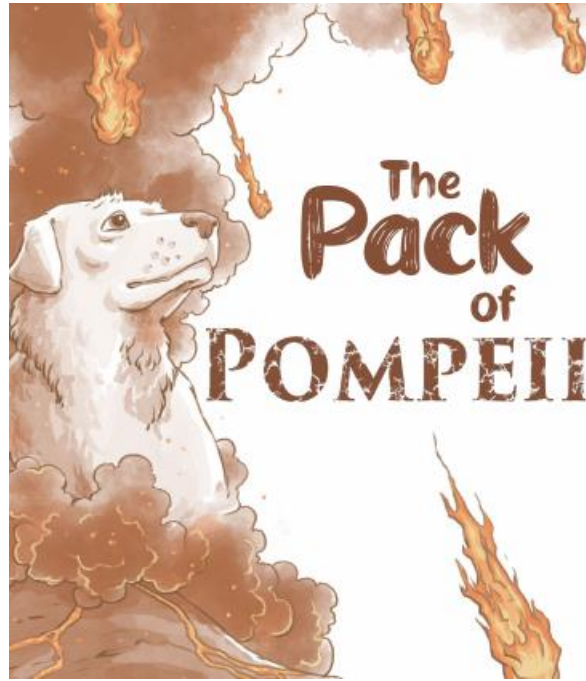


Reading – Tuesday 23rd February



Task 1: Read the text on the next page for today's reading, all of Chapter 4, pages 15 – 19.

Key words:

- Chunters – talk in a grumbling, muttering way
- Steep – rising or falling sharply
- Thistle – a plant with a prickly stem and leaves, and purple flowers
- Serene – calm, peaceful and untroubled
- Dappling – mark with spots or rounded patches
- Talons – a sharp claw, usually belonging to a bird of prey
- Lurches – make a sharp, unsteady movement
- Dislodge – knock or remove, get rid of
- Mingled – mixed or moved together

Use a dictionary, or the online dictionary, below to find the definition of any words that you want clarifying.

<https://kids.wordsmyth.net/we/>

Four

I'm relieved when we all leave the town behind and return to our hillside but, even here, something is not right. The air is thick. The ground moves beneath our paws but at least I can think clearly.

"These goats are almost as stupid as the two-legs," Alba chunters as we count the herd.

Time is running out, but what is waiting for us, I do not know. Small rocks shift and tumble past us; elsewhere, small waves of dirt and dust pour down the steeper slopes. When I glance back towards the city, I fear for the two-legs.

Thankfully, none of our shepherd's goats are missing. I wonder if the wolves have already left to find steady ground. I press the humming earth with my paw then take a long sniff. There's a strange smell – not a nice one. Like when the goats have eaten too many brown thistles.

Alba scratches the ground, too, her paw drawing wobbly lines as the earth shifts underneath her. "I don't like this. The ground is too warm on my feet."

Then, something strange happens – even stranger than the day so far. Large, grey-white flakes begin to fall from the heavens, gentle and serene against the afternoon sky. We don't notice them until one lands right on the end of Claudia's nose.

"Snow!" barks Alba.

"No," I say, sniffing at the dry flakes now dappling her fur. There is something wrong with them – they aren't melting. "This isn't snow."

Before we can investigate further, an unexpected breeze ruffles my fur. When I turn, I find myself nose to beak with Cato, the old eagle.

The Pack of Pompeii

“What are you still doing here?” the bird asks. “Don’t you know that the rabbits and foxes left before sunrise?”

“What’s happening?” I ask. “Why is the ground shaking and so warm?” I flick my tail upwards. “What is this strange snow?”

He shrugs his wings and pecks at the rocks by his long talons. “This is not the first time that the ground has shaken. I was barely out of my egg but I remember the mountain behaving like this almost twenty summers ago.”

“The mountain?”

Cato nods. “It shook so hard that many two-legs had to rebuild their stone nests.”

Alba snorts. “Their nests have already broken again. It will be a cold winter for them.”

“Or no winter,” Cato says. He points with his beak up towards the very top of the Gentle Mountain, and we look up. What we see makes Alba gasp and Claudia has to sit down on the warm ground.

A thick column of grey and black rises from the top of the mountain, blocking out part of the sky. It reaches up for miles and the dark clouds spread across the city. Still more white flakes pour down like rain, making it hard to see.

Cato shakes his head sadly. “I am leaving, and if you wish to survive the day, you should do the same.”

A low rumble, like early thunder, accompanies my racing thoughts. The ground below us lurches again and we all stare up at our beloved mountain, disbelieving.

“We’ll follow you, Cato,” says Alba, panting. “You must help us find another mountain – a place where the goats can graze and we can live.”

I stare back down at the crumbling town below. More of it falls with each tremor, sending lines of screaming two-legs rushing towards the waves or onto the tracks that lead away from danger. They stumble and fall each time the ground shakes, tripping over broken carts and dodging walls that crumble then collapse into dusty heaps. The town is falling into ruin and, with it, my one chance of a life with a full belly and a warm bed.

When a new tremor sends Cato flapping into the sky, I growl at my friends.

“Go! Follow Cato.” I leap out of the path of a tumbling rock and watch as more skitter down the mountainside. The herd is panicking. “Take the goats somewhere safe.”

Alba swishes her tail and bares her teeth. “I’ll make these goats run faster than hares. I hope you can keep up, Claudia.”

Ignoring Alba’s challenge, Claudia offers me one of her wet-eyed looks. “I’ll run close to you, Livia.” She shakes her coat to dislodge some of the false snow.

I growl. She steps back and lowers her head. I don’t like scaring her, but she mustn’t try to follow me. “Do as Alba says. She will lead the goats today.”

“Why?” Worry flattens Claudia’s ears.

When I glance towards Alba, I see her proudly licking her coat. She has been waiting for her chance to lead, and I have made my decision.

“I must go back and find the shepherd,” I say. In the distance, the town crumbles and the mingled sounds of screaming and falling stone invade my mind. My throat feels dry when I think about the small girl that I have left behind, as though I have made a mistake.

“It doesn’t have to be you, Livia,” Claudia snaps.

The Pack of Pompeii

“They don’t care about us,” Alba agrees. “Or the goats.”

“He is our master,” I say, not wanting approval.

“You’ll die,” Alba warns me.

I look to both of them, my pack, my family, and say, “I’ll find you.”

19



Task 2: Comprehension Questions Chapter 4 –

- 1) How does Livia know that what they thought was snow, isn't actually snow?
- 2) A new character, Cato, is introduced – what description tells us Cato is a bird?
- 3) What instruction does Livia give to Alba and Claudia as the mountain rumbles more?
- 4) On page 19, why does Alba not want Livia to go back to the shepherd?
- 5) Who is Livia really going back into the village for?

Challenge: Write a prediction for the Chapter 5.

Take a photo of your work for your teacher on Class Dojo.