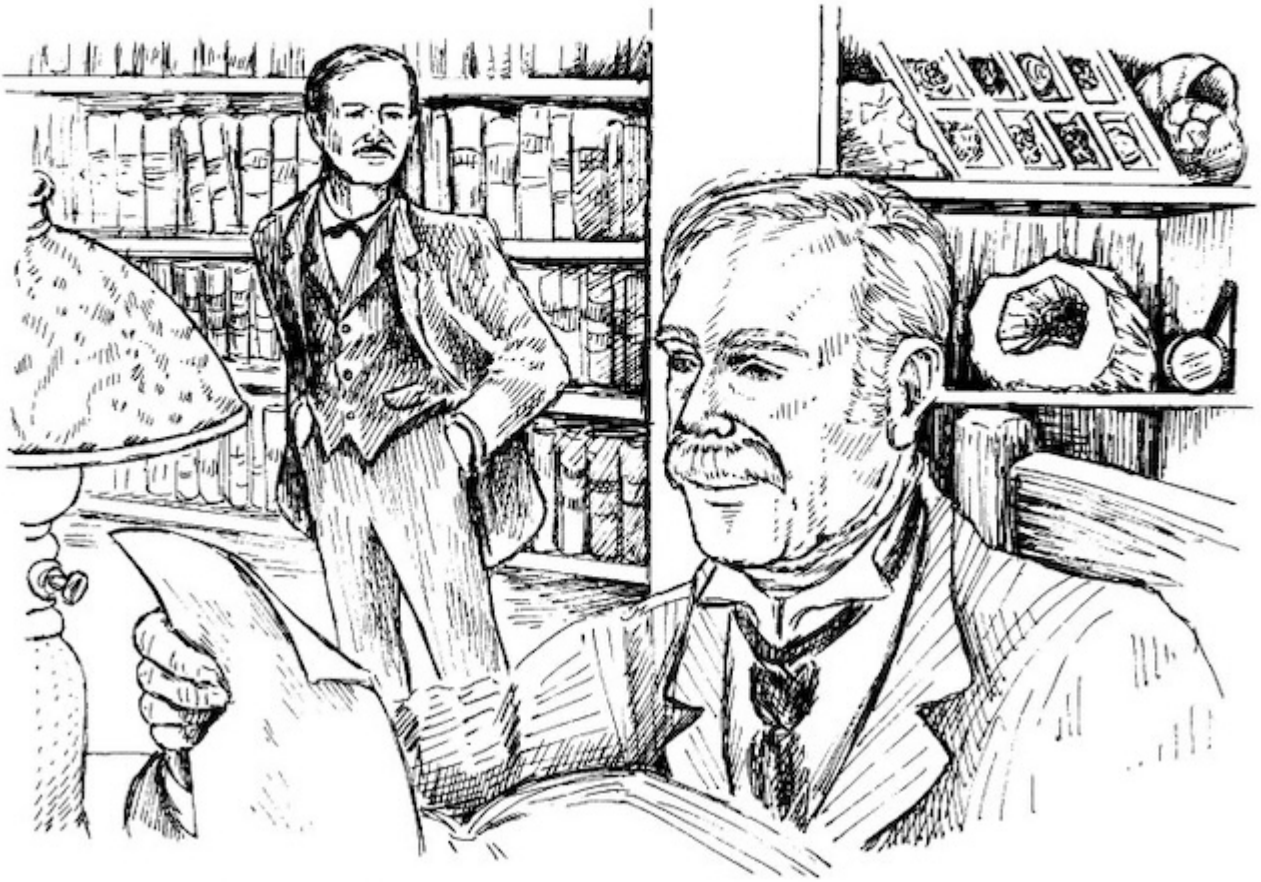


A Secret Message Discovered



*Professor Hardwigg examines the paper, trying to break the code.
He is sure that the paper contains a very important message.*

Preview:

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

You learned from your preview that the story takes place in

- a. Iceland.
- b. Germany.
- c. Northern Ireland.
- d. a science lab.

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

Now read the story.

Read to find out the secret of the message.

A Secret Message Discovered

Looking back, I can scarcely believe what has happened these past five months. I had left my home to go live in Germany with my uncle, Professor Hardwigg. He lived with my cousin, Gretchen, who would soon be my bride. My uncle was an expert in earth science. He studied rocks and mineral contents in rocks. I, also, was very interested in science. I was eager to learn from my uncle. I didn't know my interests would bring me close to disaster.

One afternoon I went to his study where he was examining an old book. He seemed overly excited, and I hadn't a clue as to why. I asked him to tell me about the book. He said it was a history of rulers who lived in the northern country of Iceland.

As my uncle was talking, a small piece of paper fell out of the book. He picked it up and studied it. The words seemed to be written in a sort of code. What did they mean? My uncle sat at his desk, searching the little piece of paper for clues to its message.

Our cook called us to come to dinner. I was hungry, but my uncle was too interested in the code, to eat. He was determined to break it. I left him alone and went to the dinner table. Our cook had made a wonderful meal, as usual, and was upset that my uncle wasn't going to enjoy it. I tried to make her feel better by eating everything. Just as I finished, my uncle shouted for me and I jumped from the table and ran to him.

