





Talk About It

How does this snake make you feel? Explain why you feel that way.



Find out more about snakes at www.macmillanmh.com

Snakes

Vocabulary

weekdays apologize
cardboard harmless
slithered ambulance
genuine



Word Parts

Base Words can help you figure out the meaning of a word.

harm = "hurt; injury"

harmless = "without hurt"

NAME THAT REPTILE

by Catherine Lutz

Narrator: Mark and Jean have been studying together **weekdays** after school for a big test on Friday. Jean takes a card from a **cardboard** box. The card has the name of a reptile on it. Now Mark will ask questions and try to name the reptile. Can you guess the answer before Mark?

Mark: Is it furry?

Jean: No. Remember, reptiles don't have fur.

Mark: That's right. Where does it live?

Jean: Mostly in the southwestern United States.

Mark: What does it eat?

Jean: It eats small birds, rabbits, mice, and squirrels.

Mark: Is it a crocodile?

Jean: No. Crocodiles live near streams, and this reptile lives where it's dry.

Mark: How big is it?

Jean: Some can be 7 feet long. Others are only 2 feet long.

Mark: It's probably not a turtle or a lizard. Is it a snake?

Jean: Yes!





Is it a crocodile?

Mark: Remember when my pet snake got loose and **slithered** across my mother's foot? I had to return it to the pet store.

Jean: What did the store say?

Mark: I think they were **genuine** when they offered to speak with my mom. I knew that wouldn't help, though.

Jean: Did you **apologize** to your mom and say you were sorry?

Mark: Of course, but she didn't change her mind.

Jean: Okay, back to studying.

Mark: Does the snake crush its prey?

Jean: No.

Mark: So it's not a python. Is it **harmless**?

Jean: No. It's dangerous. Its bite can be fatal. If you get bitten, you'd need an **ambulance**!

Mark: Yikes. Does it give a warning before it attacks?

Jean: Its tail shakes and makes a noise. Each time the snake sheds, its tail gets a new segment in it.

Mark: I've got it! It's a rattlesnake!

Narrator: Did you guess the reptile before Mark did?



It's a rattlesnake!

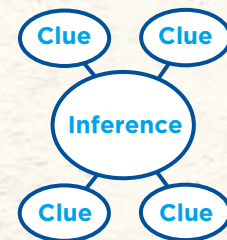
Reread for Comprehension



Generate Questions

Make Inferences Generating questions as you read can help you make inferences. For example, ask yourself, "Why did the character just say that?" or "What are some clues to what might happen next?"

Reread the selection and make inferences.
Write the clues in the Inferences Word Web.



Comprehension

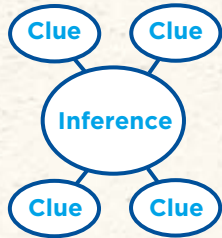
Genre

Humorous Fiction is a made-up story written to make the reader laugh.



Generate Questions

Make Inferences As you read, fill in your Inferences Word Web.



Read to Find Out

What do you learn when you read between the lines?

