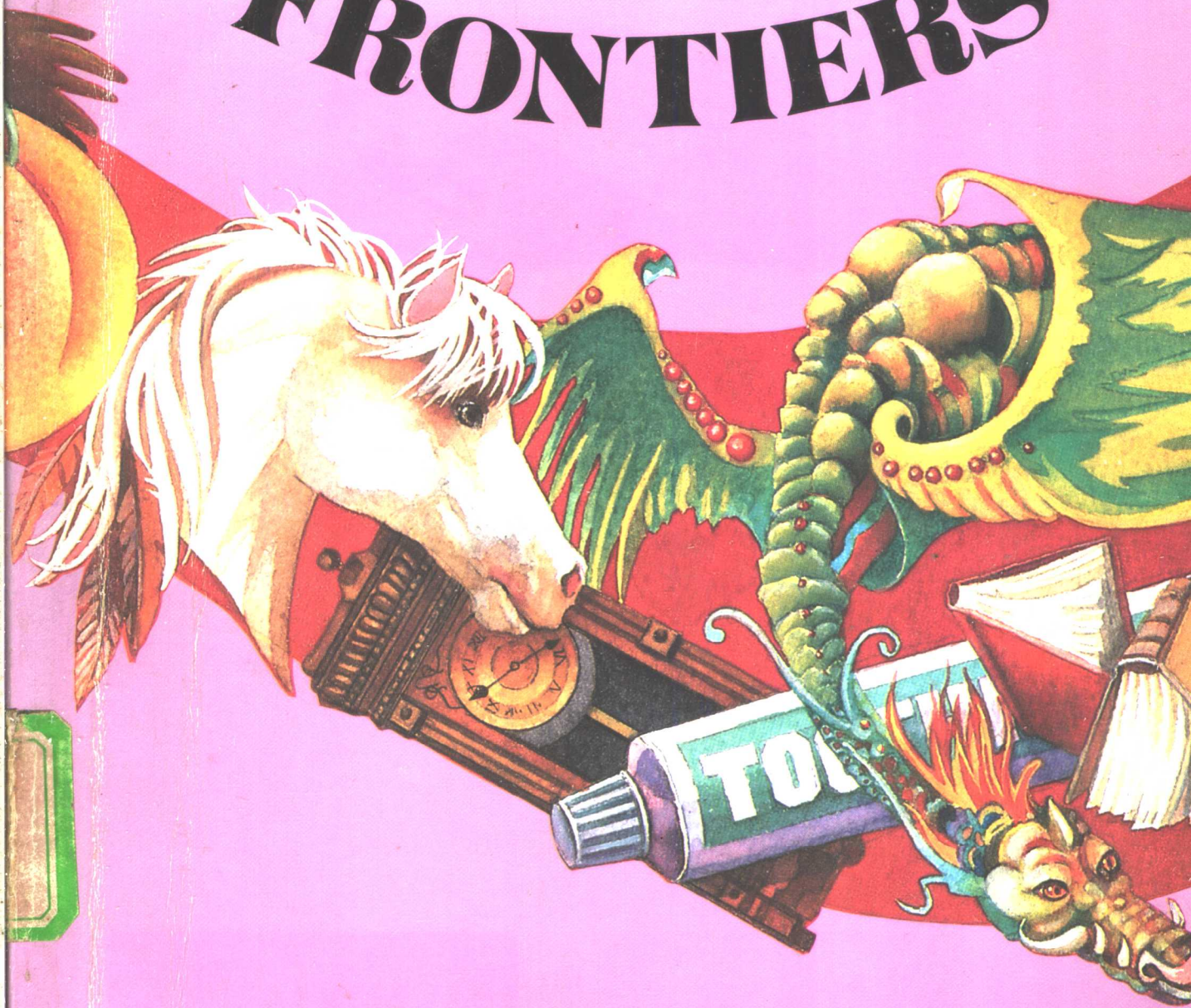


# FRONTIERS





