



Level 3

May Searches for the Sea

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My village is covered in
chilly white fog.

"In my village, there is sand
as black as coal," says my
teacher.



He teaches us the alphabet and numbers. None of us know where his village is.

When I ask, he simply says, "I'm from the village near the sea."



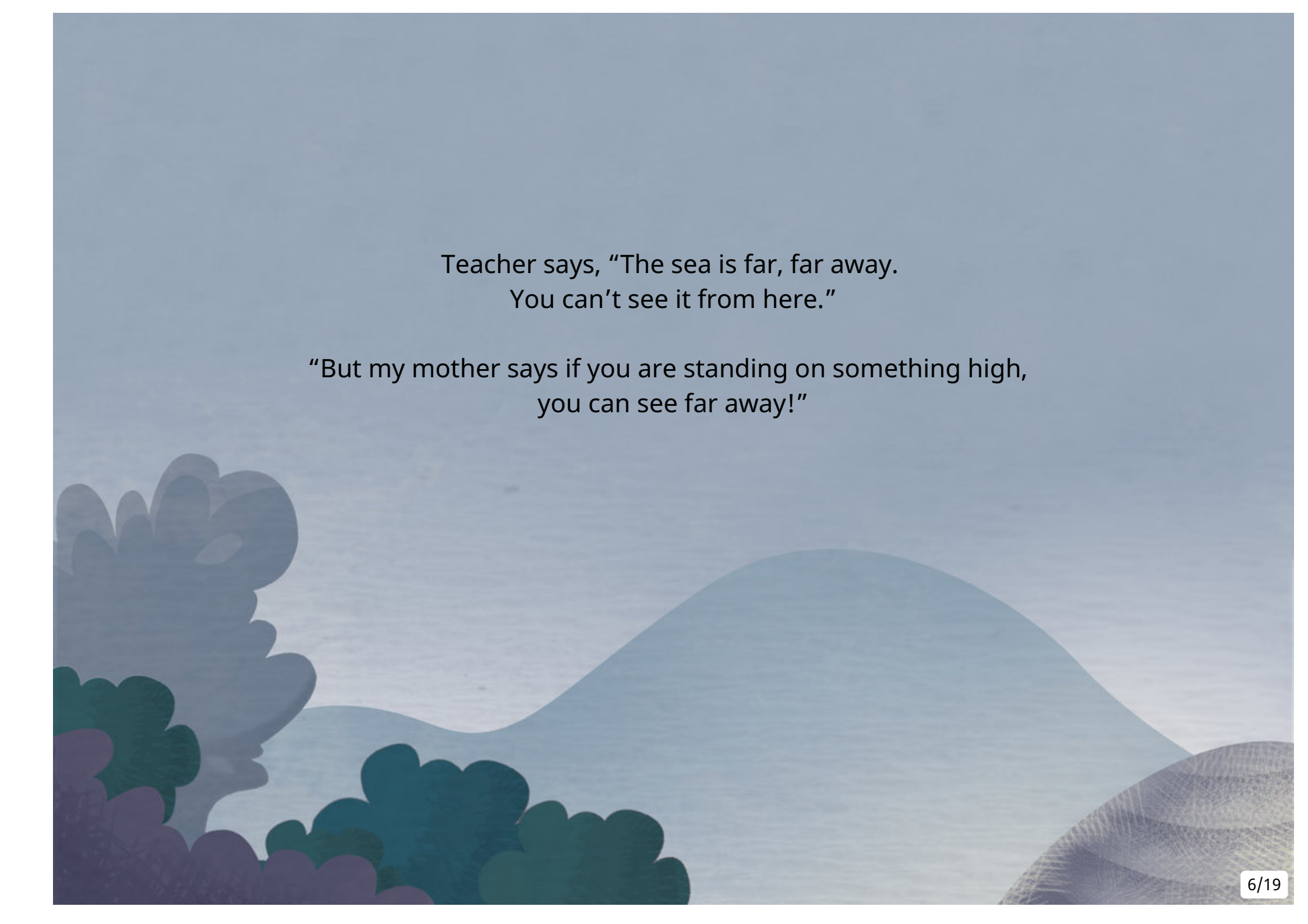
"Where is it?" I ask.

"Is your village buffalo big?
Is your village pig fat?"

"The sea does not have big
buffaloes or fat pigs. The sea
has a lot of fish and warm
sunshine."



How I love the sound of that. A warm sea! I don't like my village.
It has no sunshine, only fog.
"I want to see the sea!" I tell my teacher.



Teacher says, "The sea is far, far away.
You can't see it from here."

"But my mother says if you are standing on something high,
you can see far away!"



I run up the hill, tiptoe to the edge and look down.

My teacher asks, "What do you see?"



“I see cherry blossoms and grazing cows. But I can’t see the sea!”



