Arno and Po's War of Words



John Parsons

Gaston Vanzet

Nelson Literacy Directions

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CENGAGE Learning

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Reading Age: 10.8–11.0
Text Type: Narrative

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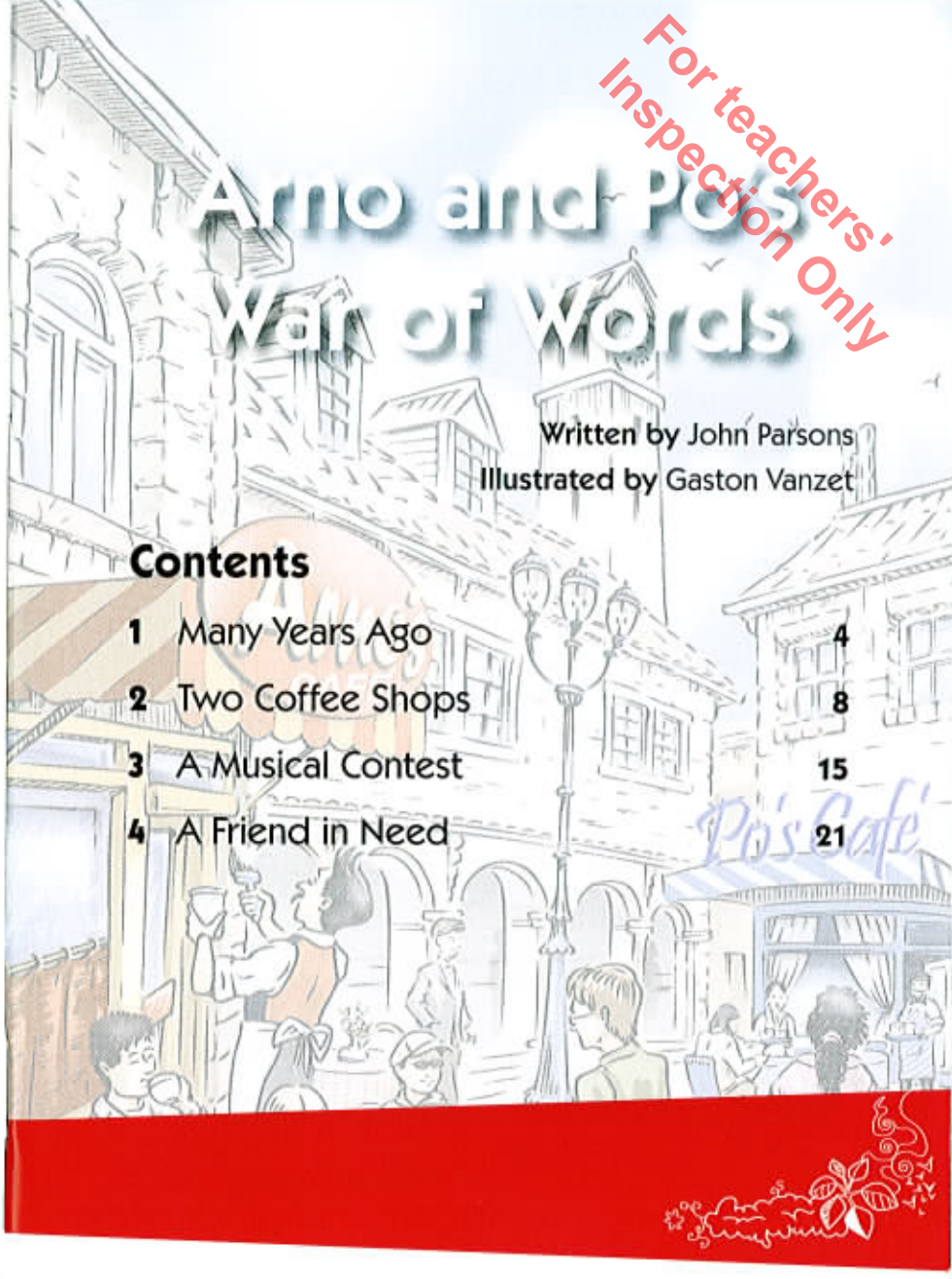
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Written by John Parsons
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Meet the Characters



Arno

A coffee shop owner, opera singer, poet and violinist.



Po

A coffee shop owner, opera singer, poet and violinist.



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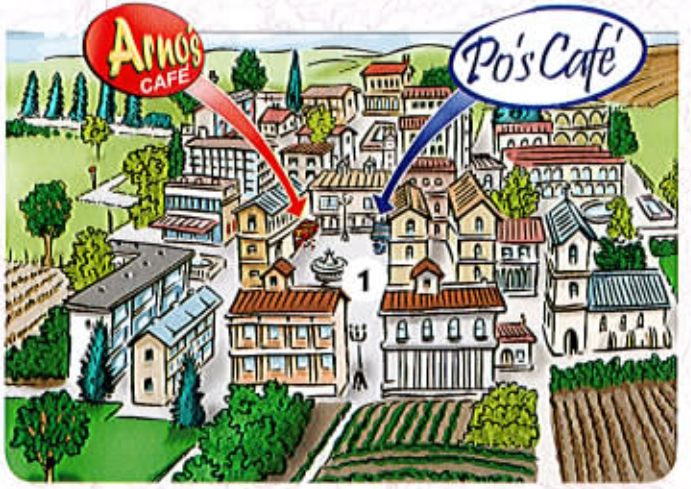
POST CARD

Dear Reader

In a city in Italy, there is a big square with two orchestras outside two coffee shops. They both try to play as loudly as they can, so people will stop at their shop. I wanted to write a story about this, but I couldn't think of names for the characters – so I named them after Italian rivers: Arno and Po!

John Parsons
Author

San Giovanni



1. The piazza (square)

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1 Many Years Ago

It all started many years ago, when Arno and Po were babies.

Both were born in the spring of 1951. Their mothers would meet in San Giovanni piazza, and park their prams next to each other.

"Goo-goo," gurgled Arno.

"Goo-goo-GOO!" gurgled Po.

Both mothers agreed their sons would be the best of friends.

Five years later, when Arno and Po were old enough to join the church choir, nothing had changed.

"La-la-la," sang Arno.

"La-LA-LA!" echoed Po, a little louder.

Both mothers agreed that their sons had the voices of angels.

Another five years passed, and both Arno and Po took up the violin.

From Arno's window on one side of the piazza came a noise like a cat stuck in a drain.

"Eeeh-awww-arr-owwwww!"

From Po's window on the other side of the piazza came a noise like a donkey singing in the bath.

"EEEH-AWW-EEEH-AWW!"

Both mothers, who had started visiting the neighbouring village's piazza to escape the noise, agreed that (with a little more practice) their sons might be quite good.

By the time Arno and Po were 15, they had both started opera-singing classes.

"Swoon-young-ladies-you-will-never-hear-a-voice-as-rich AS MINE!" sang Arno in a rich tenor voice.

"That-may-be-true-but-his-face-is-about-as-handsome-as-a-bowl OF GNOCCHI!" sang Po, in a deep baritone voice.



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Both mothers, who were by now a little deaf, agreed that their sons should get jobs in opera houses, hopefully in faraway cities like Milan or Turin.

Alas, like all their predictions, this was not to be.

Instead, Arno and Po each opened a coffee house on opposite sides of the piazza. Just like everything else they had done, they were each determined to make their coffee house the best in San Giovanni.