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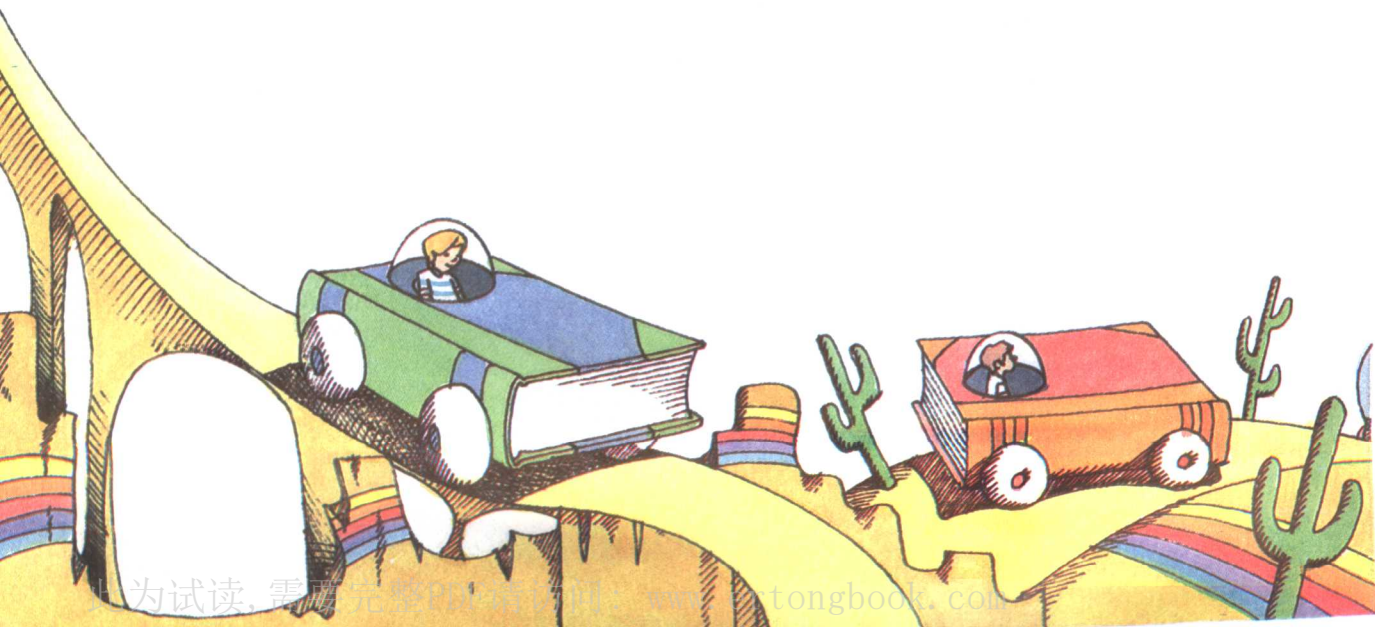


