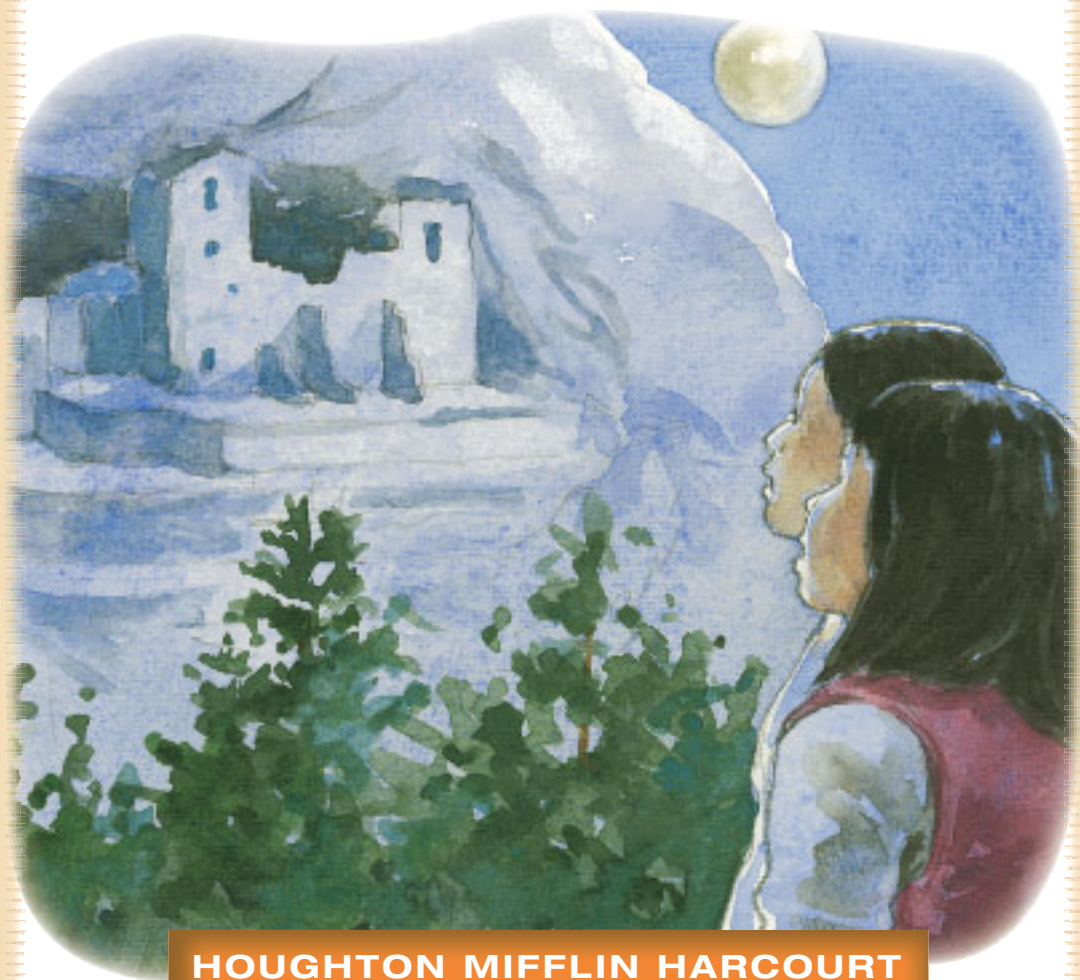




CITY IN THE CLIFFS

by M. J. Crozier
illustrated by Meg Aubrey



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT

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For many centuries, the Pueblo people have lived in the southwestern desert where the states of New Mexico and Arizona are today. This fictional story is about a young Pueblo girl in the early 19th century.




Lomasi always hurried to finish her evening chores. After dinner, Lomasi and her grandmother would sit together by the fire. Grandmother was a wonderful storyteller. As Lomasi listened, Grandmother would tell tales of the Pueblo people and their proud history. Sometimes Lomasi's best friend, Quaha, would join them.


Lomasi listens to Grandmother's story.






