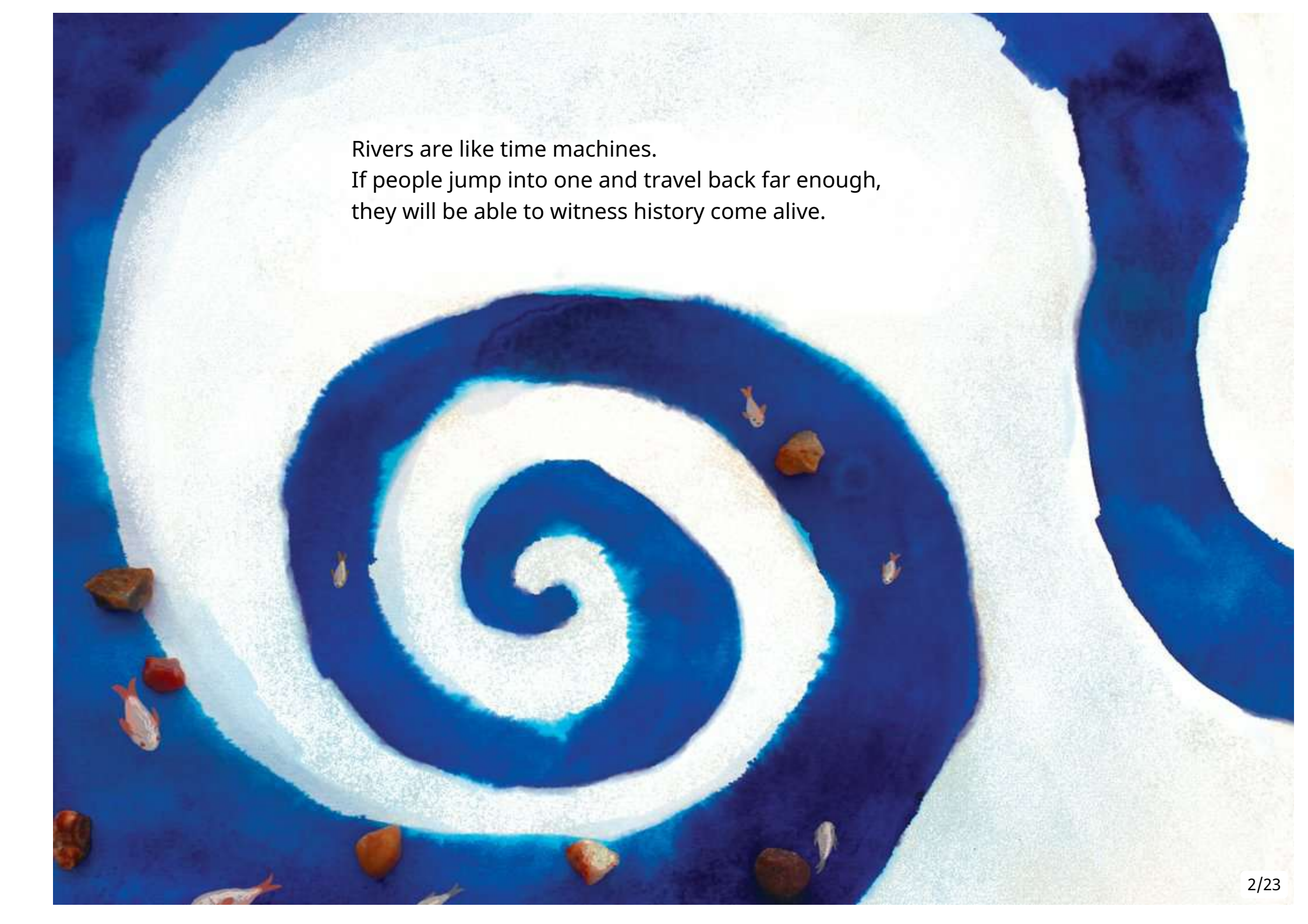# The Time-Travelling River

Author: Parinita Shetty
Illustrator: Sunaina Coelho

Level 3

Rivers are like time machines.
If people jump into one and travel back far enough,
they will be able to witness history come alive.

No two rivers are alike. Their moods change depending on what time of year it is and which part of the country they're travelling through.
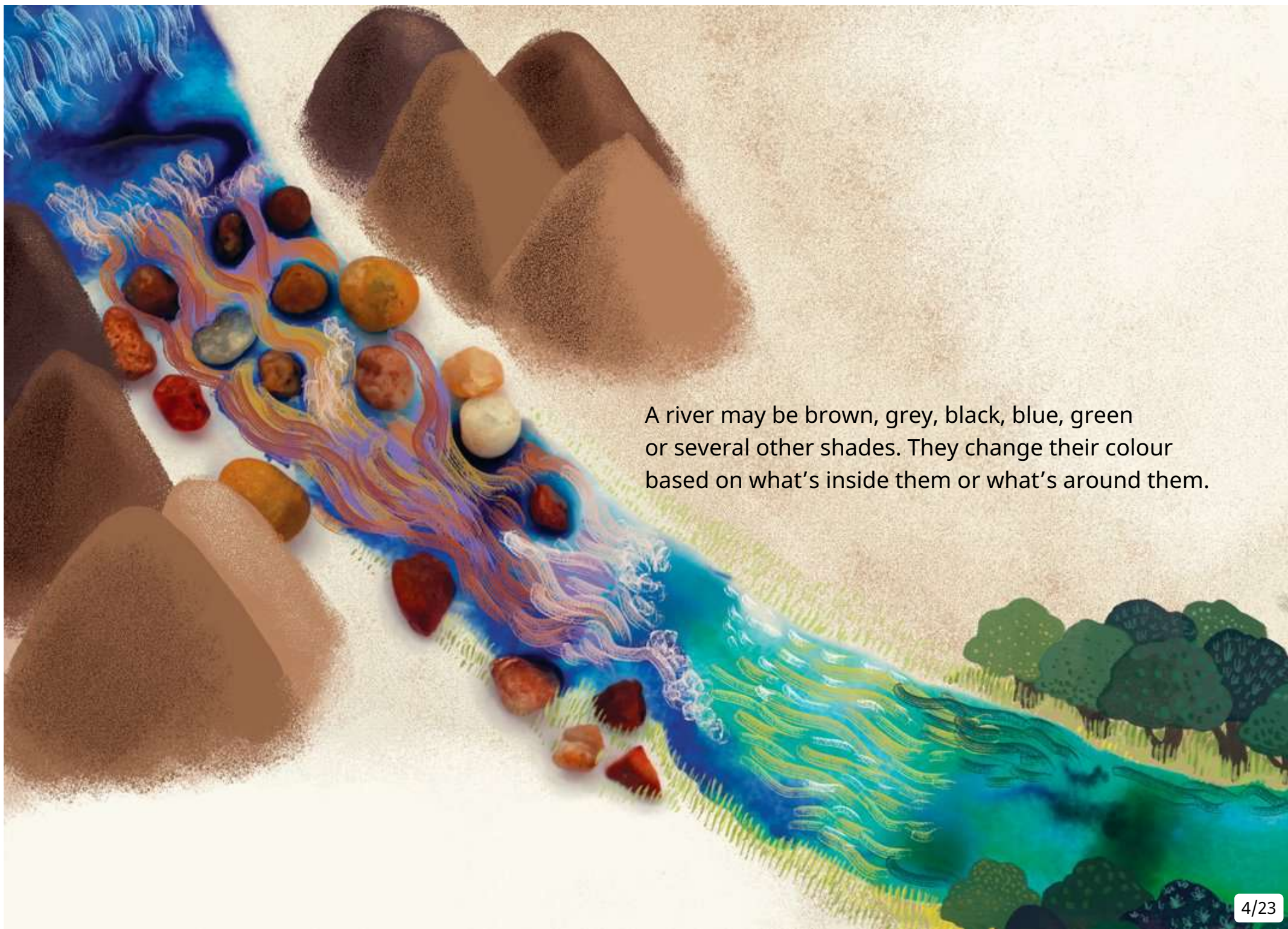
Some rivers are peaceful in the winter.