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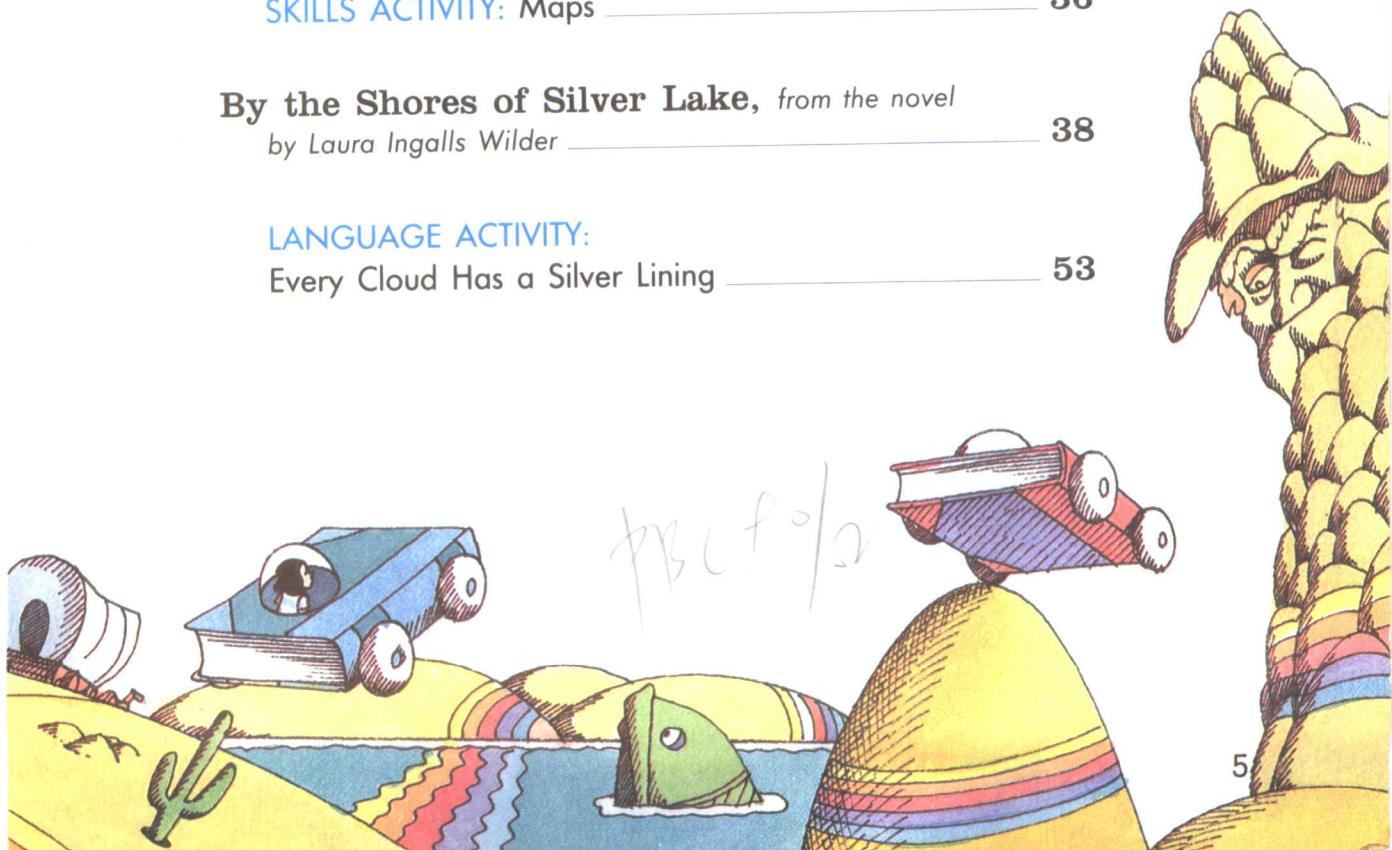