 The cliff dwellings


 Grandmother's most exciting stories were about the ancient Cliff Dwellers. The Cliff Dwellers were the ancestors of the Pueblo. Long ago, the Cliff Dwellers had built magnificent cities in the desert cliffs. Their houses were tucked into the cliffs, high above the ground. People sometimes needed ladders to reach them.

 "Where is the City in the Cliffs?" Quaha demanded curiously.


"It's hidden inside a ravine, not far from here," Lomasi's grandmother replied. "I still remember the first time my father took me to see the cliff dwellings. I was just a little girl..." Grandmother's voice trailed off as she remembered.




 Grandmother talks about the past.


 “And what do they look like, Grandmother?” Lomasi asked. She never tired of hearing her grandmother’s description of the houses of the Cliff Dwellers.

“Oh, they are beautiful. In the morning sun, the houses gleam like gold. At sunset, they glow fiery red.”


 “I wish *we* lived like the Cliff Dwellers,” Quaha sighed. “Living in the cliffs would be more interesting than living here on the ground.”

Lomasi nodded in agreement. “I don’t understand why the Cliff Dwellers ever left their homes!” she exclaimed.

 “No one knows why the Cliff Dwellers abandoned their city,” her grandmother replied. “All of a sudden, they simply disappeared. It is a mystery. Ever since then, the City in the Cliffs has been empty. Only echoes live there now.”

 Lomasi shivered. The idea of the abandoned city was a little bit frightening. But it was also exciting. Neither Lomasi nor Quaha had ever been to the City in the Cliffs, even though it was not very far from the village. They hoped to see the mysterious place for themselves someday.



 Quaha was two years older than Lomasi, but they did everything together. One day, the two girls were sent to pick herbs for that evening's meal. As usual, they talked and laughed as they searched for the special leaves and twigs to take home.

 Quaha and Lomasi pick herbs for the evening meal.



🔊 The hours flew by as Lomasi and Quaha wandered farther and farther away from the village. Suddenly, the girls realized that it was sunset. The sky turned red and orange. The sun was quickly slipping behind the mesas.

🔊 “Lomasi,” Quaha said in a hushed voice. “It’s almost night. I don’t know where we are. Do you?”

“I’m not sure,” Lomasi said hesitantly. “These shadows make everything look different.”


“Don’t worry,” Quaha said in her best “grown-up” voice. “The moon is almost full tonight. Its light will guide us,” she **reasoned**. The two girls walked for a while, hand in hand.

🔊 Quaha and Lomasi don’t know where they are.







 The girls shiver in the cold desert night.


 “I’m getting cold, Lomasi,” Quaha said. She didn’t sound so grown-up now.

“So am I,” agreed Lomasi, her teeth chattering.

“We must find a place to spend the night,” Quaha said. “But where?”

 Lomasi nodded. Her mind was racing. She realized that they were in trouble. The desert was hot during the daytime, but at night, the temperature dropped very quickly. The desert became quite cold. Grandmother had often warned about this. It was not wise to stay outdoors all night.

 Lomasi tried to stay calm. *We need shelter*, she thought. *Even a protected ledge would be enough.* She looked toward the disappearing sun. Just then, her heart jumped. She turned to Quaha.

 “Do you see that shape in the distance?” Lomasi asked, pointing. “It looks like a ravine. Maybe we can spend the night there.” Quaha agreed, and the two girls hurried toward it.

When they reached the narrow mouth of the ravine, the moon was rising. The girls hesitated. The ravine was dark and shadowy.

 “Should we go in?” Quaha asked. Her voice quavered.

Lomasi paused. She was scared, too. But the night was getting colder. And they had to find shelter. She took her friend’s hand and said, “Come on.”


They cautiously stepped into the darkness.

 The City in the Cliffs

🔊 The friends stumbled along a dark, narrow path. Suddenly, the ravine widened into a valley. Moonlight flooded in. The girls could see clearly again. Lomasi and Quaha stopped in their tracks. A magnificent sight met their eyes.


🔊 A group of dwellings sat high in the steep, **upright** slopes of the ravine. Their walls gleamed in the moonlight. A web of walkways connected the dwellings. Silent and silvery, they were the most beautiful things the girls had ever seen.




