In this twist on the classic Jewish stories, Schlemiel lives in the famous town of Chelm, known as "the place of fools." When one day he embarks on a journey to America, he has no idea the people and adventures he will encounter. But what he quickly learns is that "not all the fools in the world live in Chelm."

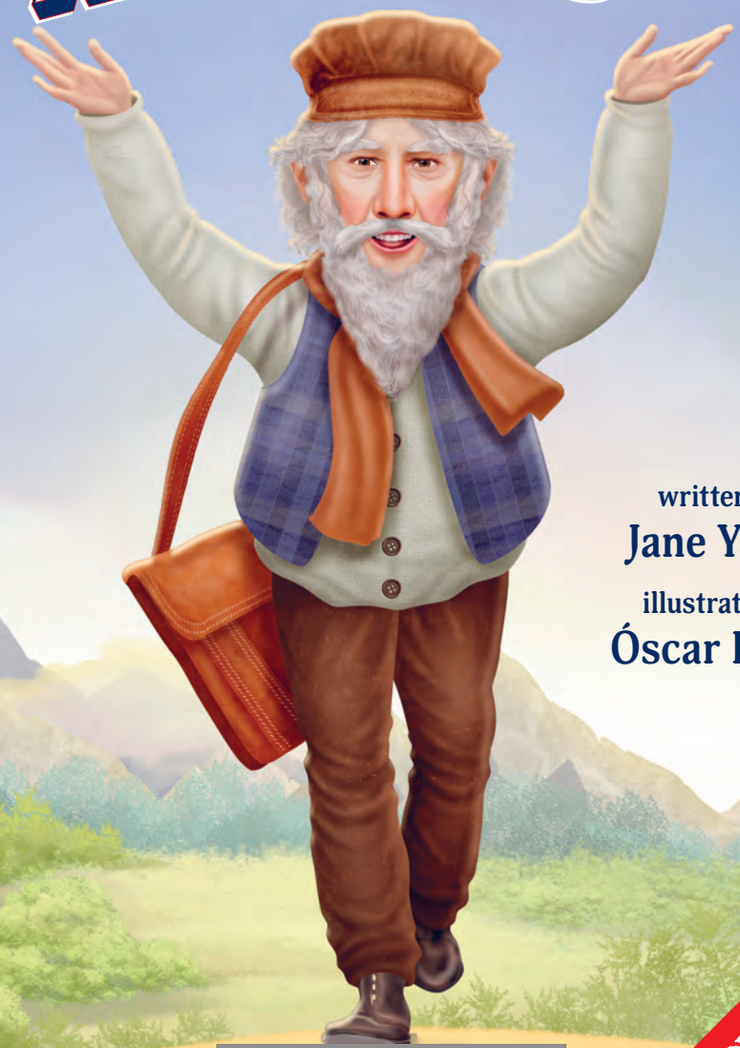
"Readers will find much to enjoy in Jane Yolen's *Schlemiel Comes to America,* especially the humor. Yolen draws from the rich well of Chelm stories and does a masterful job bringing them to life in a new setting - America."

— Barbara Goldin (Recipient of the Body of Work Award from the Association of Jewish Libraries)