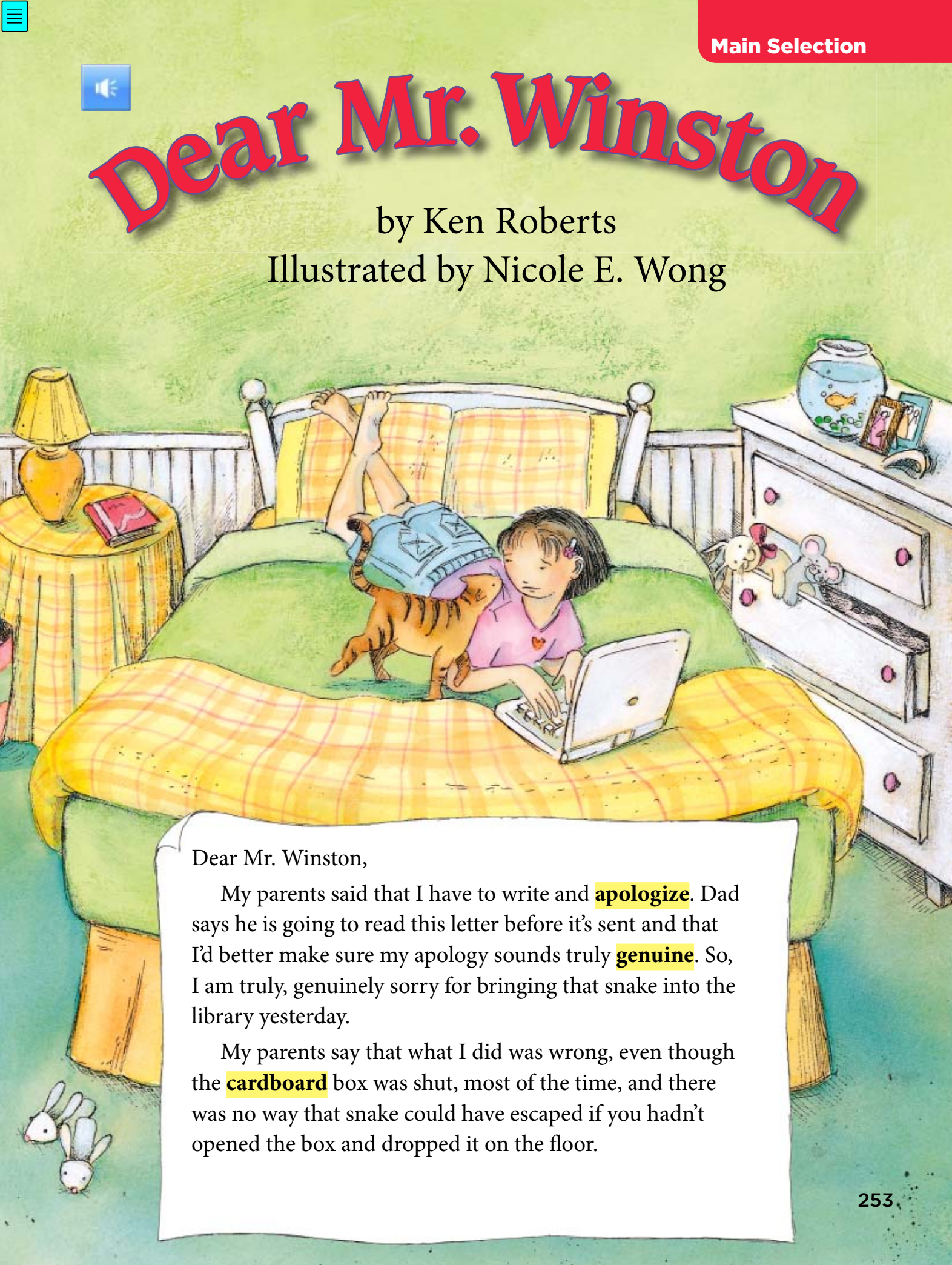




Dear Mr. Winston

by Ken Roberts

Illustrated by Nicole E. Wong



Dear Mr. Winston,


My parents said that I have to write and **apologize**. Dad says he is going to read this letter before it's sent and that I'd better make sure my apology sounds truly **genuine**. So, I am truly, genuinely sorry for bringing that snake into the library yesterday.

My parents say that what I did was wrong, even though the **cardboard** box was shut, most of the time, and there was no way that snake could have escaped if you hadn't opened the box and dropped it on the floor.



