

# HIGH NOON BOOKS SAMPLER



**Series:** High Adventures Set 2

**Content:** Reinforces phonics skills and basic sight vocabulary appropriate for third grade reading level

**Reading Level:** 3rd Grade

**Interest Level:** 11 – 18+

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# **High Adventures Set 2**

## **Victory at Icy Bay**

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Meeting the Whales**

The next day the ferry boat docked at an Alaskan port. The harbor was full of big cargo ships loaded with fish and timber. It was time for Vern and John to say goodbye to Al and Dave.

They unloaded their kayaks from the ferry. Then they changed into wetsuits and pushed off into the ice-cold waves. They paddled for several hours along the seacoast. At the entrance to Icy Bay they pulled their kayaks up on shore.

John said, "I'll go into the ranger station and tell him of our plans." In a few minutes he was back with maps.

"Let's paddle straight across the bay," he said.

"No, John. Let's stick to the shoreline. The sun is still high, but it's getting late. Summer days are long in Alaska," said Vern.

"OK. Let's go," John said.

For hours they paddled along the shore. John

said nothing about stopping to set up camp. Vern's arms and back were tired. His legs were stiff. He was cold. But he wouldn't say, "Let's stop now." He wanted John to say it first. He wanted John to think he could keep up.

Finally John shouted, "Pull in!"

"Where?" Vern called back.

"On the beach!" shouted John.

"There's only rocks and ice. Can we sleep there?" Vern called.

"Sure," yelled John. Nothing bothered John.

Then Vern saw a tent. That's why John wanted to camp here. They would have someone to talk to.

They paddled up to shore. They untied the kayaks' spray covers from their waists and jumped out. They dragged the kayaks above the tideline. They set up their tent.

Then they walked to the other tent. It was torn and broken. There were no people there.

"I'll bet a bear looking for food did this. The ranger told me there were grizzly bears around here," John said. He didn't seem afraid.

Vern wondered what they'd do if a grizzly bear came. He decided to say nothing. But he went to check the kayaks to be sure they were ready for a fast getaway. Then he crawled in his sleeping bag

and fell asleep.

Bang! Bang! John was banging pans together and shouting, “Vern! Vern!”

Vern jumped out of his sleeping bag and dashed outside the tent. John was bending over the little gas stove. “Hurry up and eat breakfast. We’ve got to get going,” he said.

So it hadn’t been a bear after all! Vern’s heart stopped pounding.

After breakfast they folded their tent and packed it in John’s kayak. Everything else went in Vern’s. Then they pushed the kayaks out into the green waves. Icy cliffs were all around the bay. Across the bay were icebergs and black rocks. The rocks were moving!

“Look, John! Whales!” Vern shouted with delight.

“Let’s go!” John shouted back. He turned his kayak toward the giant sea mammals. They paddled as fast as they could. But it was more than an hour before they came near to the whales.

The whales floated quietly beneath the surface. Just their backs were showing. They seemed to be asleep. One was as big as a bus.

“That’s close enough, John. We don’t know what they might do,” called Vern

“I want to get a picture,” John shouted. He

took his camera out of its waterproof cover and paddled closer. He was very close to the big whale.

Just then a small whale came to the surface just behind John.

The big whale suddenly rose out of the water. It made a graceful arch and crashed down. What a splash! Water went in all directions. A wave rolled over John's kayak and swamped it. It bobbed back up to the surface, upside down. Why didn't John roll his kayak?

Then Vern saw John's paddle floating away. He paddled as fast as he could to John. Would the whale rise again? Vern reached down and grabbed John's arm. He pulled as hard as he could. John's kayak rolled upright. John came up sputtering. But he was OK.

They sat quietly, watching for the whales to come to the surface again. But they were gone. "Didn't you see the little whale, John? It probably was the big whale's baby," said Vern. "Remember? We read that whales are very protective of their young."

"You're right. I'll pay attention next time you give me some advice. I'm glad you came along," John said.

Vern towed John along until they found his



*Vern reached down and grabbed John's arm.*

paddle floating nearby. John said, "I wish my camera could float." It was gone.

That evening the brothers stopped for dinner at the hotel on Icy Bay. People at the next table were talking about a grizzly bear.

John leaned toward the people and said, "We saw a torn-up tent across the bay."

An old Eskimo man nodded and said, “The grizzly comes down to the bay to catch fish.”

Vern and John were surprised when Nona brought them their dinner. “It’s nice to see you again,” she said.

“Hi, Nona. We didn’t know you worked here,” said John.

She smiled at them. “Oh, yes. This is my summer job. I work here every evening. In the mornings I work my sled dogs. They’ve gotten fat and lazy. I think my father fed them too much while I was away at school. So now I take them out and run them every day.”

John and Vern told her about their meeting with the whale and her baby.

“Oh, no, John. You must never get between a mother whale and her baby. I remember when my father hunted whales years ago. But now he wants them to live and have babies and fill the sea again. There are so few whales left,” said the Eskimo girl.

They also told her about the torn tent. She said, “My father saw a grizzly when he was fishing. He told me to stay in open country when I take the dogs out for a run. That way no bear can sneak up behind me.”

Vern looked worried. “You shouldn’t go out if

there are grizzly bears around.”

“If I see a grizzly, I’ll turn the team for home. Then I’ll see how fast they really are,” she said with a laugh.

“Tell me more about your dogs and the race,” said Vern.

Nona sat down at their table. “I have 50 huskies. They are beautiful – with thick gray coats and black markings on their faces. They weigh about 50 pounds. They are very strong and can run 60 miles a day. Each dog is different. They love to come into the house and be petted. But they are happiest running on the trail in ice and snow.”

“How many dogs run in the race?” John asked.

“I hitch 15 to the sled. It weighs about 150 pounds. In summer the sled has wheels instead of runners. Fourteen of the dogs are harnessed in pairs. One runs alone. The females are leaders. I put the larger males near the sled to pull more weight.”

“What about food for yourself and the dogs?” asked Vern.

“I put food at seven stops along the trail. These are checkpoints where an animal doctor checks the dogs. If a dog is too tired, I leave it at

the checkpoint to be flown home. But it is hard to race with fewer than 15 dogs.”

“If you only need 15 dogs for the race, why do you have 50?” asked Vern.

“Because some are puppies. Others aren’t old enough to race, but they are growing fast. And I need 30 full-grown dogs so I can pick the best ones to race. Then I will have extras ready if a racing dog is hurt or sick,” Nona explained.

“Is it dangerous?” asked John.

“If I hit a snowstorm, I might not be able to see the trail. I might get lost. It can be very cold with the wind blowing 40 miles an hour,” she said.

Vern frowned. “Why do you race sled dogs?” he asked. “It sounds dangerous to me.”

Nona smiled at him. “Because I am proud of Alaska’s sled dogs. They helped the Eskimos and the first white settlers. These days we have cars, planes, and snowmobiles. I’m afraid people will forget what the dogs have done. I race so people will remember. Now I had better get back to work.”

John and Vern said good night. They went outside and pitched their tent near the hotel. They talked of what they would see and do the next day. They hoped to see moose and caribou. They did *NOT* hope to see a grizzly bear.

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