Some rivers are small and shy in the summer.

Some rivers roar angrily in the monsoons.

A river may be brown, grey, black, blue, green or several other shades. They change their colour based on what's inside them or what's around them.

Sometimes they are the colour of the rocks at the bottom of the river. Sometimes they match the colour of the sky. Rivers also change their course. If a river is in one spot in the past, it may be somewhere else in the future.

Many rivers like the Ganga are thousands of years old.
They have seen humankind grow up.
People have always loved living and working near rivers.
Rivers know how to take care of people.

Some of our food comes from rivers and river water is used to grow most food. When the food has made its way through the body, rivers to the rescue again!
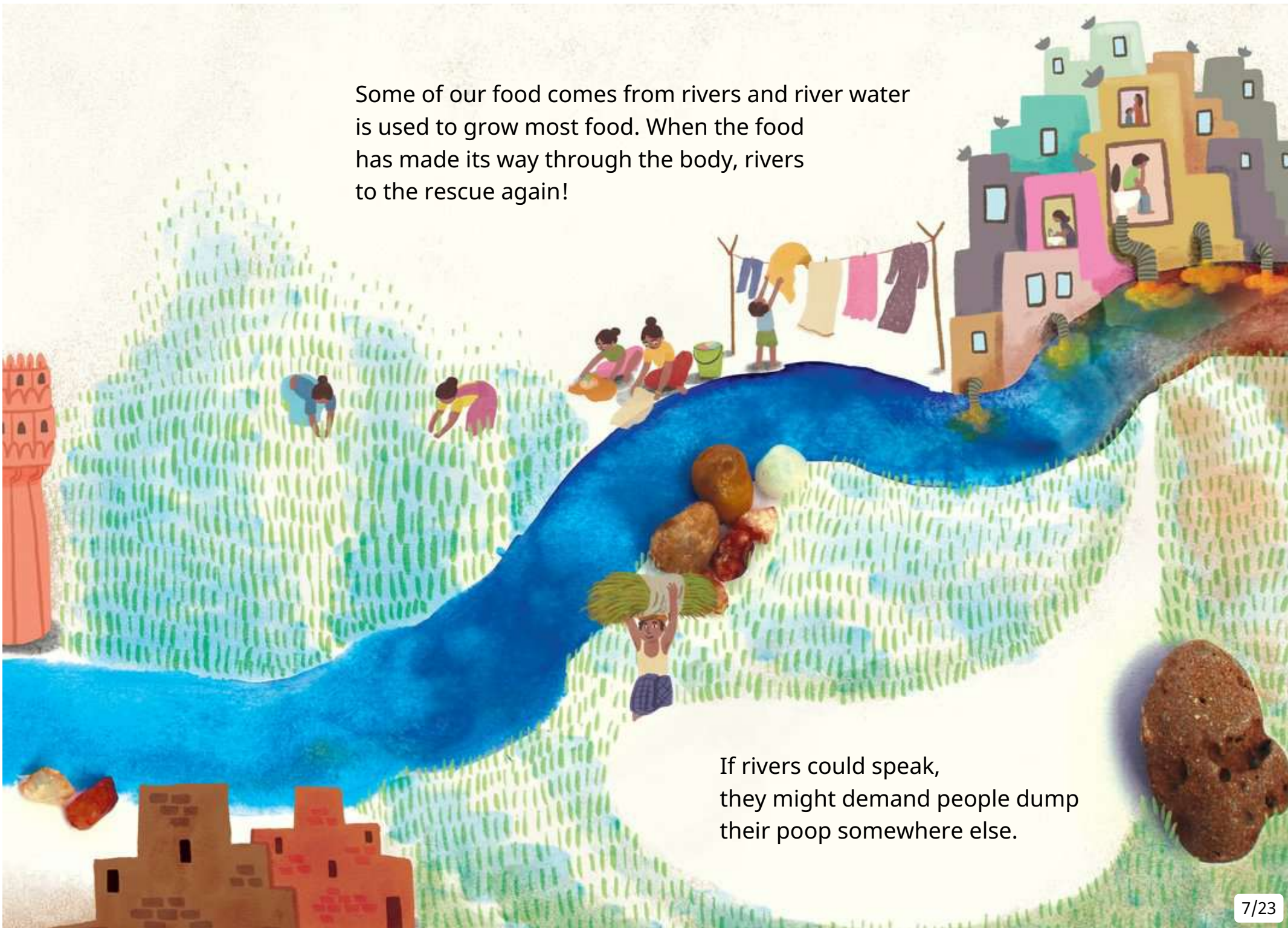
If rivers could speak,
they might demand people dump
their poop somewhere else.

