

The Flying V

This text is provided courtesy of the National Audubon Society.



Migrating geese fly in a flock shaped like the letter V. Why?

The big birds stir up lots of air with their heavy wings. If the flock flew in a straight line, each goose would be tossed around by rough air caused by the beating wings of the bird in front of it.

But air rises when it passes over the top of a bird's wing. Each goose takes advantage of this rising air. It flies behind and a little to one side of the bird just ahead.

A bird flying alone has to work hard and use a lot of energy to keep moving. But geese can get a lift from their neighbors flying with them, and that saves energy!

Birds Don't Live in the Air!

This text is provided courtesy of the National Audubon Society.



Birds spend many hours on the wing, but they must come down at times. We can help make sure they find shelter when they land.

Some kids think migrating birds land only in faraway places, such as mountains or forests. But a man who lives in New York City saw more than 100 different kinds of birds in his tiny backyard.

Why would migrating birds choose to land in the center of a great city? They land there because they see trees and shrubs in backyards.

Ask your family and friends to keep your neighborhood green. Birds eat berries and nuts that grow on shrubs and trees and insects they find on the twigs and branches. Trees and bushes also make safe places for birds to hide as they rest.

Wild Calls in the Springtime Sky

This text is provided courtesy of the National Audubon Society.



[Imagine you are somewhere in the United States.] It's an evening in spring. The air is still chilly. You watch a big red sun setting on the horizon.

Ah-honk! Ah-honk! Ah-honk!

The wide sky seems to be calling to you. There are dark specks in it, far away. The sound grows louder, the specks grow larger. They are wild creatures-birds-long necks outstretched, wings beating steadily up and down. One bird is in the lead, the others strung out behind in the shape of a large V.

Canada Geese are on their way north. These big birds fly through almost every state on the spring trip to their nesting places. Keep watch, and you are sure to see them.

These families of Canada Geese have lived together in the South during winter. One day in late winter, an adult male tosses his head up and down. There is a lot of gabbling and "talking" among the restless geese. Then they all rise into the air.

An older bird sets the course, but they change leaders often. The geese move slowly at first-high over cities, highways, rivers, and forests that spread out below them like a map. They

push farther and farther north as the Earth warms, melting ice on ponds and lakes.

The geese fly day and night, landing briefly to rest or feed. As they come close to their summer homes, they increase their speed. Some flocks stop in the northern United States, others fly far into Canada.

The leader knows when they have arrived. The geese glide down, gabbling and honking at the sight of the marsh where they have built their nests in previous years.

When migrating geese pass over us in spring, they remind us that we share Planet Earth with wild creatures of many kinds-wild creatures on the move.

Bird Migration: Low-Tech, Hi-Tech

This text is provided courtesy of the National Audubon Society.



Scientists are always trying to learn everything they can about when and how birds migrate. They still use some of the "old tricks," like counting birds through a telescope as they pass in front of the moon. These counts give them an idea of how many migrants are passing that night.

But scientists also depend on radar, those hi-tech instruments that are used at airports to track incoming planes. By watching the radar screen, scientists learn about the numbers and directions taken by migrating birds at night. Using the same kind of radar that helps police catch speeding drivers, scientists can even tell how fast the birds are flying.

Scientists put old and new methods to work to protect migrating birds.

Nations Work Together to Help Migrating Birds

This text is provided courtesy of the National Audubon Society.



There is a certain long beach that becomes very busy every May. Hundreds of thousands of horseshoe crabs crawl out of the ocean. These fantastic creatures, with tails like spikes, are among the oldest kinds of animals on Earth.

Each female crab digs a hole in the sand. There she lays as many as 50,000 tiny eggs.

Overhead, the sky is filled with birds-plovers and sandpipers. Tired and hungry, they land on this important beach to feast on the eggs of the horseshoe crabs.

They stay for two or three weeks. Each bird must eat about 9,000 eggs a day to fatten up for the hard flight to its nesting ground far north in the Arctic.

Fortunately, enough eggs will be left to hatch and grow into adult horseshoe crabs! If there were no horseshoe crabs and no beaches, the migrating shorebirds would not find "fuel" to reach their nesting places. Beaches are part of a chain of life that stretches the length of the Western Hemisphere. Now Canada, the United States, and many other South American countries are working together to locate and protect beaches for birds, other creatures, and people, too!