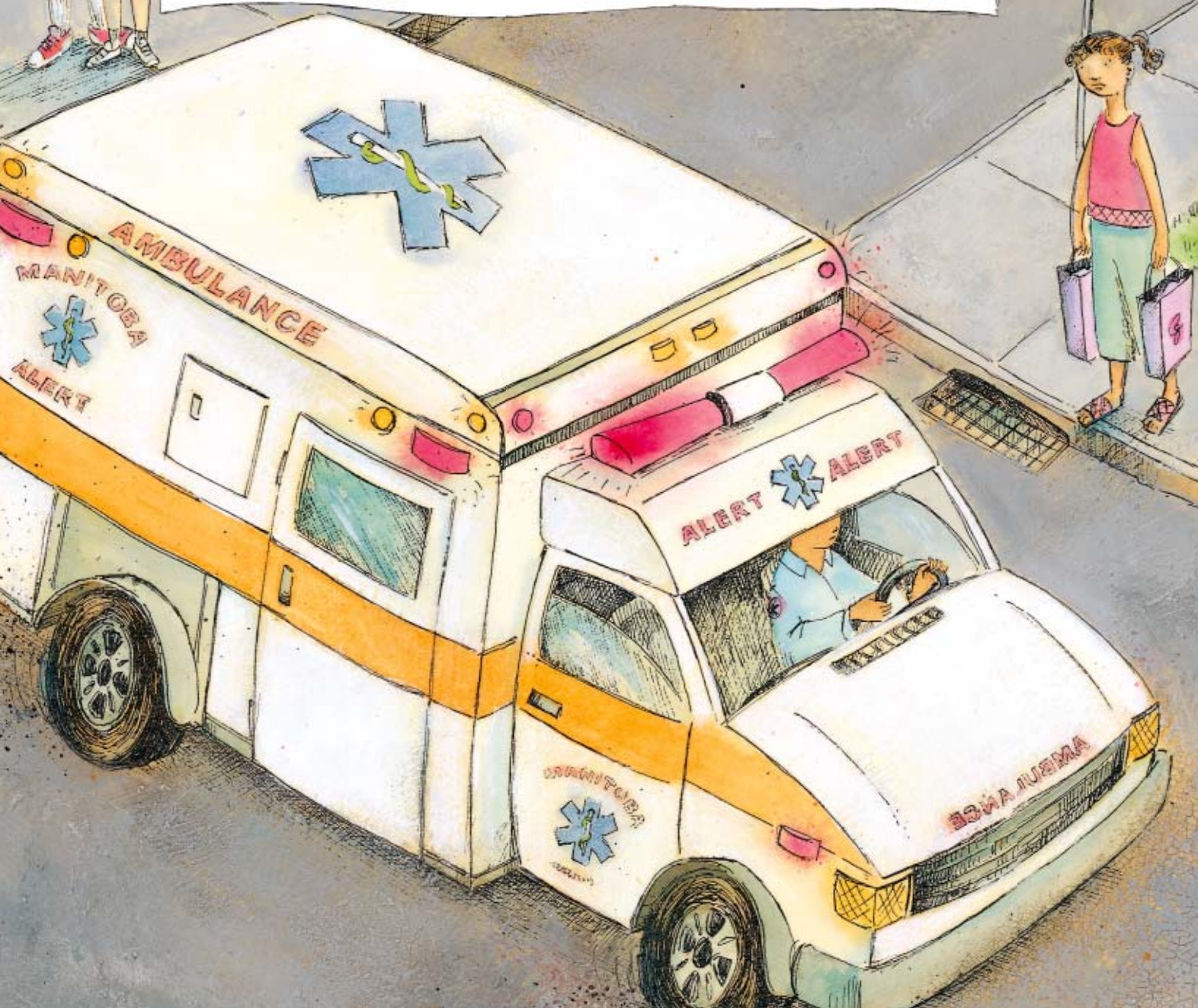
My parents say it's my fault for having brought that snake into the library and I truly, genuinely apologize but I still don't know how I was supposed to find out what kind of snake I had inside that box without bringing the snake right into the library so I could look at snake pictures and then look at the snake and try to find a picture that matched the snake.

I told my parents something that I didn't get a chance to remind you about before the **ambulance** took you away. I did come into the library without the snake, first. I left the box outside, hidden under a bush and tried to borrow a thick green book with lots of snake pictures. You told me that the big green book was a reference book which meant that it had to stay inside the library and I couldn't take it out, even for ten minutes.




My parents say I still shouldn't have brought that snake into the library and that I have to be truly, genuinely sorry if I ever hope to watch Galactic Patrol on television again. My parents picked Galactic Patrol because it's my favorite show, although I'm not sure what not watching a television program has to do with bringing a snake into the library.

The people at the library say you hate snakes so much that you won't even touch a book with a picture of snakes on the cover and that is why you won't be back at the library for a few more weeks. If you want, you could watch Galactic Patrol. It's on at 4:00 P.M. **weekdays**, on channel 7. There are no snakes on the show because it takes place in space.







Did the flowers arrive? Dad picked them out but I have to pay for them with my allowance for the next two months. The flowers are proof that I am truly, genuinely sorry for having brought that snake into the library. I hope the people who work at the library find that snake soon! Did they look under all the chairs?

