

Building Bridges



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TCM

Teacher
Created
Materials

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Chapter One



STRONG BRIDGES



Tara's grandmother was the town's chief civil engineer. That meant she helped create the roads and bridges. She always said each bridge told a story. Tara loved walking to school with her grandma.

They passed an old arched stone bridge. "We ran out of stones during building," Grandma recalled. "So, your mom and her classmates donated their rock collections."

Tara smiled. She'd already heard this story. "I know. I like searching for Mom's gems in the arch."

She skipped along until they approached a creaking wooden overpass.



“Should we cross this bridge today?”
Grandma asked.

“Haunted Bridge?” Tara gulped. Maybe it wasn’t haunted—but all the kids thought so. “It’s so old that it might collapse!”

Grandma smiled. “No, it’s safe. Even an elephant could cross this bridge. It’s designed using strong shapes, such as triangles and semicircles. They’re good at balancing weight.”

But Tara refused. Even a million triangles and arches wouldn’t seem safe to her.

“Maybe another day,” Grandma agreed.

In front of town hall, they saw a man yelling and jabbing a clipboard at people passing by. “Sign our petition! This bridge will destroy jobs!” He waved a sign in his other hand: *No Marsh Bridge! Save Our Jobs!*

“What is Marsh Bridge? Why will he lose his job?” Tara asked. Was Marsh Bridge one of Grandma’s bridges? Tara knew Grandma would never hurt anyone on purpose.

Frowning, Grandma led Tara away before the man could see them. “Marsh Bridge will connect everyone across the marsh. People who depend on rowboats will be able to walk to town instead. But I don’t know why he wants to stop the bridge.” She seemed concerned.



At school, Tara waved goodbye to Grandma and shuffled inside. Twins Kate and Nate loved crafting and often greeted Tara with something homemade. Today, it was a friendship bracelet.

“For me?” Tara gave a shy smile before slipping on her new favorite treasure.

“What are *you* going to give *them*, Tara?” Oxford bellowed from behind her.



Tara's ears burned when the other students turned at the noise. She hadn't even considered giving something back!

That afternoon, Mrs. Truss, their teacher, made an announcement. "Attention, class. The school is having a contest!"

Excited murmurs rippled through the classroom.

"Teams will build bridges from gumdrops and toothpicks," she explained. "The strongest bridge will win. And the winning team will get to cut the opening ribbon for Marsh Bridge!"

Tara gasped. The winners would work with Grandma! She had to win! But who would her teammates be?

Not Oxford, she hoped, glaring at him. He gave an annoying grin back.

Building Bridges

Tara wants to win the bridge-building contest at school, even if it means working with her least favorite person. But a possible spy, hungry teammates, and bad luck stand in her way.

Reading Levels

Guided Reading: N

DRA Level: 30

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