

Little Friend of all the World



While Kim played, he watched as a holy man entered his village.

Preview:

1. Read the name of the story.
2. Look at the picture.
3. Read the sentence under the picture.
4. Read the first paragraph of the story.
5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that

- a. Kim lived in England.
- b. Kim spoke no English.
- c. Kim lived in India.
- d. Kim had many enemies.

Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.

Now read the story.

Read to find out how Kim earned the nickname, "Little Friend of all the World."

Little Friend of all the World

Kim sat upon the great cannon Zam-Zammah and dared his friends to push him off. His skin was brown from the sun, and he spoke the language of India as well as his companions did. But Kim was English, though he had lived in India all his life.

He had no memory of his mother, but he did remember his father. Kimball O'Hara had been a soldier. O'Hara expected that some day the other soldiers of his regiment would come for little Kim. Because their flag was green with a Red Bull on it, he said that the best soldiers in the world would come, bringing a Red Bull on a green field. And he gave his son three papers that he said would benefit him when the Red Bull came. After his father died, Kim kept the papers in a tiny bundle on a string around his neck, and he kept the memory of his father's words in his heart.

So Kim lived, free and happy, in the streets of India. Sometimes the rich, young men of the city would appeal to him for aid. Slim and strong, he crawled up water-pipes and ran along rooftops carrying messages from the men to their ladies. In this way, he earned enough money to live and also earned the nickname, "Little Friend of all the World."

One of the young men had given Kim a full suit of Indian clothing. He loved to dress as an Indian boy and mix with the people at an athletic event or a wedding. Even his friends didn't recognize him when he came to a celebration dressed this way.

Now Kim drummed his heels against Zam-Zammah, and none of the others could push him off. He soon lost interest in this athletic contest, as a strange old man appeared before them. India was a land of many faiths, and holy men were a common sight. But his holy man was like none that Kim had

ever seen before.

To Kim's delight, this unusual person now turned to him. "I appeal to you for help," he said, "in finding my way."

"Strange holy men eat boys," whispered one of Kim's friends.

Kim just laughed and offered to accompany the stranger. Something new and different might fill his friends with horror, but not Kim; he was always ready for adventure.

The old man told of a journey he planned, a search for a holy river spoken of in old tales. The thought of such a journey excited Kim. "I will go with you," he exclaimed, "and help you find the river. And I go to look for a bull," he added, "a Red Bull on a green field who shall help me. When I find him, there will be a great celebration."

The old man began at once to look upon Kim as his own special pupil. They agreed to begin the journey the next day. But first they needed a place to sleep for the night, so Kim took his new friend to the house of a certain horse trader named Mahbub Ali.

Kim had had many dealings with Mahbub. Sometimes he would ask Kim to watch a man for a whole day and report on every person with whom the man talked. Kim didn't know why Mahbub wanted such information. But he did know that a clever boy who saw much, without being seen, could earn hot meals and silver money.

When Kim told him of his new plans, Mahbub didn't seem especially interested. But his mind was racing. He realized that this trip of Kim's might well benefit Mahbub, the horse trader.

For Mahbub Ali was not just a horse trader. He was also known as C.25, a spy for the English, and the English ruled India.

Right now, there was a problem the government needed to learn

about quickly. Mahbub had to get a secret message to another city, but he knew he was being watched. On his journey, however, Kim would pass right through that city.

"If you will carry a message for me to Umballa, I will give you money," Mahbub said. "It is about a white horse." He taught Kim certain words to say and gave him a note to deliver. Kim understood that this business was important to Mahbub. Not for a minute did he believe it was really about a horse.

Before dawn, as Kim lay sleeping in Mahbub's house, strange noises woke him. Peeking through a crack in the wall, he saw with horror that a man was searching Mahbub Ali's room. It was lucky that Mahbub wasn't there, for the man was ripping everything open with a long, sharp knife.

"It must have something to do with this made-up horse," Kim thought. Quickly, he woke the holy man and told him it was almost morning; time to go.

Soon they arrived at the railroad station. The holy man wasn't used to trains and didn't know where to go or what to do, so Kim bought the tickets and took care of everything. He found a place for them to sit and made conversation with others on the crowded train as they waited for their journey to begin.

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COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. Kim was different from his friends because
 - a. he was really an English boy.
 - b. he spoke the language of India.
 - c. he sat on the cannon.
 - d. he didn't like to play games.

2. Kim's father said the soldiers would bring
 - a. a white horse.
 - b. a Red Bull.
 - c. a cannon.
 - d. some papers.

3. Kim kept his papers
 - a. locked in a chest.
 - b. in his pocket.
 - c. on a string around his neck.
 - d. under his pillow.

4. Kim lived
 - a. with Mahbub Ali.
 - b. with his father.
 - c. in the streets.
 - d. on a rooftop.

5. The strange old man who appeared before the boys, was
 - a. a horse trader.
 - b. a soldier.
 - c. a holy man.
 - d. a spy.

6. Kim took the old man to Mahbub Ali's house because
 - a. they needed a place to sleep.
 - b. he had received a secret message.
 - c. he wanted to buy a horse.
 - d. he was afraid of the man with the knife.

7. Mahbub Ali's message was
 - a. really about a white horse.
 - b. not really about a horse.
 - c. just a joke about Kim.
 - d. not understood by Kim.

8. First, Kim peeked through a crack in the wall. Then, he woke the holy man. Next,
 - a. Kim went back to sleep.
 - b. Kim bought tickets.
 - c. Kim and the holy man went to Mahbub's house.
 - d. Kim and the holy man went to the railroad station.

9. Another name for this story could be
 - a. "On the Train."
 - b. "A New Friend."
 - c. "Zam-Zammah."
 - d. "Mahbub's House."

10. This story is mainly about
 - a. how Kim got his nickname.
 - b. how Kim became the pupil of a traveling holy man.
 - c. how Kim saw the man with the knife.
 - d. how Kim's father gave him some important papers.

Preview Answer:

- c. Kim lived in India.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.