

# OBSERVING





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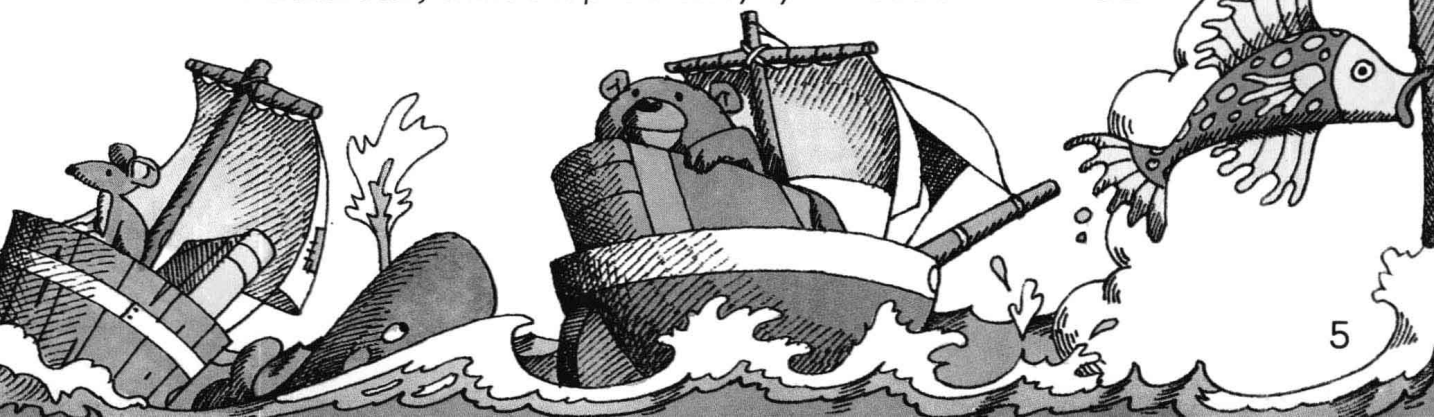
