

Lexi's Lantern



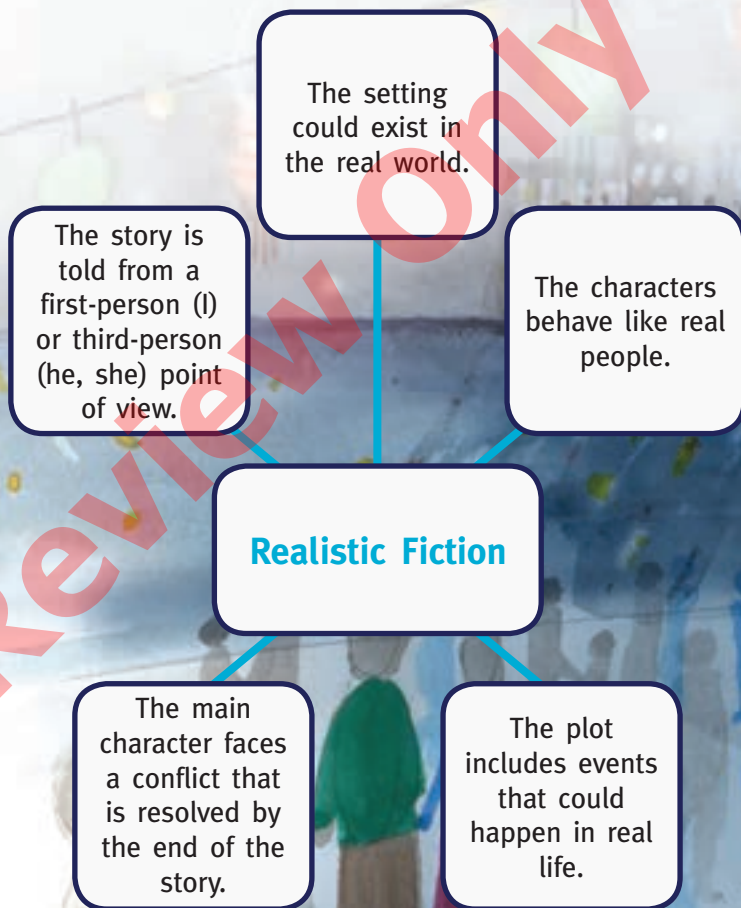
REALISTIC FICTION
LITERATURE

Level **N/30**

Lexile® **590L**

Realistic Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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Welcome to Bangkok, Thailand

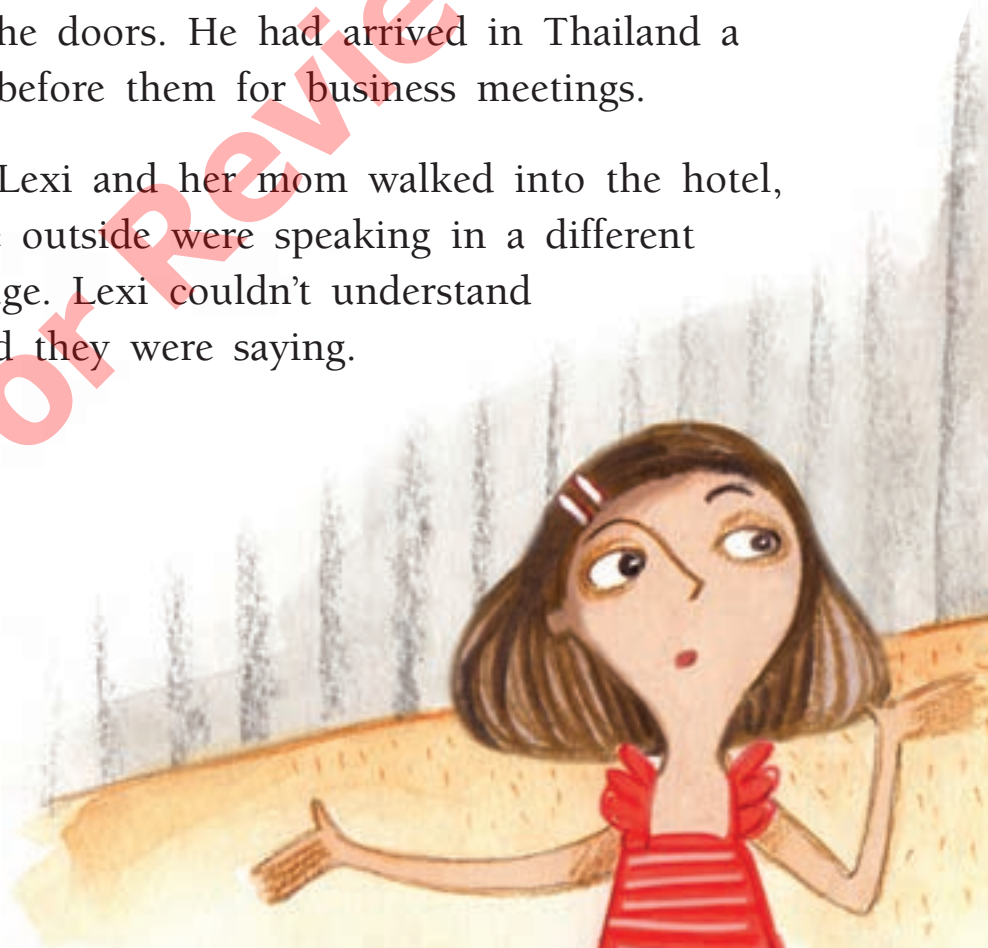
Lexi stared out the taxi window. She wiped at the sweat dripping down the back of her neck.