Humans aren't the only creatures rivers look after. Many birds and plants, animals and fishes, insects and flowers rely on rivers.
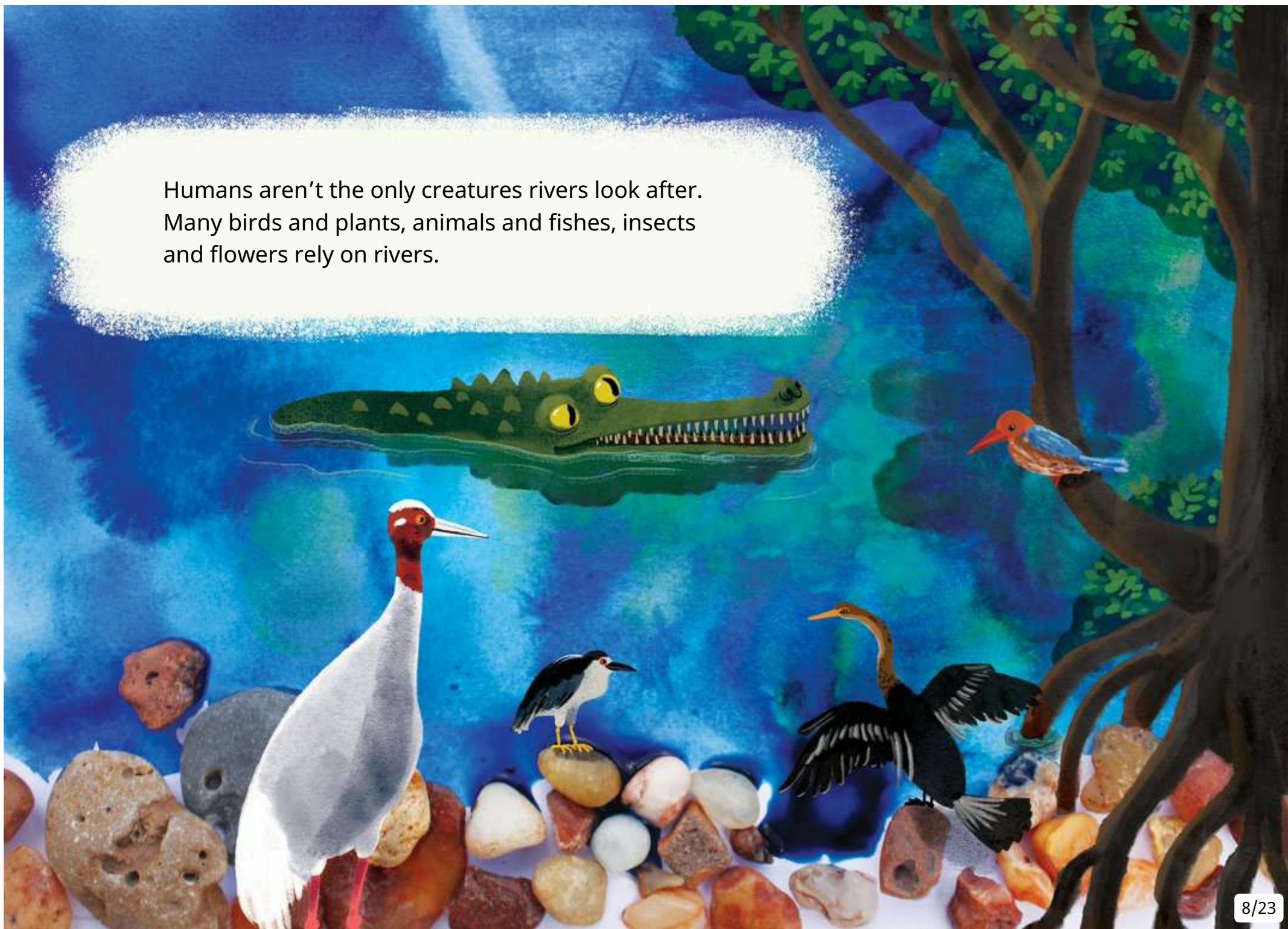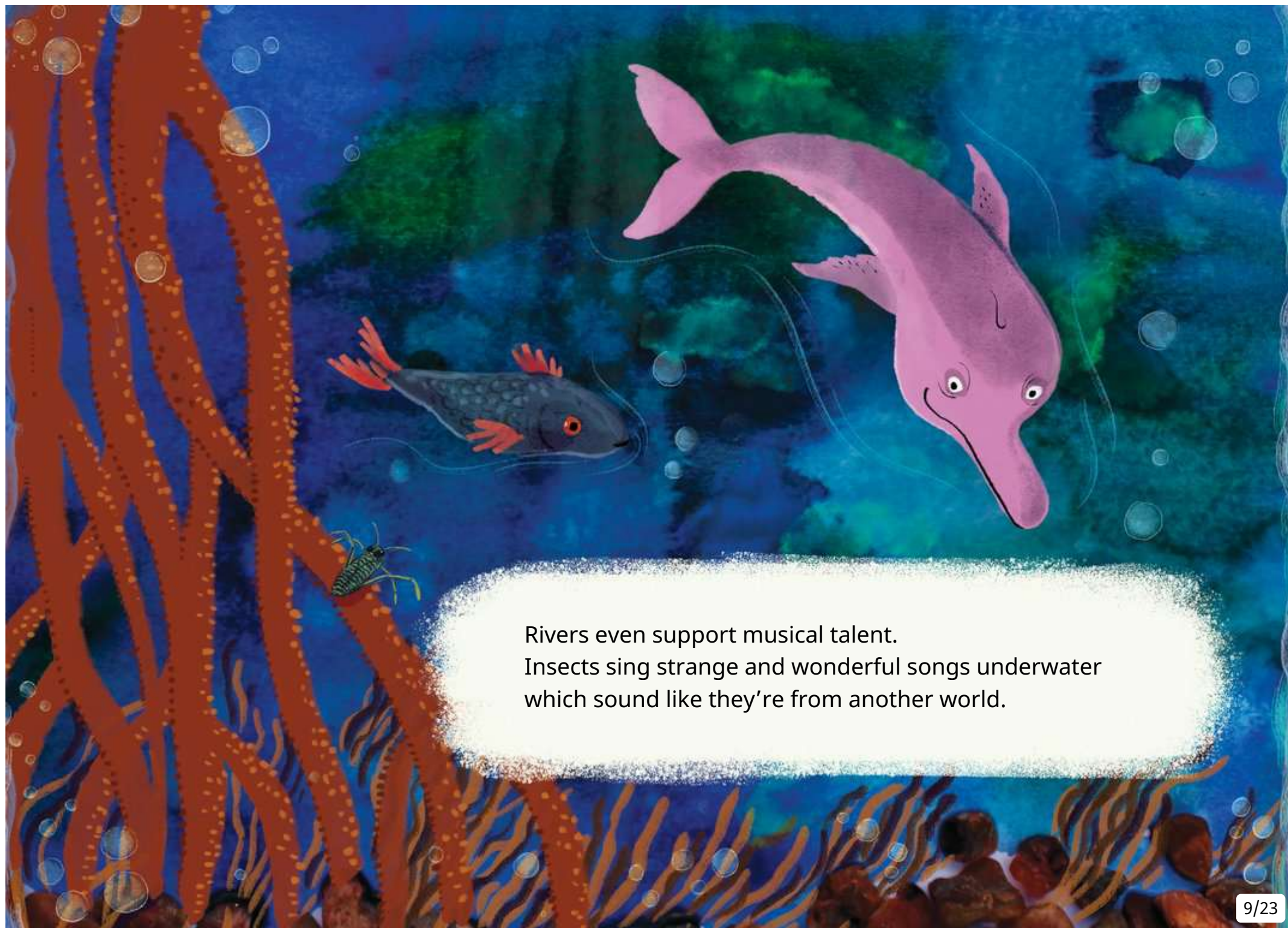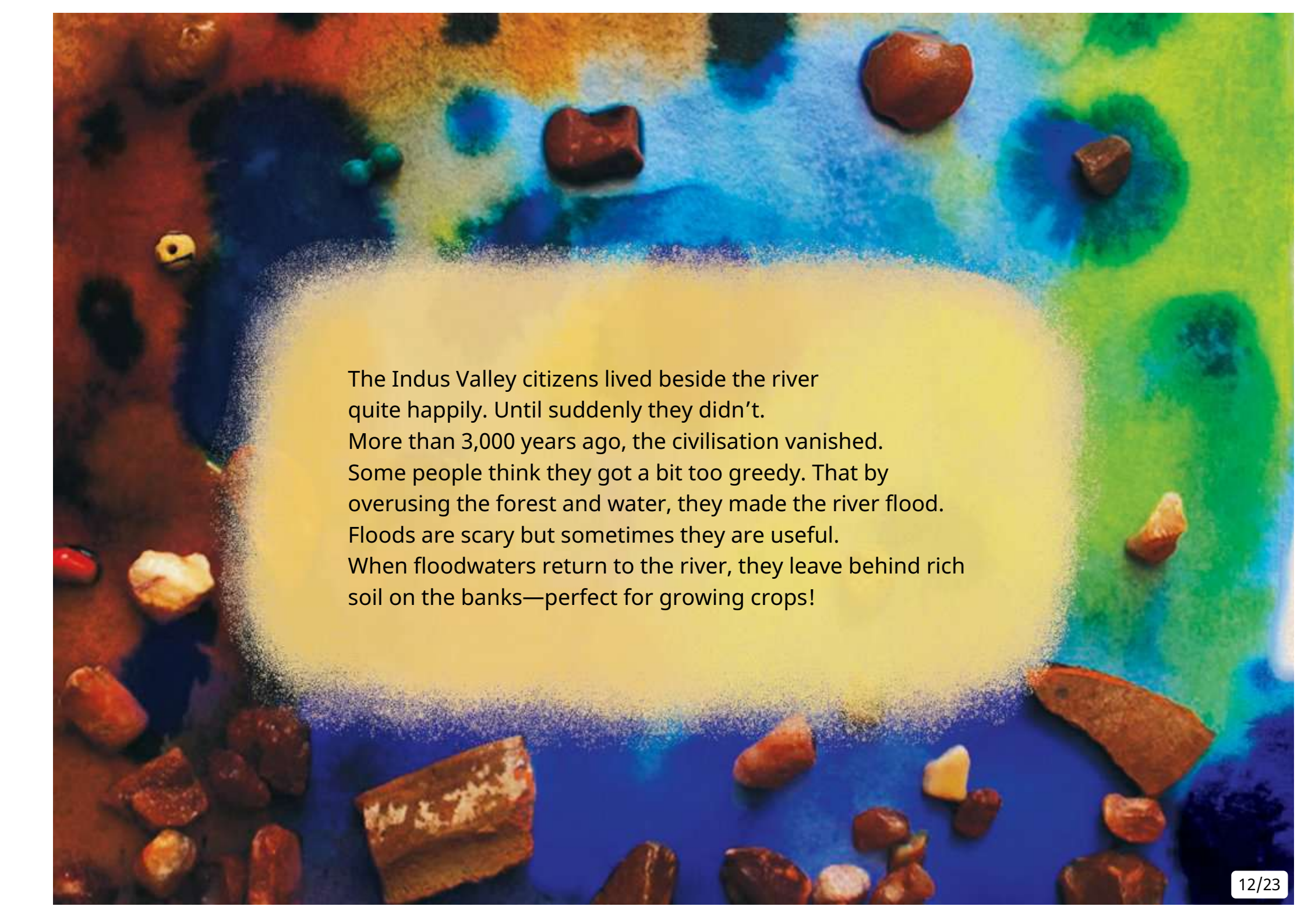
Rivers even support musical talent.
Insects sing strange and wonderful songs underwater which sound like they're from another world.