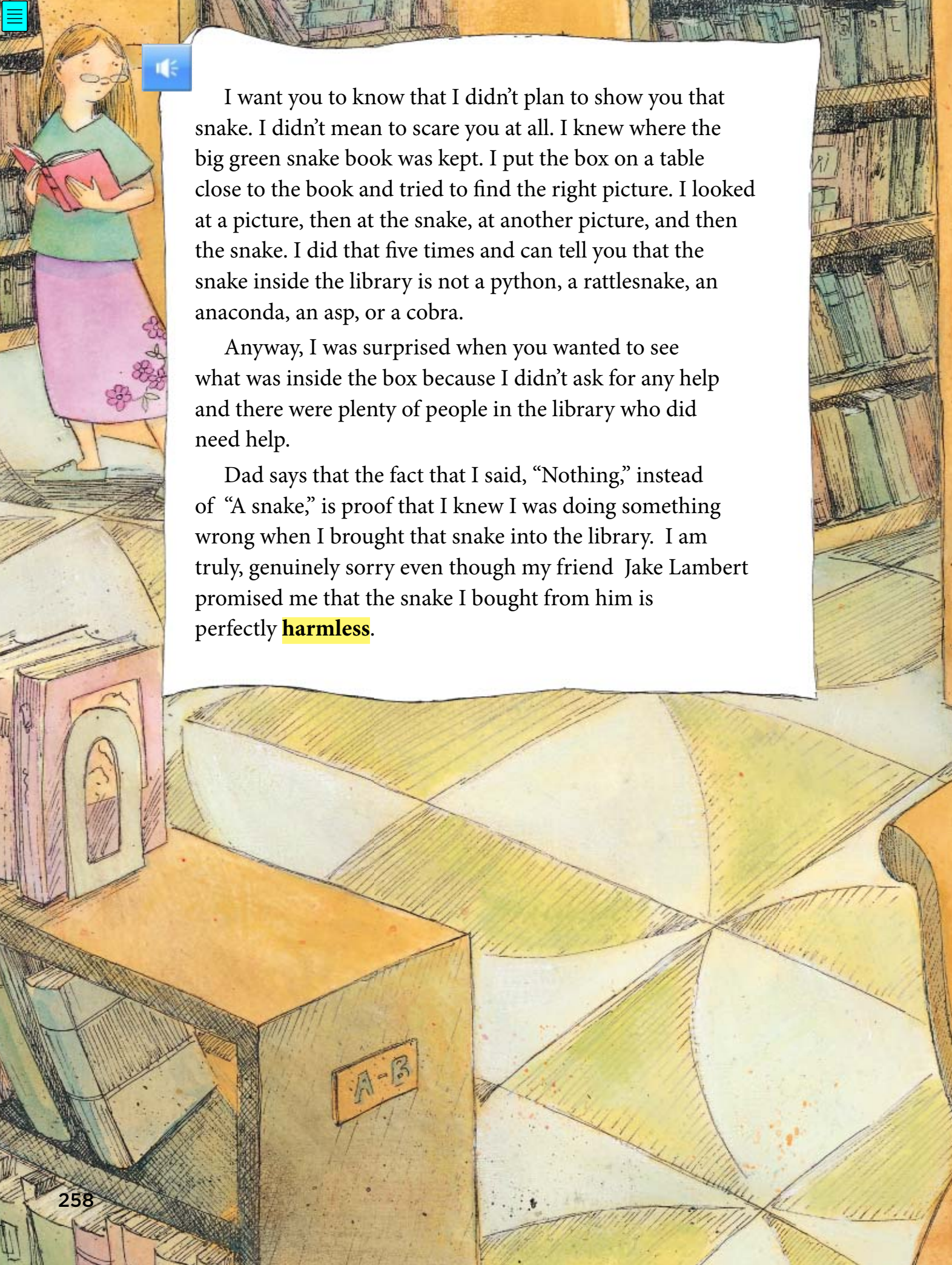
That snake isn't dangerous. It is a local snake, and there are no poisonous snakes in Manitoba. The people at the library say you know that too because that was one of the reasons you decided to move here. I bought that snake from a friend. I paid one month's allowance for it, which means that snake has cost me a total of three month's allowance and I only owned it for one hour!

Mom says I don't have to tell who sold me that snake so I won't tell you either because Dad says he is going to read this letter. Besides, I don't want you to be mad at anyone else when I am the one who brought that snake into the library yesterday. I am truly, genuinely sorry.



Make Inferences

Do you think the girl is truly, genuinely sorry for bringing the snake into the library? Why or why not?




I want you to know that I didn't plan to show you that snake. I didn't mean to scare you at all. I knew where the big green snake book was kept. I put the box on a table close to the book and tried to find the right picture. I looked at a picture, then at the snake, at another picture, and then the snake. I did that five times and can tell you that the snake inside the library is not a python, a rattlesnake, an anaconda, an asp, or a cobra.

Anyway, I was surprised when you wanted to see what was inside the box because I didn't ask for any help and there were plenty of people in the library who did need help.

Dad says that the fact that I said, "Nothing," instead of "A snake," is proof that I knew I was doing something wrong when I brought that snake into the library. I am truly, genuinely sorry even though my friend Jake Lambert promised me that the snake I bought from him is perfectly **harmless**.





I did tell you that I didn't need any help and I did have a snake book open in front of me, so I don't know why you insisted on looking inside the box if you are so afraid of snakes and everything. I don't know why you picked up that box before opening a flap, either. If you had left the box on the table and maybe even sat down next to it, then maybe the box would have been all right when you screamed and fainted. You wouldn't have fallen so far, either, if you were sitting down.