"Then you're not standing high enough."

"I will stand on this big rock, then!" Teacher helps me climb up.



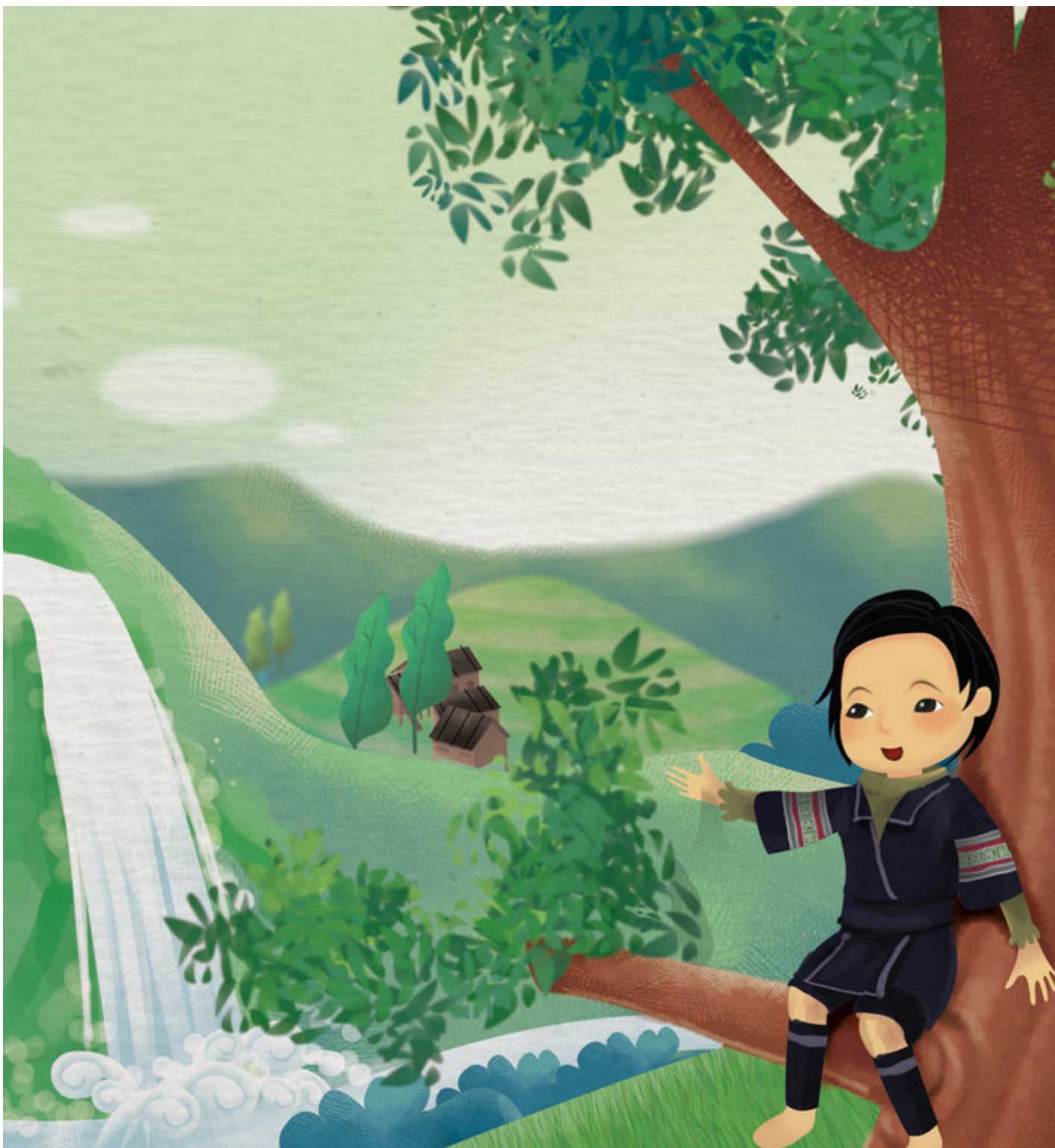
"Can you see the sea now?" he asks.

"Not yet! I see only terraces," I sigh. "And I see Thái people with black skirts carrying logs. And Hmông people with red skirts carrying cloth to the market."



"I must stand up higher."

I tell my teacher that I will
climb the highest tree on the
hill!



"What do you see now?" he asks.

"I see our waterfall and the sparkling stream."

I am quiet while I think.
Then I say, "Oh! So my village has its own beauty. But I still want to see your sea, teacher."



“Climb down, May,” my teacher says. “The sea is very far away. You will have to wait until you learn the alphabet, until your legs are as hard as rock and you can walk all the way there. But I have an idea in the meantime.”



“Here!” says my teacher.
“Look at this. It’s a book.
Inside this book, you can see
the sea and other new and
magical things.”