India gets its name from a river.
Apart from naming the country, the Indus was home to one of the oldest civilisations in the world. The river helped the ancient people build cities.

They used the river to travel to lands both near and far,
carrying everything they wanted to buy and sell.

The Indus Valley citizens lived beside the river
quite happily. Until suddenly they didn't.
More than 3,000 years ago, the civilisation vanished.
Some people think they got a bit too greedy. That by
overusing the forest and water, they made the river flood.
Floods are scary but sometimes they are useful.
When floodwaters return to the river, they leave behind rich
soil on the banks—perfect for growing crops!

But floods can also destroy lives and buildings.
Furious rivers frighten people. Ancient humans thought
songs, prayers and gifts could calm the river down.
It wasn't usually the best plan.
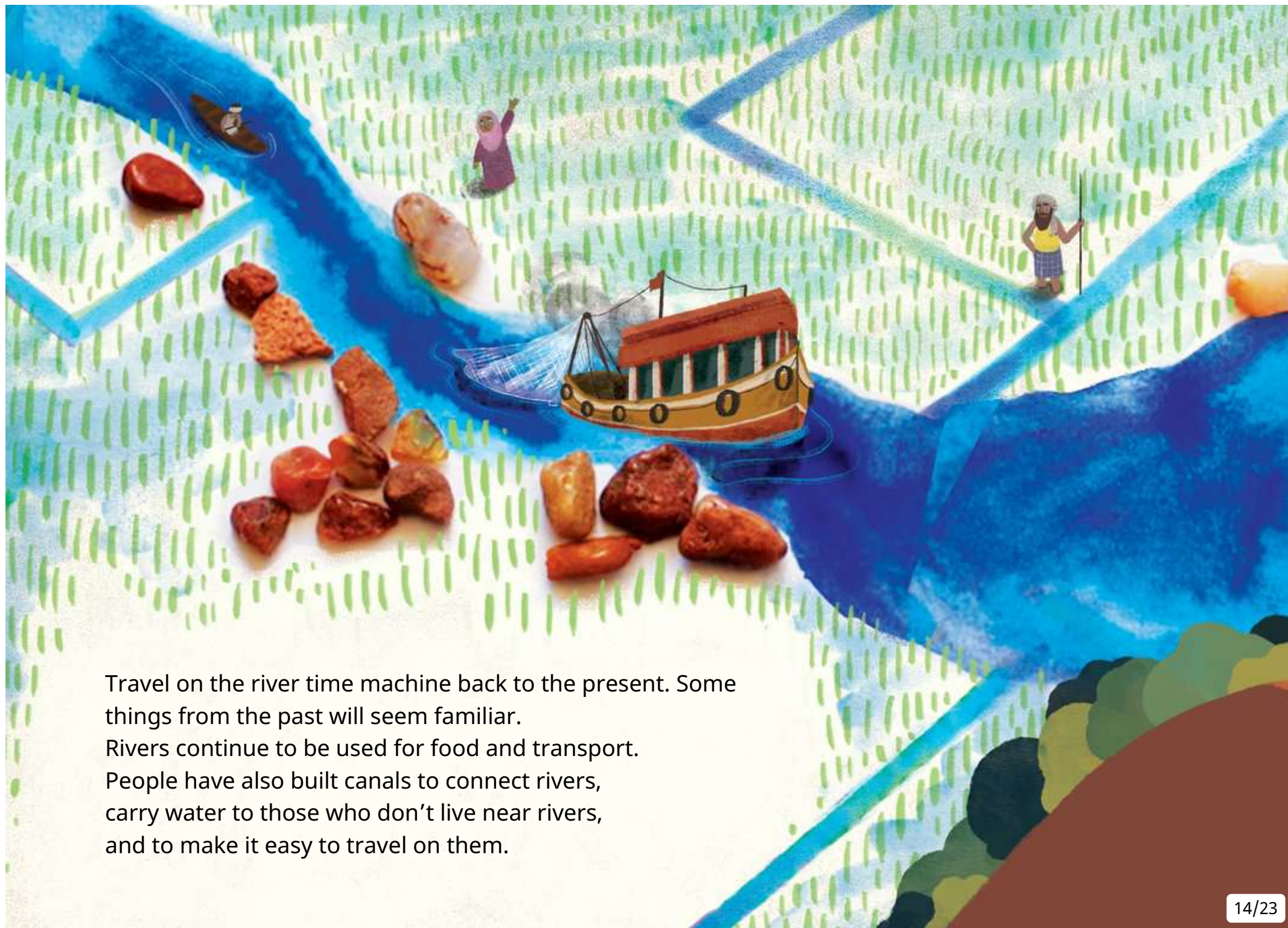
Travel on the river time machine back to the present. Some things from the past will seem familiar.
Rivers continue to be used for food and transport.
People have also built canals to connect rivers, carry water to those who don't live near rivers, and to make it easy to travel on them.