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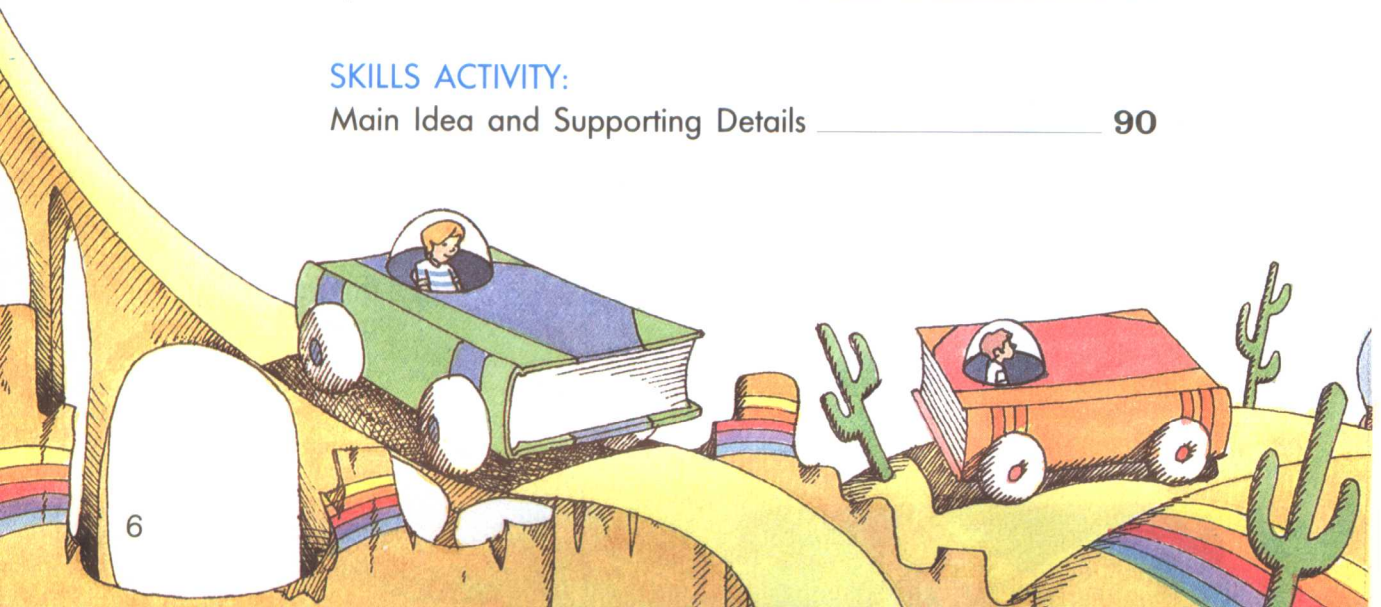
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