

Waterfalls

by Jacqueline Moody

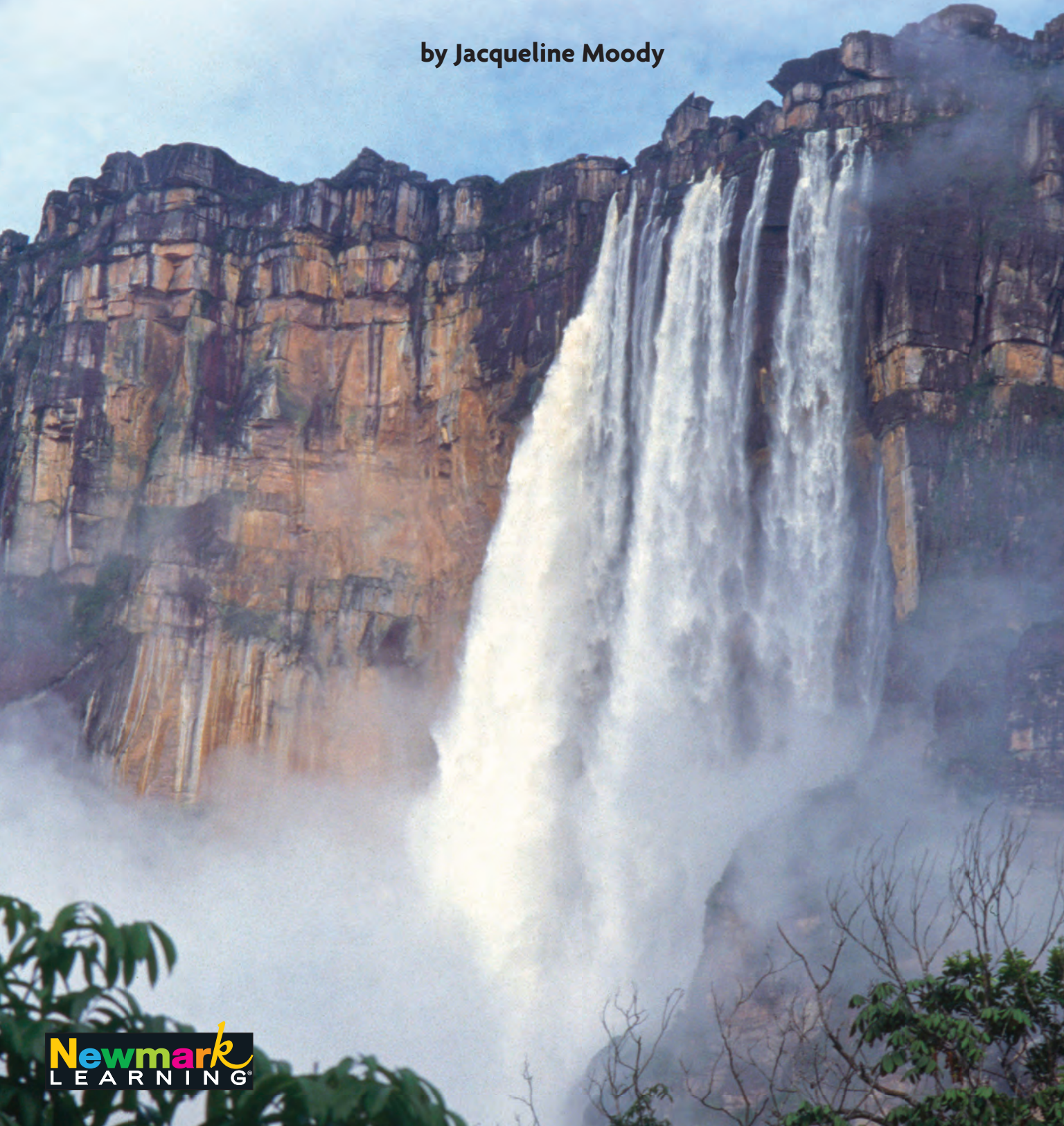
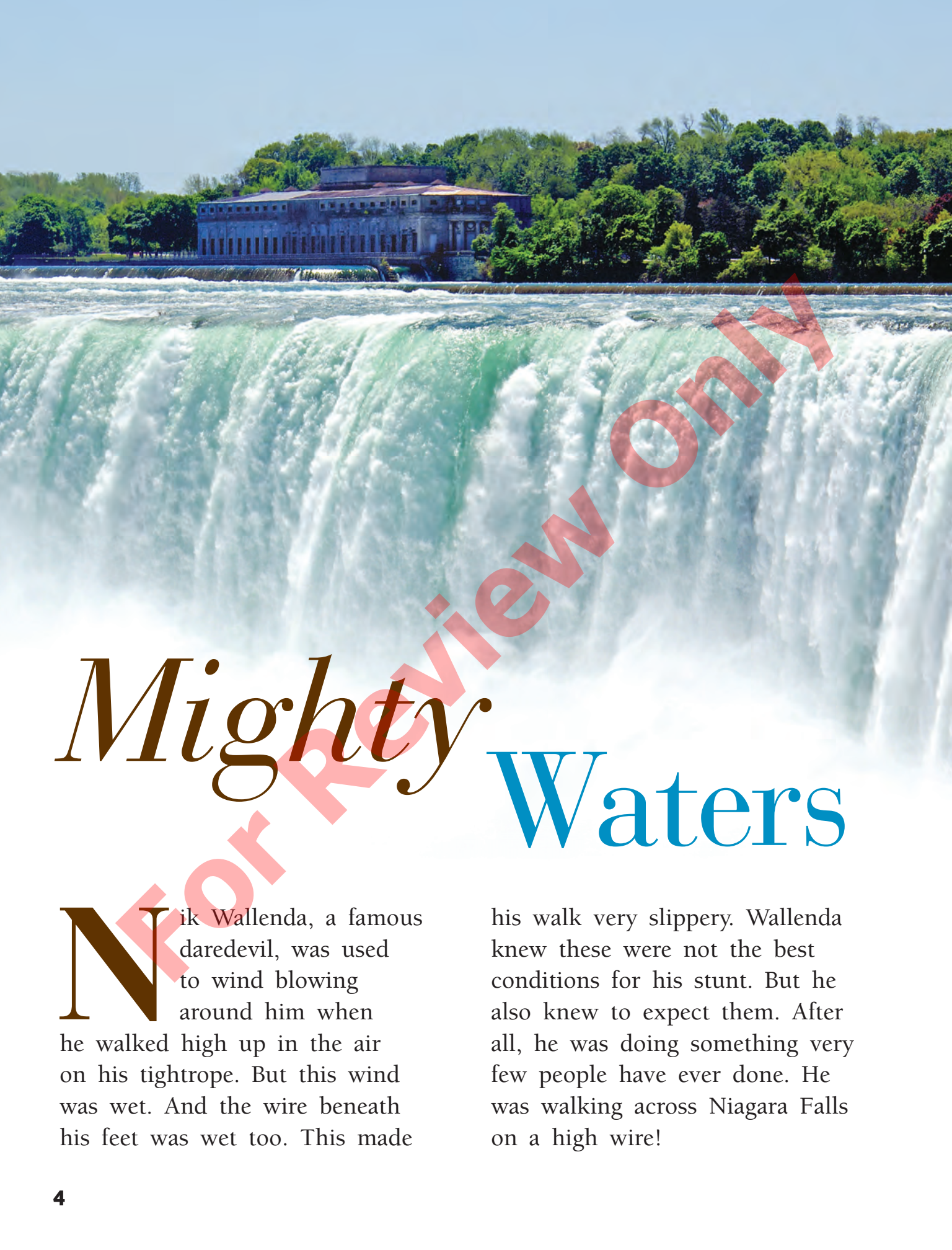