People construct dams to control the flow of rivers, store water, and create electricity from the river's energy.

But all this human meddling is messing up the rivers. Dams and canals make it harder for rivers to take care of all their creatures.

Many people don't understand how rivers work, how rivers live and how rivers die.
In some areas, rivers have become as dry as deserts. In others, rivers are treated like rubbish bins, sewage pipes, and plastic dumps.
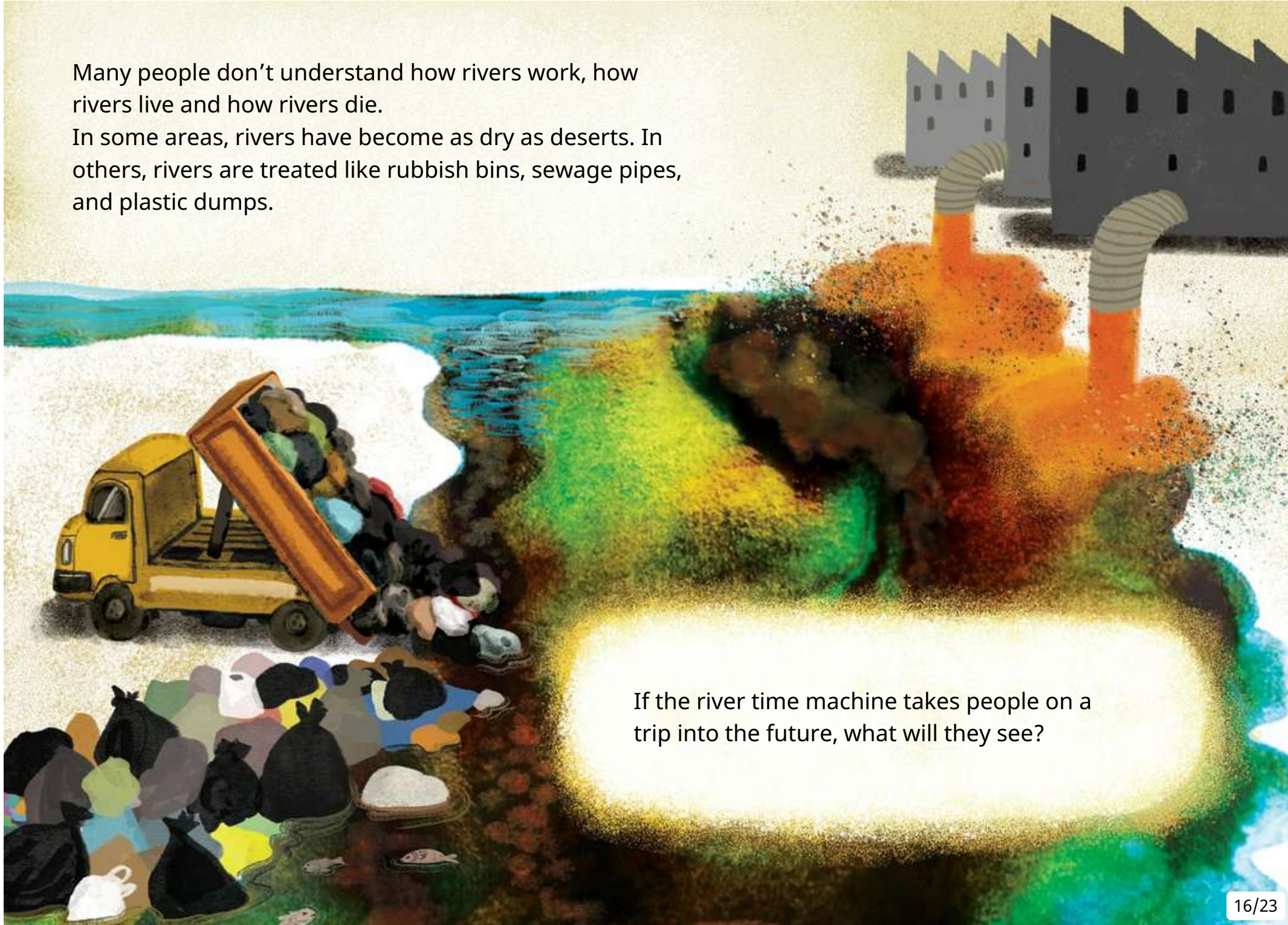
If the river time machine takes people on a trip into the future, what will they see?