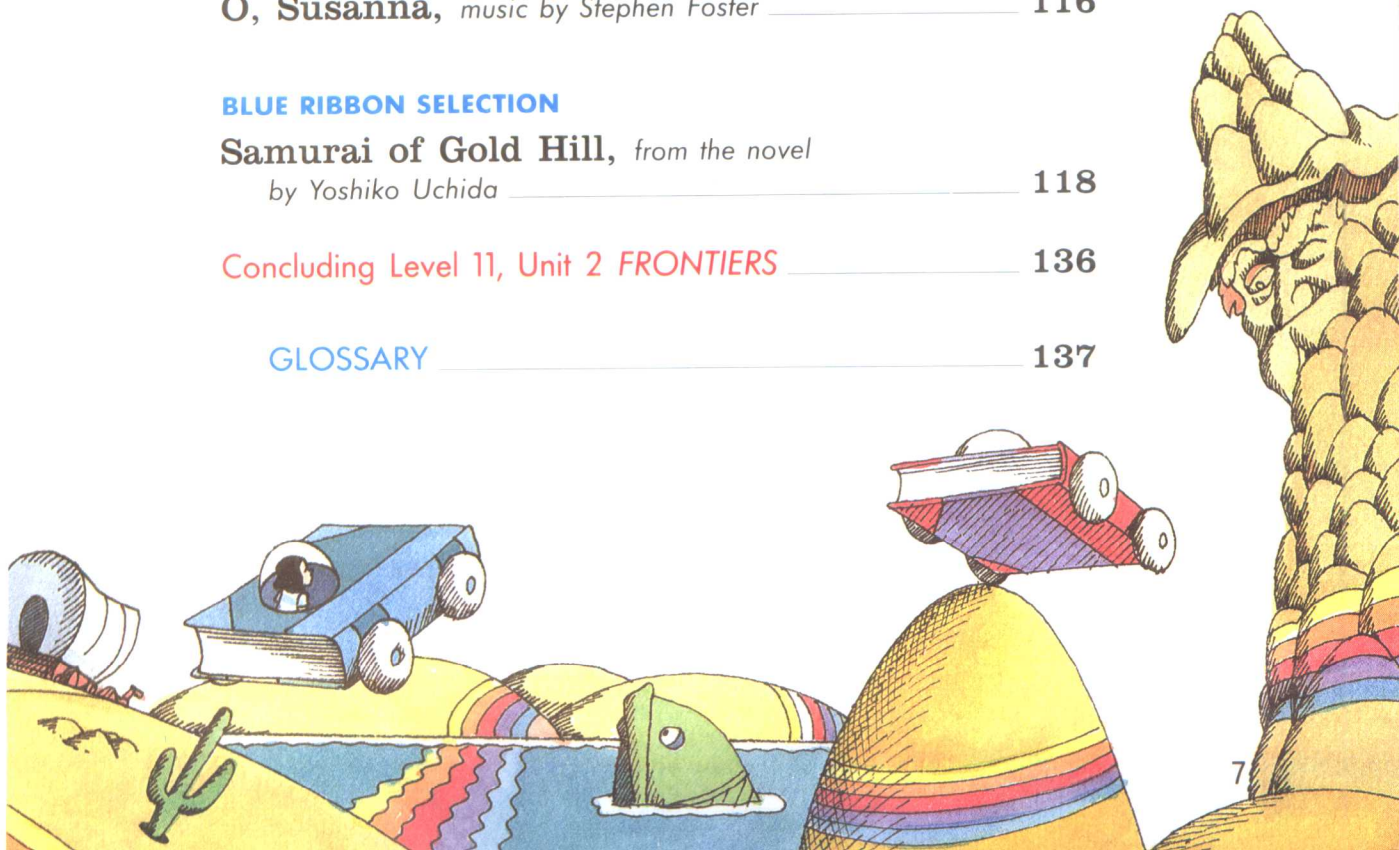
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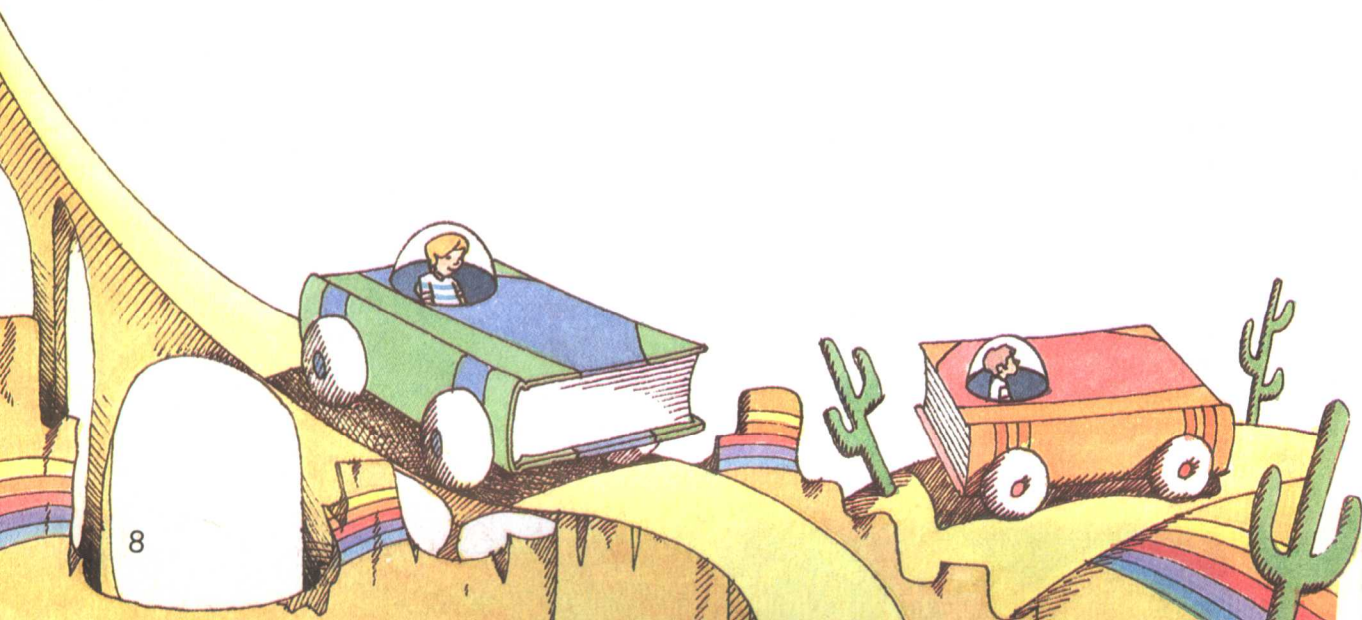