★ Schlemiel Comes to America ★ Jane Yolen ★ Óscar Perez

Schlemiel Comes to America



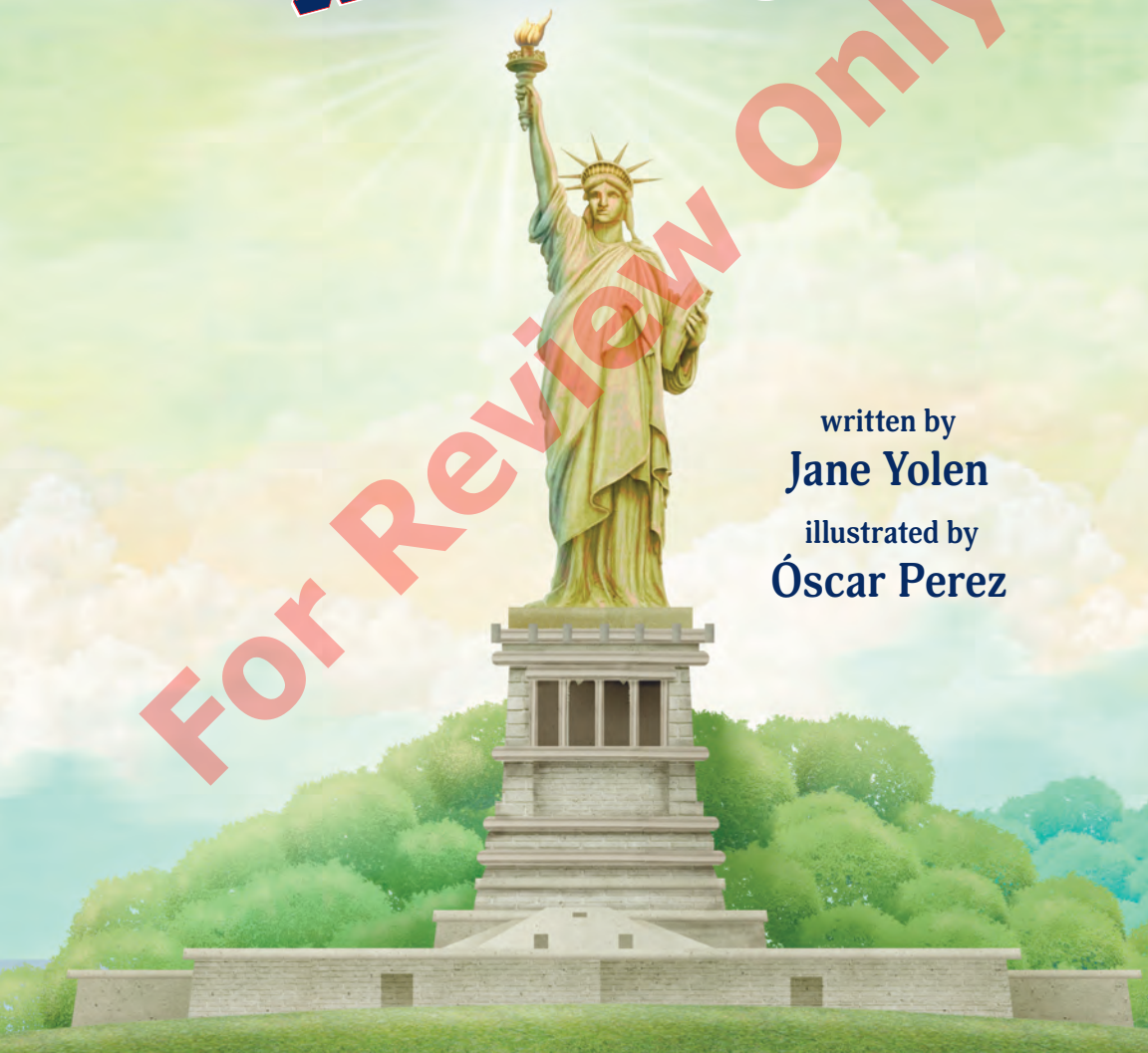
written by
Jane Yolen

illustrated by
Óscar Perez

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Schlemiel Comes to America



written by
Jane Yolen

illustrated by
Óscar Perez

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Why Chelm 5

2 Hard Work 11

3 Going to America 17

4 On the Boat 25

5 Schlemiel Solves the Problem 31

6 American Fools 39

About Chelm 46

Author/Illustrator Biographies 48

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1

WHY CHELM

One day God looked over the world and saw that it was a pleasant enough place. But it lacked people.

So, God gathered up a lot of souls—both foolish souls and wise souls. There were both kinds flitting around heaven in those days.

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God put the souls into two separate sacks—
a rock-colored sack for the wise souls, and
a wheat-colored sack for the foolish ones.

Then God rang a golden bell, summoning the chief angel.

The chief angel flew in, the wind feathering his wings.

"Take these two sacks," God said. "Distribute them across the face of the earth. But mind you mix them well. We wouldn't want too many fools in one place, too many wise folks in another."

So, the angel took the sacks and flew down to Earth.

But the sacks were heavy.

It was a long way down.

And the angel, being very tired, was not careful.

As the angel flew over the town of Chelm, the tip of the wheat-colored sack caught on a mountain top.

Uh-oh.

It ripped.

Just a little rip.

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Just the slightest tear.

Just enough.

And dozens and dozens of foolish souls floated down into Chelm, the town that sat at the foot of the mountain.



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Many years went by. Years filled with foolishness.

Chelmites tried to trap the moon's reflection in a barrel.

They built a roof over the town sundial to keep it from getting wet.

They tried to grow salt in the fields.

They were very, very foolish.

For centuries fools lived in Chelm. Fools multiplied in Chelm. And some fools divided as well.