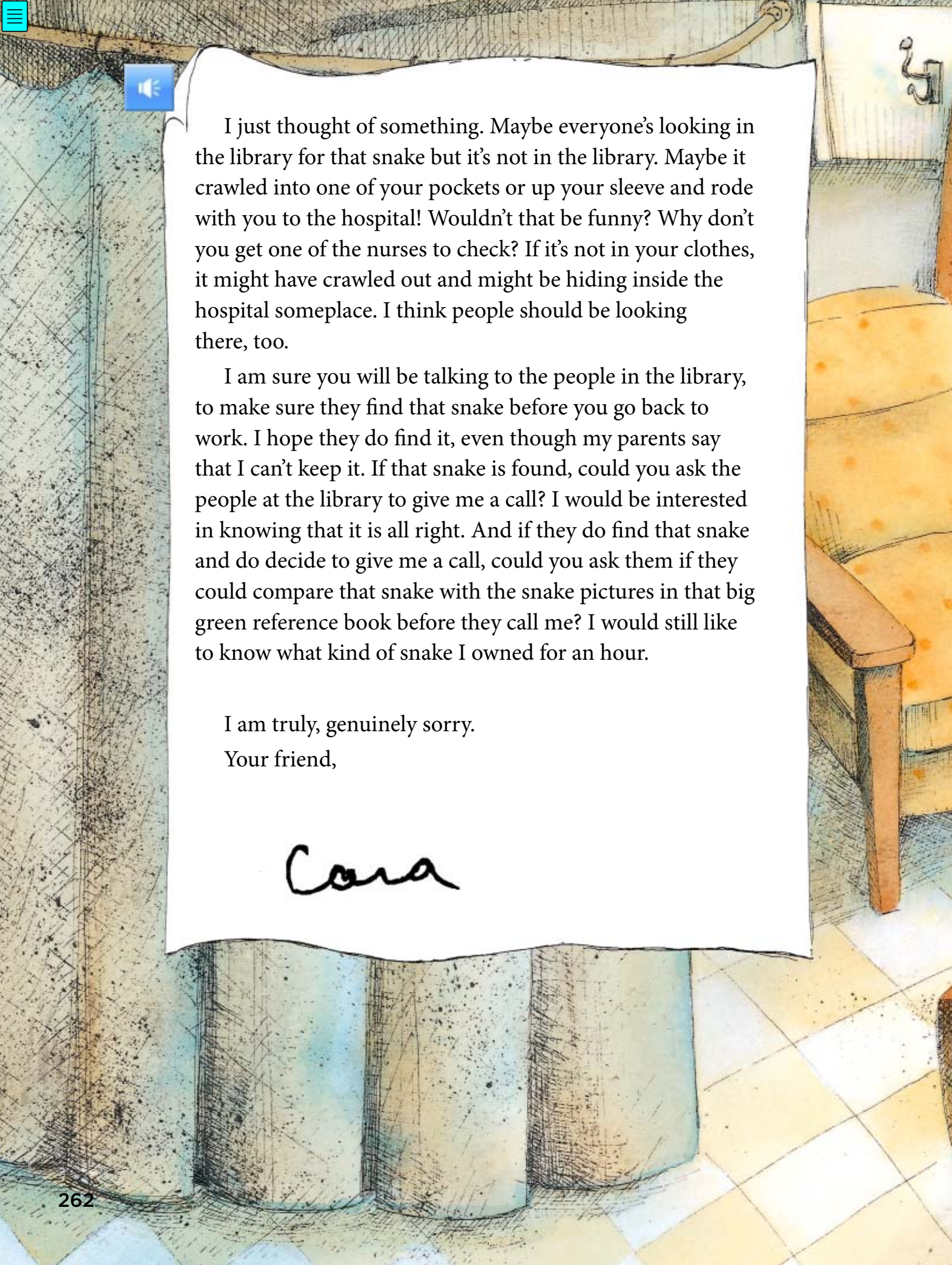
Did you know that you broke out in a rash after you fainted? I thought a person had to touch something like poison ivy to get a rash. I didn't know it was possible to get a rash by just thinking about something but my parents say it really can happen. I think maybe you did touch something. Maybe, when you were lying on the floor, that snake **slithered** over to you and touched you! Did you know that snake skin feels dry, not wet and slimy at all?



Make Inferences

Is the girl taking full responsibility for what happened to Mr. Winston? What makes you think so?





I just thought of something. Maybe everyone's looking in the library for that snake but it's not in the library. Maybe it crawled into one of your pockets or up your sleeve and rode with you to the hospital! Wouldn't that be funny? Why don't you get one of the nurses to check? If it's not in your clothes, it might have crawled out and might be hiding inside the hospital someplace. I think people should be looking there, too.

