



PENGUIN ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 3

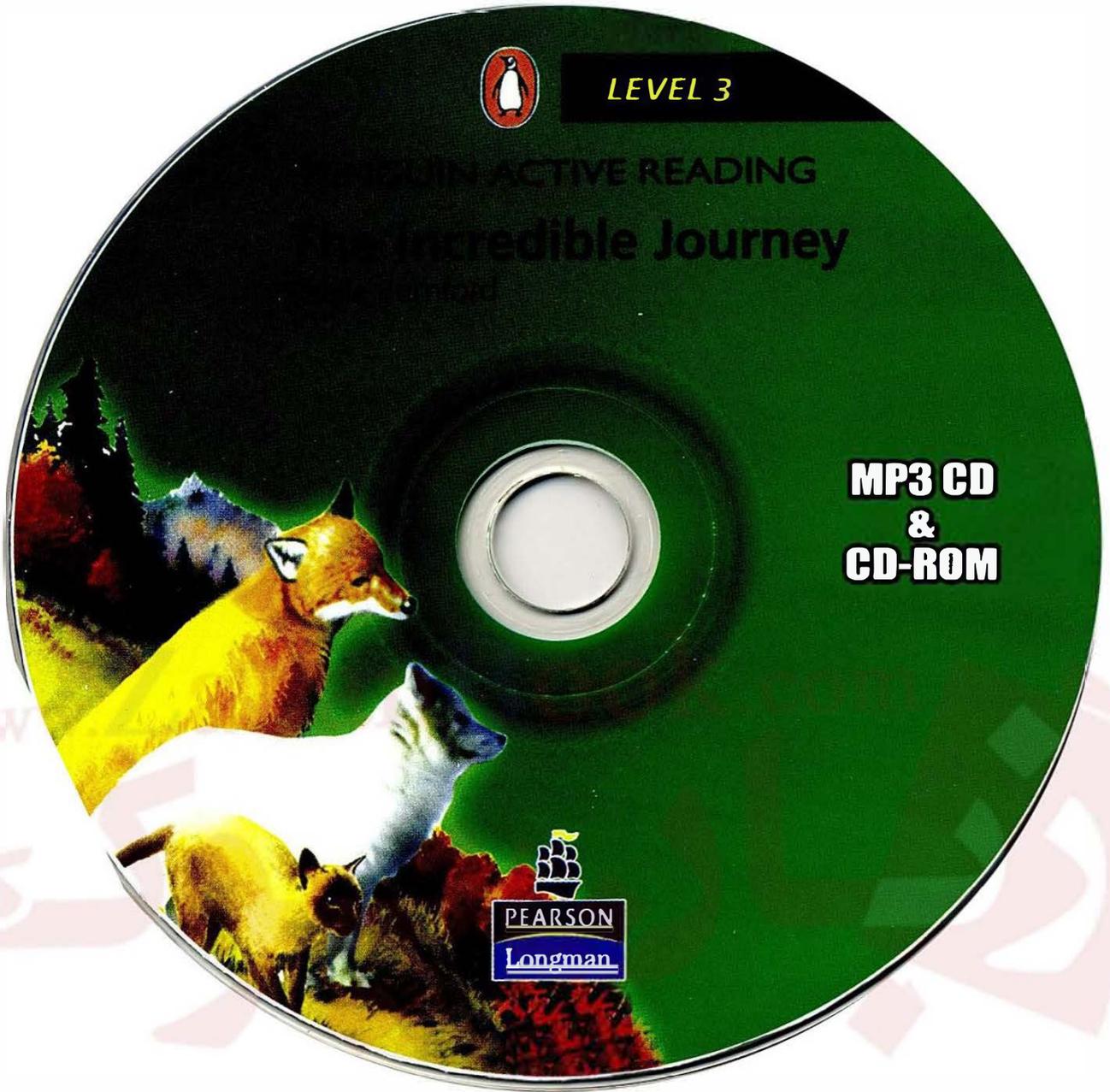
The Incredible Journey

Sheila Burnford

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LEVEL 3

AN ACTIVE READING

An Incredible Journey

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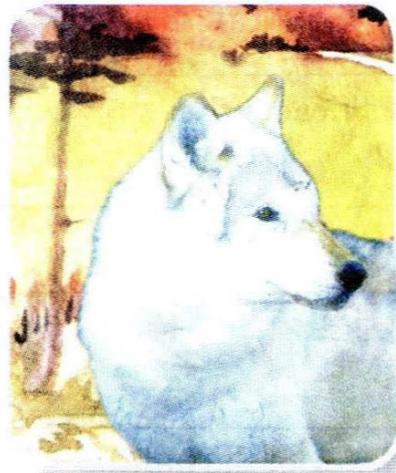


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1.1 What's the book about?

Look at the pictures and discuss these questions.



- 1 Which of these animals would you most like to have as a pet? Why? What do you think each animal likes and hates to do?
- 2 What is the longest journey that you have ever made on foot? Why did you make the journey? How long did it take? How did you feel at the end of your journey?

1.2 What happens first?

Look at the picture on page 1. This story is about a journey across the northwest of Ontario in Canada. What do you know, or what can you imagine, about this part of the world? Make notes.

Notes

the land:

the people:

the animals:

the weather:

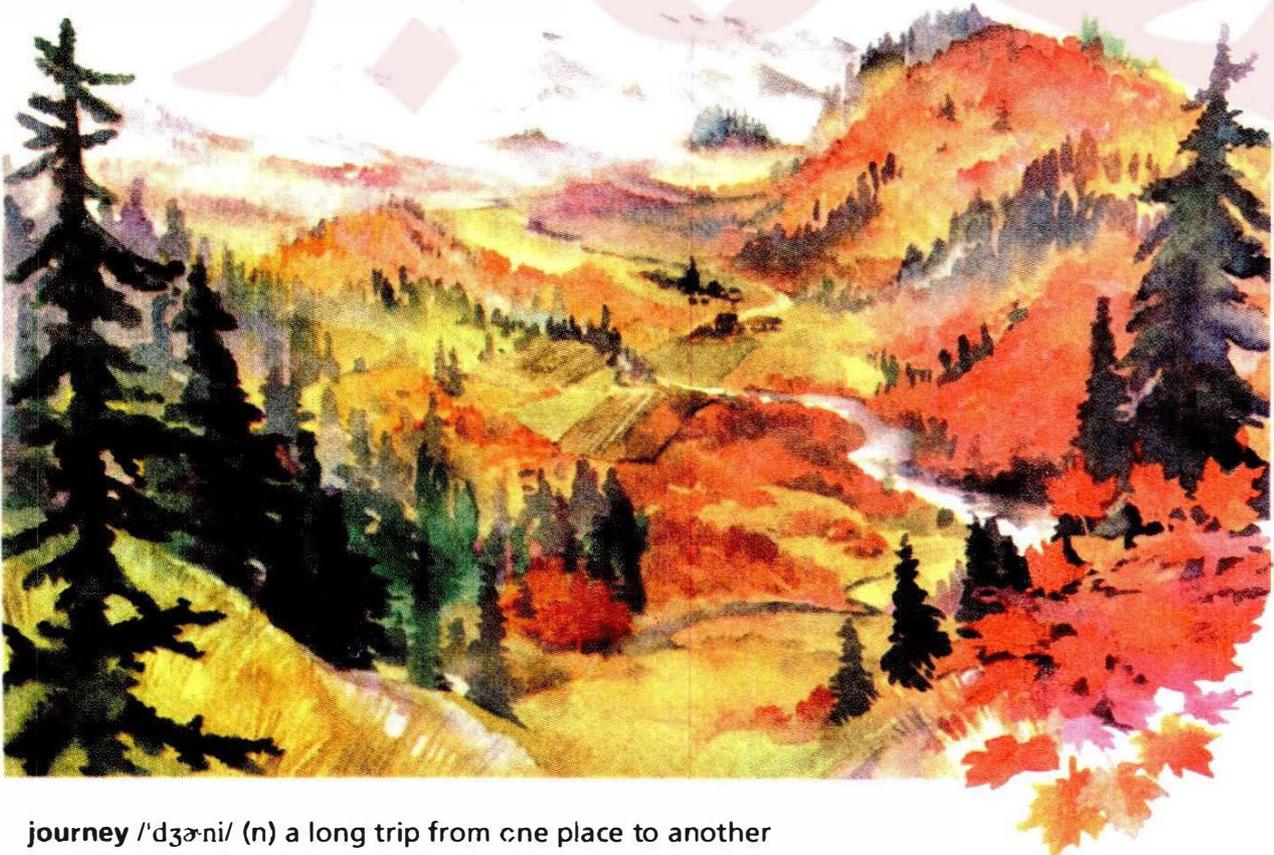
The Three Friends

*One of the pages of Longridge's note to Mrs. Oakes flew into the air.
It sailed across the room and landed on the fire.*

The **journey** took place in Canada, in the northwest of Ontario. This part of the country is wild, with woods, lakes, and fast rivers. There are thousands of kilometers of narrow country roads, a few small towns, and lonely farms. Men from the big paper companies cut down trees deep in the forests. There are Indians and **hunters**. But most of the time there are no **human beings**, only wild animals. And silence.

For almost half the year the area is covered in snow, and the temperature falls below zero for weeks. The seasons are different in north Ontario. The plants and flowers do not grow slowly in spring. There is a sudden, short summer when everything grows fast. Then it is fall again with clear blue skies, sunny days, and wonderful, richly colored **leaves** on the trees: gold and yellow and red.

Through this wild, lonely country, in the fall, the three travelers made their **incredible** journey.



journey /'dʒɜːni/ (n) a long trip from one place to another

hunt /hʌnt/ (v) to catch and kill animals

human being /,hyʊmən 'biːɪŋ/ (n) a man, woman, or child

leaf /lif/ (n) one of the flat, green parts of a plant or tree

incredible /ɪn'kredəbəl/ (adj) so strange that you cannot believe it

John Longridge lived alone a long way from one of the small towns, in an old stone house that belonged to his family. He was a tall man of about forty, serious but kind. He was a writer of history books and traveled a lot. But he always returned to the comfortable old stone