But one man, a little tailor named Schlemiel, who lived not too long ago, was the only fool in Chelm smart enough to ever want to leave.

What made him go?

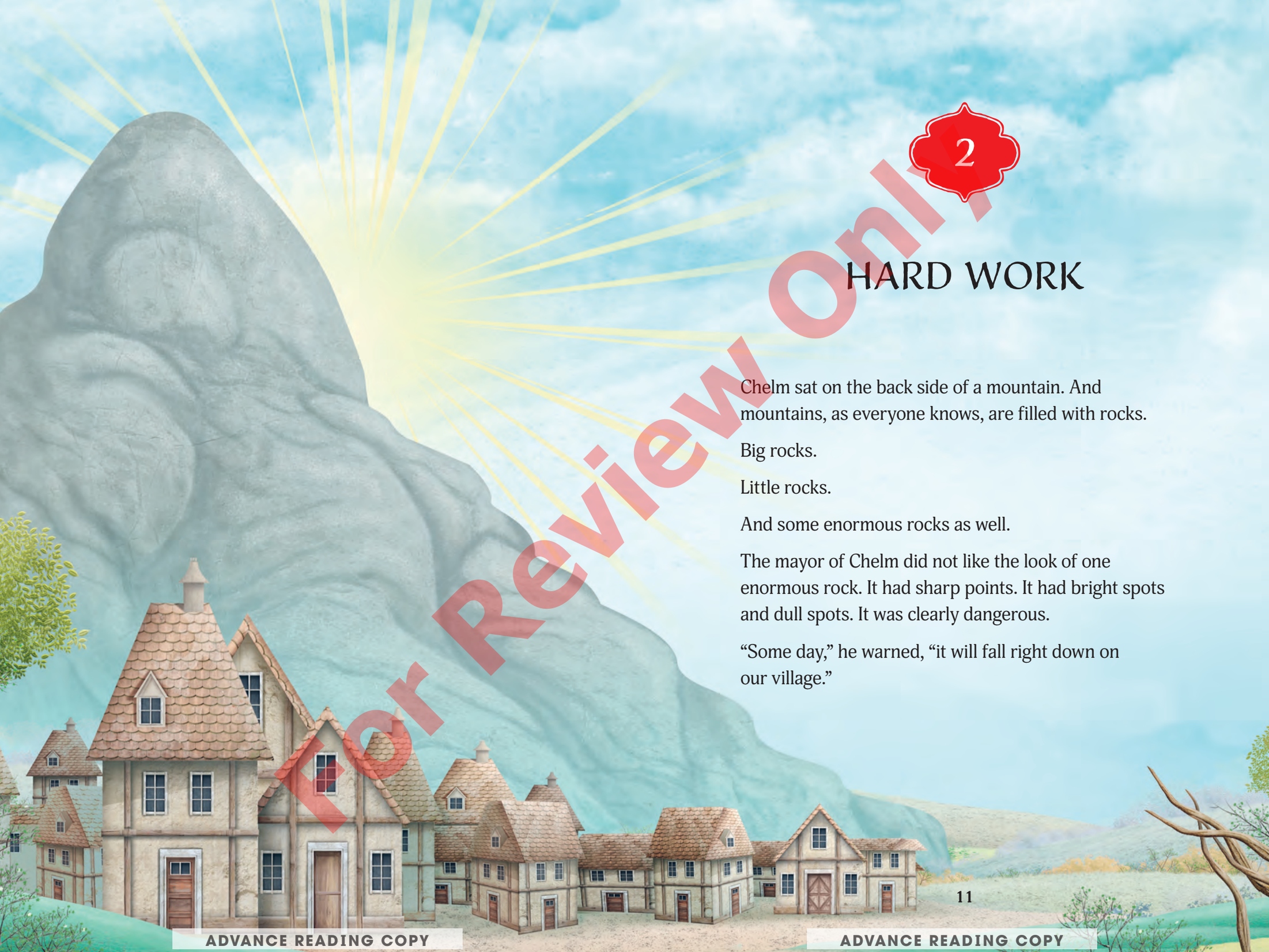
Hard work.



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2

HARD WORK

Chelm sat on the back side of a mountain. And mountains, as everyone knows, are filled with rocks.

Big rocks.

Little rocks.

And some enormous rocks as well.

The mayor of Chelm did not like the look of one enormous rock. It had sharp points. It had bright spots and dull spots. It was clearly dangerous.

"Some day," he warned, "it will fall right down on our village."

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