



JUNIOR JOURNAL

56



Published 2018 by the Ministry of Education,
PO Box 1666, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.
www.education.govt.nz

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Publishing services: Lift Education E Tū

ISBN 978 1 77669 268 2 (print)

ISBN 978 1 77669 269 9 (online PDF)

ISSN 0112 5754

Replacement copies may be ordered from Ministry of Education Customer Services,
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Pen Pals

by Jo Makgill and the students of Room 14,
Arataki School



The students from Room 14, Arataki School in Tauranga have some special pen pals. In this article, some of the students describe how they are getting to know their pen pals and what they have learnt about their lives.

Old Friends

Our pen pals are a lot older than us. Many of them are more than eighty years old. Some are older than ninety! Our pen pals live at the Somervale Retirement Home.



We write our letters into our books, and our teacher takes the books to Somervale. In the letters, we tell our pen pals about ourselves and the things we do. When they write back, they tell us about themselves and what they do, too.





Our pen pals are very busy! They play indoor bowls and table tennis, they go to exercise classes, they sing, have quizzes, listen to music, and go to concerts. Sometimes they go out to the RSA for afternoon tea.

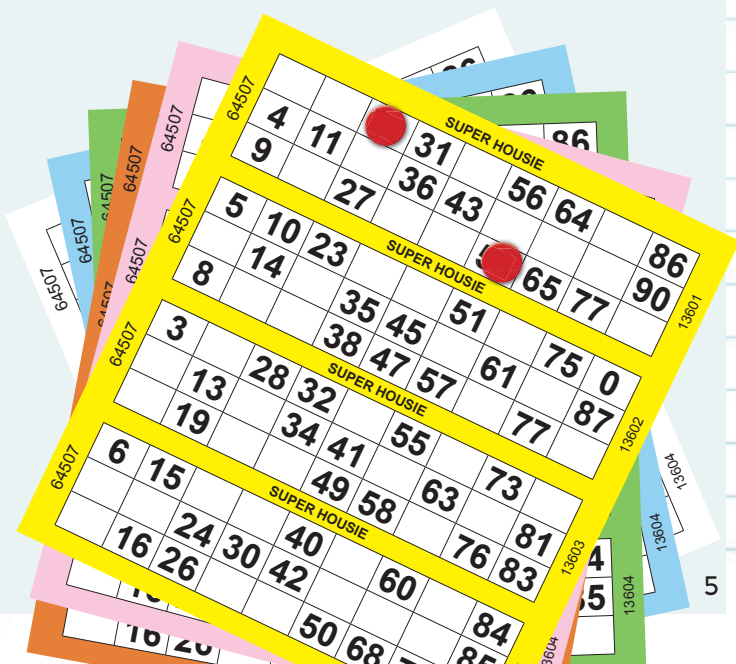
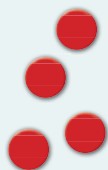
Iris likes to feed the sparrows every day, and Ruth likes to sit by the window and “watch the world go by”. She says there are always things to see – things like people, cars, and dogs. If the weather is fine, Ron likes to go out on his mobility scooter and have coffee at a café in town.



Wilf likes to play Housie. Wilf explained that Housie is a game they play at Somervale, and if they win, the prize is usually chocolate. We wanted to find out more about playing Housie, so we asked our families and went on the internet.

Housie

We found out that Housie is a game where the players all have cards with rows of numbers on them. Every card has different numbers between 1 and 90. A caller reads out numbers one by one. As each number is called, people who have that number on their card cross it out or cover it up. The first person to cross out a whole row of numbers calls out “Housie” and wins the game. Another name for Housie is Bingo.



Our pen pals sometimes tell us about what life was like when they were children. Barbara wrote that she used to ride a horse to get to school. Glenys used to play hopscotch outside with the children in her street.

Thank you so much for your letter. I'm not feeling well today so my friend Diane is writing and I'm telling her what to say. You look like a happy class in the photo - I grew up on a farm so I didn't go to school until I was 8, and then I rode a horse to school.