I am sure you will be talking to the people in the library, to make sure they find that snake before you go back to work. I hope they do find it, even though my parents say that I can't keep it. If that snake is found, could you ask the people at the library to give me a call? I would be interested in knowing that it is all right. And if they do find that snake and do decide to give me a call, could you ask them if they could compare that snake with the snake pictures in that big green reference book before they call me? I would still like to know what kind of snake I owned for an hour.

I am truly, genuinely sorry.

Your friend,

Cara

Identify the Author and Illustrator

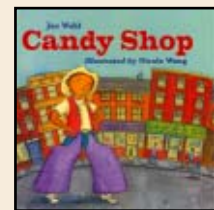


Ken Roberts is actually a librarian. He often writes funny stories with unusual characters, like the girl in this piece. Ken has many talents. He is a storyteller, puppeteer, juggler, and magician. He was once a champion runner, too.

Nicole E. Wong has been interested in art all her life and even went to college to study it. She has been very fortunate to have turned her passion and training into her career in illustration. Nicole's artwork has appeared in several books, including Jan Wahl's *Candy Shop*, and various magazines. Nicole lives in Massachusetts with her husband, Dan, and their dog, Sable.



Another book illustrated by Nicole E. Wong



Find out more about Ken Roberts and Nicole E. Wong at www.macmillanmh.com



Write About It

Cara wrote a long letter to apologize for bringing a snake into the library. Write about how you would have apologized to Mr. Winston.





Comprehension Check



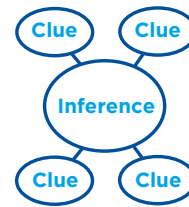
Summarize

Summarize *Dear Mr. Winston*. Include the main characters and tell the most important events in the correct order.

Think and Compare



1. Was Cara's apology to Mr. Winston truly **genuine**? Use your Inferences Word Web to help you decide. Tell what clues helped you make this inference. **Generate Questions: Make Inferences**



2. Reread the second paragraph of the story. Who does Cara seem to say was responsible for the snake's escape? Use story details in your answer. **Analyze**
3. How would you have avoided Cara's mistake? **Synthesize**
4. Do you think that Mr. Winston will ever be able to see the humor in this event? Explain your answer. **Evaluate**
5. Read "Name That Reptile" on pages 250-251. How is the problem that Mark is trying to solve similar to Cara's problem? How is it different? Use details from both selections in your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**



Science

Genre

Electronic Encyclopedias include articles, diagrams, and photographs on many topics.



Text Feature

Toolbars help you find more information or move to a different area in an electronic encyclopedia.

Content Vocabulary

reptiles
camouflage
hibernate
digested

Find

▼ [article outline](#)

Snakes

Physical Characteristics

Snakes are **reptiles**. They have flexible skeletons and no legs. Their bodies are covered with scales. Clear scales even cover their eyes. Most snakes are colored to **camouflage** them. For example, the emerald tree boa is green. This helps it hide among tree leaves. Other snakes, like coral snakes, are brightly colored to warn enemies that they are poisonous. Snakes range greatly in size. The dwarf blind snake is 10 cm (around 4 in.) long. The anaconda and reticulated python can be as long as 10 m (about 33 ft.).



Timber rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*), northeastern United States

Behavior

Like all reptiles, snakes are cold-blooded. They cannot make their own body heat. Snakes need the sun or warm surroundings to keep them warm. In cool weather, many snakes gather underground or in other sheltered places. There, they **hibernate**, meaning they stay at rest during the winter.

Printers



Features

Tools

Options

Favorites

Help

Contents Page

Multimedia

Related Articles

Anaconda

Coral Snake

Emerald Tree Boa

Skeleton

Using a Toolbar



Click on the Related Articles menu and select the subject about which you want to learn more.

Coral Snake a kind of poisonous snake found in North and South America. There are about 30 species. Coral snakes all have bright bands of color on their bodies and are two to three feet in length. They hunt lizards and other snakes.

Anaconda a member of the boa family living in swamps and rivers in South America. The anaconda, like other boas, wraps itself around its prey to suffocate it. It is one of the longest and thickest snakes and bears live young.



Coral snake



Hunting and Eating



Egg-Eater Snake
(*Dasyreptis scabra*),
Savannah, South Africa

Snakes are meat eaters but do not chew their prey. They swallow animals whole. Snakes can stretch their jaws far apart. This lets them eat animals that are bigger than their own heads.

