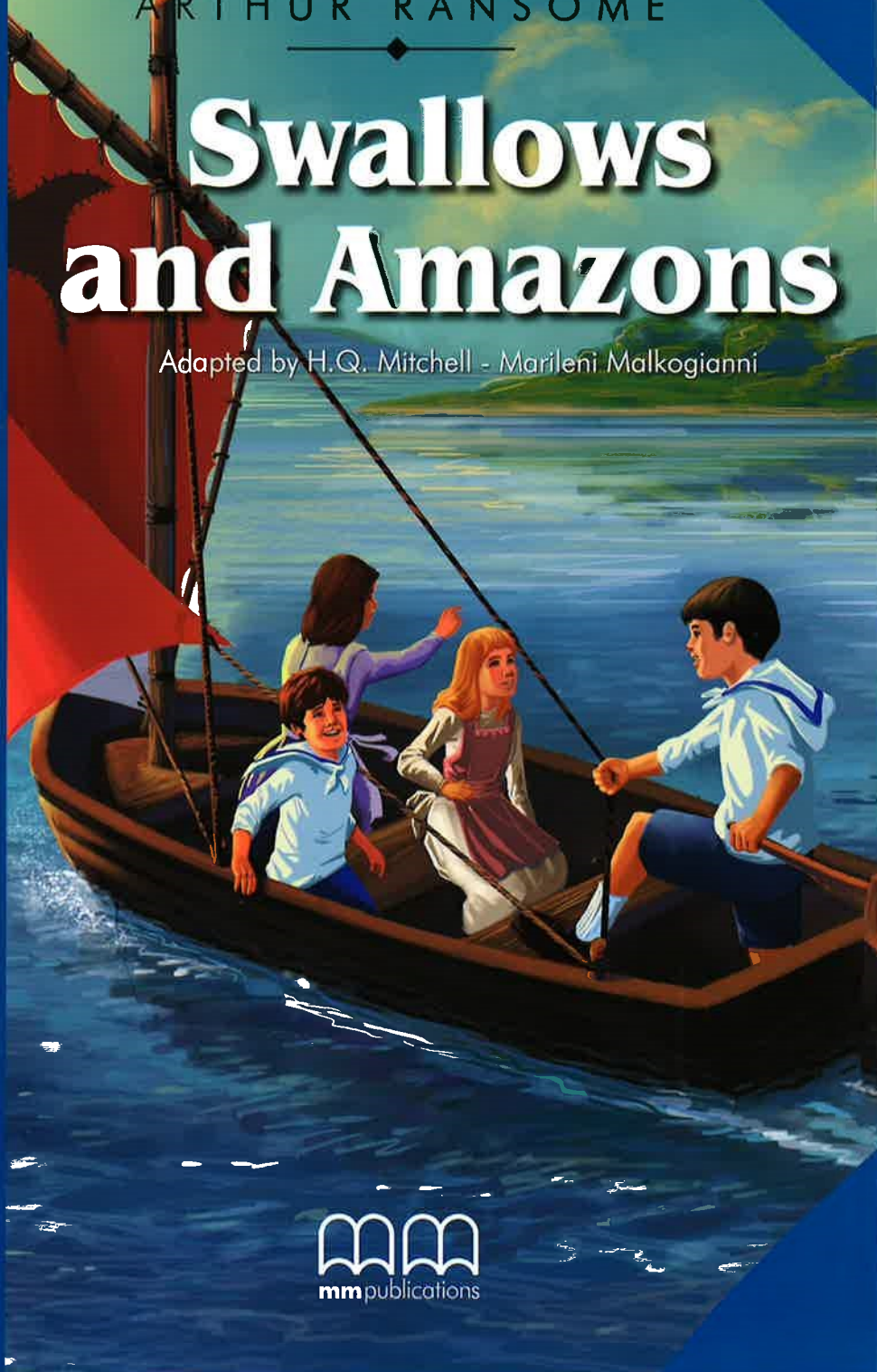


TOP READERS

ARTHUR RANSOME

Swallows and Amazons

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level
3


mm publications

Contents

Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	7
Chapter 3.....	10
Chapter 4.....	17
Chapter 5.....	20
Chapter 6.....	24
Chapter 7.....	28
Chapter 8.....	30
Chapter 9.....	33
Chapter 10.....	36

Activity Section

Chapter 1.....	42
Chapter 2.....	44
Chapter 3.....	46
Chapter 4.....	48
Chapter 5.....	50
Chapter 6.....	52
Chapter 7.....	54
Chapter 8.....	56
Chapter 9.....	58
Chapter 10.....	60

CHAPTER 1

ROGER WALKER, AGED SEVEN, RAN THROUGH THE PINE FOREST holding the letter tightly in his hand. He could hardly wait to tell his siblings the good news. When he reached the clifftop, his older brother, John, was making a fire, and his sisters, Susan and Kitty, were sitting at the edge of the cliff, staring out at the lake.

John jumped to his feet when he saw the letter. "Is that the answer?" he asked.

