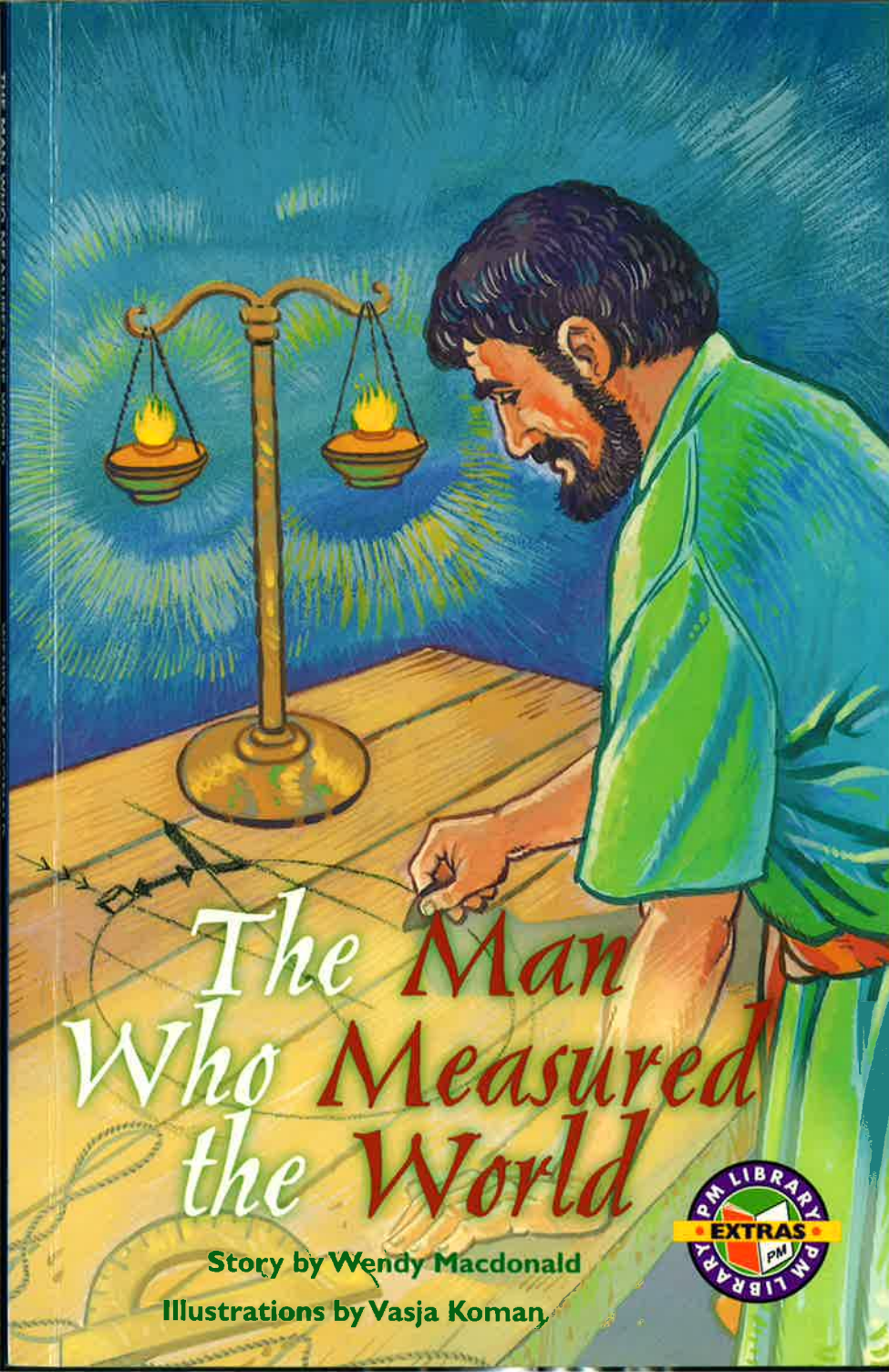

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Key vocabulary

circumference, prow, stern, scholars, scrolls, papyrus, parallel, obelisk, solstice, orchestra, Royal Barge, catalogue, protractor, galleys

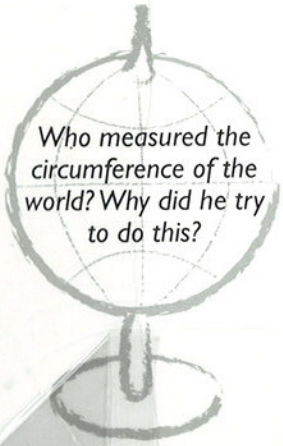
Grammatical conventions

- Action verbs: frowned, smiled, smirked
- Complex sentence structures: 'The prow and stern of the Royal Barge were shaped like lotus flowers and were covered with gold leaf that gleamed in the sun.'
- Direct speech: 'What are you going to discover for the King's competition, Father?'
- Exclamation marks: 'Just imagine what fun it would be!'

