

Night at the Capitol



Chapter Six

Written by—
Carolyn Mueller

Illustrated by—
Christopher Grant

Charlie followed the four Missouri soldiers through the halls and up the staircase. He recognized the route from earlier. They were leading him to the House Lounge!

Charlie remembered the giant mural in the lounge. The colors, the action, the people, they seemed to be leaping from the walls. He couldn't wait to see what it would be like now that the museum was alive! Tom, the WWI soldier, pushed the doors of the Lounge open, and the group entered.

"Whoa." Charlie didn't know where to look next! The characters and people who had seemed so alive earlier were literally off the walls now! The Native American and fur tradesman were bartering quietly in the corner. An ironsmith dutifully swung his tools in another. These people filled nearly every space in the lounge. Townsfolk brushed shoulders with politicians. A mule clopped slowly by.

"Well, howdy do!" cried a man in a coonskin cap as he approached them "Daniel's the name! And who do we have here, men?"

"This young lad is Charlie," Will answered. "He's our guest for the evening, here at the Capitol."

"Son, what are these clothes you got on there?"

Daniel surveyed Charlie's polo and khakis from his school day. His eyes lingered on Charlie's untied Nike shoes.

"This isn't gonna sit right 'round here. You need to look like a Missourian!"

Before Charlie could explain that he was actually from California, Daniel pulled a dead raccoon from a sack in his left hand.

"I'll make you a nice fur hat, then you'll really be ready for

right here in this room, as a real boy? He remembered reading Mark Twain's famous tale back at his old school in California. He never thought he'd see the characters in real life once he moved to Missouri.

"Those guys, there?" Jeb told him. "Those are all the beer makin' folks from St. Louie. And

really isn't much of a place for a child, you know." The hefty man glanced meaningfully into the corner, where a few showgirls were dressing themselves in feather boas and petite hats.

"We'll be moving on shortly, Mr. Pendergast," Phil said sharply. "We're only showing him around."

Charlie wandered over to a woman at a typewriter.

"Hello," he said, timidly. "What are you doing?"

The woman glanced up at him, ever so quickly, as she continued to type.

"Why I'm transcribing, of course. Lots to do, lots to do, sorry, no time to chat. Please, if you'll excuse me."

The woman turned her attention back to the typewriter. Charlie marveled at how different this energetic career woman seemed than the older woman, baking and kneading bread on the other side

of the room.

"I don't see Jesse," Phil suddenly said to the others. "Do you?"

"Jesse?" Charlie asked. Why did that name sound familiar?

"Yes. Jesse James," Phil answered. "I don't see him anywhere in here."

"Oh yes!" Charlie said excitedly. He remembered the outlaw from seeing the painting earlier in



adventure!" He shouted, with enthusiasm.

"No need," Will said. "Lots of people to meet, see. Come now, Charlie, look over here. See those two? That's Huck Finn and Jim."

Charlie observed a young boy in a straw hat and a large, shirtless black man as they both looked at a wooden paddle.

Wow, Charlie thought. *Huck Finn,*

the ones right across from them are the butchers from Kansas City!"

Charlie observed men measuring and tasting beer samples, while other men inspected a dead cow hanging by its back legs.

A hefty man in a fancy suit next approached Charlie and the group. "Come now, gentlemen, what brings you around our neck of the Capitol?" he said. His eyes lingered on Charlie. "This

the day. He'd been curious about the man in the red shirt holding the gun and Mr. Priddy had said that his name was Jesse James. "The outlaw!"

"Yes ..." Will said, a bit suspiciously. "That's right, the outlaw. He doesn't seem to be anywhere here at the moment."

All four soldiers turned their faces from one end of the room to the other. Politicians bickered. Children chased each other. A dog barked and the woman on the typewriter continued to type away.

But Jesse was nowhere to be seen.

"Charlie," Will suddenly asked, turning to the boy. "Would you like to go see the seal?"

Capitol Ideas



As the mural came to life, Charlie witnessed many people busy with their jobs and saw how they contributed to society. Find the job listings in your newspaper. What job is most interesting to you? What skills do you have that would make you a good fit for this type of job?

Learning Standards: I can read historical fiction to develop fluency and to make text-to-world connections. I can identify vocabulary in context. I can comprehend main idea and supporting details. I can analyze literary techniques and make predictions.

For a companion teaching guide, visit mo-nie.com and use download code: readmo16.