We had a great time because all the children in the street played outside together. We played a game called Hop Scotch. We used to go swimming in the Hot Pools - it was so much fun.

Ron wrote that at school they used pens they filled from inkwells, and Arthur said they had to say their times tables over and over until they got them right.

Inkwells

We found out that desks in schools used to have a hole in them for an inkwell. An inkwell was like a little bowl that you filled with ink. You dipped your pen into the ink. You could only write a few words, and then you had to dip it again.



Wilf told Michael about the movies he used to go to when he was young. We found out more about the movies in those days, too.

Old Movies

When our pen pals were young, there was no television but most New Zealand towns had a picture theatre (a place where movies were shown). As well as the main movie, there would be “shorts” (short films, such as cartoons and the news). Before the movie started, “God Save the Queen” would be played. Everyone had to stand up until it had finished. All the movies were in black and white. The first coloured movies came in the 1950s.

The King’s Theatre in Wellington was one of the first picture theatres in New Zealand.



Our pen pals are very friendly. They encourage us and give us advice.



ARTHUR



TAITE

Arthur told me it's important to go to school because you never know when you might need something you have learnt.



BERYL

I sent Beryl a picture of me and my dog. Beryl told me I was a good artist.



LEO



JUNE



LAYLA

June told me that she used to be shy, but that "as we get older, we're not as frightened of being ourselves".

Some of our pen pals make jokes in their letters. June wrote to Layla, "I have just had a birthday, and I am 94 years old. That's a lot of candles!"

When Ari told Doug that he got \$5 when his tooth fell out, Doug replied that when he was young, he only got sixpence. (Sixpence is about the same as 5 cents today.) Doug wrote, "I think I was ripped off!"

At Easter, we went to visit our pen pals at Somervale. It was great to meet them in person. We found it easy to talk. We knew so much about each other already, it was just like meeting up with old friends!



Mixed Meanings

Sometimes our pen pals use words we don't know or that have different meanings from what we're used to. Sometimes we need to explain our words to them, too. Some of us told our pen pals about our class "dabbing", but they thought dabbing was something to do with painting. We sent them a photo to show them that dabbing is also a type of dance.



Dorothy told Jakhova that she played basketball when she was at school, but our teacher told us that Dorothy meant netball. Netball used to be called basketball when Dorothy was young.

I was watching people playing Bowls yesterday. I used to play ^{Indoor} Bowls.

I played Basket Ball at School
I was a Defender.



Netball or Basketball?

Netball has been played in New Zealand for over a hundred years, but it used to be called “women’s basketball”. That name made things very confusing when basketball became popular. In 1970, the name “women’s basketball” was changed to netball.

Michael's pen pal, Wilf, was confused about Michael wanting to eat a "wrap". He wrote, "I'm not sure what a wrap is, but I hope it's good for you!" We found out later that the word "wrap" can also mean a shawl. Maybe that's why Wilf was confused.



We were interested to find out that Jim and Ruth both call bikes "pushbikes". We think it's because Ruth said her bike had no gears, so she had to get off and push it up hills.

Barbara said she was learning to use her tablet to play bridge. We knew what Barbara meant by a "tablet", but we had never heard of playing "bridge". We found out it's a card game.

Doug told Ari that he had worked for the dairy industry. That's when Ari found out that "dairy" has more than one meaning.



Sometimes our pen pals use sayings we haven't heard before.

In my day, we would have said you were "full of beans".

Your writing is very good. It puts mine to shame.

I will be 95 - a ripe old age.



Dear Nate -
Thank you for your letter.
In my day, we would have said that you are 'full of beans'!

YOUR WRITING IS VERY
GOOD; IT PUTS MINE TO SHAME.
HAVE A GOOD WEEKEND
IF RO M RON

I AM VERY HAPPY HERE.
NEXT MONTH SEPTEMBER I HAVE MY
RIPE OLD AGE. THE PEOPLE WHO
CALL FOR US ARE SO BARRING I HAVE
NO COMPLAINTS. HOPE TO HEAR
FROM YOU BEFORE TOO LONG. KIND REGARDS

We had to read their letters carefully and think about what the sayings might mean. We found out that words can be tricky!