 “Are we dreaming?” Quaha whispered.

“I feel like we’re in one of Grandmother’s stories,” Lomasi replied slowly. “But this is real—it’s the City in the Cliffs! It’s so beautiful.”

Quaha nodded. “And now we have a place to spend the night. I just hope there are no ghosts.”

 For a second, Lomasi was frightened. But then she thought of Grandmother’s stories. “Even if there were, they wouldn’t harm us. The Cliff Dwellers are our ancestors. We are their children. We will be safe here tonight,” she said.

 The girls carefully climbed up the steep slopes of the ravine. They soon reached some of the **deserted** dwellings. The bright moonlight lit their path. They made their way into one of the houses. As their eyes adjusted to the darkness, they saw a bare room, with walls and floor made of hard, dry clay.



Quaha looked around the room. "This isn't so bad, is it, Lomasi?" She reached out to touch her friend's shoulder.

"No, Quaha," Lomasi agreed. "I feel as if I've been here many times, thanks to Grandmother's stories."

"I think we'd better get some sleep until the sun comes up. Then I know that we can find our way home."

Lomasi and Quaha find a place to spend the night.



🔊 All was quiet, and Lomasi was almost asleep when she heard a strange noise. “Ssssss.”

“Did you hear that?” Lomasi asked, alarmed.

“Hear what?” Quaha replied sleepily.

“Ssssssss.”

“That!” Lomasi said, sitting up from where she had been lying.

It was hard to tell who was more surprised, the girls or the snake who had curled up in a corner of the room.

🔊 Quaha finally worked up her **nerve** and moved close enough to get a better look at the creature hissing at them from the corner.

“Oh,” she sighed with relief. “Don’t worry, Lomasi. He’s just a bull snake. He won’t hurt us. He’s probably more scared of us than we are of him.”

🔊 Lomasi can’t sleep until the snake leaves.



Despite Quaha's reassuring words, Lomasi couldn't sleep until the snake had had enough of their company and slithered out of the room. Eventually, Lomasi's eyes closed, and she fell asleep.

Hours later, the morning light began to peek through the door of the room where they were sleeping. "Wake up, Lomasi," Quaha said, as she shook her friend's shoulder. "We need to get home!"

"Grandmother's going to be worried about us, and our parents will be, too. We'd better hurry."

In the light of day, the girls were able to retrace their steps and find their way home.



When they finally arrived, Grandmother rushed out to meet them. "Where have you been?" she demanded sternly. "I've been so worried!"

"I'm sorry, Grandmother," Lomasi said quietly.

"So am I," said Quaha. "We lost track of time. Suddenly, it was night... We couldn't find our way home in the dark."

"But where did you sleep?" Grandmother asked anxiously.

Lomasi smiled. "Our ancestors looked after us."

"What do you mean?" Grandmother asked. She looked **astonished**.

"We found the City in the Cliffs," Lomasi explained. "We spent the night there."

"It *was* beautiful, just like you told us!" Quaha added.

Grandmother smiled. She put her arms around both girls. "Well, you finally saw the City in the Cliffs!" she exclaimed. "Next time, I'm going with you!"

Grandmother welcomes the girls home.



Responding



TARGET SKILL

Theme What do Lomasi's thoughts and actions tell you about the theme of the story? What text details support your conclusion? Copy and complete the chart below.

Detail	Detail	Detail
Lomasi listens carefully to her grandmother's stories.	?	?
Theme ?		



Write About It

Text to Text Think of a story you have read about a character who learns something as Lomasi does. Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting Lomasi with the character you have chosen.



TARGET VOCABULARY

astonished

banish

bared

deserted

envy

margins

nerve

reasoned

spared

upright



TARGET SKILL

Theme Examine characters' qualities, motives, and actions to recognize the theme of the story.



TARGET STRATEGY

Infer/Predict Use text clues to figure out what the author means or what might happen in the future.



GENRE Historical Fiction is a story whose characters and events are set in a real period of history.

Level: Q

DRA: 40

Genre:

Historical Fiction

Strategy:

Infer/Predict

Skill:

Theme

Word Count: 1,454

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