house to write his books. Mrs. Oakes and her husband Bert lived about a kilometer away. Mrs. Oakes went to Longridge's home every day. She looked after the house and cooked his main meals. Bert looked after the backyard. They understood Longridge very well. While he was writing, they worked quietly around the place.

On the evening before the incredible journey, toward the end of September, Longridge was reading a newspaper by a warm wood fire in his comfortable



library. He couldn't turn the pages easily because a Siamese cat with bright blue eyes was sitting on his knees. From time to time, the cat moved his brown front **paws** as he looked into the fire.

On the floor, with his head on one of Longridge's feet, lay an old white fox. His eyes were closed and his tail moved in his sleep. Some people think fox are strange, animals. But Longridge loved him: he was a friendly family pet and, at the same time, a strong, brave fighter. The man always enjoyed the look of happiness in the old fox's little eyes.

By the door lay another dog with his nose on his paws. This was a young fox with a strong body. His brown eyes were wide open, watching everything. When Longridge got up from his chair, the fox lifted his proud head.



paw /pɔ/ (n) the foot of an animal

Longridge put the cat on the floor and carefully moved his foot from under the old fox's head. He walked across the room and looked out the window. A **huge** orange moon was coming up just above the trees at the far end of the yard. It was bright outside from the light of the moon. Longridge could see the leaves on the grass. There were a few colorful flowers, still there from the summer.