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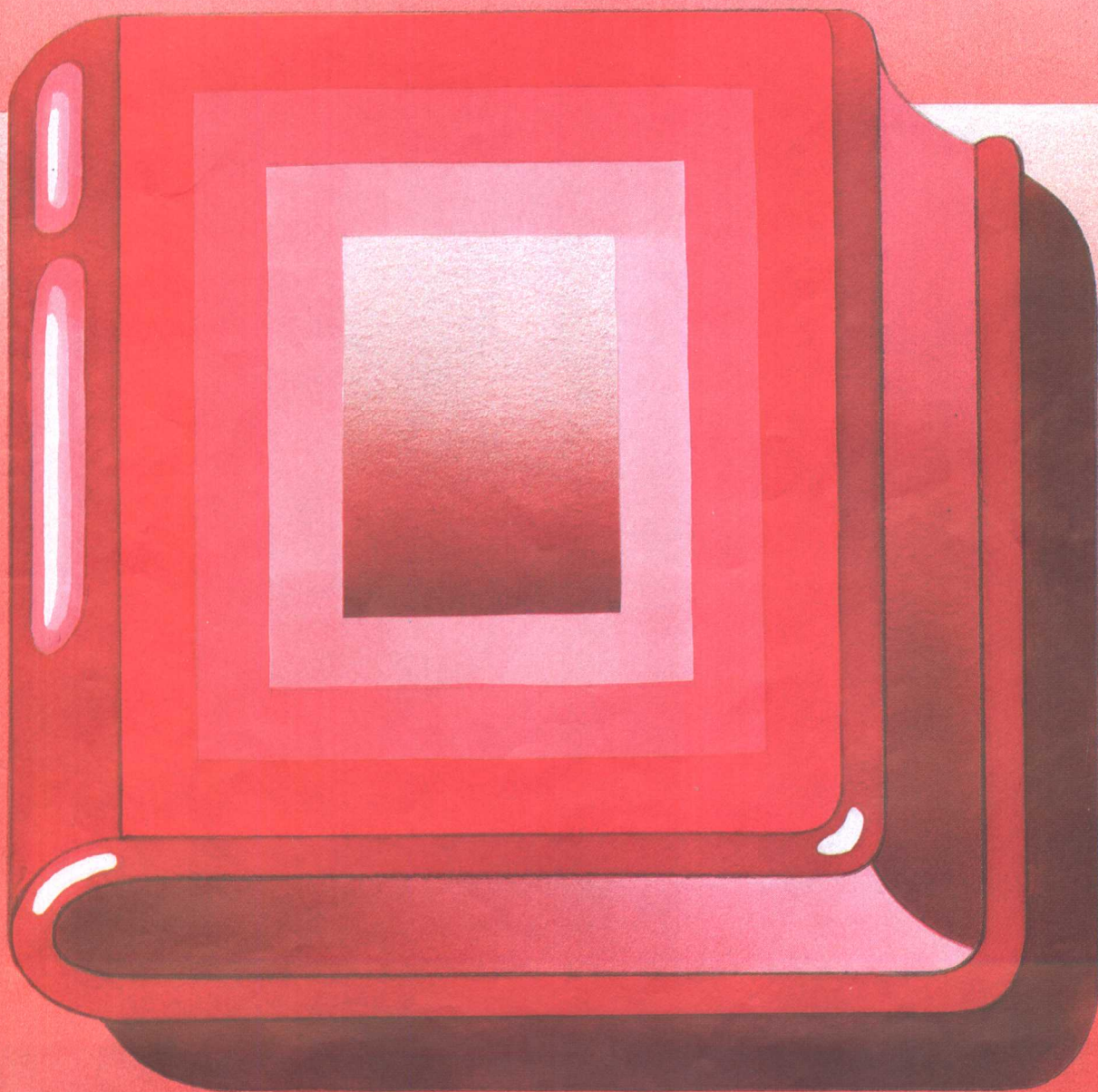