My uncle told me he was sure there was a secret in the piece of paper, but he hadn't been able to discover it. We examined the old book for clues and found a blot of ink on the inside cover of the book. My uncle looked at the blot closely, and managed to figure out the name of a scientist from Iceland. The man

was dead, but his name was famous to all scientists: Arne Saknussemm.

"Do you realize this may have been written by Saknussemm, himself?" My uncle waved the paper in front of my nose. "I promise you Harry, we will not eat or sleep until we discover the secret in this message!"

Being a young man and always hungry, I was glad I had eaten such a big dinner! Who knew when we'd eat again?

After hours of trying to break the code, my uncle became disgusted and left the house. I picked up the paper and looked at the strange, mixed-up words. An idea flashed! The whole message might have been written backward! I wrote it down, being careful with each letter, and then I read it.

No! Impossible! I couldn't let my uncle discover this frightening secret! If my uncle knew about this, nothing, and no one, would stop him, and such a dangerous trip could only lead to disaster. I was just about to throw the paper into the fireplace, when my uncle burst through the door. He fell into his big leather chair without speaking a word to me. Silent hours passed, and I napped on the sofa.

When I woke, my uncle was writing notes. His red eyes, his pale face, and his shaking hands told me he had been working all night. I loved my uncle and I didn't want him to suffer like this, but if I told him about the message, he would do something insane. I had to keep the truth from him to keep him safe. But by lunch, I couldn't keep quiet any longer. My uncle started to leave the house again, and who knew to where, or for how long this time. Although I was afraid of what he'd do, I stopped him and read this message:

CLIMB INTO THE CENTER OF THE DEAD VOLCANO, SNEFFELS, IN THE SHADOW OF THE MOUNTAIN, SCARTARIS, BEFORE THE END OF JUNE, AND YOU WILL REACH THE CENTER OF THE EARTH. I DID IT.

ARNE SAKNUSSEMM

My uncle jumped into the air with joy. He rushed around his study, wild with excitement, knocking over tables, books, and jars of minerals. At last, he threw himself into his leather chair.

"Let's have something to eat, my boy! And then we can start getting ready."

My uncle grinned and joked through dinner. I hadn't seen him so jolly in a long time. But afterwards, he began to speak seriously.

"Harry, without you, I couldn't have broken the code to this wonderful message. We must go! We must go together, explore, and see for ourselves the secrets inside the earth!"

I told my uncle I didn't want to climb inside a volcano. How could we be sure it was dead? This was really insane! I would much rather stay at home and be close to my future bride. But I've never been able to talk my uncle out of anything. I knew in my heart I'd be going on this trip with him, leaving my dear Gretchen behind.

A Secret Message Discovered

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. Harry went to live with his uncle
 ___a. for five months.
 ___b. to be close to his future bride.
 ___c. to study earth science.
 ___d. to examine an old book.
2. The book Professor Hardwigg was examining was
 ___a. a history book.
 ___b. a science book.
 ___c. a book of clues.
 ___d. a book about minerals.
3. First, Professor Hardwigg examined the book. Then, a small piece of paper fell out of the book. Next, Professor Hardwigg
 ___a. was called to dinner.
 ___b. took a nap.
 ___c. picked up the paper and studied it.
 ___d. looked for clues to break the secret code.
4. Professor Hardwigg did not go to dinner because
 ___a. he wasn't hungry.
 ___b. he didn't like what the cook had prepared.
 ___c. he had just eaten a wonderful meal.
 ___d. he was too interested in the code, to eat.
5. What was it that convinced the professor that the words on the paper were truly some sort of important message?
 ___a. He found the name of a famous scientist from Ireland inside the book.
 ___b. The book had been written by a dead man.
 ___c. The book had been written by Arne Saknussemm.
 ___d. An ink blot that uncovered the name of a famous scientist who may have written the message.
6. When Harry discovered the secret of the code,
 ___a. he ran to tell his uncle.
 ___b. he ran to tell Gretchen.
 ___c. he wanted to destroy it.
 ___d. he was happy and excited.
7. By keeping the secret to himself, Harry believed he could keep his uncle
 ___a. from danger.
 ___b. awake all night.
 ___c. from going insane.
 ___d. from eating dinner again.
8. Feeling sorry for his uncle, Harry tells the professor the secret of the message. Next, the professor jumps with joy. Then,
 ___a. the professor makes plans for their journey.
 ___b. Harry and his uncle have dinner.
 ___c. Harry says good-bye to Gretchen.
 ___d. Harry tries to talk his uncle out of the trip.
9. Another name for this story could be
 ___a. "Harry Visits Germany."
 ___b. "History of Iceland."
 ___c. "A Code is Broken."
 ___d. "Harry's Secret."
10. This story is mainly about
 ___a. a clever man and his uncle.
 ___b. an old history book that reveals a hidden message.
 ___c. Harry's visit with his uncle.
 ___d. a message that will send two men to explore the secrets of the earth.

Preview Answer:

b. Germany.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.