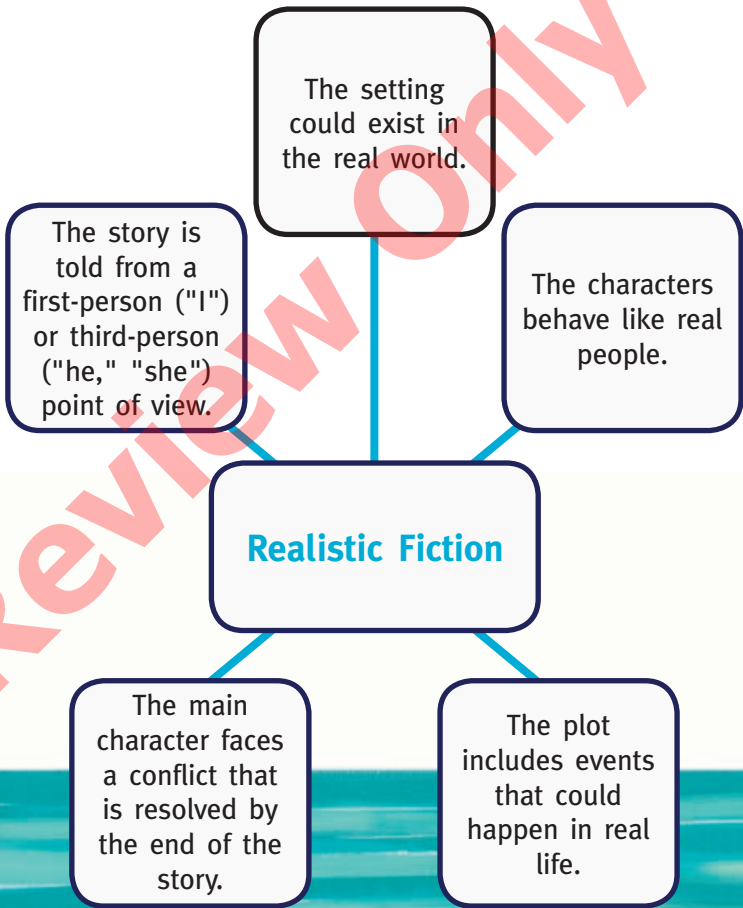


The Ultimate Sandcastle



Realistic Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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Special Sand

The sun shone brightly over the Huzzah Beach parking lot.

“It’s early and it’s already hot out,” said Daphne as she tied back her hair. “Do you think your brother has a fan in that backpack of his?”

Charlene laughed. “You never know with Clyde. He’s *always* prepared.”

Charlene and Daphne watched Clyde as he rummaged through a large backpack full of stuff. Their friend Pablo was lounging on a bench, soaking up the sun.



Daphne, Charlene, Clyde, and Pablo were waiting for the sand-sculpting contest to begin. They had high hopes that their team, the Sandblasters, would get first place. They'd been practicing building their sand sculpture for weeks.

A bunch of other teams were gathering around, too. Suddenly, a van zoomed into the parking lot. The Sandblasters could hear kids chanting through the windows: "Castle Kings. We're the best! We build better than the rest!"

The van screeched to a stop, and the Castle Kings scrambled out. Each of them wore a blue T-shirt with "Champions Every Year" written on the front.



Daphne sighed. “The Castle Kings won the last three sand-sculpting contests. We don’t stand a chance,” she said. “And they always build really big sculptures. This year, they will probably cover half the beach!”

“Don’t worry about them,” replied Pablo. “We have the same chance of winning as they do.”

Daphne’s fears were confirmed as two of the Kings unrolled a huge sheet of paper with a drawing of their sand sculpture. It was a sprawling and **complex** design with endless towers, **turrets**, and a **moat**.



Daphne looked at her teammates. “Let’s just go home now. Maybe the tower we’re building is too difficult.”

Clyde wasn’t paying any attention at all. He was still rummaging through his backpack.

Charlene didn’t seem disturbed, either. “We’re not giving up yet. Besides, we’ve got a special ingredient.”



Charlene pointed to a pickup truck entering the parking lot. Charlene and Clyde's dad stuck his hand out of the window and waved.

"Really? What's he bringing?" asked Pablo as the truck pulled up beside them.

"Lake sand," replied Charlene.

Daphne was confused, staring at the pickup truck loaded with sand. "We're bringing sand to the beach? Isn't there plenty here already?"

"All sand isn't the same," Clyde chimed in. He pulled a **pocket microscope** out of his backpack. "Every type of sand has its own color, texture, and shape. Here, look at the Huzzah Beach sand."

Daphne peered into the microscope; each grain of sand was easy to see.

"The sand on this beach is rounded," Clyde continued. "It's mainly made of shells and coral worn down by the ocean waves."

Then he scooped up some lake sand from the vast mound in the truck and poured some in Pablo's hand.

“Now look at this. The Jefferson Lake sand is much different. It has more small, **angular** grains. When we make the sand-water mixture, the angular grains will stick together better.” Clyde explained.

Pablo peered into the microscope. “That’s cool.”



“You know how our sculpture kept falling apart while we were practicing? Well, we think the lake sand will help,” added Charlene.

Daphne still had a worried look on her face

“Don’t worry, Daphne,” said Charlene. “We brought the photo of the tower. That will help us, too.”

Charlene unrolled a large photo showing the world’s tallest building—the **Burj Khalifa**.

The Sandblasters heard someone snickering behind them. They turned around and saw one of the Castle Kings looking at their photo.

“No way,” the boy said, snorting. “You would need a wooden frame to build that. Otherwise, it would just fall right down.”

“Maybe you just need the right type of sand,” stated Clyde matter-of-factly.

Just then they heard a horn blast from the beach. The contest was about to begin.