**Introducing Level 11**  
**Unit 2**

# **Frontiers**





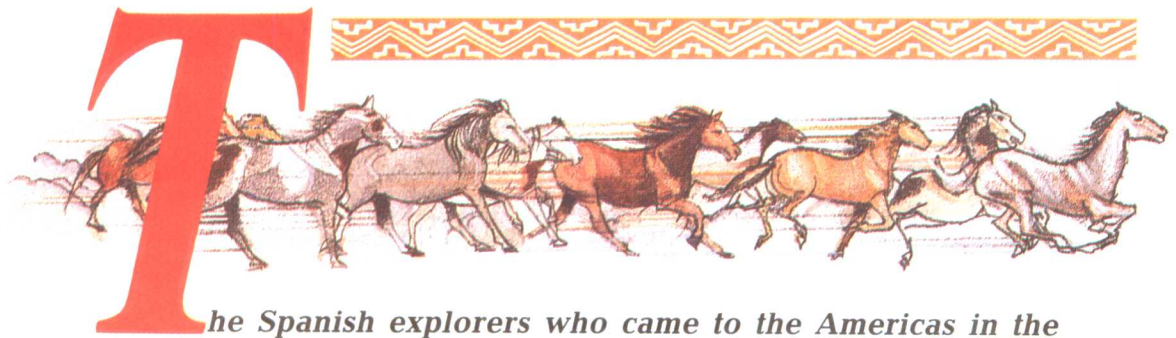
# DIABLO BLANCO

THOMAS FALL



Winborg





*The Spanish explorers who came to the Americas in the early 1500s brought the first horses to Mexico. The wild horses that roamed throughout the southwestern part of our country in the 1800s probably were the descendants of these Spanish horses.*

*This story is about a wild mustang named Diablo Blanco (dē ä' blō blän' kō) who lived on the Texas prairie in the 1870s. For years, this proud and clever white stallion had avoided capture. Some who had tried to take him had lost their lives. Roberto's father was one of them. Now Roberto is determined to find the horse and take his revenge. To carry out his plan, Roberto must first become an expert horseman.*

Roberto knew that there was much about wild horses he must learn. The Comanches were the finest horsemen in America, and many of their best horses were mustangs that had once run wild.

I will go into the mountains and find Chief Leaning Rock. He will help me, Roberto said to himself.

The mountain up which he rode was rough and steep. After several days of hard riding, Roberto spied a lookout from an Indian camp and approached him cautiously.

"I am searching for Chief Leaning Rock," Roberto said to the lookout, who seemed surprised to hear the Comanche



tongue. "I am the boy who helped your chief when he was wounded. My grandfather and I were coming out of New Mexico when we found him."

The lookout eyed Roberto solemnly. "Follow me. I will take you to Chief Leaning Rock."

Roberto entered the chief's tepee. At his invitation, Roberto sat beside the ashes in the ring of fire stones at the center of the tepee. "My grandfather died a few weeks ago," he said to the chief. "I came to ask a great favor of you."

The chief shook his head sadly. "Your grandfather was

my friend. What do you want me to do, Roberto?"

"Send me to Conas with the young braves from your clan."

"That is a special training camp for teaching young men the arts of warfare."

"That is why I want to go."


"Do you want to become a Comanche?" the chief asked.

