

# Mr. Eads' Bridge

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## CHAPTER ONE

### The Other St. Louis Arches

The sweeping lines of the stainless steel Arch soared into the sky above Becky's head. Her view from the base of the monument was simply awesome. The huge leg looked like a stack of giant steel pie slices that climbed to meet the matching leg high above.

"Class, time to go into the museum!" Mr. Brown called. "Everyone over here, please."

Becky sighed and turned toward the little group of her schoolmates. She'd return later. Right now, they had a tour beginning at the sleek new steel-and-glass entrance. The underground museum itself lay between the legs of the Arch, officially renamed the Gateway Arch National Park just the year before.

Something moved by the corner of her eye, causing her to pause. A little bug of some kind, flying in lazy circles. But this one was glowing in the middle of the day, like a lightning bug, and it made a buzzing sound like fairies singing.

*Fairies singing?* "Where did that thought come from?" Becky whispered. She tried to gently wave the insect away and jumped back in surprise when it landed on her finger. She barely felt it there, even though it looked rather bulky, like some kind of beetle. Its back pulsed blue and violet and green. The colors soothed her somehow, and the beetle's wings buzzed a soft, relaxing tune.

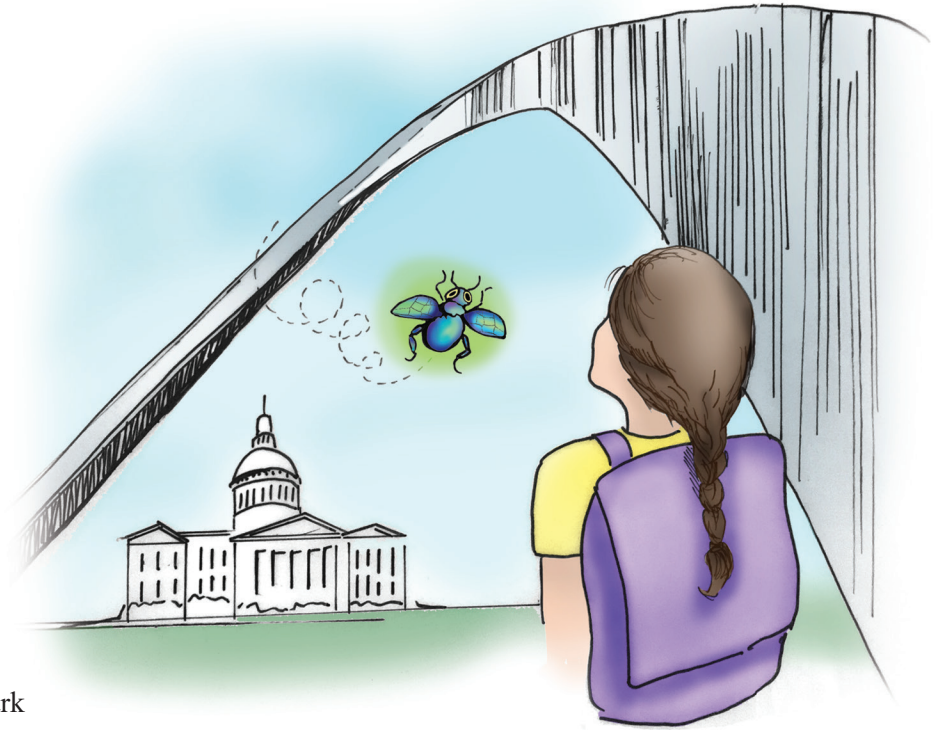
*Time to learn,* the beetle's song hummed, and it gave a brilliant green flash of light. Becky had to blink her eyes and turn away.

When the spots cleared, she found the beetle flying in circles again. *See you soon,* it sang and flew off.

"Wait!" Becky called. "What are you? I've never seen anything like you before. And you can talk, or sing, or something. Oh, darn, it's gone."

She turned back to rejoin her class and froze. A huge lump rose in her throat. The Arch had vanished.

The river still tumbled by in front of her, but steamboats now crowded the shore, their twin stacks belching soot. She looked around.



"There's the old courthouse. And the old cathedral is here, but it looks new. And where did all these other buildings come from?"

Fighting back salty tears, she took a deep breath and searched for more clues. "The highways are gone, and *all* of the bridges have disappeared, except..."

To the north, she spotted two stone piers rising out of the river. Partially built spans flowing upward in graceful shallow arches stretched out both east and west from the top of each pier; their ends eerily suspended in space. Above the river the spans almost touched.

"Time to learn, huh?" Becky muttered. "I guess I need to at least find out what's going on." Her first step felt strange, and she stared down in disbelief. "I'm wearing a dress?" She touched her head. "And I have hair ribbons, too? What kind of bug was that?"

She walked toward the construction, hoping the bridge would bring answers.

#### Newspaper Connections:

Record the facts in each chapter. Take note of the 5 Ws and 1 H: who, what, where, when, why and how. Compare this chapter with a newspaper article. Do the 5 Ws and 1 H appear in both? Why or why not?