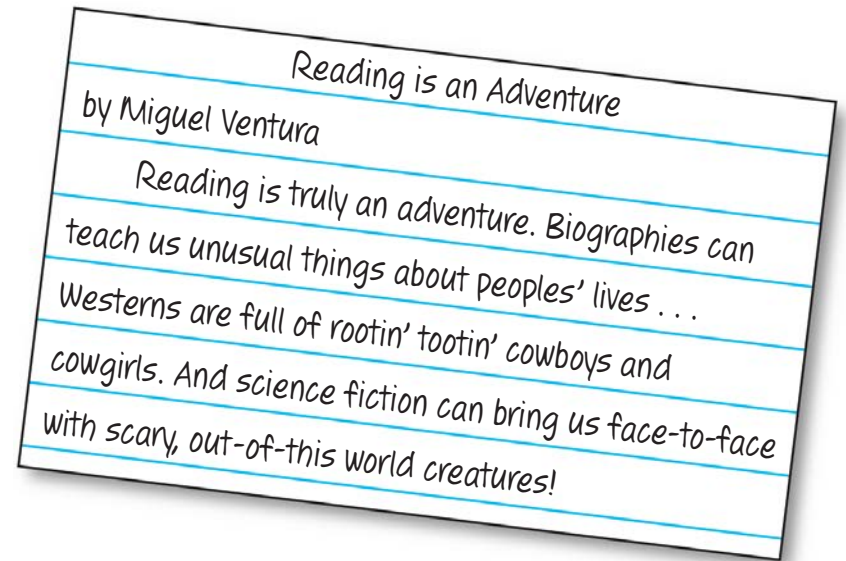


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One Boring Saturday

Raindrops splattered the asphalt like a million exploding firecrackers. Miguel lined up toothpicks in the shape of a rocket ship on the counter. Working at his family's sandwich shop was not Miguel's idea of an exciting Saturday afternoon. Neither was doing homework. He had an essay due on Monday, and, of course, he hadn't even started!



Great-Grandpa George

Miguel slumped over onto the chest. *Science fiction was terrifying and thrilling all at the same time!* he thought.

The shop would be closed soon, and Miguel knew that after his mom locked the doors, she would ask to see his essay. He put the books back, leaving the key in the lock.

When he got down from the loft, Miguel picked up his pencil. It felt good in his hand. Ideas were fresh in his mind, so Miguel's words flowed easily, like pouring syrup on pancakes.

Miguel tapped all the buttons on the door panel, finally opening the door. He slipped through just in time! As Miguel stumbled in, he accidentally activated his radio communicator.

"Mission Control."

"Something tried to kill me!" Miguel gasped.

But before anyone could answer, the Exit Room walls blurred. Miguel closed his eyes and was happy to feel the soft, warm couch beneath him.



"It's slow now," Miguel's mom said. "Go start your essay."

"It's too hard." Miguel munched the last pickle from the jar. "I can't write an essay about 'Reading Is an Adventure'."

"That doesn't sound so bad," Miguel's mom said.

"It does to me."

"Peel these," she slid a box of cucumbers over to him, "or start your essay."

Not much of a choice, Miguel thought.

"Fine, I'll do the essay." He dragged himself to the back room and plopped down on a box. He stared at the lines on his paper. His mind was empty, like the pickle jar. *How could reading be an adventure?*