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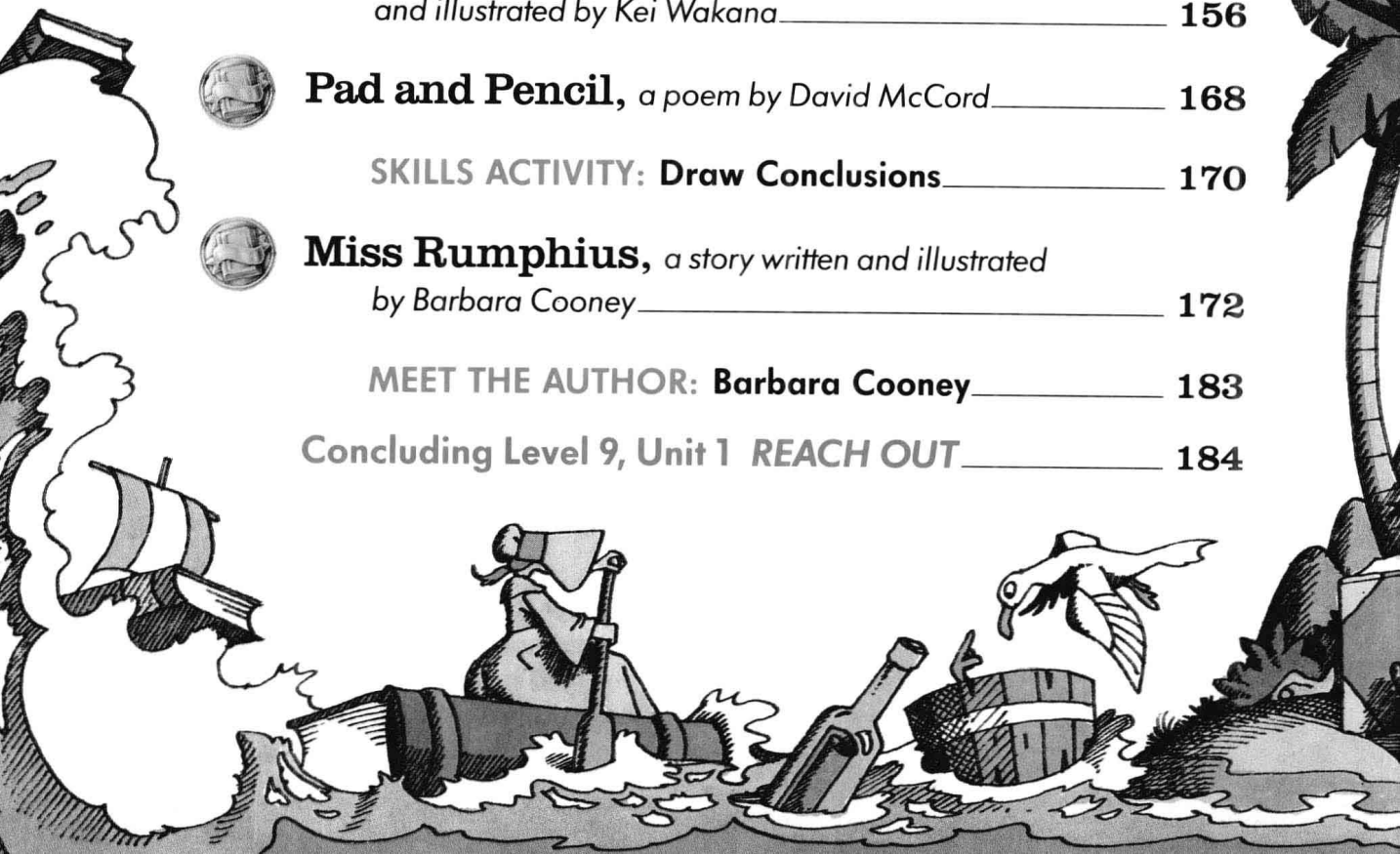
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