

THE RIVER SPEAKS

CHAPTER 8 - BY KAY HIVELY

It was a long evening as passengers from the *Arabia* made their way to shore. The captain was the last to leave the boat.

Hearing about the wreck, local people came in wagons to help. Most of the wet passengers went into town to spend the night. Toby and his father helped rescue some of the baggage that belonged to the passengers. But they never found their own satchel.

Toby showed his father the leather pouch with the gold nuggets. Mr. LePage told him to hang it around his neck, under his shirt, until they could find Johnny Waters.

Long after dark, all the baggage was stacked together in the woods not far from the river. The captain said passengers could come back in the morning and search for their belongings.



After doing all they could, Toby, his father and the crew of the *Arabia* started toward the nearby town. Looking out over the river, they could see just the top deck and the smoke stack of the once-proud steamboat.

Mr. LePage scratched his chin and said to Toby that the river had spoken again.

This time, Toby understood what his father was saying.

When Toby and his father got into town, all the hotel beds were full. Passengers from the boat were sleeping everywhere there was a place to lie down. Toby and his father slept on quilts the hotel clerk put on the floor.

Early the next morning, Toby and his father took breakfast in a small cafe and then walked down to the river. There was much excitement and anger. In the night, thieves had come into the woods and stolen all the valuables from the baggage that had been left there. Toby was glad he had kept the leather pouch with him. It was still safe in his shirt.

The captain of the *Arabia* told Toby and his father that another steamboat would soon be coming. He said they could board it and return home since

there would be no trip to Council Bluffs. He said all passengers on the *Arabia* had been rescued, and he thanked Toby and his father for their rescue efforts.

Toby was disappointed that his riverboat ride was cut short. But, just as he had predicted, it was an adventure he would remember the rest of his life.

As Toby and his father waited for the boat going downstream, they spotted a familiar face. It was Johnny Waters. Toby jumped to his feet and ran to meet his friend.

Proudly, he reached into his shirt and pulled out the leather pouch. Johnny Waters' face lit up as he took it from Toby's hand.

But at that moment, there was a long whistle, and Toby saw the riverboat coming. It was time to go back home. Toby stuck out his hand to say good-bye to his friend. The gambler reached into the pouch and took out a gold nugget, which he placed in Toby's hand. As Toby stared at the nugget, Johnny Waters thanked him for returning the gold.

Toby flashed a big thank-you smile to Johnny Waters, clasped the nugget tightly in his hand, and ran down to the river to join his father.

Yes, Toby finally could hear the river speak. It told him he was one very lucky boy.

THE END

Things to Think About and Do

1. If you were a newspaper reporter in City of Kansas, how would you report the story of the sinking of the *ARABIA*? Study a newspaper to see how a news story is written, then write a new story, with an interesting headline.
2. A steamboat *ARABIA* really did sink in the Missouri River in 1856. Thankfully, no human lives were lost, but there was a casualty. Research this historical event to discover what was lost.
3. Pretend you are Toby, and you want to tell your school friends about your trip. With your teacher's permission, give a two-minute talk in front of the class and tell what happened to you.

Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both from Neosho, MO. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation, ©2009