

Writing competition

Step into a symphony of stories!

Imagine a world where books burst open and amazing characters from every kind of story leap out!

Write a short story about a wonderful world filled with colourful characters. (Limit of 3 pages per entry.)

Elena woke, opening her sea green eyes groggily. She was lying on rough, wet sand, as foaming waves lapped her toes. A couple metres away was her father, some other adults, and a young girl. Her dad was not the average adult. He looked ordinary, with chestnut brown hair like her, but he had a wooden leg, a parrot, several gold teeth and an eyepatch. Her ~~was~~ a pirate and was currently talking to his crewmates who were even more unruly than him. Her friend Sophia was also with the group, and when she noticed Elena was awake, she raced over, her blonde hair flying in the wind.

"What happened?" Elena asked. Her mind slowly woke up from its blissful slumber, and she began to remember. "Navy ships! We... lost?"

"They lured us into Deadman's Reef," Sophia replied, grimacing. "It was like a wild beast, tearing our faithful ship apart. No one was severely hurt, but our boat, the Golden Shark, is beyond repair. We're stranded."

"What?!" Elena shouted. "Where are we?"

"Let's go and find out," Sophia replied gravely.

The two set off towards a small village of huts. They started to make their way through a jungle of ferns, trees, vines and bushes. Eventually, they reached the outskirts of the village. After taking of anything that would betray them as a pirate, the pair ran over to a market of stalls full of food, antiques and supplies. An elderly woman with a mass of knotted grey hair greeted them in a dry cracking voice.

"Hello, dearies," she croaked. "What can I get for you today?"

"Information," Sophia answered in a bold voice. "Our crew of sailors was shipwrecked on this island. Where are we, and where can we get a new ship?"

The lady replied, "You're on Parakeet Island, located in the Sapphire Sea."

"What's the second one?"

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"And the second one?" Sophia questioned when the ancient, wrinkled woman fell silent.

"You can't buy any," she told the young pirates sullenly. "Except for rowing boats, the closest shipyard is far away." She showed them an old, faded map. A collection of islands swam north like a shoal of lush green fish, and beneath them was 'Azure Archipelago' written in curly letters. East was a large island labelled 'The Mainland', and in the center of it all was a tiny island-where they were right that moment.

"Oh." Disappointed and worried, Elena realised they were stuck.

Trying to cheer them up, the aged lady said, "Of course, there is an old tale about a fleet of ships that the greatest pirate in the world, Doomdagger, hid when he feared his rivals were about to attack. Many have searched for it but none have returned and-"

"Thanks for the information!" Sophia told her quickly, not wanting to hear any more myths.

Elena and Sophia walked back, taking the long way so they could have time to talk.

"What are we going to do?" the two girls groaned in unison.

"We could make our own ship," Elena mused. "But it would take years! I guess we could..." She gasped. "What is it?" Sophia cried frantically.

"It's a secret pirate symbol!" Elena said, pointing to a nearby tree. Near its roots was a drawing of a jewelled dagger with a diamond and a skull on the tip of its silvery blade. "It's the pirate Doomdagger's symbol!" Sophia pressed it, and to her amazement, a secret trapdoor appeared. Excited, the two crawled in and found a long tunnel.

"Maybe we should tell the captain about this first," Sophia suggested. But it was too late- the door closed, locking them into the eerie, mysterious cave. They trudged along the path towards a light in the distance.

"What if the myth that the old lady told us about is true?" Elena wondered aloud. But then her face fell, deflating like a balloon. "But Doomdagger would have made it more protected-"

WOOSH! Suddenly, arrows flew out of the wall quicker than lightning! The pair ducked just in the nick of time.

"Phewf, that was close!" Sophia exclaimed. "I'm glad it's over, and there is no need to panic any more."

As if listening to her words, small circular devices attached to the arrows began to tick like bombs, causing them to immediately start panicking. The ticking stopped, and smoke started seeping out of holes in the spheres, clouding their vision. Immediately, axes swung out of the walls, and the floor opened up to reveal a deep pit with sharp, ruthless spikes at the bottom.

Glass rained down, causing them to lose balance and topple over the edge. They fell, but was caught by a giant robotic arm. One of the metal fingers which wasn't holding them wrote on the dusty wall: 'To pass this test and stay alive, decode a word using the secret pirate alphabet. The word is hidden in this room. You have 3 guesses.' Sophia and Elena looked around until they spotted it on a spike jutting out of the ground.

"I see a pirate, a skull, a ship, a gem and an eye patch," Elena said. "Is the word SWORD?" "Or... COINS?" But it wasn't either one.

"Last guess!" Elena realised. "Look! I can also see a treasure chest! Is the word PIRATE?" The finger wrote yes on the wall, then turned into a tunnel, and flung them down, causing screams of shock. They landed on a pile of cushions, and turned around to see... a sleeping dragon! It had crimson scales, humungous wings, an immense tail and a nose which which smoke was billowing out of. Elena and Sophia gulped like nervous gold fish, then began tiptoeing away. They had only snuck a metre away from the dragon when Elena stumbled on one of the twigs strewn across the cavern floor, snapping it. SNAP! The dragon opened its large fiery amber eyes and did something totally unexpected. It spoke.

"Thieves," the scarlet dragon hissed. "Why have you come here, only to be captured and eaten by the great Rubyflame, the fearsome Guardian of Parakeet Island?!"

"We're pirates, and we were shipwrecked in a fight with the Mainland Navy," Elena replied, nervously. "And, um... we need a new ship!"

"Well, Doomdagger did say to let them succeed in their quest if they made it this far," Rubyflame said, contemplating the idea thoughtfully, and watching hope flourish and bloom on her prisoners' faces. "Just kidding! There are conditions, of course. One, take care of the ship and don't tell anyone but your crew where you found it. And two, check behind the bookshelf in the captain's cabin for me." Her burning sunset orange eyes glinted as she winked. Once the two girls agreed, she pressed a hidden button and the cave wall slid up to reveal a sparkling lake with dozens of the finest ships bobbing up and down on the clear blue water. After thanking the dragon gratefully, the pair scurried up onto the nearest ship like mice to a giant piece of cheese. They sailed back to their stranded shipmates, picked them up and explained what had happened. By the time the sun had begun to set, they were off, sailing towards the horizon where the sky had turned the colour of Rubyflame's eyes.

"Oh, I just remembered!" Sophia cried suddenly. She dashed below deck and returned triumphantly with a rolled up piece of parchment. "A treasure map! Rubyflame wanted us to find it!"

Elena looked west, where warm colours were filling the cold evening air. "It looks like the adventure is just beginning!"