He turned, crossed the room, and turned on another light. Next he opened a narrow cupboard halfway up the wall. Inside were a lot of guns. He took one out and looked at it carefully. The fox sat up when he saw the gun. He looked at it with excitement and great interest. When Longridge put the gun back in the cupboard, the young fox lay down again. He turned his head away, his eyes unhappy.

Suddenly, the telephone rang and broke the silence of the quiet room. Woken by the noise, the cat jumped angrily off the chair. The old fox **struggled** to his feet. Longridge answered the phone. He could hear Mrs. Oakes, but her voice was not very clear.

"Speak louder, Mrs. Oakes," he said. "I can't hear you."

"I can't hear you very well either," said Mrs. Oakes. "Is that better? I'm shouting now! What time are you leaving in the morning, Mr. Longridge? Excuse me? Could you talk louder, please?"

"About seven o'clock. I want to get to Heron Lake before dark," he shouted. "But you don't have to be here at that time, Mrs. Oakes."

"What did you say? Seven? Will it be all right if I come at about nine? My daughter's arriving on the early bus and I'd like to meet her. But I don't want to leave the foxes alone too long..."

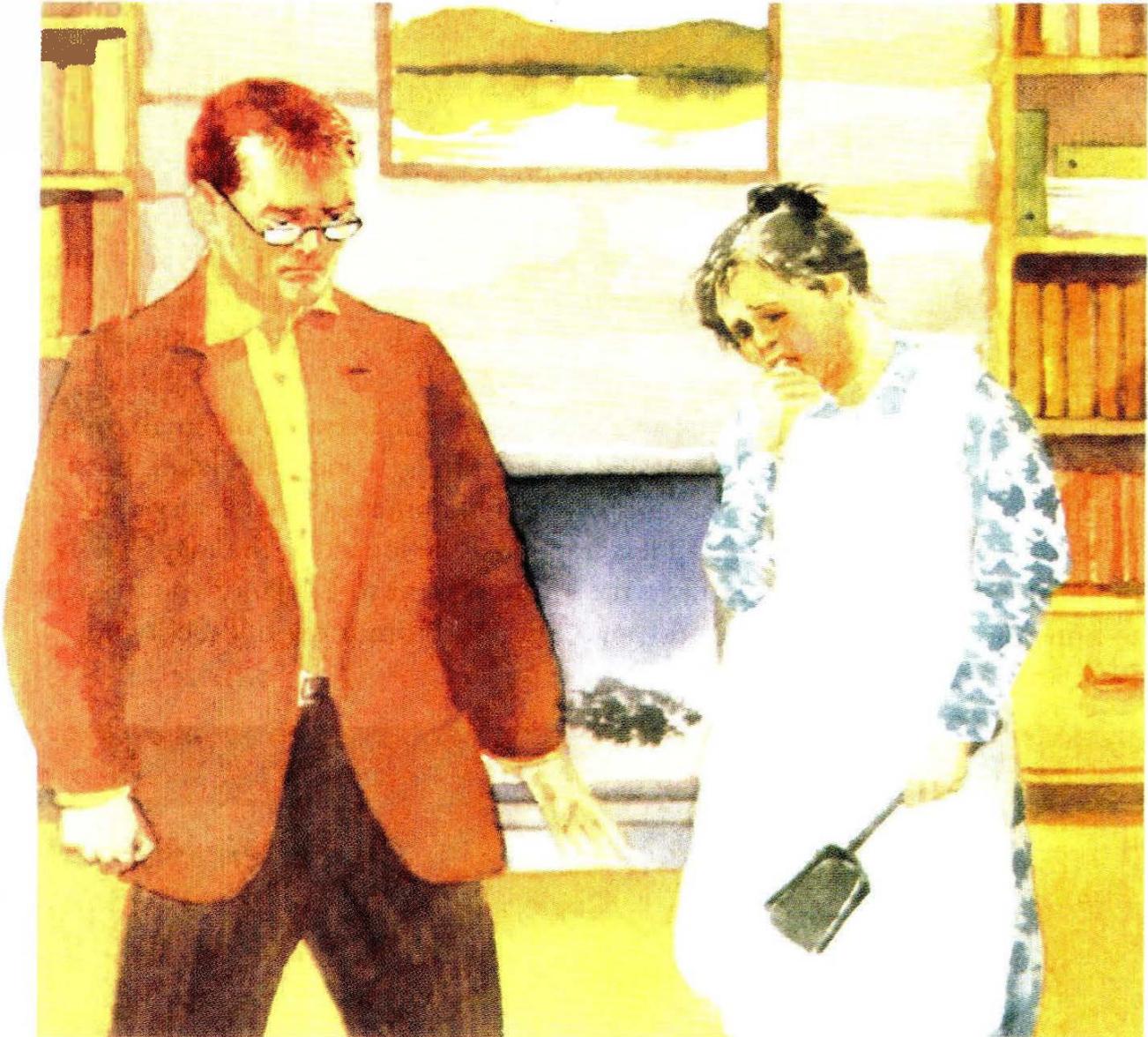
"Of course you must meet her," John shouted. "The foxes will be fine. I'll take them out before I leave and..."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Longridge. I'll be there at about nine, I promise. What did you say about the animals? Don't worry about them. Bert and I will..."