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Mighty Waters

Nik Wallenda, a famous daredevil, was used to wind blowing around him when he walked high up in the air on his tightrope. But this wind was wet. And the wire beneath his feet was wet too. This made

his walk very slippery. Wallenda knew these were not the best conditions for his stunt. But he also knew to expect them. After all, he was doing something very few people have ever done. He was walking across Niagara Falls on a high wire!



▲ The walk over Niagara Falls marked Nik Wallenda's seventh world record.



On June 15, 2012, Wallenda stepped onto his tightrope strung across the waterfall. Wind and spray from the falls blasted him. The mighty Niagara River roared beneath him. He carried an 18-kilogram (40-pound) balance pole and dragged a safety rope behind him. He walked 550 meters (1,804 feet)—about the distance of six football fields—on a wire that was just 5 centimeters (2 inches) wide.

Twenty-five minutes later, he crossed the last few feet of the wire. He became the first person to walk across Niagara Gorge on a tightrope that was so close to the actual falls.

The mighty Niagara Falls, a spectacular site on the border between the United States and Canada, is only one of the natural wonders of the world called waterfalls.

What Is a Waterfall?

A waterfall is a place where water flows over a steep drop and into a plunge pool below. Another name for a waterfall is a cascade. Most waterfalls are found on rivers or streams. But water can also come from lakes or snow melt.

National Geographic classifies a waterfall in different ways. One way is to measure its volume, or how much water flows over a waterfall. Other ways are to measure its height or width. Scientists also look at waterfalls by their type, or how the water flows down the waterfall. There are many types of waterfalls. Some waterfalls might fall under more than one category or type.



Plunge

When water pours over the ledge of a cliff and falls straight down without touching the cliff, it is considered a plunge waterfall. Plunge waterfalls often have thin, elegant streams of water tumbling down.