The Loft

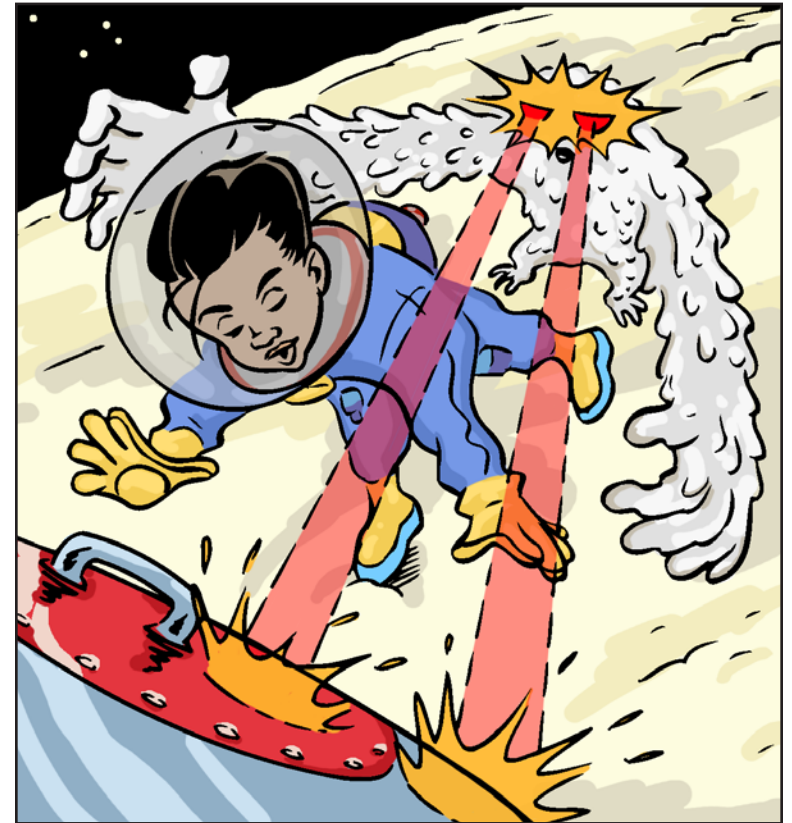
A tall, red ladder stood along the wall and Miguel wandered over to it. Miguel's mom used the ladder to reach the high boxes in the storage room. The ladder was so old that strips of red paint peeled off the wooden rungs. Miguel put his foot on the first rung and looked up—a loft he'd never noticed!

Miguel tugged himself quickly up the ladder. *Crack!* The topmost rung snapped. Miguel began to slide.

His heart raced. Red paint chips fluttered down onto his hair like **confetti**. Miguel caught his foot on a rung and pushed off hard, leaping up into the loft. He made it!



Bulging, laser-like eyes glowed from the fleshy face of a creature almost as white as the moon. Miguel threw his body forward, hop-skipping out of there as fast as he could. Red laser eye-shots whizzed passed Miguel. He lunged for the lunar outpost in a panic. His breath fogged his visor. He tripped on a rock and tumbled forward, doing a complete somersault in the air. The creature groaned, its gooey arms almost upon him.





Then Miguel sensed a dark shape moving toward him. He turned, and something struck him from behind, sending him sailing through the air like a helium balloon that had been cut free. He couldn't stop! Miguel floated past a tower, clung to the side, and shimmied down to the ground. There, Miguel came face to face with the ugliest creature he'd ever seen!

Miguel found dusty boxes stacked to the ceiling, old magazines and newspapers littering the ground, and a sagging, purple couch. Old posters **plastered** the walls—posters that even in their faded condition, screamed with color and interesting designs. One read *The Great Gallardo!* It showed a hooded figure beneath an arch of shooting stars. A glittery black chest with a lock fit snugly up against the couch. Tiny pictures carved into the wood seemed to dance across the lid—ships sailed, horses trotted, and stars twinkled.

Miguel looked down at his feet and found an old **skeleton key**. Its shape and shine had almost worn away, but a golden letter G still beamed through its dullness. Miguel kneeled next to the chest. He cleared cobwebs from the keyhole and turned the key in the lock. It clicked!



Benjamin's Bathtub

Miguel lifted the lid to the old chest, hoping to find gold coins, jewels, or swords inside. He peeked inside, and his heart sank. The chest was full, not with treasure, but with books.

"Who would keep old books in such a cool trunk?" he asked himself, picking up a thick, black book with fancy lettering: *The Story of Benjamin Franklin*.

"Ugh," he muttered, "a boring **biography**." He tried to put the book back, but for some reason he felt he had to open it. He focused on the words, *Chapter Eight: Benjamin's Bathtub*, when his mom's voice distracted him.

"Miguel, what are you doing?" she called out from the diner's front counter.

"Reading."

"Really?" his mom asked.

"Yeah, really."

He glanced back down at the words: *During the American Revolution . . .* but they became strangely fuzzy and danced around on the page.

