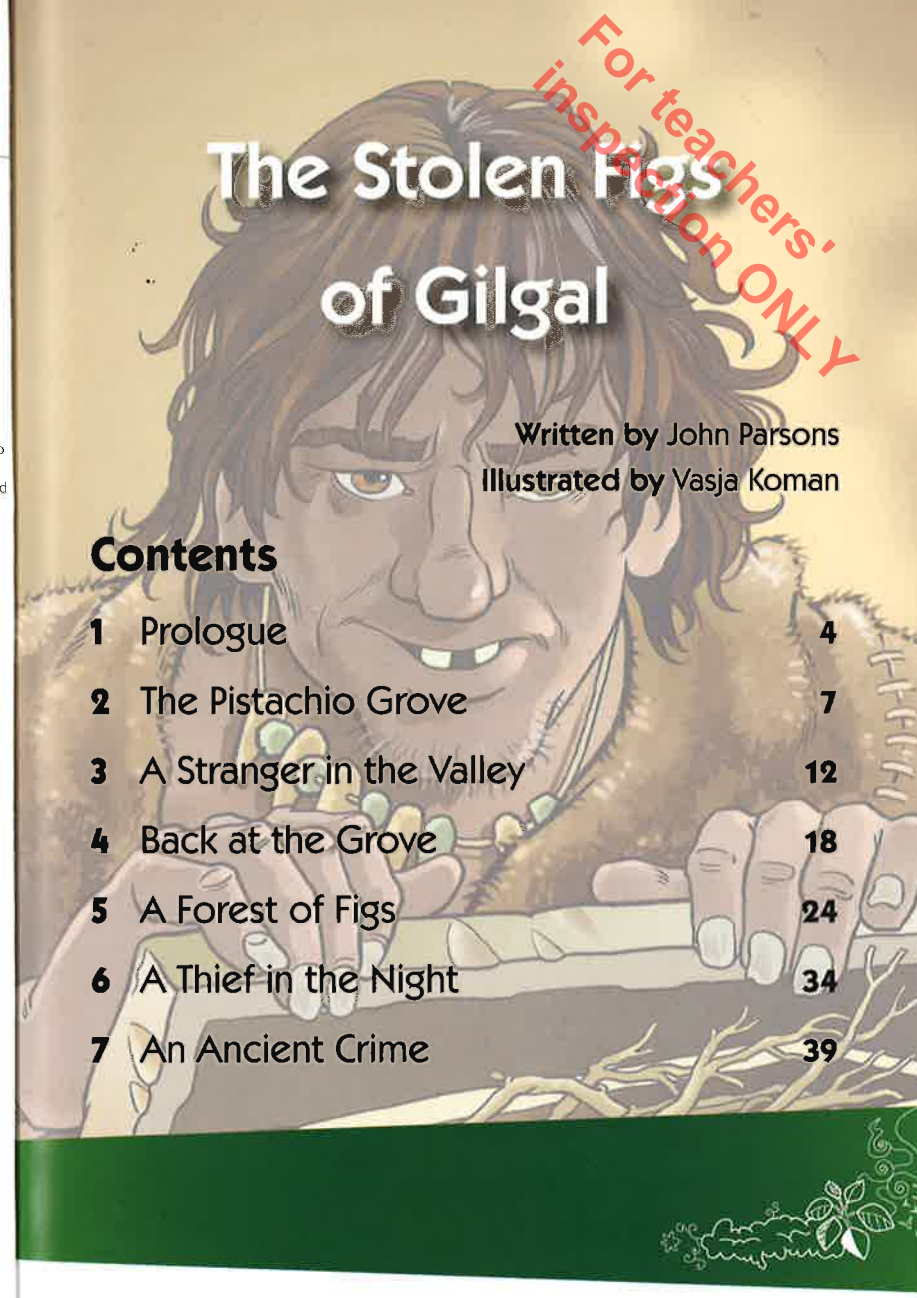
The Stolen Figs of Gilgal



John Parsons

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Nelson Literacy Directions



The Stolen Figs of Gilgal

For teachers' inspection ONLY

Written by John Parsons
Illustrated by Vasja Koman

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Meet the Characters

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Melissa Fox

A world-famous archaeologist.



Ibn Kayid

A Stone Age thief.



Fahd

A young man from Gilgal.