Talk About Migration

This text is provided courtesy of the National Audubon Society.



For thousands of years people watched birds arrive in spring, as if by magic, then disappear again in fall. They had no idea where birds spent the winter. Some people guessed that birds hid in the mud, like frogs, or flew to the moon!

Scientists began to follow the birds' movements. They learned where birds go in winter and what happens to them during migration.

Some birds migrate alone and others migrate in flocks. Some fly at night and land at daylight to rest or feed. Scientists discovered they often stop at familiar places each year: ducks may land on the same ponds, shorebirds on the same beaches, and songbirds in the same parks.

Now conservationists are trying to protect those resting places. When other people pave them over for roads or malls, birds are in trouble.

It's up to us to keep our eyes on migrants - the birds our ancestors believed had flown to the moon - and make sure they have safe places to rest on their long journeys.

Magic Tomatoes

by Edward I. Maxwell



Luke's father is a farmer. To be more precise, his dad is a fruit-and-vegetable farmer. Instead of cows, pigs, sheep, and horses, Luke's house is surrounded by corn, squash, lettuce, and tomatoes.

Luke does not mind that there are no animals. In fact, he likes living on a fruit-and-vegetable farm much better. If you asked Luke, he would say that a fruit-and-vegetable farm is magical.

"What do you mean, magical?" Luke's friend Tom asked one day.

"Well, it's like this," said Luke. "My dad casts a spell, and soon enough the fruits and vegetables appear where there used to be bare dirt!"

Now, Luke knows that this is not really *magic*. But all the same, he feels it is pretty special that his dad is able to create something as grand as a corn field where there used to be nothing. Sometimes, Luke sets his alarm clock, so he can wake up before the sunrise, too. He eats cereal with his dad and asks him what spells he is going to cast.

"I'm planting tomatoes today, son," Luke's father explained. "Tomatoes ripen best in very hot summer heat,

so I need to plant the seeds early in spring. That way there will be tall, healthy tomato vines once August arrives."

"How do you make sure the vines grow tall and healthy?" Luke asked.

"They grow strong when you give them care and attention and have a little bit of hope," his father laughed.

"Can I help?" Luke begged.

"Of course!" exclaimed his father.

So on days Luke did not have school, he helped his father, and Luke learned more about his dad's magical work.

Luke learned that a tomato plant indeed needs a lot of care. He spent one whole day in the early June sun, sinking wooden stakes into the ground by young tomato sprouts. After the tomato vines had grown a little taller, Luke tied them to the stakes so that they would not topple over and lose their special fruit.

"The tomatoes sure need a lot of attention!" Luke exclaimed one late afternoon. He had been double and triple tying the vines, because the weather forecaster had predicted wind and rain for that night. Luke's father wanted to make sure his tomatoes did not get blown over in the storm.

"Most worthwhile things do require a lot of attention, Luke," replied his father with a smile.

"What do you mean?" asked Luke.

"Well," said his father, standing up straight and wiping the sweat from his forehead. "We should pay close attention to things that make our lives better."

"That is why you pay attention to Mom?" asked Luke.

"Yes," replied his father. "I pay close attention to you and Mom, because you both make my life better. You both make me very happy."

The rest of Luke's work that day went by a lot quicker. Taking care of the tomato plants, Luke imagined he was taking care of his mom and dad. With a little bit of family magic and a lot of attention, Luke was certain these would be the most beautiful tomatoes he had ever seen once August arrived.

A Grand Old Canyon

by Linda Ruggieri



Canyons are deep valleys surrounded by rocky cliffs. One of the most famous canyons in the world is in the Arizona desert in the United States. It is called the Grand Canyon.

The Grand Canyon stretches for 277 miles. That is a long distance! If you were in a car traveling at highway speed, it would take you about five hours to go that far.

The cliffs of the Grand Canyon are made of brown, red, and yellow rocks and sand. It is one mile from the top of the cliffs to the floor of the canyon. The Colorado River flows along the canyon floor.

Nature has shaped the Grand Canyon. For millions of years, scientists say, wind and water hit the canyon's rocks and sand. Strong winds blew on the cliffs. Rain and river water wore down the rocks. Together, the wind and water created the canyon we see today.

Even today, wind and water continue to change the canyon by reshaping the rocks and battering the cliffs. The change is very slow, but it never stops. A million years from now, the Grand Canyon will look very different.