Rumpelstiltskin

retold by Kylie Parry



Once upon a time, a girl called Maddie lived on a sheep farm with her father.

Every day Maddie helped her father with the sheep, and every evening she sat at her spinning wheel and spun their fleeces into wool. But one day, that spinning wheel got her into big trouble ...

The door slammed shut.
Maddie looked around.
She looked at the bars on
the window and the locks
on the thick metal door.
There was no way
to escape.



“This is all Dad’s fault”, she muttered. It had all started a few weeks before, when Maddie’s father had been talking with some other farmers.



“My daughter is the most beautiful in the land,” boasted one farmer.

“My daughter can sing like a bird,” said another.

“Well, my daughter can ... spin,” said Maddie’s father. The other farmers stared at him. Her dad couldn’t stop himself – he had to exaggerate. “I haven’t finished,” he continued. “My daughter can spin straw into gold!” The other farmers gasped with surprise.

The story spread far and wide, and it wasn’t long before the King heard about Maddie. He sent for her to come to his castle. “Spin my straw into gold,” he ordered.

“And what if I don’t?” Maddie asked.

“I’ll throw you into my deepest dungeon,” replied the King.



So now, here she was – shut in a room with a spinning wheel and a pile of straw. Maddie looked at the straw. There was no way she could spin it into gold. “What can I do?” she cried.

Then she heard a voice.
“Girl, what will you give me
if I help you?”

Maddie jumped. A strange, ugly little goblin was standing in front of her. “How can you help me?” she asked.

“I can spin straw into gold,”
said the goblin. “What will
you give me?” he repeated
with a sly smile.



Maddie thought fast. What could she give him? She felt in her pockets. “I have these really cool sunglasses,” she said.

The goblin tried them on. “OK, it’s a deal,” he said.



He sat down at the spinning wheel and picked up a handful of straw. The wheel spun round quicker than the eye could see. In a flash, all the straw had gone – and in its place, there was a pile of shiny gold. The goblin stood up and bowed, then he disappeared.

The next morning, when the King saw the gold, he was very pleased. In fact, he was so pleased that he shut Maddie in a bigger room with more straw.

The next night, the strange goblin returned. “What will you give me this time if I help you?” he asked.

“Oh, no,” thought Maddie. “All I have left is my phone.” But there was no choice. She handed her phone over, and once again, the goblin spun the straw into gold.

The next morning, the King was overjoyed. In fact, he was so overjoyed that he locked Maddie in an even bigger room filled with even more straw.

“Last one,” he said cheerfully.

Again, the goblin appeared. “What will you give me this time if I help you?”

“I’ve got nothing left,” said Maddie in despair.

“You can give me a promise,” he said. “Promise me your first-born child, and I will help you,” the goblin said.



“That’s weird,” thought Maddie. She looked at the pile of straw and the bars on the window. She wasn’t planning to get married or have a baby ...

She made up her mind. “Sure,” she said. So once again, the goblin spun the straw into gold. The King was so happy (and rich) that at last he let Maddie go.





The years passed quickly. Maddie grew up, and much to her surprise, she changed her mind about getting married. Life was good, and Maddie and her husband were very happy. Their happiness was complete when Maddie found out she was going to have a baby. She forgot all about her promise.

But a few days after the baby was born, the goblin suddenly appeared in front of her. “Here I am,” he said. “Remember your promise.”

Maddie turned pale. “You can’t take my baby! What else can I give you?”

“Nothing,” replied the goblin. “You promised me your child, and your child I will have.”

“Please,” cried Maddie. “I’ll do anything.”

The goblin thought for a moment. “All right,” he said with a cunning smile. “If you can guess my name, you can keep your child.”

“How much time can I have?” asked Maddie.

“Three days. I will come back three times. If you guess my name, the child is yours.”

Maddie tried not to panic. She wrote down every name she knew. None of the names seemed right for such a strange creature, so she searched the internet.