*asked Benjamin to Franklin France. was
to Congress go by*

"Colonel Chan?" a woman said. "This is Mission Control."

Miguel pressed the red button and tried to sound official. "This is Colonel Chan."

"This is Colonel Lundy," she said. "We need you to get outside now and investigate some strange activity near the **crater**."

Miguel gulped. Being on the moon alone would be terrifying!

"Get out there now, and report back what you find." Colonel Lundy said.

I can do it, he told himself as he tried to figure out how to work the spacesuit. *After all, I'm an astronaut now.*

He put on his helmet, engaged the door, and stepped out onto the moon . . .

The sky was deep black. Miguel stepped forward and hopped into the air. Lunar gravity made him as light as a feather! *I must weigh less than twenty pounds!* he thought.

He leaped and jumped across the silvery gray hills, leaving boot marks in the dust. He looked up and stopped dead in his tracks. There in the sky hung a crescent-shaped Earth!

"Lunar rocks?" Miguel whispered. "I'm on the moon!"

Miguel raced out the lab's door and through long, silent corridors, hoping to find a view of the moon. He followed the red lights that dotted the floor. He pushed open a door that read "Exit Room." Something beeped in the pocket of his jumpsuit. Miguel pulled out a radio communicator.



Miguel squeezed his eyes shut. His balance shifted, as if the floor moved beneath him. Salty air stung his eyes and tingled his tongue. Miguel no longer smelled the dusty, old loft . . .

"I'm an old man of seventy," a man's voice called out, "on a **perilous** journey to France."

Miguel opened his eyes to find himself aboard a ship on the ocean, sitting on a wooden lid that covered a . . . a bathtub! One end of the lid was open, and out popped an old man's head.



“Temple, my grandson, America shall be free!” The man looked directly at Miguel.

An image of a face on an old half-dollar that he had gotten from his own grandpa flashed before Miguel. This was Benjamin Franklin!

Miguel had been **transported** into the biography he had flipped open, and now Ben Franklin thought Miguel was his grandson, Temple!

“Ah, I do wish I were in fair health like you,” Ben said. “Then I could make my daily swim at sea. Now I must **resort** to these baths to soothe my aching joints.”

Miguel tried not to giggle—biographies could reveal **intimate** details about a person. Miguel remembered learning that Ben Franklin traveled to France to ask for help in America’s fight against the British. He couldn’t imagine that Franklin actually brought along a bathtub!

“I have so many questions,” Miguel started.

But before he could finish, Ben Franklin’s face blurred. Miguel shut his eyes and held his breath. The dusty smell of the loft once again tickled his nose. He was back.

The Creature from Copernicus Crater

Miguel sat down on the floor. Life was tough on the prairie, especially for women. He never imagined westerns were so interesting! It was getting late, but Miguel had to try one more book.

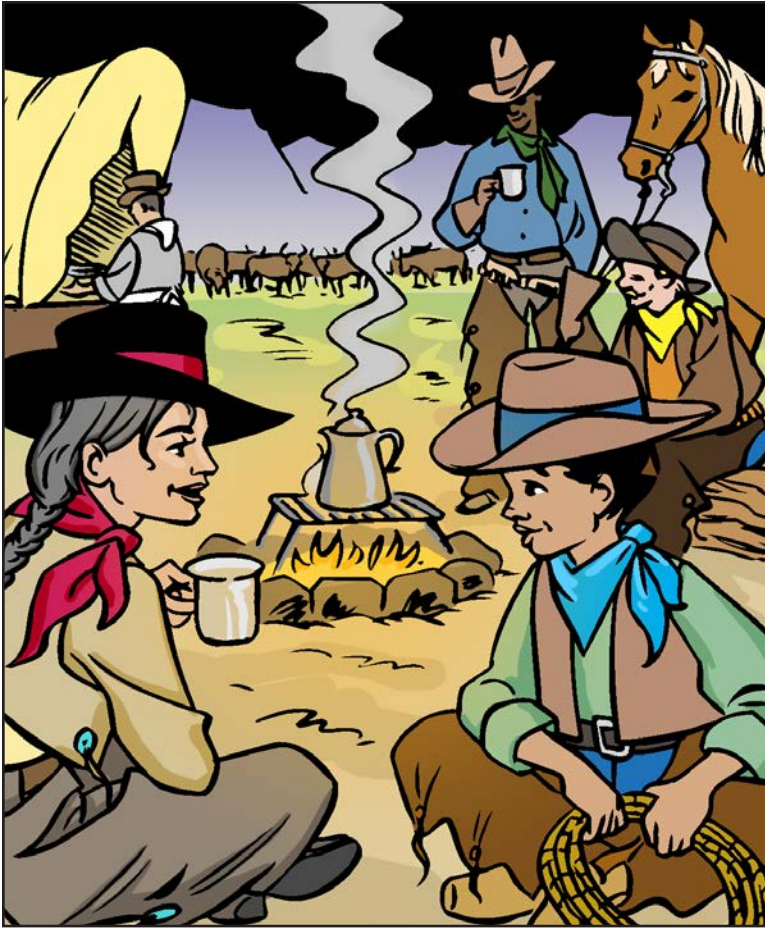
A small book with a silver moon on the cover called *The Creature from Copernicus Crater* grabbed his attention.