"Yes!" replied Roger. "And the answer is yes!"

John took the letter from the boy and read it, while his siblings gathered around. "Father says that we can stay on the island!" he exclaimed.

The girls cheered and hugged each other, and Roger ran around the fire, laughing with delight. The Walker children had been spending their school holidays at Holly Howe Farm, with their mother and baby sister, Vicky, while their father, a ship's captain, travelled to Hong Kong. Holly Howe was close to a large lake which had several bays and small islands. There was one island in particular that had caught the children's attention, and they had written to their father to ask permission to camp on the island for a few days. While they waited for a reply, the children spent their days watching the island from the clifftop, and imagining their adventures on the high seas. Finally, the good news had arrived.

The children sat down around the fire with a packet of biscuits and mugs of hot tea and began to plan their trip. "There's a sailing boat in the boathouse near the farm called *Swallow*," said John. "Mother said we could use it. Since I'm the oldest and I have the most sailing experience, I'll be the captain. Susan, you're the first mate; Kitty, you're the able seaman. You're the youngest, Roger, so you'll be the ship's boy."

The children made a list of all the things they would need for their trip and, when night fell, they returned to the farm to collect their supplies. They woke up early the next morning to pack the boat with tents, lanterns, torches, cutlery, crockery and boxes of food. When it was finally time to leave, Mrs Walker and Vicky came to the



boathouse to say goodbye to the children.

“Do be careful!” shouted Mrs Walker as the boat sailed away.

“We will!” said the children. “Goodbye, Mother! Goodbye, Vicky!”

A strong wind carried the boat in the direction of the island, and the children’s excitement grew.

“Look over there!” said Kitty, pointing to a large blue boat that was anchored in a bay close to the island.

“It looks like a houseboat,” said John.

As the children neared the boat, they saw a fat man sitting on the deck. A green parrot was squawking loudly next to him.

“Did you see the parrot?” said Roger. “That man must be a pirate!”

“Look!” cried Kitty. “There’s a cannon on the deck! He’s definitely a pirate!”

The children waved as they sailed past the fat man, but he ignored them. When the island came into view, John headed towards the eastern shore and dropped anchor at a pebbly beach. The adventure had finally begun.



CHAPTER 2

THE CHILDREN CARRIED THEIR SUPPLIES TO SHORE AND THEN began the search for a suitable campsite.

A short walk brought them to a clearing which was surrounded by thick green pine trees.

"This is the perfect place to set up our camp," said Susan as she glanced around. "And it's close to the harbour."

"Someone's been here before," said Kitty, pointing to a ring of stones in the middle of the clearing which was filled with ash.

John frowned. "Well, I'm quite sure we're alone now," he said. "I didn't see any other boats when we arrived."

The children put up their tents; one for John and Roger, and one for Susan and Kitty. Then, they gathered some firewood and lit a fire in the ring of stones. Susan quickly started to work, making tea and scrambled eggs for the hungry crew. Once all the plates had been washed, the children carried their telescope to the top of a steep hill at the northern end of the island.

"This will make a fine lookout," said John. "We'll be able to see any boat that comes near our island."

"There's one now!" said Kitty.

Roger looked through the telescope and saw Mr Jackson, the farmer at Holly Howe, rowing towards the island. "It's Mr Jackson!" he cried.

The children took turns at the telescope, then, when the boat reached the harbour, they ran down to welcome their visitor.

"Hello, children!" said Mr Jackson, as he pulled his boat ashore.

"Hello!" said the children.

"Your mother told me to bring you some bags of hay to sleep on," said Mr Jackson.

"Thank you," said Susan.

The children helped Mr Jackson carry the bags of hay to the camp; then they offered him a cup of tea and a plate of ginger biscuits. "Your mother told me to tell you that she's arranged for you to collect milk from Dixon's Farm on the mainland every morning," said Mr Jackson as he chewed on a biscuit. "And you can only stay here until

Sunday; you're going back home on Monday."

The children nodded.

"Did you see the pirate?" asked Kitty.

"What pirate?" asked Mr Jackson.

"The one on the houseboat," said Kitty.

Mr Jackson laughed. "That's Mr Turner and you're right, he probably is a pirate!"

"Really?" said Kitty.

"Mr Turner is an adventurer," said Mr Jackson. "He's travelled the world and his boat is full of souvenirs from different countries. I've heard some people say that there's treasure on his boat..."

"Treasure?" repeated Kitty, her blue eyes sparkling.

Mr Jackson nodded. "Mr Turner lives on the houseboat during the summer. Last year, he spent all his time with his nieces, the Blackett girls, who live on the other side of the lake. This year, he's decided to keep to himself. He won't let anyone near his boat; no one has any idea what he does there all day."

"He's probably guarding his treasure," said Kitty.

"Probably," said Mr Jackson with a grin.

Mr Jackson finished his tea and the children walked him back to the harbour; then, they returned to the camp and went to sleep underneath a starry sky and a silvery half moon.