Durriyyah

Fahd's sister.



Shamar

Fahd and Durriyyah's aunt.



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POST CARD

Dear Reader

Recently, I read a fascinating newspaper article about the discovery of some ancient figs in a Stone Age village in Jordan. I started thinking about the people who had lived there, 10 000 years ago – and then I wondered if there were heroes and villains in those days, too. Just like a fig tree, the idea for this story started to grow and grow!

John Parsons
Author

The Jordanian Mountains



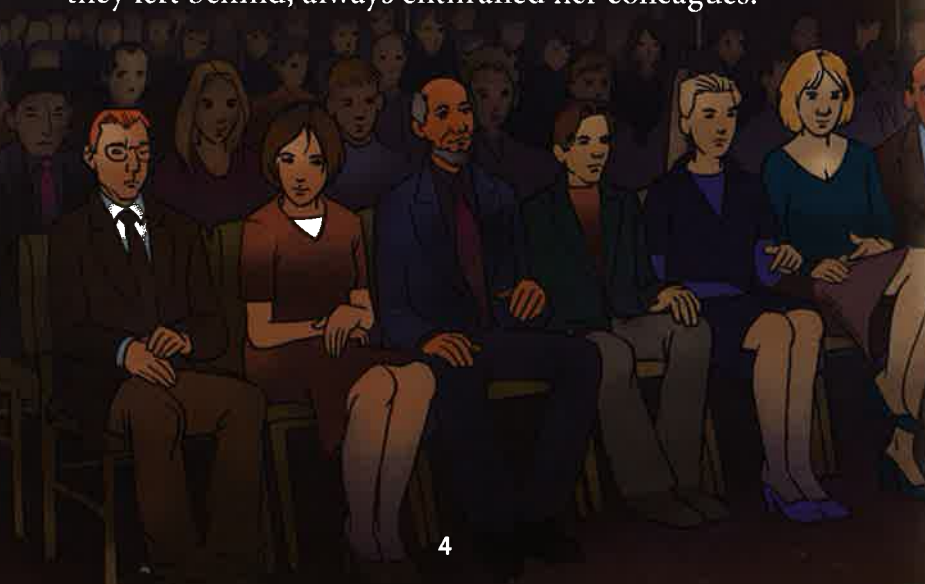
1. Gilgal
2. The site of present-day Dan'har
3. Ibn Kayid's cave