Science fiction? he thought. *That’s weird, the first chapter starts on page 214.*

Miguel began to read, “Colonel Chan guarded the underground lunar outpost. He hadn’t seen another living thing for two years until . . .” Suddenly the words streamed together.

adangerousandmysteriouscreatureappearednearthecrater!

Miguel shivered and closed his eyes. The air seeping into his nostrils smelled artificial, like the air at a hospital. Computers beeped in the distance. Miguel opened his eyes to find himself in an underground **laboratory**. Countertops were jammed with **high-tech** equipment—cameras, scanners, and other strange **contraptions**. Jars full of rocks, dust, and liquids filled the shelves. Miguel picked up a jar and read: Copernicus Crater Lunar Rocks.



"You're brave," said Miguel.

"Just lucky," she said. "I get treated fairly in these parts. A lot of women ranchers don't."

Miguel had many questions, but the stars began to blur. He felt dizzy, so he shut his eyes. In an instant, Miguel found himself back at the loft.



Under the Cowboy's Hat

Miguel shut the biography and put it back in the chest. *How could that have happened?* he thought. *Maybe reading biographies isn't so boring after all.*

A leather-bound book titled *Riding Roundups* sat in the row next to the Ben Franklin biography.

"Must be a **western**," Miguel said, looking at the cowboys on the cover.

He opened the book and read. Just as Miguel turned the page to *Chapter Five: Under the Cowboy's Hat*, the words flipped upside down and backward.

Cowboy Max could ride the roundups and knew the wildest tricks of all!

Miguel covered his eyes with his hands. A strong wind that blew against his cheeks brought with it the smell of sweet **sagebrush**—and stinky cow manure. Miguel was on the prairie, surrounded by a dozen cowboys and hundreds of longhorn cattle.

“**Lasso** those horns!” a cowboy shouted at him from behind.

A rope trembled in Miguel’s hands as he realized he’d become a cowboy in the Old West.

Before Miguel could take a breath, the cowboy slipped out his rope, flew past Miguel, lassoed the bull’s horns, and circled his stallion around a tree. Miguel stared in **awe**.

“Cowboy Max,” one of the other cowhands shouted, “is still as quick as lightning!”



“Get a move on, Greenie,” Cowboy Max said, nodding his head toward Miguel.

Miguel remembered that cowhands in the Old West drove longhorn cattle up trails from Texas to Kansas. Being called a “greenie” must mean that he didn’t know what he was doing. *Boy, are they right!* he thought.

Back at camp the smell of coffee and smoked meat hung in the air. Miguel watched the men sitting near the fire playing poker and telling stories. Cowboy Max removed his black hat and out fell a long gray braid tied with a red ribbon.

Miguel’s mouth dropped. Cowboy Max was a lady!

She smiled at Miguel. “Sorry, Greenie, thought you knew.”

He shook his head. “They call you Cowboy Max.”

“It’s short for Maxine,” she said. “Some people don’t like women who wear **breeches** and speak up for themselves.”

“You still ride?”

“You bet,” said Maxine. “I’m my happiest when I’m with my herd.”