Mexico's Natural Wonder: Paricutin Volcano



U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Paricutin Volcano erupting

The Paricutin Volcano in Mexico earned its title as one of the seven natural wonders of the world in an explosive way.

In 1943, this volcano emerged from a cornfield in a village about 200 miles west of Mexico City. People living in the area had been feeling the ground shake and hearing it rumble for weeks. Then one day, the earth in the cornfield rose up about six feet! Ash and vapor exploded from the ground. By later that day, a small cone shape had formed. The volcano had begun erupting, sending lava and pieces of molten rock into the air. As these rock pieces landed around the new volcano, the cone shape grew bigger and bigger.

As Paricutin continued erupting, the surrounding area was covered in smoke and ash. People were forced to leave.

The eruption was most intense during the first year. By the end of the first year, the volcano was over 1000 feet high! Within two years, only the top of a church was visible above all the lava.

Paricutin continued exploding for about nine years before stopping. It is now about 1,391 feet high!

Now, Paricutin is considered extinct. But during the nine years it was active, scientists studied the volcano closely. Paricutin is the first volcano that scientists were able to study and document from birth to death. Thanks to this natural wonder, scientists learned a lot about volcanoes.

Australia's Natural Wonder: The Great Barrier Reef



The Great Barrier Reef

In the Coral Sea in Australia, there is a reef. A reef is a ridge of rock, coral, or sand near the surface of a sea. But this reef isn't just any old reef. It's the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef system. It covers over 2300 kilometers, reaching from shallow areas to deep ocean waters. It is so big that it can be seen from outer space!

The Great Barrier Reef is home to many types of living things. It has thousands of types of mollusks and over 1500 kinds of fish. It's also home to many species of sharks and dolphins, not to mention sea turtles, sea cows, and other creatures. Humpback whales even find their way to the reef to breed!

Although it's home to many creatures, the reef might be best known for its coral. The Great Barrier Reef has over 400 different kinds of coral. It includes both soft and hard coral. The reef's corals are many different colors, shape, and sizes. This is partly what makes the reef so beautiful.

The Great Barrier Reef is known as one of the most diverse and beautiful places in the world. But today, warmer ocean temperatures are putting great stress on the coral. Large areas of the reef have died or are in danger because of the warmer seawater. Pollution also affects the reef, as sediments or litter often find their way into the water. This is bad for the health of the reef and its plants and animals. People are working hard to protect the Great Barrier Reef and the species that live there. With people's help, there may be a way to save this beautiful reef and the living things it supports!

Harbor of Rio de Janeiro

by ReadWorks



Harbor of Rio de Janeiro

On January 1, 1502, an explorer from Portugal named Goncalo Coelho and his crew sailed into a huge bay by what is now Brazil. A bay is a body of water that is partly surrounded by land. The explorers thought they had found the mouth of a large river. So they named the place "Rio de Janeiro," or "River of January." The bay they found is known today as the Harbor of Rio de Janeiro.

The Harbor of Rio de Janeiro is the world's largest natural bay, containing more water than any other bay in the world! Because of its size, the Harbor of Rio de Janeiro is considered one of the world's seven natural wonders.

The bay is surrounded by mountains made from granite. The mountains are huge and steep, with odd shapes. One of these mountains was named after a sugar loaf, because it looks like a type of bread made on an island near Portugal. Another one was named Corcovado, or "The Hunchback," because of its mound-like shape. Together, the water and mountains create a beautiful harbor.

The beauty of the harbor attracts people to this day. Tourists from all over the world come to see the gorgeous harbor and the city of Rio de Janeiro. People have even built cable cars and trains to accommodate tourists and show them around the area.

The Northern Lights

by ReadWorks



Imagine you are somewhere far north on Earth. It's nighttime, but the sky is not dark, like you might expect it to be. Instead, it's filled with colorful lights. Some lights look like moving curtains. Others look like a steady glow, or bands across the sky. The lights are usually green, but you may see other colors, like yellow, red, purple, or blue. The lights are dazzling as they dance far above your head.

What you're imagining is the Aurora Borealis. It's also called the Northern Lights. This natural light display has wowed people for hundreds of years. In fact, it is one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

People can thank the sun for these incredible light shows. During a certain kind of solar storm, energy and small particles from the sun can travel all the way to Earth. They can enter

the atmosphere near the North Pole. These particles interact with the gases in our atmosphere. This causes the beautiful lights we see in the sky.