The next night, the goblin appeared. Maddie looked at her list.

“Is your name Creepy McCreepy Face?” Maddie asked.

“No.”

“Bandlegs? Cragglehop?” She read all the names on her list.

“No, no, no!” chortled the goblin. “You’ll have to try again tomorrow,” he said and disappeared.

Maddie was in despair. There had to be a better way to work out the goblin’s name. She thought hard. At last, she worked out a plan. The next night, she put her plan into action.

“Is your name ... Slobbydosher?” she asked. The goblin began laughing so hard he didn’t notice Maddie drop a GPS tracker into his pocket.

“How about Slugmaster? Bofflehopper?” She tried more names, but the goblin just kept on laughing.

“See you tomorrow night,” he said as he disappeared.

Maddie ran to her computer.
The GPS tracker was working!
She followed the blue dot as it moved
across the map. It went along the
street, across the park, and stopped
beside the river. “So that’s where
the goblin lives,” she thought.



The next morning, Maddie crept
down to the river and hid behind a bush. There was the
goblin, dancing round a fire and singing.

*Ha, ha, ha, tee, hee, hee,
Tonight my prize I'll claim.
She'll never guess.
How could she know
That Rumpelstiltskin is my name?*



Maddie smiled. She went back to the farm and waited.
The goblin arrived that night, grinning in triumph.

“Could your name be Groocher?” asked Maddie. “Is it Foodlewoodle?”

“You’re nowhere near,” chortled the goblin.

“OK, then. I think your name might be ... Rumpelstiltskin!”

The goblin stopped grinning. His face turned dark with anger. “How could you know that? You must have cheated!” He stamped his feet in rage. He stamped so hard he made a huge hole in the ground.

“Look out!” called Maddie, but it was too late. The goblin slid into the hole and was gone.

“Oops,” said Maddie. “There goes my GPS tracker. Never mind.”

And she went back to living happily ever after. As for the goblin – he was never seen again.



illustrations by
Jez Tuya

Naming the Goblin Baby

It was time to name the baby.
All the goblins gathered round.
“Foodle-stoop?” said Grandma,
“It has a lovely sound.”

“Not Foodle-stoop” said Grandad.
“Poodle-loop sounds better.
Or Wiffle-step or Diffle-stop
Or Diffle-doffle-setter.”

Then all the aunts and uncles
gave their suggestions, too:
“Wiffle-stepper, Piffle-pepper,
Pixel-wixel-woo,

Rumpel-lumpel, Foodle-woodle,
Toodle-oodle-zum,
Slobby-dosher, Pobby-dasher.”
“Please, no more!” said Mum.

“Yes,” said Dad, “Let’s stop right there.
This is a tricky job.
We need to choose a shorter name –
I think we’ll call him Bob.”

Kay Hancock







Chang-O and the Moon

嫦娥奔月

**A traditional tale
from China,
retold by Cherie Wu**

Part One: Hou Yi and the Sun Birds

Long, long ago, ten sun birds lived in a volcano. Each day, one of the birds would leave the volcano and fly up into the sky and around the world, bringing heat and light to all the land.

One day, the ten birds decided to go out on the same day. Ten sun birds in the sky made it ten times hotter on Earth. The land was scorched. The rivers and seas dried up. Animals and crops died in the fields. It felt like the world was about to catch fire.



Something had to be done quickly. The Emperor sent for a young man named Hou Yi, who was known to be a great archer. “Save us,” said the Emperor. “Shoot down the sun birds.”

Hou Yi took ten arrows and a huge bow, and he walked to the top of a hill. He shot down the sun birds one by one, until there was only one left in the sky. He let the last one go so that it would continue to give light and warmth to Earth.

“You have saved the world,” said the Emperor, and he rewarded Hou Yi richly.

Part Two: Hou Yi and the Elixir of Immortality

Hou Yi became known as a hero. Young men flocked to him. They wanted Hou Yi to teach them to be great archers, too.