A scene of empty rivers which live only in old stories. They will find states and countries at war over the few rivers which do exist. They will wander into a barren wasteland.
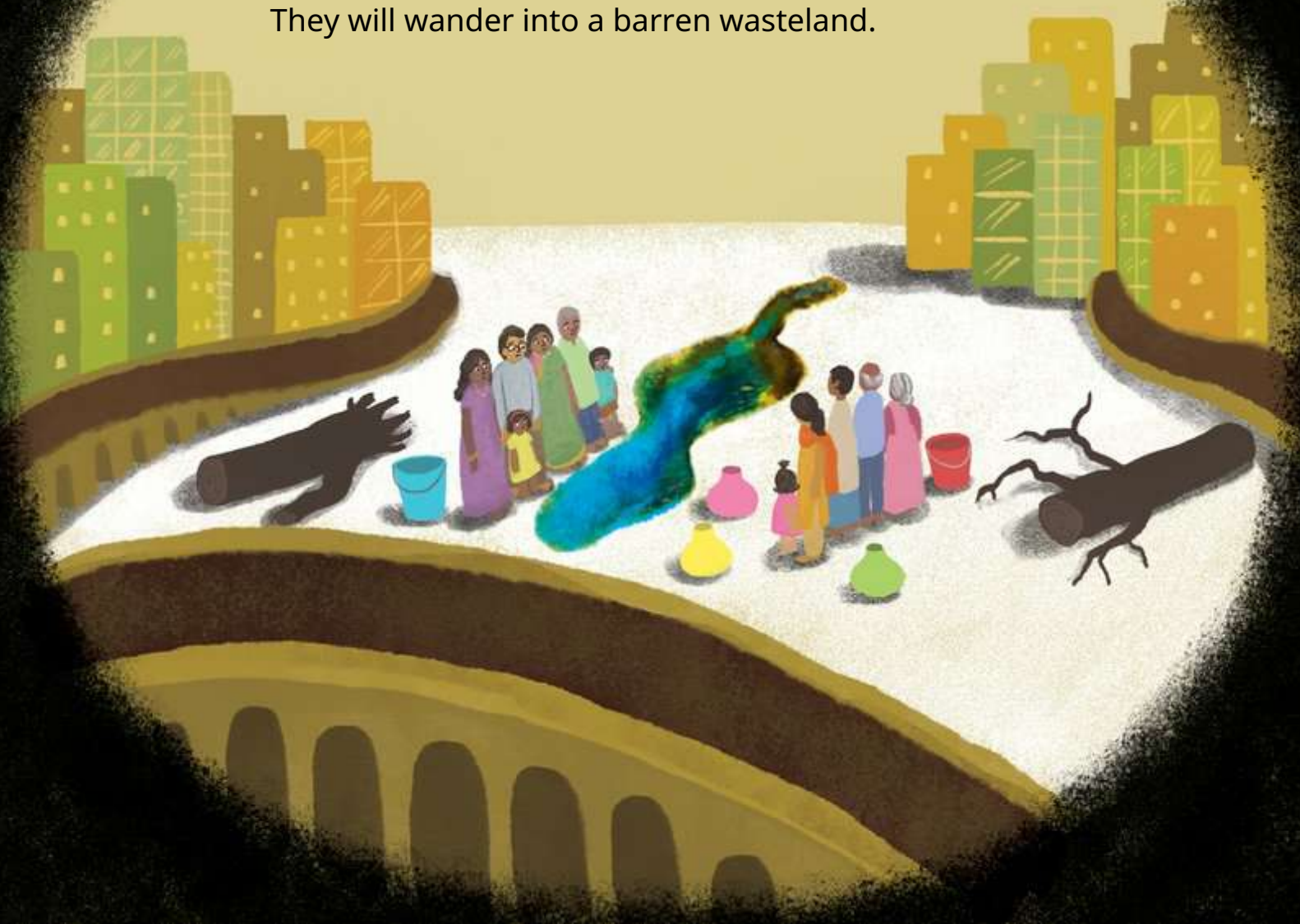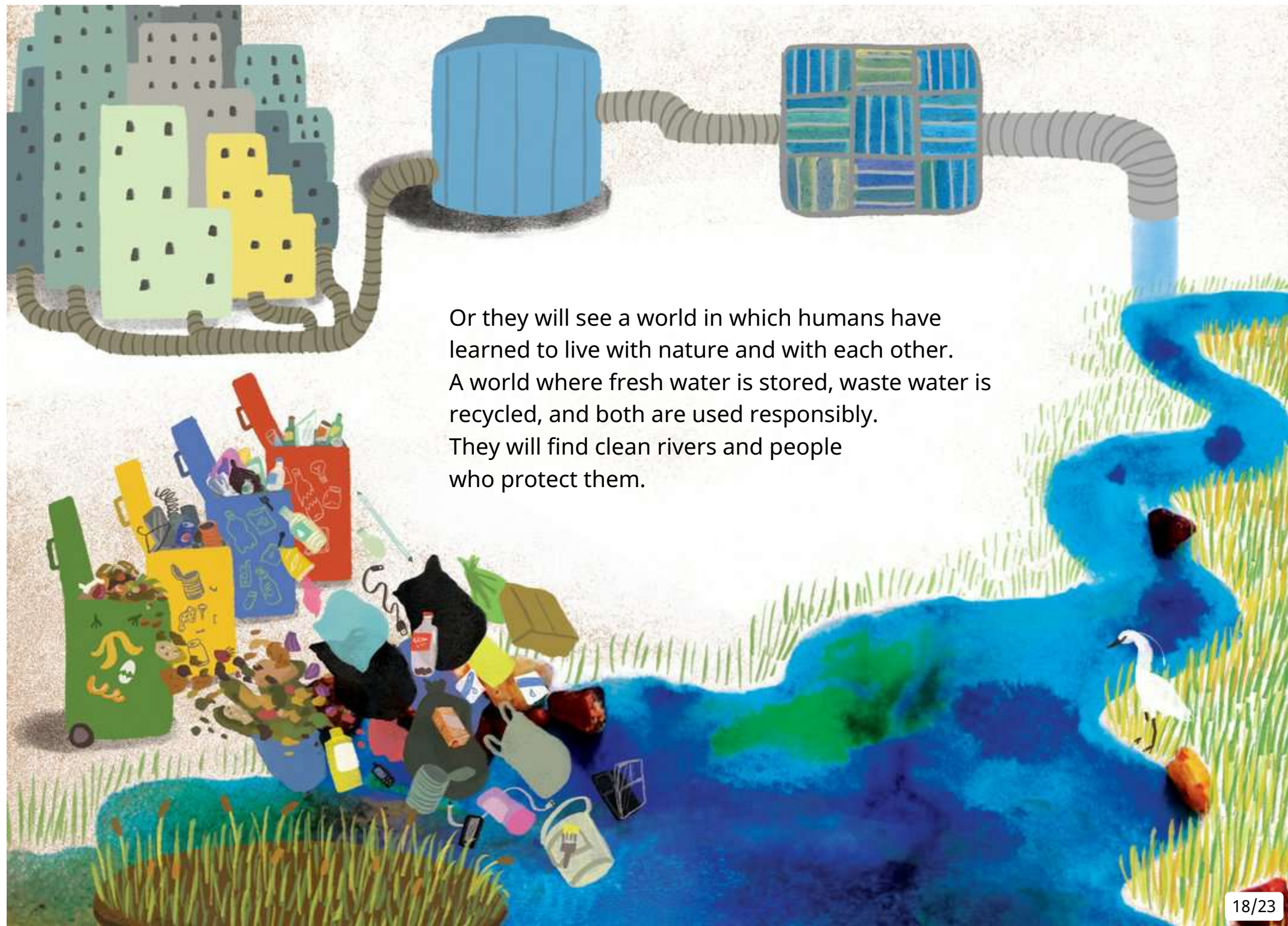
Or they will see a world in which humans have learned to live with nature and with each other. A world where fresh water is stored, waste water is recycled, and both are used responsibly. They will find clean rivers and people who protect them.