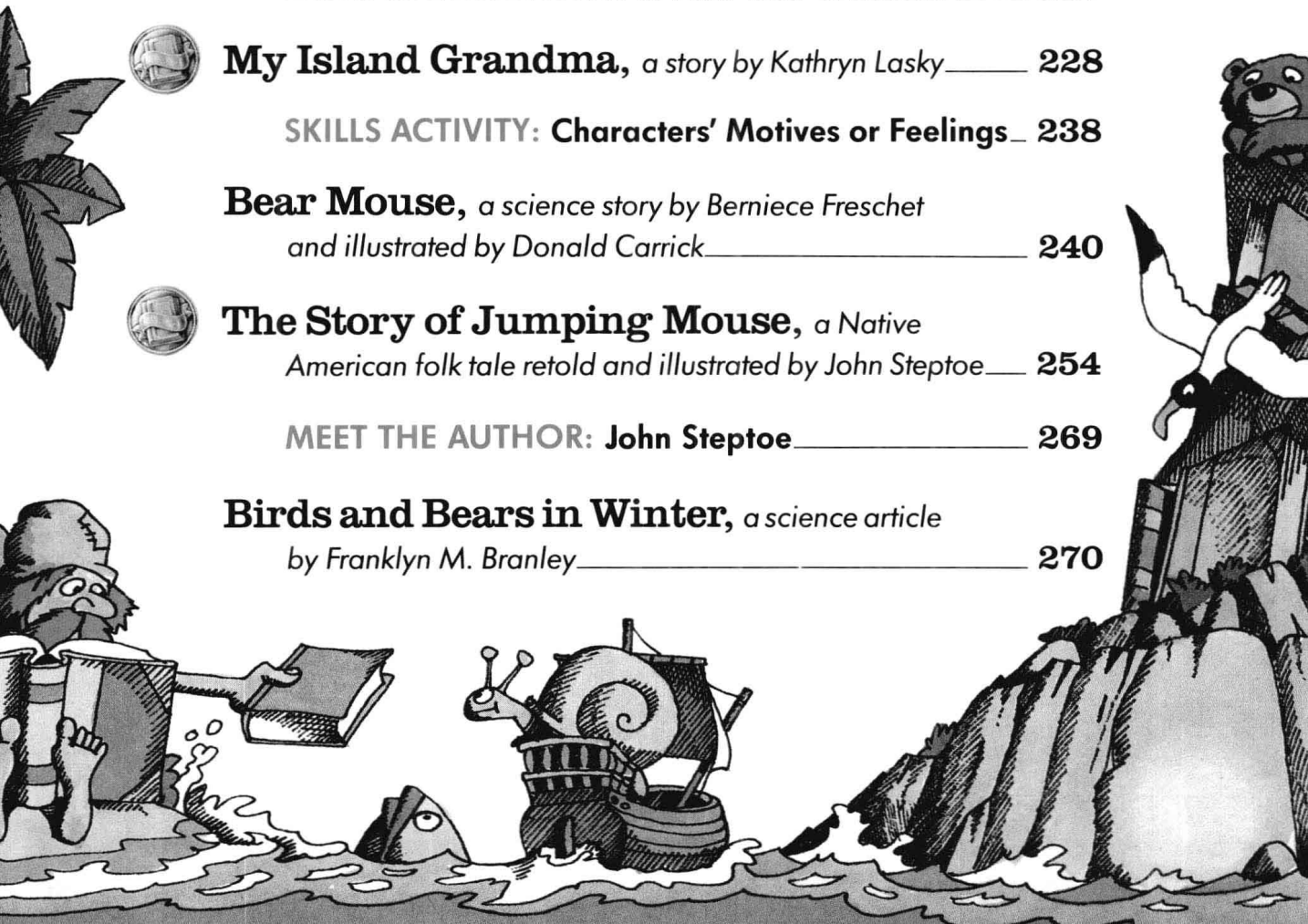
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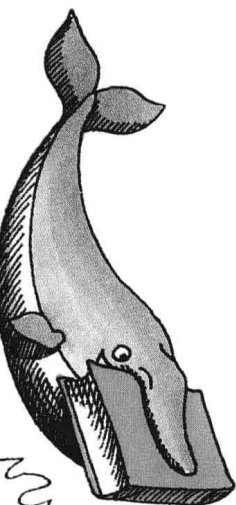