But Longridge couldn't hear her. He put down the phone, walked over to the outside door, and opened it wide. The three animals followed him and ran out into the cold night air. Longridge stood at the door, quietly smoking his pipe. The animals did the same thing every night. For the first few minutes they stayed in the yard, then they all ran into the fields. As they disappeared into the darkness (the old fox far behind the other two), Longridge turned back into the house.

huge /hyudʒ/ (adj) very large

struggle /'strʌgl/ (v) to try hard for a long time to do something difficult



“There aren’t many people if you go straight across country, over the Ironmouth mountains,” said Longridge thoughtfully.

“Over the Ironmouth?” Mrs. Oakes said. “If you’re right, then there’s no hope. There are bears and other wild animals over there, and no food...”

“Maybe a hunter or somebody has helped them,” said Longridge when he saw Mrs. Oakes’s sad face.

“No, Mr. Longridge, it’s impossible. A young fox could cross that country, and possibly a cat. A cat can look after itself. But old Bodger couldn’t walk ten kilometers! No fox as old as Bodger could live more than a day or two in that wild country. And that’s a fact.”

They both looked out of the window at the dark.

“You’re right, Mrs. Oakes,” said Longridge in an exhausted voice. “They left almost three weeks ago. I’m sure our old friend Bodger is dead. And Tao, too,

Later that night the telephone rang. It was a hunter in a place called Lintola. “A little girl from the Nurmi family found a Siamese cat in the river about two weeks ago,” he told Longridge. “But it disappeared again a few days later.”

“Thank you,” said Longridge. “I’ll phone Lintola tomorrow and try to speak to the child.”

“There’s some other news too,” the man said. “But I don’t know if it’s useful. Old Jeremy Aubyn came into town and talked about ‘three visitors’ to his house. He never has any visitors, poor old man. Maybe his visitors were animals, not people.”

Longridge thanked the man warmly, put down the phone, and looked at Lintola on the map. “They *are* going home,” he thought. “I was right. Two weeks ago the cat was alive. But what’s happened to the other two? Are they dead?”

He lay awake in the dark that night, missing the feeling of the old Bodger’s warm body next to him on the bed.

“You can *have* the bed if you come back, Bodger,” he thought. “I’ll sleep on the floor. But please, come back!”



Coming Home

“They can’t be alive now,” Jim Hunter told his family sadly. “But I hope their incredible journey ended quickly and without pain.”

In the following week Longridge’s telephone never stopped ringing. Some of the news was difficult to believe. Some of it was hopeful. Longridge listened to it all patiently.

“Every man, woman, or child has seen a cat or fox on the road,” said Longridge, exhausted, on the phone to Jim Hunter. “And they’re all ringing to tell us!”

“Yes, but they’re all trying to be helpful and kind,” said Jim Hunter. “And some of them really *did* see our dear pets.”