The color of the lights partly depends on the gas that interacts with the particles from the sun. Oxygen gives off green light or red light. Purples and blues come from nitrogen in the atmosphere.

The same kind of light show can happen near the South Pole, as well. That display is called the Aurora Australis.

It's usually easiest to see the Northern Lights in a place where it is dark. It also helps to be far north on Earth, in places such as Canada, Iceland, Alaska, and Greenland. And, of course, you're most likely to see the lights after there's a big solar storm!

Victoria Falls: The Smoke That Thunders



Victoria Falls in Africa

Victoria Falls is one of the most impressive waterfalls on the planet. It is located along the border of Zimbabwe and Zambia, two countries in southern Africa. There, the Zambezi River takes a plunge, forming the giant "sheet" of falling water. Victoria Falls is considered to be the largest waterfall in the world. And no wonder - it's about one mile wide and 360 feet high!

This amazing sheet of falling water can be heard from miles away. The spray and mist from the waterfall can be seen from many miles away, too. In fact, local tribes first called the waterfall "Mosi-oa-Tunya." That means "the smoke that thunders." But the falls received another name in 1855. That year, a Scottish explorer came across the waterfall. His name was David Livingstone. He named it Victoria Falls after Queen Victoria, who was ruling Great Britain at the time.

The mist caused by the falls also supports the surrounding environment. Around the waterfall is a rainforest-like ecosystem. Many species of trees, plants, and animals thrive there. If you travel there, you may catch a glimpse of the many different raptor species nearby, like falcons and black eagles. You may even spot elephants in the national parks on both sides of the river!

Today, the site is one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World. Hundreds of thousands of people make the trip to Victoria Falls each year. They hope to see the spectacular "smoke that thunders" in person.

A Trip to Taughannock

by ReadWorks



Crunch, crunch, crunch. With each step she took, Eliza made a crunching sound on the stone path she was walking on. Her dad and brother, Kenyon, were far behind her. She always liked to run ahead. When she turned around to see if they were still there, they looked like little ants. They were at the bottom of the hill. "Come on, slowpokes!" she yelled down to them. Her voice echoed through the trees that lined the trail.

Up ahead, she could see a wooden bench. She slowly jogged to the rest stop and plopped down on a bench. To her right, she noticed an information sign. "Taughannock Falls State Park," it read in big block letters at the top. Eliza remembered having a hard time learning how to spell the tricky name. Her dad taught her how to pronounce it, "Tuh-ga-nick," but spelling it wasn't easy. Underneath the heading, there were a few paragraphs about the big waterfall at the end of trail. Eliza noticed it mentioned where the name "Taughannock" might have come from. It either referred to a Native American chief who used to live in the area, or a Native American word, "Taconic," which means "in the trees."

Eliza already knew plenty about the park, since her father often drove her and her brother there from their home in Ithaca, New York. It was only a ten-minute drive. Eliza loved going to the state park. She would try to explore new trails, or look for little frogs and lizards. She would collect stones she found pretty and add them to her collection back home.

"You know, Taughannock Falls is one of the highest waterfalls around here," her dad said when he and Kenyon reached the bench where Eliza was sitting. "We knowwww," Eliza and Kenyon said at the same time. Every time they hiked in the park, their dad always told them the same facts. "It's even taller than Niagara Falls!" their dad said, laughing. He liked to tease them.

They continued on the trail, stopping every so often for Eliza to pick up an interesting-looking stone. After twenty minutes, they noticed a dry creek bed down off the path. The light tan

stone reached far into the distance, and formed a smooth surface of rock. Eliza noticed some small puddles in some areas. "Can we go dip our feet in the water?" she asked her dad. It was getting hot, and she wanted to cool down. "Let's go!" her dad said, and both Eliza and Kenyon went running down to the creek bed.

"You know, this used to be full of water," their dad said while they peeled off their shoes. "But since this has been such a hot summer, the creek dried up." Eliza tried to picture the smooth stone covered in flowing water, full of small fish and stones. She dipped her toe in one puddle, but it was too warm. It was shallow, so the sun heated the water. She looked for another puddle, deeper this time. "Come over here!" Kenyon called out. He was standing by a larger pool of water, and started to splash water on his arms and legs. "This one is cool!"