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*Introducing Level 9*

# **REACH OUT**



**Climb high  
Climb far  
Your goal the sky  
Your aim the star.**

*Anonymous*

## **UNIT**

# **1**

The stories in this unit are about people who have goals and who work hard to make their dreams come true. You will meet characters who want to set a world record, climb a mountain, seek a fortune, put on a play, make music, or simply make the world more beautiful. What special goal would you like to reach?

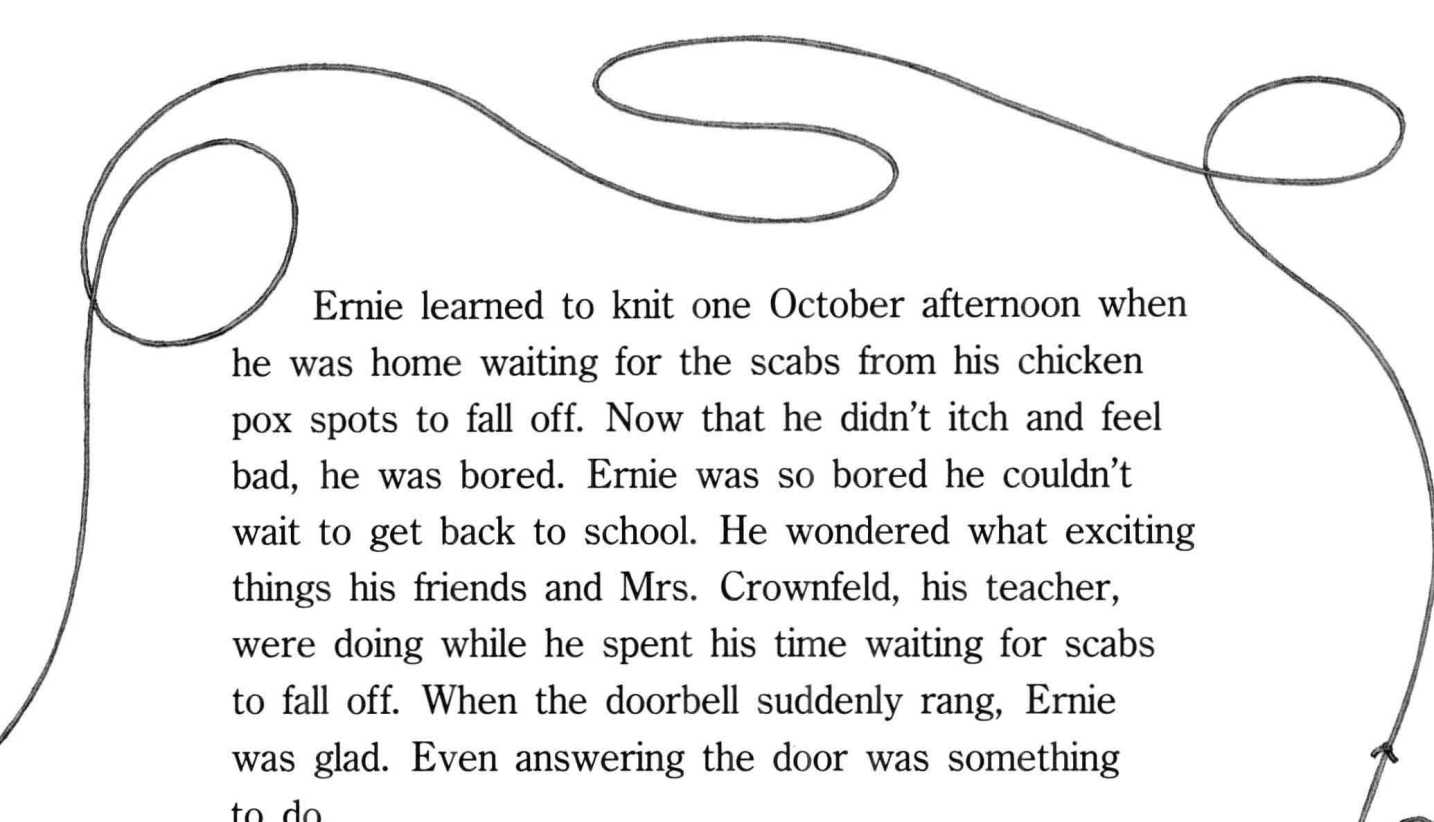


# Ernie and the Mile-Long Muffler

*Marjorie Lewis*

Have you ever dreamed of holding a world record? Ernie, the boy in this story, tries to do just that. But what he learns along the way may be more important to him than being in a record book.





Ernie learned to knit one October afternoon when he was home waiting for the scabs from his chicken pox spots to fall off. Now that he didn't itch and feel bad, he was bored. Ernie was so bored he couldn't wait to get back to school. He wondered what exciting things his friends and Mrs. Crownfeld, his teacher, were doing while he spent his time waiting for scabs to fall off. When the doorbell suddenly rang, Ernie was glad. Even answering the door was something to do.

Ernie looked through the peephole in the door to find out who was there before opening it. He saw it was his Uncle Simon. Uncle Simon was a sailor. Ernie and his mother hadn't seen Uncle Simon in two years because he had been away at sea. Ernie had thought of Uncle Simon often during those two years. He had imagined Uncle Simon doing all the things that sailors did in the stories Ernie read.

Ernie and Uncle Simon sat and talked with each other while Ernie's mother made dinner. Uncle Simon showed Ernie pictures of the places he had been and of the ship he'd sailed on.