“We know from these phone calls that I was right,” Longridge said to his friend. “The animals *are* traveling west along the line of my map. The little girl, Helvi Nurmi, looked after Tao for a short time. And a man saw two dogs in the Ironmouth mountains. And a farmer saw an old white fox who was stealing one of his chickens!”

Peter smiled for the first time when he heard this. He could see Bodger enjoying himself in a fight. But he knew that his old fox was really dead. And Luath.

Elizabeth was different from her brother. She was sure that Tao was alive. “He’ll come home soon,” she told her family. “I don’t believe that he’s dead. You’ll see.”

But only Elizabeth was hopeful. Longridge and the rest of the Hunter family looked at the map: the animals were in wild, lonely country.

“They can’t be alive now,” Jim Hunter told his family sadly. “But I hope their incredible journey ended quickly and without pain.”



Some weeks later, Longridge visited the Hunters again. People continued to ring about the animals, but there was no good news. It was Peter’s twelfth birthday the following Sunday.

“Let’s all go to Lake Windigo for a short vacation,” Longridge suggested to the family.

“But maybe Tao will come back when we’re away,” said Elizabeth.

Longridge showed her Lake Windigo on the map. “It’s on the line I drew,” he told her.

Elizabeth agreed, full of hope. So they left for Lake Windigo to stay in the Hunters’ small cabin there. It was almost winter and the lake was cold. There



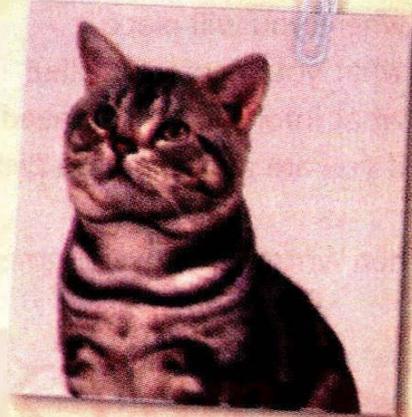
were no boats and all the other cabins were empty. Peter had a new camera and he went into the woods for hours with it. Elizabeth played in a treehouse near the lake.

On the last afternoon, the Sunday of Peter's birthday, they decided to go for a long walk. It was a beautiful, clear day and they walked in friendly silence. Each person was quietly thinking to himself. Jim Hunter missed his fox. He remembered walking with Luath on other fall days, gun in hand. And he remembered hunting with Luath on lakes, waiting patiently for hours in boats with him.

- c Find out about one of the animals that you are planning to find a home for. Then write an owner's guide for customers who have never had a pet like this. For example, give information about feeding the pet, exercise and play, and sleep.

Looking after your cat

Keep your new cat inside for the first few days. Take it outside into the yard for the first time before a meal. Go with your pet and watch it. After a few minutes, call it back inside and feed it.



3 A good animal center will help customers choose the right pet for them. For example, a big cat needs a lot of exercise. It is not the best pet for someone who lives in a small apartment in a city.

- a Discuss the best pets for these people:
- a family with two small children and a baby
 - a businesswoman who travels a lot for work
 - an old man and woman who live in the country
 - a group of students who live together in a house
- b Write questions to help people choose the best kind of pet from your center.

4 The animals in your center need good homes. Make an advertisement for your animal center.

a Decide:

- who you want to see the advertisement
- where you will place it
- what your center is called
- what information you need to give people
- if you are going to have pictures

b Then write your advertisement.

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The Incredible Journey

Sheila Burnford

American English
Contemporary

The country is wild and dangerous. Mountains are high, rivers run fast, and there are strange animals in the woods. But three family pets begin a long, long walk through western Canada. They miss their family and they are trying to get home. But will anyone see them again?

Number of words (excluding activities): 14,895

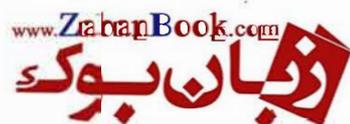
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