I see blue, blue, blue. "What is this, teacher?" I ask.

"This is the sea's surface. The sea is formed by hundreds of rivers. The river is formed by hundreds of streams."

“What about this?” I point to a strange shape. “What is this wooden piece with cloth?”

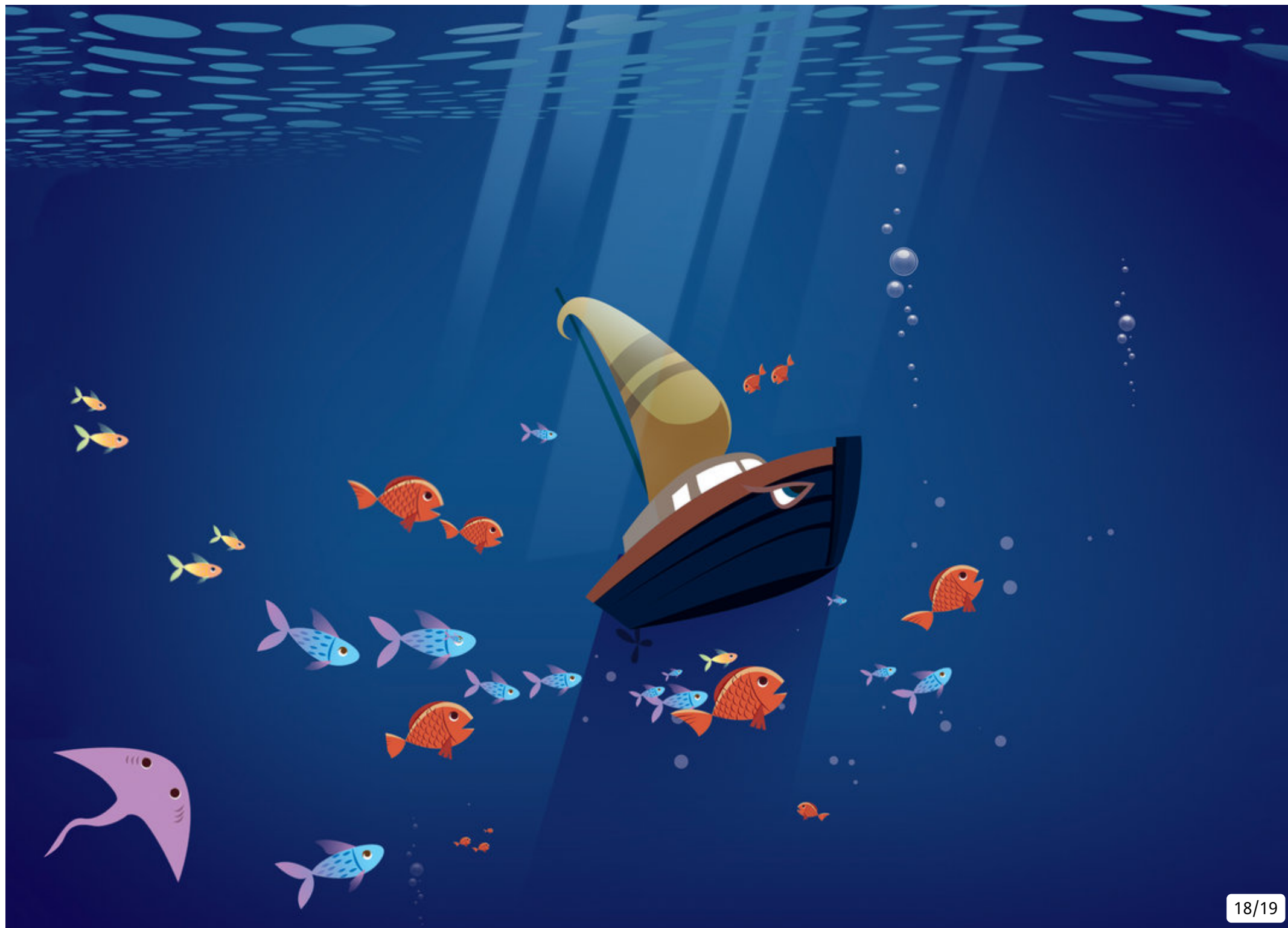
“That wooden piece is a boat. That cloth is the sail. This is a fishing boat, May. The sea has fish as big as houses!”





I am quiet while I think.
If the fishes are as big as
houses, then the sea
must be *enormous*.

I smile at my teacher.
"I thought the sea was
too far away for me.
But it's right here,
in this little book!"



Glossary

Thái, Hmông: the names of two ethnic groups in Vietnam.

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May Searches for the Sea (English)

May lives in a mountaintop village miles away from the sea. When her teacher tells her class about his own village by the ocean, May is breathless. She is desperate to see this mysterious sea—but how?

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



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