The second future isn't impossible.
Our skills and technology have brought
dead rivers back to life before.
Rivers have taken care of us for thousands
of years. Now some humans are trying to
take care of our rivers.

Some courts have decided that rivers have the same legal rights humans do.

GUILTY!
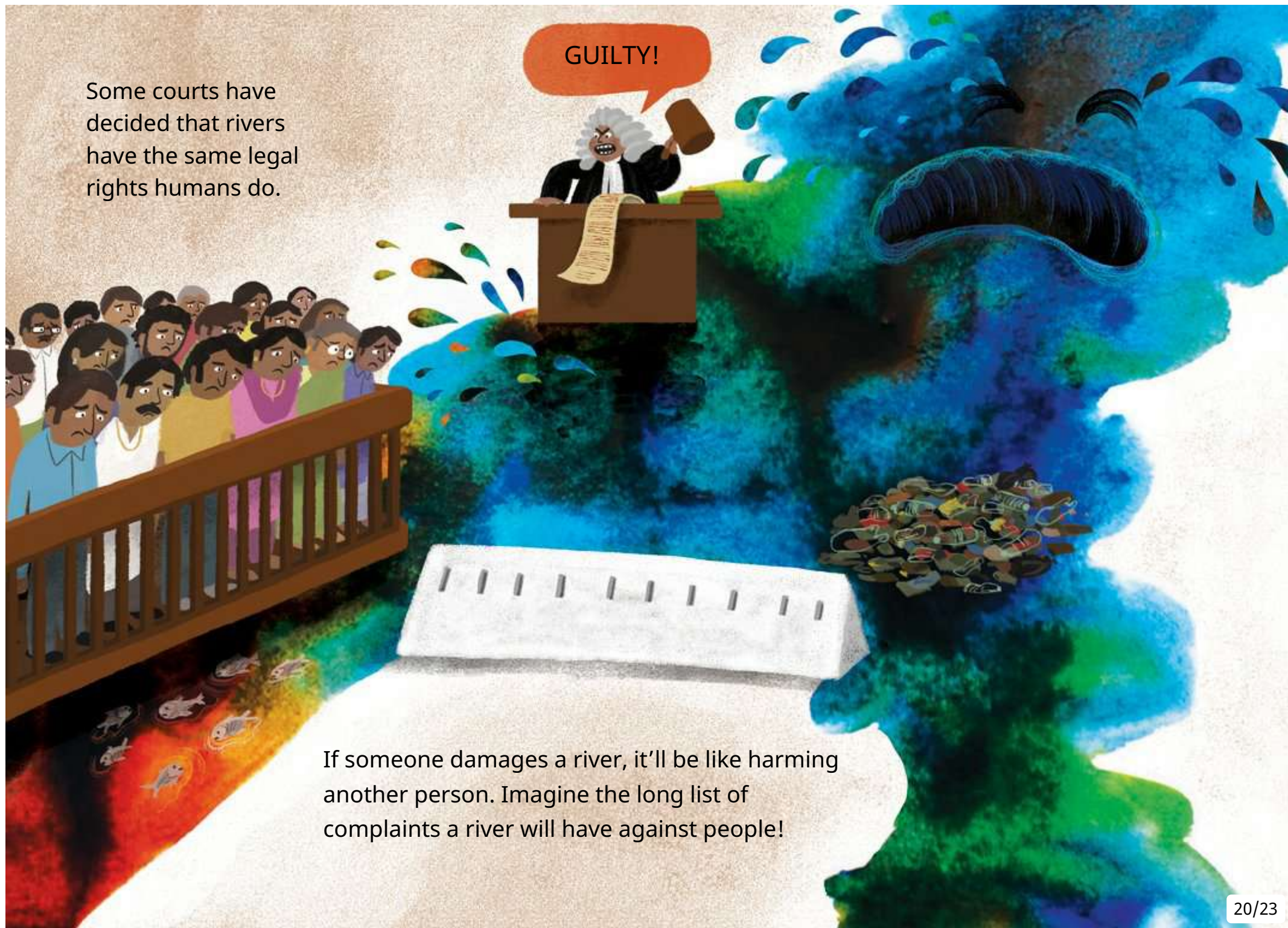
If someone damages a river, it'll be like harming another person. Imagine the long list of complaints a river will have against people!
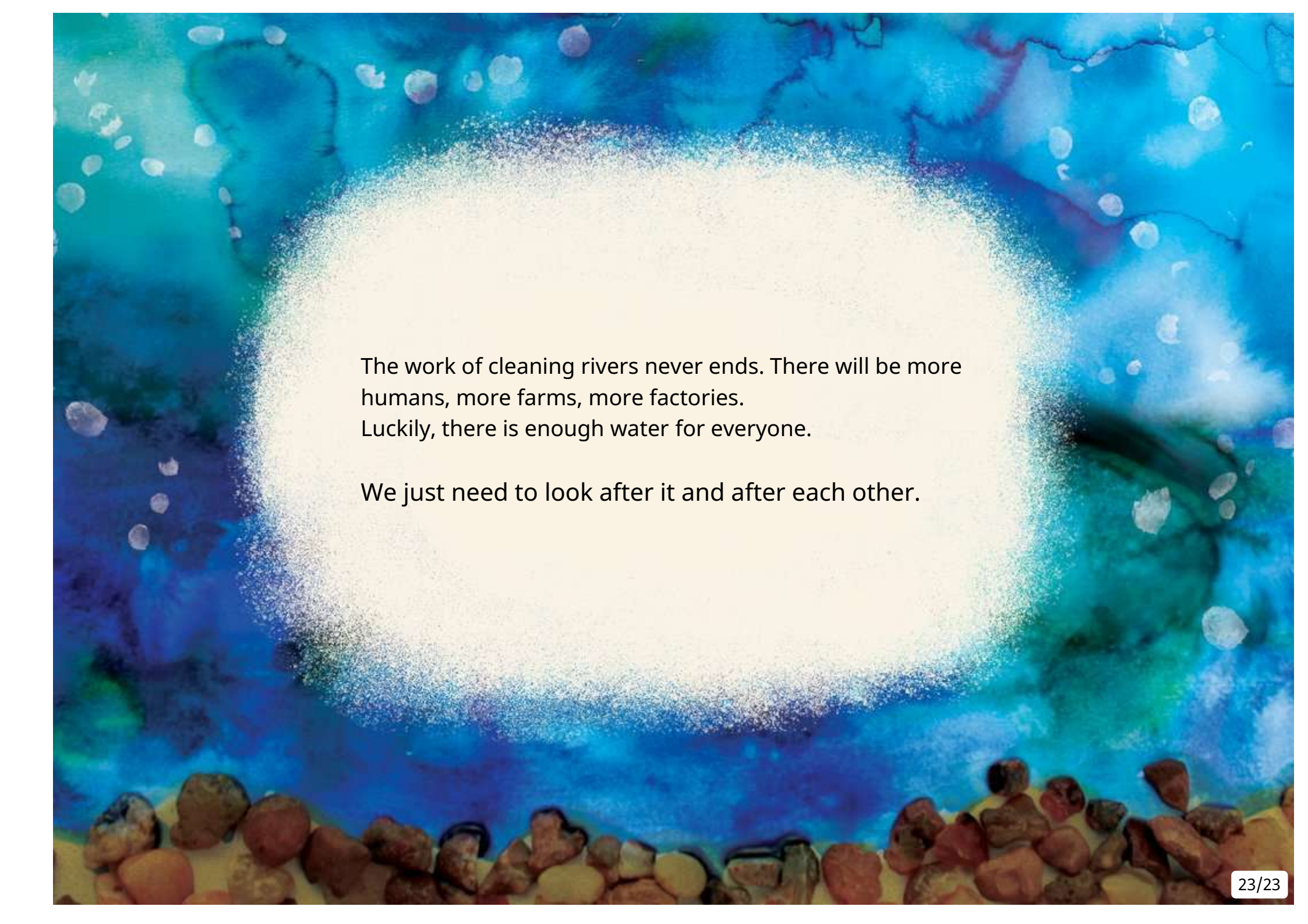
Children are taking to the streets
to demand a better future.
In 2015, 11-year-old Stella Bowles campaigned
her local government to fix the polluted river—
and they did! Adults are beginning to listen.