Constrictors, such as boa constrictors, wrap themselves around their prey. These snakes suffocate their prey and then swallow it. Some snakes are venomous and kill their prey with poison. Venomous snakes, such as rattlesnakes, inject the poison through their fangs. Some poisons kill the animal. Others break down the animal's flesh so that it is partly **digested** by the time the snake eats it.

Raising Young



Cobra hatching

Most female snakes lay eggs that have soft leathery shells. Some females stay close to guard the eggs. Others, such as pythons, coil around the eggs to keep them warm. Some snakes give birth to live babies. Garter snakes can have more than 40 baby snakes at once. Snakes do not usually take care of their young.



- Boa Constrictor
- Garter Snake
- Python
- Rattlesnake

Garter Snake a common and harmless type of snake in North America. They are fairly small (about two feet long) and usually have dark colors, with stripes running along their bodies. They live in moist areas and feed on toads, frogs, earthworms, and similar animals.

Connect and Compare



1. Look at the Related Articles menu on this page. What would you click on to find out how constrictors kill their prey?
Using a Toolbar
2. Constrictors often hunt animals that have sharp teeth, claws, or hooves. Why do you think they need to kill their prey before swallowing it? **Analyze**
3. Think about this article and *Dear Mr. Winston*. Which of the snakes you have read about would not make a good pet for Cara? Explain your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**




Science Activity

Research a snake. If possible, use an electronic encyclopedia. Write a paragraph or two about the snake, and draw a picture of it.



Find out about kinds of snakes at www.macmillanmh.com



 **Writing**

Conventions

In a business letter, use the correct form and the right punctuation. Then the reader will take the contents seriously.



I wrote to the zoo to complain about the hours of the Reptile House.

I used correct punctuation in my letter.

Write a Letter

123 Maple St.
Chicago, IL 41456
Jan. 24, 2007

Mr. Thomas Fine
City Zoo
450 Wonder Lane
Chicago, IL 60610

Dear Mr. Fine:

My family enjoys visiting your zoo. The only problem we ever have is in the Reptile House. It is supposed to be open every day, but sometimes the doors are locked. How can we learn about snakes if we can't see them? Please make sure that the Reptile House is open all the time.

Yours truly,
Adrianna O.



Your Turn

It's your turn to speak out about something you think is important.

Use a business letter to tell a person or a company about a problem you have. Be sure to use correct punctuation for your letter. Use the Writer's Checklist to check your writing.

Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Did I state my problem clearly? Can I add convincing facts and opinions?
- Organization:** Did I follow correct letter form? Does the order of the information make sense?
- Voice:** Did I use formal language in my letter?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose just the right words so that my message is strong but polite?
- Sentence Fluency:** Did I avoid run-on sentences?
- Conventions:** Did I use abbreviations with a period? Did I check my punctuation and spelling?



Protect Our Valuable Oceans

by Deepak Mallavarpu

We live in a watery world. It has five oceans: the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Indian, the Arctic, and the Antarctic. Water makes up more than 70% of the surface of our planet. No wonder astronauts see Earth as a beautiful blue world!

Oceans do more for us than just make the world look pretty from space. They give us fish, seaweed, and shellfish. Tons of food are taken from the oceans each year. Some of our salt, fertilizers, and minerals come from the sea. A great deal of the world's oil is drilled offshore. That means it comes from beneath the ocean floor. We get some of our natural gas this way too.

Oceans provide us with transportation. Freight and fuel travel by boat. Oceans are also used for recreation. They allow us to explore, swim, snorkel, study wildlife, and ride waves.

The oceans help make our weather. They play a huge role in spreading the sun's warmth all over our planet. Oceans fuel storm systems, too. And storms bring fresh water to land.