“When will we get to the hotel?” she asked as she reached for her mother’s hand.

She peered up at skyscrapers. She looked at the stores covered with cartoon characters and writing in another language. Nothing fit together.

Finally, the taxi climbed up a winding driveway to a big, white hotel. Lexi looked for her father near the doors. He had arrived in Thailand a week before them for business meetings.

As Lexi and her mom walked into the hotel, people outside were speaking in a different language. Lexi couldn’t understand a word they were saying.



Were they speaking Thai? she wondered.

Inside, Lexi listened while her mother spoke with the hotel workers.

When they finally got to their room, her father was there plugging in his phone.

“Daddy, you’re here!” said Lexi.



“Why didn’t you meet us outside?” Lexi asked.

“Sorry,” he said. “I meant to be there to meet you, but I just discovered I lost my watch.”

“Oh, no,” said Lexi’s mom. “Not the watch your father gave you?”

“I think it slipped off my wrist while I was sightseeing with my brother,” said Lexi’s dad. “How was your trip?”

“It was VERY long,” said Lexi. “But Daddy, how are you going to find your watch? Everything is so different here.”

“Let’s not worry about that right now,” he said. “We are going out to eat with your Uncle Aroon and cousin Malai.”



At lunch, Lexi picked at the noodles on her plate. They didn't smell like the noodles at home. She watched her cousin Malai and Uncle Aroon cracking the heads off giant shrimp and eating the insides.

Lexi could almost smell abuela's chicken tortilla soup and secretly wished she could go home.

This is strange, Lexi thought, looking around. They were eating at a tiny table on the sidewalk while a woman cooked the shrimp on a cart right next to them as people and stray dogs walked by.

Then she looked across the street and saw a canal with boats. Women were hanging laundry from a bridge. Everything seemed so different from home.

Malai told Lexi, "You came at a good time. The day after tomorrow is *Loi Krathong*, the lantern festival. Everyone in town will put a lantern in the river and make a wish."

Uncle Aroon said to Lexi's father, "You can wish to find your watch."

“Where did you lose your watch, Daddy?
We can go find it.”

“I don’t know, sweetie. We went to so many places—the market, the mall, the temple. I do remember seeing a funny octopus when I went to check the time, but my watch was gone. I should’ve paid more attention.”

Her father looked sad. “I have to go back to work now. You and your mother have fun sightseeing.”

Lexi grabbed her mother’s hand as her father and uncle disappeared into the crowd around them. “What if we get lost?”

“Don’t worry,” cousin Malai said. “I’ll be your guide!”

Suddenly, Lexi had a thought. *This could be an adventure!* “Malai, are there octopuses at the market my father visited?”

“Yes, there are,” Malai said.

“Can we go there first? I want to look for Daddy’s watch.”

The First Search

The market was a maze of stalls selling so many things: bright sundresses and purses, Buddha-shaped decorations, racks and racks of shiny earrings, and unusual fruit drinks. Lexi's mother wanted to stop for a foot massage, but Lexi wanted to keep going.

"Go with Malai, then," her mom said, as she settled into a massage chair. "Come back here in one hour. Then we'll check the mall."



“Malai, will you take me where the octopuses are?” asked Lexi.

“Yes. There are some tanks over there!” Malai said, and they set off. Far across the market, they came upon a stall selling frozen fish and squids plus tanks full of live crabs and ... a small octopus!

Lexi saw an old woman cleaning fish, and a man standing by the crabs. “Malai, can you ask him if he’s seen the watch?”

Malai put her hands together and bowed her head. She said something like “saw-wah-dee-kah” to the man.

They spoke in Thai. “No, he hasn’t seen the watch,” Malai told Lexi.

The stall next door sold coconut shells filled with ice and colorful bits. “What are those things?” Lexi asked.

“They’re called *nam kang sai*. They’re like snow cones with fruit,” said Malai. “Try the mango.”

“This is delicious,” Lexi said. She felt her adventure was turning into many discoveries!

“What was that word you said to the seafood lady, when you put your hands together?” asked Lexi.

“*Sawatdee ka*,” said Malai.

“*Sawatdee ka*,” Lexi repeated slowly.

“It’s a polite way to say hello,” said Malai.