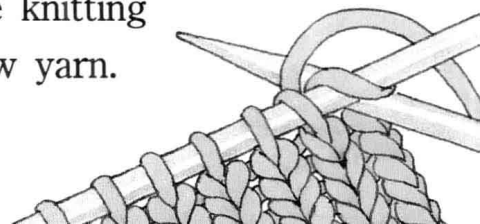




Uncle Simon asked Ernie what kinds of things he liked to do. Ernie told him about reading books and cereal boxes. Then he told him about trading baseball cards, making cookies, and shooting baskets.

Uncle Simon told Ernie he liked most to read mystery stories. Next, he liked to bake bread, and third, to knit. Ernie said that he didn't know that men knitted. Uncle Simon said that men have knitted for hundreds of years, especially men in armies and navies. Those men spend a lot of time waiting for things to happen.

Uncle Simon opened his seabag. He took out a sweater that looked like a rainbow. He let Ernie try it on. Ernie thought it was the most terrific sweater he had ever seen. Then Uncle Simon took some knitting needles out of his bag and a big ball of yellow yarn.



By the time Ernie's mother called them for dinner, Uncle Simon had taught Ernie to knit.

The next few days, while Ernie waited for the scabs to fall off and his spots to fade, he knitted a sweater for his dog Buster. He knitted socks for his father's golf clubs. He knitted a muffler for his mother for her birthday. The muffler was beautiful. It fit his mother's neck so well that Ernie decided to make mufflers for everyone he knew. Then he had a better idea. The idea came to him one morning while he was eating breakfast. He was reading his world-record book for the hundred millionth time. Ernie decided that he would knit the world's longest muffler. He would make it a mile long! Ernie wrote a letter to Uncle Simon, who was back at sea, and told him about his plan.

He asked his mother to get all the record books she could find in the library. Ernie looked through all of them. He found that none of them said anything about a record for muffler knitting. Ernie pictured himself holding knitting needles crossed in front of him. Foot after foot of muffler would be looped around the throne he would be sitting on when they took his picture for the record book.

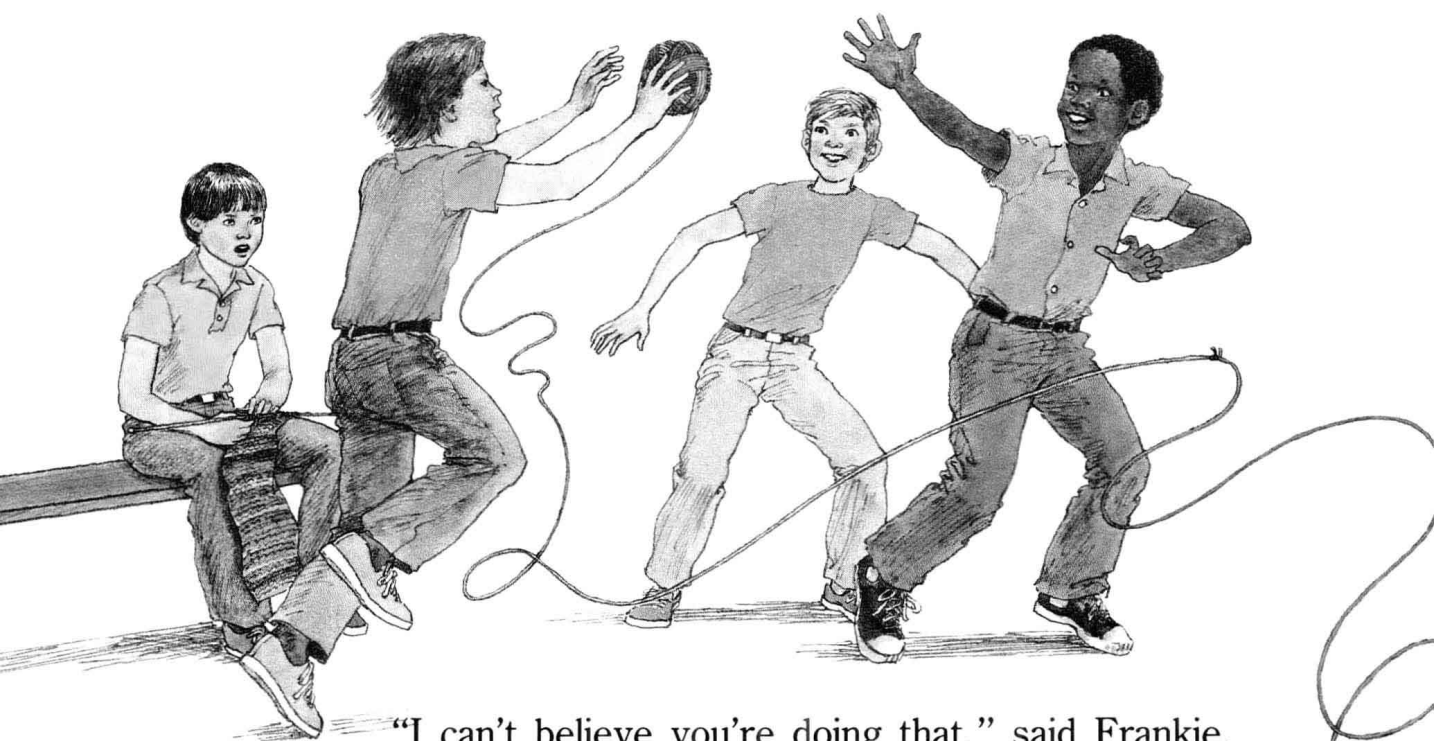
Ernie told his mother about his idea. She told him that there were 5,280 feet in a mile. Then Ernie and his mother figured out that there were 63,360 inches in a mile. Ernie's mother said that it would sure be a lot of muffler to knit!