Spelling

- Compound words: shipyards, lighthouses
- Plural: discover/discoveries, moss/mosses, wharf/wharves
- Suffixes: discovery, personally, sleepily

Creative thinking task – Knowledge

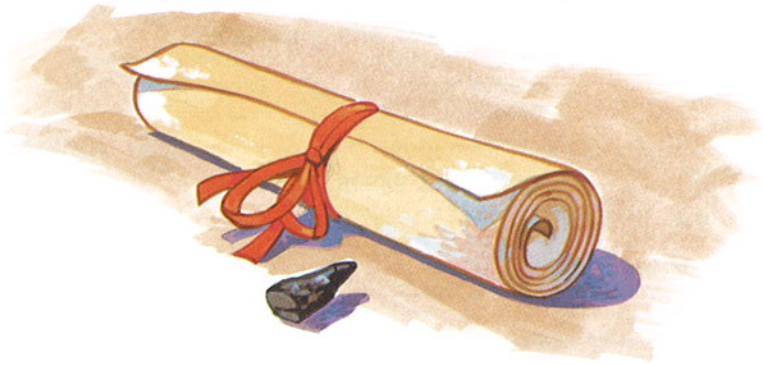


Who measured the circumference of the world? Why did he try to do this?

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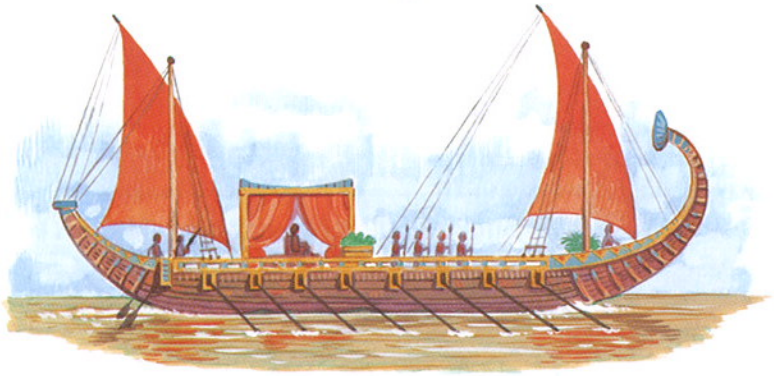
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CHAPTER 1

The King's Idea



'Look, Daddy!' exclaimed Xenia. 'Here comes the Royal Barge.'

Xenia and her father Eratosthenes were standing on the bank of the river Nile. Behind them were the marble columns of the Temple of Jupiter. The Temple of Jupiter contained the great library where Eratosthenes was the third librarian.

The Royal Barge was pulling in to shore, and people were streaming out of the library and up on the steps to welcome the King.

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The prow and stern of the Royal Barge were shaped like lotus flowers and were covered with gold leaf that gleamed in the sun. In the middle was an open cabin with purple curtains and a couch piled up with purple cushions for the King to rest on. There was an orchestra on board, which played sweet music, and a banquet table set with lovely food and big jugs of wine. Eight sturdy rowers wearing linen skirts and beaded collars pulled smoothly in time making the Barge glide in towards the library steps. Slaves ran to tie it up to the mooring posts.

Xenia stared open-mouthed at all this.