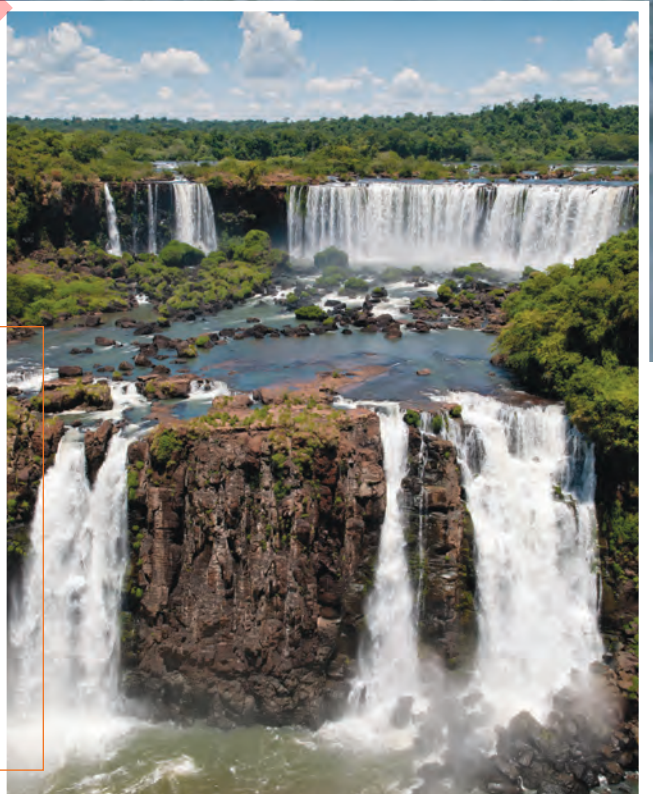
◀ A plunge waterfall is the most basic and recognizable type of waterfall.

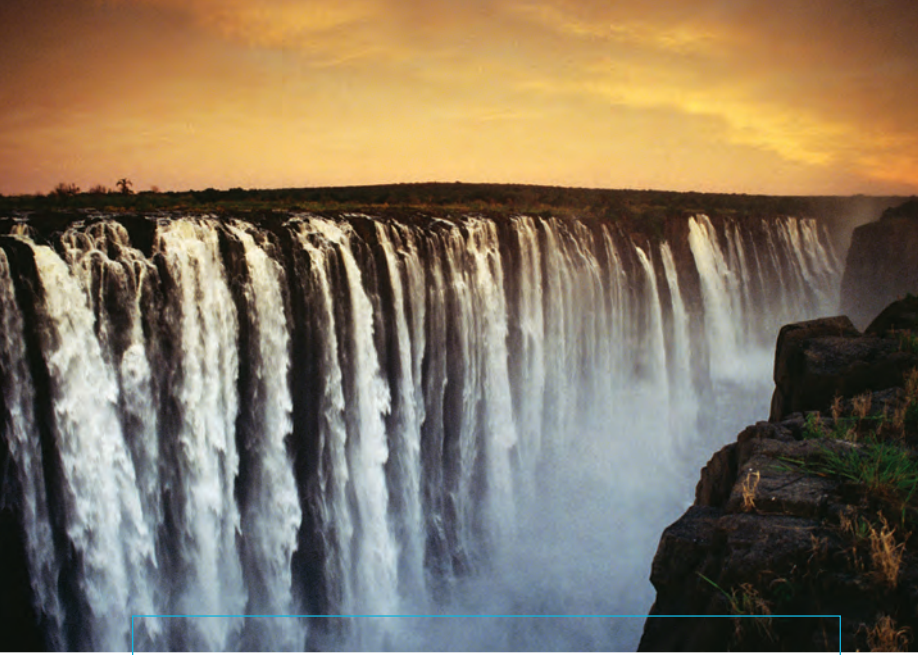
Cataracts contain more water than most waterfalls.



Cataract

Cataracts are large, wild, powerful waterfalls. Because of their force, cataracts can be fascinating to watch. They can also be very dangerous.





Block Waterfall

A block waterfall descends from a wide river, so the waterfall itself is wide. This type of waterfall is also called a “sheet” or “curtain.” It is usually wider than it is tall.



Horsetail Waterfall

A horsetail waterfall is similar to a plunge waterfall, but the water maintains contact with the rock cliff behind it as it falls. The water in a horsetail waterfall starts out narrow. Then it gets wider at the bottom. It looks like a horse's tail.

◀ Horsetail Falls is appropriately named for its horsetail shape.



Usually, the wider the river that's plunging, the wider the waterfall.



◀ Rustic Falls is a fan waterfall found in Yellowstone National Park.

Fan Waterfall

Like a horsetail, a fan waterfall keeps contact with the rock behind it, but it spreads out more as it falls. This makes it look like the shape of an upside-down fan.