After the three enjoyed what was left of the creek, they pulled their shoes on and started back on the trail. They wanted to get to the big waterfall. After walking for a while, Eliza noticed a wooden bridge in the distance. "We're almost there!" she called out. She ran ahead, like usual, knowing that the bridge meant that they were close. Suddenly, she saw it. It looked like it stretched all the way up to the clouds. The water made a loud crashing noise as it hit the rocks at the bottom of the falls. It amazed her every time she saw it.

Chinchillas

by ReadWorks



photograph of a chinchilla being fed

People love to have chinchillas as pets because they are extremely soft. Their fur is thick and feels like velvet. Its fur can be up to 80 times as dense as other mammals! Unfortunately, because chinchilla fur is so soft to touch, many people try to use chinchilla fur to make clothing and blankets. Chinchilla fur also comes in many different colors, which makes it even more desirable.



photograph of a chinchilla nibbling on its food

Chinchillas have a long life span and can live up to 20 years! The chinchilla is therefore a great pet to have if you are looking for an animal that sticks around for awhile. Chinchillas can sometimes be difficult to own, however. They are delicate, so you have to be careful while holding them. When chinchillas are frustrated or stressed, they sometimes throw their own poop. So if you plan on owning a chinchilla, be careful!



Photo Credit: Juli25nbg, CC BY-SA 3.0

photograph of a newborn chinchilla

Capybaras

by ReadWorks



Photo Credit: Miguel Ortiz, CC BY-SA 2.0

photograph of a woman with her pet capybara

In the United States, many people like to have capybaras as pets. A capybara is a large rodent from Central and South America. It stands two feet tall and is covered in stringy brown hair. Its face is very unique. Its nostrils are located on top of its head! Capybaras often live in riverbanks and ponds. The location of their nostrils allows them to breathe in air by sticking the top of their heads out of the water. Their eyes and ears are also on top of their heads, which makes it easy for them to know what's happening in their surroundings.



Photo Credit: Karoly Lorentey, CC BY 2.0

If capybaras are threatened by predators, they can hide underwater. In fact, they can stay underwater for five minutes! Capybaras eat water plants. With their long rodent teeth, these animals eat the underwater grasses throughout the day. Can you guess how many pounds of grass a capybara can eat per day? They can eat up to 8 pounds!



Photo Credit: Charlesjsharp, CC BY-SA 4.0

photograph of a capybara with a bird on its head

Kinkajous

by ReadWorks



Photo Credit: MaRu180, CC BY 2.0

photograph of a baby kinkajou

Kinkajous are mammals that live in the tropical rainforests of Central and South America. They are small in size and have tiny webbed fingers. Their tails are not so tiny, however. In fact, their tails are longer than the combined length of their heads and bodies. The tail is long for one important reason: balance! Kinkajous look for food in trees, which means they need to have excellent balance in order to stay safe while performing this daily activity. They can even hang from branches by the tips of their tails. When they want to return back to the branches, all the kinkajous have to do is climb back up their tails!

Kinkajous are commonly referred to as honey bears because they love to steal honey from beehives. They also love to drink sweet nectar. This earned them the scientific name of *Potos flavus*, which translates to "golden drinker." Kinkajous are also nicknamed *la llorona*. This means 'the crying woman' in Spanish. Can you guess why kinkajous have this nickname? Their loud screeches and barks echo throughout the forest, which makes them sound like a woman crying.

Kinkajous are normally mild-mannered and sweet. That's why some people like to have them as pets. Their constant climbing and screeching can sometimes make them difficult to own, however. Kinkajous are also nocturnal, so sometimes they can be disruptive when you're

trying to sleep!

Would you want to own a pet kinkajou?



Photo Credit: Dick Culbert, CC BY 2.0

photograph of a kinkajou

Genets

by ReadWorks



Photo Credit: Frédéric SALEIN, CC BY-SA 2.0

photograph of a genet

Genets are spotted mammals that are native to Africa. When they are born, their average birth weight is less than 3 ounces. That's less than a quarter of a pound! Their average adult weight is only 4.5 pounds. Because they're quite small, they are able to squeeze into and through very small spaces. In fact, genets are able to fit through any space that their head can fit through.