This river
is contaminated
with fecal bacteria!

All across the globe, children are telling adults that they need to do a better job of looking after the world they're leaving behind. It's the only one we have, after all.
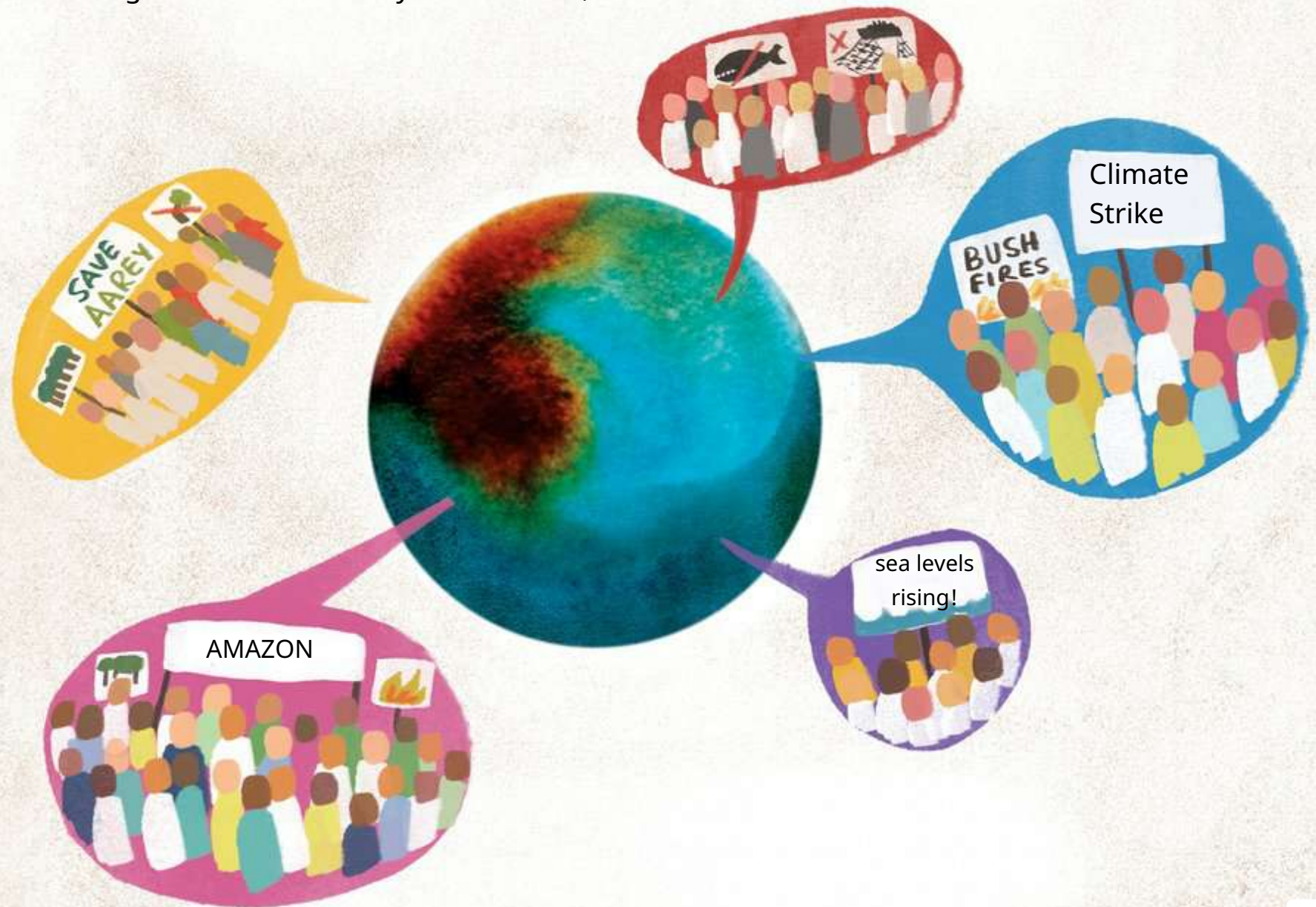
The work of cleaning rivers never ends. There will be more humans, more farms, more factories.
Luckily, there is enough water for everyone.

We just need to look after it and after each other.

This book was made possible by Pratham Books' StoryWeaver platform. Content under Creative Commons licenses can be downloaded, translated and can even be used to create new stories - provided you give appropriate credit, and indicate if changes were made. To know more about this, and the full terms of use and attribution, please visit the following link.

Images Attributions:

The Time-Travelling River
(English)

Imagine all the stories rivers could tell us about the past, present and future! Rivers were there when humans wanted to grow food. They were there when humans started to build cities. They are still here, providing water, food and livelihoods. But they are also being treated like rubbish bins. Rivers know how to take care of us, but if we want a future with them, maybe it is time for humans to take care of our precious water bodies.

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.

PRATHAM BOOKS

storyweaver