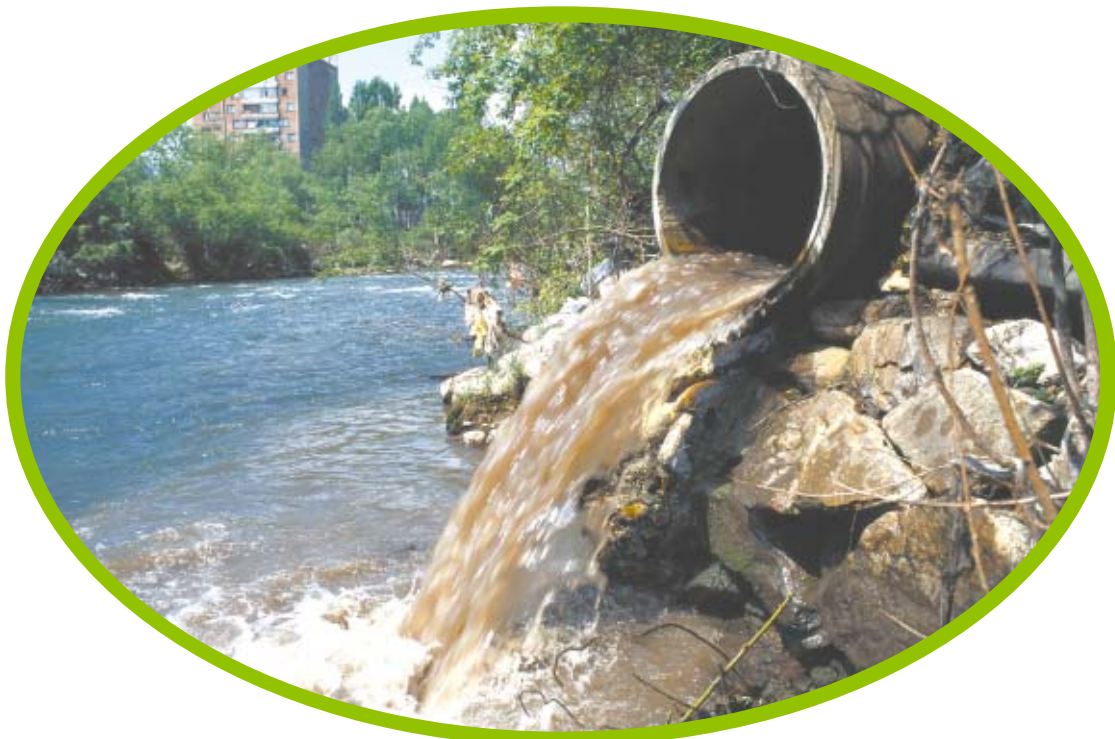
Even though our oceans do so much for us, we have not been taking care of them. They are getting more and more polluted. Some kinds of fish are dying out. Coral reefs are being damaged by water that is too warm.

Pollution may be the biggest problem. Some pollution results from things people dump into the oceans. For example, cruise ships dump waste into the ocean every day. Other pollution comes from industries dumping their waste into rivers. The rivers carry it to the sea.

Often, we harm the oceans without knowing it. For example, nitrogen gets into the oceans from fertilizers. Nitrogen is carried to the oceans as runoff. As water “runs off” the ground, it flows into our streams and rivers. The rivers and streams carry it out to sea. Other pollutants go into the air. Later, they reach the water. For example, most of the mercury found in the ocean comes from power plants that use coal.

When pollutants reach the oceans, problems occur. For example, nitrogen reduces the amount of oxygen in the ocean. Less oxygen can kill some sea animals or cause diseases. Sometimes pollution upsets the balance of nature. Too much nitrogen can make algae, tiny plants, grow so much that they hurt other plants and animals.

Luckily, there are things we can do to protect the oceans. A good start is by learning about the oceans. Another thing that we can all do is get rid of waste properly. You should always use water wisely. And finally, we can ask our government to get involved. The oceans do a lot for us, but they won’t last if we don’t take care of them.



What You Can Do to Protect Our Oceans



Conserve water.

Don't be wasteful when washing your car or watering your lawn.

Reduce household pollutants.

Properly dispose of chemicals and cleaning products.

Reduce waste.

Dispose of trash properly, and don't leave fishing lines, nets, or plastic items in or near the water.

Reduce automobile pollution.

Use fuel efficient vehicles, carpool, recycle motor oil, and repair oil and air conditioning leaks.

Protect ocean wildlife.

Be considerate of sea-life habitats. Don't feed sea birds, mammals and turtles, or disturb their nesting grounds.

Get involved.

Take part in a beach cleanup or other ocean-oriented activities.

Tip

Keep reading. The answer may be in more than one place.

Directions: Answer the questions.

1. Which of the following solutions would NOT help protect our oceans?

- A conserving salt
- B conserving water and reducing waste
- C informing people about environmental problems
- D reducing nitrogen “runoff”

2. What is the BEST reason for learning about oceans?

- A There is more water than land on Earth.
- B We need to keep the water clean and blue.
- C People enjoy water sports and boating.
- D We depend on oceans for food and our climate.

3. What can you do to protect our oceans?

- A Reduce automobile pollution and protect ocean wildlife.
- B Ask people not to fish or catch seafood.
- C Dump chemicals and waste products into the water.
- D Kill algae and eat seaweed.

4. Read the poster. How is the information it presents the same as or different from the information in the article?

5. What can you do to protect the oceans? Include information from the article in your response.

Writing Prompt

Write an essay to your principal about an issue at school you care about, such as a safer playground or a better cafeteria. State your opinion and support it with reasons. Write three paragraphs.