Photo Credit: Bernard Dupont, CC BY-SA 2.0

photograph of a genet

Genets are very mobile. They are able to climb trees and run along the ground. They also adapt quickly to their surroundings. For example, they pull their claws back in when they are not hunting or climbing. But when they feel threatened by enemies or predators, the claws come back out! Genets also release a stinky odor. This drives other animals that may try and hurt them away. People who have genets as pets need to be very careful not to upset them!

Bearded Dragons

by ReadWorks



photograph of a woman with her bearded dragon

Bearded dragons are among the most popular lizard species for pet owners. Bearded dragons are very entertaining to observe. They can change their color and expand their spiky beards. They do this when the temperature around them changes. They also do this when they want to prove they are more powerful than other lizards.



photograph of a bearded dragon

Bearded dragons make for good pets because they have a relatively long lifespan (5 to 8 years). They also are easy to take care of. In order for bearded dragons to stay healthy and happy, pet owners must buy a large aquarium. The aquarium should be kept at around 100 degrees because bearded dragons prefer to live in hot climates. After all, the bearded dragon is native to Australia. Some pet owners live in an area with a warmer climate. They can keep their pet bearded dragons in large outdoor cages. These cages should be placed in a place with both sunlight and shade. Bearded dragons like to climb around. So it's best that they have branches and structures to climb on in their cages. In addition to climbing, bearded dragons love to eat! Insects and vegetables are their favorite munchies.



Photo Credit: André Karwath aka Aka, CC BY-SA 2.5

close-up photograph of a bearded dragon

Wallaroos

by ReadWorks



Photo Credit: Ltshears, CC BY-SA 3.0

photograph of a wallaroo

Wallaroos are in the same animal family as kangaroos. While they are certainly smaller than kangaroos, they are still stocky and powerful. The average weight of males is between 50 to 100 pounds, as opposed to the male kangaroo's average weight of 150 pounds. The weight of female wallaroos does not vary as much. Their average weight ranges between 40 and 50 pounds.

Wallaroos live in rocky mountain terrains. They descend from the mountains when they need to eat. They are herbivores, which means that they only eat plants. Wallaroos typically feed on grasses in the pastures. They only eat during the night and remain at higher elevations during the day. To help them with their daily climbing, the wallaroos have pads on their feet.



photograph of a wallaroo

People who have wallaroos as pets are advised to have a large backyard. If pet owners do not have a backyard, then they need to put a diaper on their wallaroo. Unfortunately, potty training is not as effective with wallaroos. But this does not stop people from buying wallaroos. Once the wallaroo has adapted to its home environment and bonded with its owners, they are very friendly and sociable.

Amra and the Skateboard

by ReadWorks



The skateboard flew down the hill. Buzzing over the pavement, it passed by houses with manicured gardens and freshly cut grass, and whizzed past prim and proper homeowners—middle-aged mothers with beehive haircuts and stern-looking fathers with Oxford button-downs tucked into crisp khaki pants. At the bottom of the hill, it slammed into the curb and landed violently on its side.

Amra was searching for worms in her front yard. She was on her hands and knees when she heard the whizzing crack. Startled, she shot her head up and scanned the scene.

She saw the skateboard to her right, lying on the sidewalk. To her left, high up on the hill, she saw a gaggle of boys. Blinding rays of light carved out their silhouetted figures. The outlines of kneepads and helmets could be made out, as well as other skateboards, some held like canes, others like briefcases. One among the crew was sitting on his bottom, rocking back and forth in mild pain. He had wiped out.

Amra walked over to the skateboard. She took it into her hands and looked up toward the boys. One of them beckoned to her with his hand.

"Bring it up!" he called out.

The thought of interacting with them set her nerves on edge. She was only 10. They were older-high-schoolers.

Amra slowly walked the skateboard to the top. The boys stood there expressionless.

"Thanks kid," the one who wiped out said.

He walked over and took the skateboard from Amra's arms.

"Can I try?" she asked him.

The boys laughed.

"You're just a kid," Wipe Out said.

"And you're a girl," added another.

More laughter.

Amra shot an angry look. "Let me try!"

Wipe Out smirked. "Okay," he said, and handed back the skateboard.

Amra laid it on the pavement and rolled it back and forth to get the feel of the concrete. Stepping her left foot onto the front of the skateboard, she crouched and shot off, zipping down the hill and landing on a strip of grass along the sidewalk.

When she lifted the skateboard over her head in triumph, the boys were dumbfounded.