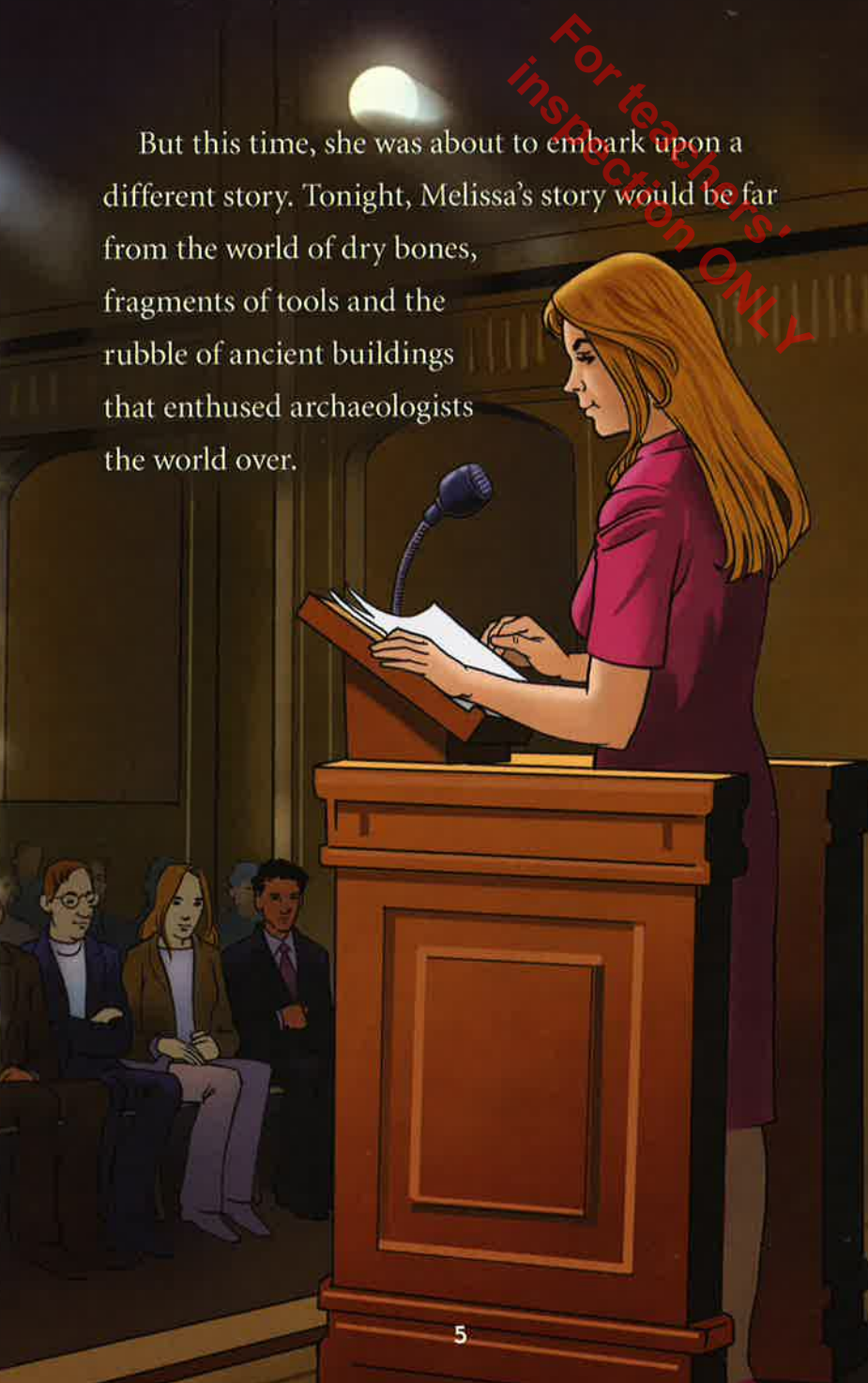
1 Prologue

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When the clapping and cheering from the audience died down, Melissa Fox moved to the microphone and took a deep breath.

She looked at the crowd of delegates to the International Convention on Archaeology that she was about to address. As the applause demonstrated, Melissa was well known to the delegates, all experts in the field of archaeology. Her specialty, re-creating the stories of ancient civilisations through the remains they left behind, always enthralled her colleagues.





But this time, she was about to embark upon a different story. Tonight, Melissa's story would be far from the world of dry bones, fragments of tools and the rubble of ancient buildings that enthused archaeologists the world over.

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Tonight's story was a tale of drama and deception. The story of a crime, hidden for ten thousand years. The story of a mystery that had lain forgotten across ten millennia.

"Thank you, friends and colleagues," began Melissa Fox. She gazed once more at the expectant faces, four hundred people, all focusing on her. Then, after a second's hesitation, she began.



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2 The Pistachio Grove

"In 2006, archaeologists on the west bank of the Jordan River were working on a site from the late Stone Age, or Neolithic era, as we call it. At the time, I read the results of their research with interest – but little did I know that the things they uncovered would help me solve an ancient crime.

As in all good mysteries, I won't give away the clues right at the start. But I will say that the work of these archaeologists inspired me to start my current research in that region.

My story begins in October 2010. Those of you who have worked in Jordan will know that, while the sun is warm and skies are clear in spring and autumn, winter is cold and rainy. Snowfall in the highlands is common in December, and often the trails throughout the mountainous areas are closed after heavy rainfall.

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That autumn, on one of my rare days off, I'd been hiking along one of the trails in the mountains, when I spied an area that sparked my interest. My work at the site I'd originally come to Jordan for was nearing completion. Most of the artefacts there had been documented, researched and moved to the Jordan Archaeological Museum in Amman, the capital of Jordan.

I was keen to find a new project. And that afternoon, as I rested on the plateau in a grove of wild pistachios, which the locals call *fustuq halabee*, something caught my eye.

The last season's rain had caused a minor mudslide, now reduced to a scattering of dry rocks and rubble. Among the debris, my eyes fell upon a handful of rocks that seemed too even in their dimensions to be natural.

All of you, ladies and gentlemen, will have experienced that moment when wonder turns to certainty and the thrill of discovery raises the hairs on the back of your neck.



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