The Queen of Heaven also saw what Hou Yi had done and wanted to reward him. She gave him the Elixir of Immortality and told him, “You deserve to live a long and happy life. If you drink half the elixir, you will live forever. If you drink all of it, you will ascend to Heaven.”

Time passed. Hou Yi married a beautiful girl named Chang-O. He told her about the elixir. “We will pick a good day,” he said, “and share the elixir so that we both become immortal. Then we can live a happy life together forever.”



Part Three: Chang-O and the Elixir of Immortality

But one of Hou Yi's students, Feng Meng, overheard this conversation. Feng Meng wanted to become immortal, too.

One day when Hou Yi was out hunting and Chang-O had gone to the market, Feng Meng sneaked into their house. He wanted to steal the elixir for himself, but Chang-O arrived back from the market before he could find it.

“What are you doing here?” she demanded.

“I want the elixir,” Feng Meng shouted. “Where is it?”

Chang-O refused to tell him, but she knew Feng Meng would soon find it. She rushed to the cupboard where it was hidden, grabbed the bottle, and ran for the door. But she was not quick enough – Feng Meng stood in the way.

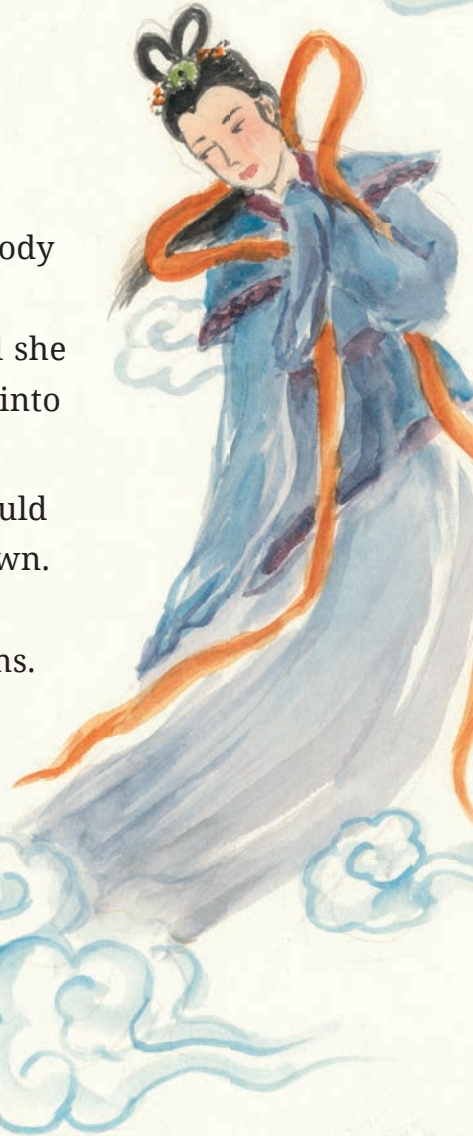
Feng Meng was a strong man. Chang-O knew that she could not escape, so to stop him from stealing the elixir, she drank it all herself.



Part Four: Chang-O Ascends to Heaven

The moment she swallowed the magic drink, Chang-O felt her body start to change. She felt herself become lighter and lighter until she floated out the window and up into the sky.