Ernie asked his mother to ask her friends to give him all the extra yarn they had. By the time Ernie was well enough to go back to school, he had finished about two feet of muffler. Ernie thought that the two feet had been done so quickly that it wouldn't be hard at all to do a mile of knitting.

His first day back at school, Ernie packed his gym bag with his gym shorts, his T-shirt, and his knitting. He kept his knitting with him all morning. He knitted when he was sitting and waiting for late-comers to be present for morning homeroom, or for the assembly program to begin. While he waited for the fire drill to be over, Ernie knitted. Mrs. Crownfeld said she thought it was wonderful to be able to knit. She asked Ernie if, after recess, he would show the class how to knit. Ernie said he would.

At recess, the class went outside. Ernie sat down on the bench to wait for his turn to shoot baskets. He took out his knitting.





"I can't believe you're doing that," said Frankie.

"I mean my *mother* does that!" said Alfred.

"So what," said Ernie. "Your mother bakes cookies, Alfred, and so do you. And so do I."

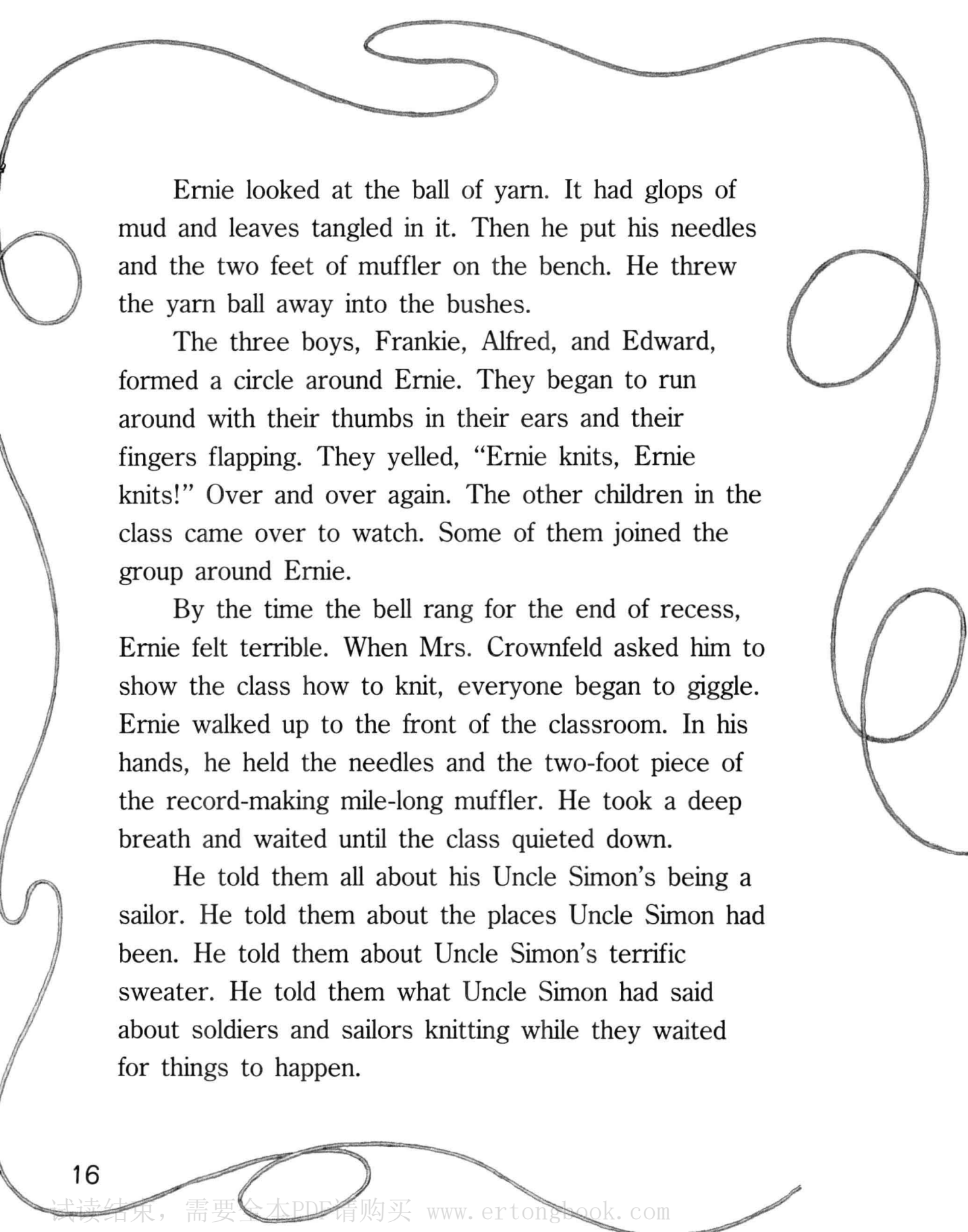
"It's different," Alfred said. "Knitting is different."

Alfred watched while Ernie's fingers made the needles form stitches. When Edward came over Frankie and Alfred moved away. Edward leaned over and watched Ernie.

"No boy I ever saw did that," Edward said.

"Boys don't do that." Edward reached out and grabbed the ball of yarn, tearing it off from the knitting. Ernie watched silently while Edward, Frankie, and Alfred played basketball with the yarn ball. Then they dropped it into a puddle. They fished it out and tossed it to Ernie.





Ernie looked at the ball of yarn. It had glops of mud and leaves tangled in it. Then he put his needles and the two feet of muffler on the bench. He threw the yarn ball away into the bushes.

The three boys, Frankie, Alfred, and Edward, formed a circle around Ernie. They began to run around with their thumbs in their ears and their fingers flapping. They yelled, "Ernie knits, Ernie knits!" Over and over again. The other children in the class came over to watch. Some of them joined the group around Ernie.

By the time the bell rang for the end of recess, Ernie felt terrible. When Mrs. Crownfeld asked him to show the class how to knit, everyone began to giggle. Ernie walked up to the front of the classroom. In his hands, he held the needles and the two-foot piece of the record-making mile-long muffler. He took a deep breath and waited until the class quieted down.

He told them all about his Uncle Simon's being a sailor. He told them about the places Uncle Simon had been. He told them about Uncle Simon's terrific sweater. He told them what Uncle Simon had said about soldiers and sailors knitting while they waited for things to happen.