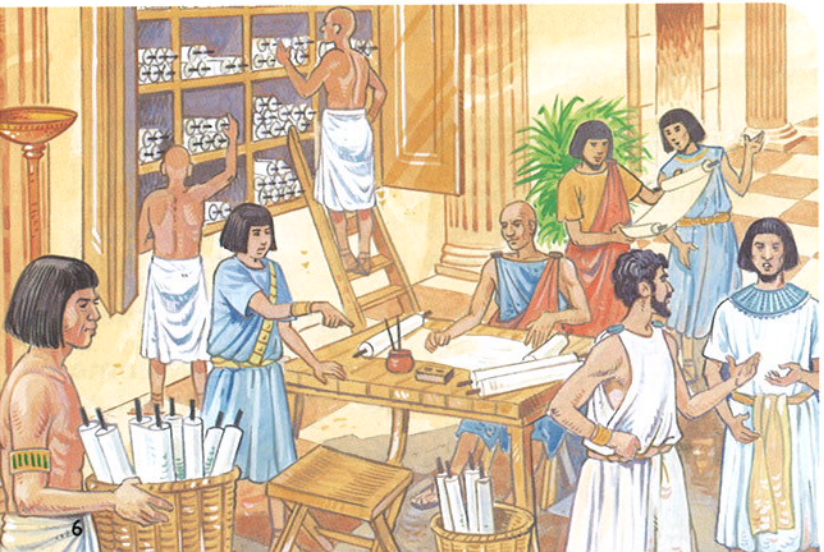
'Oh, Father,' she whispered. 'Wouldn't it be lovely to have a ride in that? Just imagine what fun it would be!'

Eratosthenes laughed. 'You can see just as much from a row-boat,' he said.

Xenia slipped down to have a closer look at the Barge while librarians, scholars, courtiers and other people crowded round to welcome the King.

All the people of Alexandria were very proud of their library. It was begun by the King's grandfather, King Ptolemy 1. He ordered his learned men to gather or copy all the books of knowledge they could find so that scholars and wise men would have the information they wanted in one place, instead of having to search for it in many different places. The library now contained over 400 000 scrolls of papyrus, rolled on long rods with gilded ends.

As well as assembling the books, the King sent out far and wide for learned men to come to Alexandria to study these books. So Eratosthenes and Xenia had come to Egypt from Cyrene.



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The King was very proud of the library and liked to stroll through it and chat to the scholars who worked there.

Inside the library the King sat on a special throne and all the people gathered around to listen to him. Two attendants fanned him with fans made of peacock feathers to make a breeze and shoo the flies away. Xenia sat on the floor behind a pillar and hoped no one would notice her. The marble pavement was nice and cool and it had little pictures of birds and fish and flowers inlaid in it.

'I have had an idea,' announced the King. Everyone listened respectfully. 'Here,' he said, waving his hand at the collection of scrolls around him, 'we have the greatest collection of knowledge, and here,' and he waved his hand at the assembled wise men, 'are the wisest men in the world.'

All the scholars smirked at this and Xenia smiled at her father. But Eratosthenes just frowned and shuffled his sandals.

'I wish to give a prize,' the King went on, 'to the person who, in the next year, makes what is judged by you all to be the greatest scientific discovery. The prize will be a gold necklace, which I will personally present to the winner, and a journey in the Royal Barge.'

Everyone began to cheer and clap and to say how wise and good the King was, but Xenia only gave a deep gasp. A journey on the Royal Barge! Imagine it! Listening to the orchestra as the hippopotamuses splashed among the reeds… the pyramids slipping by… all the people waving… it would be wonderful!



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CHAPTER 2

A Bucket Full of Sunshine



At home that night Xenia asked, 'What are you going to discover for the King's competition, Father?'

'I don't know,' said Eratosthenes. 'It must be something important. Something no one has ever done before. All the others are talking about it.' Eratosthenes paused for a moment, then continued. 'I thought of counting the stars. No one has ever done that.'

Xenia laughed.

'No one *can* do that,' she said sleepily, and she closed her eyes and dreamed of counting the scrolls in the library, but they all turned into stars and swam away.

The next day, Eratosthenes had to go to the shipyards to see how the King's galleys were coming on. He and Xenia climbed to the top of the lighthouse. Xenia could see the shore with all the wharves and ships, and the sea stretching away into the furthest distance.

'How far does the sea go, Father?' she asked.

Eratosthenes shook his head.

'No one knows,' he said, 'but it must go for a very long way. Some say it goes right around the world.'

'But how far is that?' asked Xenia.

Eratosthenes looked at the horizon.

'No one knows that either,' he said.

The sun was setting and the shadow of the lighthouse stretched out to sea.

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'If you knew that, you would win the King's competition, wouldn't you?' said Xenia.

Eratosthenes just nodded and said nothing.

