

# Night at the Capitol

## Chapter Two

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“**OK** class, now let’s go to the third floor rotunda to see the Hall of Famous Missourians,” Mr. Priddy boomed in his big, enthusiastic voice.

Charlie snapped to attention. He hadn’t been listening to Mr. Priddy at all. Instead, Charlie had been studying a particular scene in Thomas Hart Benton’s famous mural in the Missouri Capitol’s House Lounge. The scene showed some sort of cowboy wearing a red shirt and pointing a gun at two men in front of a train. The men held their hands up in surrender. It looked, to Charlie, like the cowboy was some kind of robber or outlaw. Charlie wondered who he was, and why Benton had chosen to depict him in the painting.

As his class started to follow Mr. Priddy out of the room, Charlie sighed. Perhaps he’d never know. His teacher ushered him back out into the hall to continue on their field trip through the Missouri Capitol, but Charlie got lost in his own thoughts, tuning out the tour guide and his teacher as they led the class into a new room.

“That was Jesse James,” a low voice growled in Charlie’s ear.

“Huh?” Charlie said, turning to find Mr. Priddy standing next to him, again.

“In the painting. The outlaw you were staring at was Jesse James. But you won’t find him in here,” Mr. Priddy said, gesturing to an open hall filled with bronze busts in every corner. “This Hall

is dedicated to the lives of those who have contributed in positive ways to Missouri’s history.”

Mr. Priddy scanned the room resting his eyes on the nameplates of the famous Missourians.

“Well,” he said, chuckling. “Mostly.”

*Jesse James*, Charlie thought. He’d heard that name before

around! Does anybody know this guy?”

The class crowded around a bust of a man with a bushy mustache and crazy hair, all captured in immovable bronze. There was a bit of whimsy in the statue’s eyes, Charlie thought.

His classmates murmured amongst themselves, trying to guess whose bust they stood before.

*Of course Ben knew*, Charlie thought to himself, grumpily. His mom was the school librarian!

“I’m sure some of you will recognize this man here!” Mr. Priddy spoke again. “And if you don’t recognize his face I’m sure you’d recognize his mouse!”

“Huh?” the class said.

“Mickey! This man is the creator of Mickey Mouse!”

“Oh,” Lily said. “Walt Disney! I didn’t know Walt Disney was from Missouri!”

“Sure!” Mr. Priddy answered. “Look around class, there are probably quite a few names in here you’ll recognize, many that you didn’t know came from Missouri.”

Mr. Priddy’s enthusiasm for the subject was contagious, even if Charlie didn’t want to catch it. The class dispersed immediately, going from bust to bust reading names and

learning who the bronze faces belonged to.

Charlie shuffled over to a bust near the staircase. It was a woman. She seemed to look right at him with warm eyes, even though they were etched in bronze.

*Laura Ingalls Wilder*, he read on her nameplate.



but couldn’t quite place where or when. He surveyed the grand space around him, checking out the statues as Mr. Priddy spoke.

“Class, this is the Hall of Famous Missourians! It is dedicated to instructing visitors to the Capitol in the outstanding contributions that Missourians have made to the world. Look

“I’ll give you a hint,” Mr. Priddy said. “Tom Sawyer? Huck Finn? Heard of these characters before? Well, they were created by this man here ...”

“Oh!” Charlie’s classmate, Ben, started. “I know! It’s Mark Twain!”

“Very good, Ben!” Charlie’s teacher gushed.

Charlie turned and saw a staircase near the Wilder statue. His class and his teacher were all occupied with the Hall of Famous Missourians, but he was still pretty bored with this whole Capitol tour.

Some of Charlie’s classmates were getting very excited about the bust of Stan Musial and the tour guide was headed toward them, ready to inundate the group with all sorts of facts and trivia about the beloved Cardinals baseball player.

This was Charlie’s chance.

## Capitol Ideas



In this chapter, Charlie was viewing famous Missourians. Look through the newspaper to find an example of someone you think would be worthy to be nominated to a “hall of fame.” Summarize why you have chosen this individual. Next, divide your classmates into groups of five. Present your hall of fame nominee to the group and listen to your classmates as they present their nominees. Try to convince your group to vote for your nominee to enter the hall of fame.

**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.