"No," said Roberto. "I will always be the Comanche's friend, but I will not become one myself."

"Then why do you want to go to Conas?"

"To learn riding and mustang-catching. I was too young to





learn enough from my father before he died. I am going to catch Diablo Blanco."

"Many men have tried to capture Diablo Blanco," said the chief. "Some of them have been killed, including your father."

"I know," Roberto said.

"The war instructor at Conas this year is Yellow Cloud," said the chief. "I will send you out of gratitude to your grandfather."

Roberto's pulses pounded at the thought of going to Conas, the principal town of all the Comanche tribes. It was there that they kept their eternal fire burning—*conas* meant "fire" in the Comanche language. It was there that they held their largest and most important training for future warriors.

Roberto set out for Yellow Cloud's training camp. The stream near Conas flowed across a level area nestled among some rolling grassy hills above the Colorado River in central Texas.

\* \* \*

That winter, Roberto learned which cacti would provide water

and which roots and herbs would keep him alive when no other food was available. He went into the hills and over the prairies and onto the desert for days at a time. He learned to track others who had gone ahead of him.

Yellow Cloud drew Roberto aside one day and said, "I think you could become a Comanche if you wanted to. You are the best student in the camp."

"Thank you," said Roberto, "but I am going to hunt for a white stallion called Diablo Blanco as soon as our training here is completed. Then, I am going to become a professional mustanger."

Several days later, Yellow Cloud called together all the boys who were ready for the special horsemanship instruction. At last Roberto would begin the part of the training that he had been waiting for.

"First you must learn to braid buckskin arm loops into your horse's mane," said Yellow Cloud. "Your life may depend on the strength of your braids."





As the young men watched, Yellow Cloud demonstrated with heavy buckskin thongs the method of braiding loops into the long mane of a training horse. He then placed a rawhide belt, with short loops of buffalo sinews for stirrups, over the horse's back and cinched it tight.


"Now you will see how important the braids are," Yellow Cloud told them. He put a foot into one stirrup and an arm through a loop in the mane. He drew himself instantly off the

ground into a hanging position at the horse's side. "Notice that both my hands are free."

Yellow Cloud then showed them how he could drop from a normal position astride the horse to a hanging position. He threw one foot over into the stirrup on the opposite side and let his arm slide through a mane loop. He did it at a trot and then at full gallop.

"Roberto can try first," he said.

Roberto had probably spent more time on a horse during his



life than the Comanche boys. They were not allowed horses of their own until they completed training. He sprang astride the horse, threw his leg over and let himself dangle off the ground at the horse's side. He performed as Yellow Cloud had shown them.

Not too bad," Yellow Cloud admitted.

After days of practicing, Roberto could swing himself from side to side, picking up objects from the ground at full gallop. He beat all the other boys in his class at this difficult task.

He excelled at the trick of riding on the side of his horse into a mustang herd, to single out the lead stallion, drive him from the herd, and rope him. He learned to throw the mustang, leap down, and tie its forelegs before it could get up. He learned to gentle the wild ones by talking to them blindfolded. He would rub their backs and pat them, quietly placing a rawhide belt on them. Then he would ride them, letting them run themselves into exhaustion if they wanted to.

Roberto felt that he was ready. He had learned well what he had to know. Now that his training was completed, he took his Comanche horse and headed for the prairie.

At dusk he looked for a place to spend the night. The spring air was chilly when he finally hobbled his horse and lay in a bed of oak leaves at the edge of some low scrubby hills. He burrowed under the leaves to keep warm, thinking of the day he would capture Diablo Blanco.

In the morning he selected a temporary campsite on a small mesa (mā' sə). He knew that, until he had caught a mustang and gentled it for trading, he must work from this camp.

The next day he found a mustang herd shortly after sunup. He prepared a coil of rope and slipped down alongside his horse. He circled the mustangs casually for half an hour and then gradually went closer. Already he had singled out a young stallion. With a gentle tug on his horse's mane, he cut the stallion off from the herd.