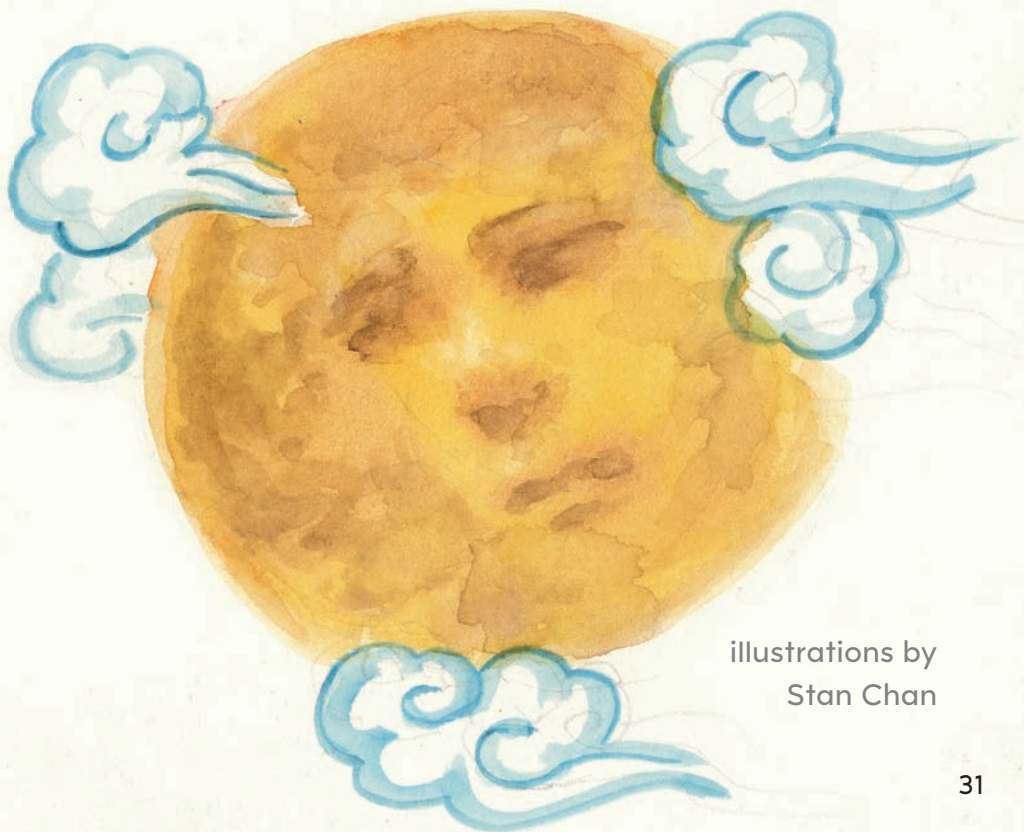
Try as she might, Chang-O could not make herself come back down. She floated up and up until she reached the moon in the heavens.



When Hou Yi came home and saw the empty bottle, he knew his wife had gone forever. He was full of grief and cried out his wife's name again and again. The Queen of Heaven heard Hou Yi's cry and took pity on him. She decided that she would let Hou Yi see Chang-O.

That night, the moon was big and bright. Hou Yi looked up and was amazed to see a shape in the moon that looked just like his wife! Then he realised that Chang-O had become a goddess of the moon.

Now, once a year, Chang-O returns. Look up – if it's a clear night, you will be able to see her.



illustrations by
Stan Chan

The Moon Festival

A note from the author



When I was a child, I was told the story of Chang-O and the Moon. Every year, I look for Chang-O in the sky. She returns in September (or sometimes in early October) when the moon is full. That's when Chinese families get together to celebrate the Moon Festival. We worship the moon for peace and good luck, and we think about loved ones who live far away. We eat moon cakes and fruit, drink tea, and enjoy meals with our family.



Acknowledgments

The Ministry of Education and Lift Education would like to thank Diane McLaughlin and the residents of Somervale Retirement Village, Tauranga and Ayn Harris and the students of Room 14, Arataki School, Tauranga for their help with “Pen Pals” and Amy Zeng for her help with “Chang-O and the Moon”.

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Editor: David Chadwick

Designer: Liz Tui Morris

Literacy Consultant: Kay Hancock

Consulting Editors: Hōne Apanui and Emeli Sione

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“Chang-O and the Moon”

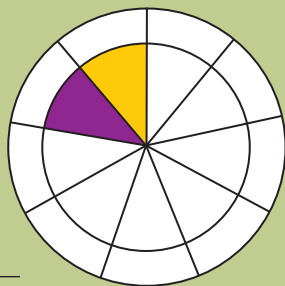
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TITLE	GUIDED READING LEVEL
Pen Pals	Gold 1
Rumpelstiltskin	Gold 1
Chang-O and the Moon	Gold 2



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Naming the Goblin Baby		✓




MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
 TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

New Zealand Government

ISBN 978-1-77669-268-2



9 781776 692682