

THE RIVER SPEAKS

CHAPTER 7 - BY KAY HIVELY

More firewood had been taken on board at City of Kansas, so Toby and his father went to work. Still thinking about all the things he had seen in town, Toby was ready to move on upriver.

The Arabia was scheduled to go all the way to Council Bluffs. Toby tingled with excitement. This was an adventure he would remember the rest of his life.

Shortly after the boat got under way, the dinner bell rang and most of the passengers went to the dining room. Toby kept working. After two days on the river, he had learned his job well and had even found his sea legs.

Just as he was thinking about how steady he was on his feet now, Toby heard a thunderous noise and then a loud ripping sound. Before he could even think, Toby felt

himself falling over. With a crash, he landed on the deck and began sliding down toward the water.

The Arabia was sinking!

All around him, Toby could see boxes and ropes sliding toward the water. He tried to grab onto something but everything was moving. He could hear women and children screaming. The last thing he saw before he went over the edge was his father rushing toward him.

As he plunged into the water, Toby tried to avoid being hit by things sliding off the deck of the sinking boat. Because he was a good swimmer, Toby had no trouble in the water, but he worried the boat would roll over on top of him in the shallow water.

In only a moment, Toby's father was in the river beside him.

Finding Toby safe, Mr. LePage told him to swim to shore. Toby's father said he would stay to help get everyone to safety.

Although worried about his father, Toby started to shore, swimming around the debris. As he drew close to shore, something caught his eye. It was Johnny Waters' leather pouch laying on top

of a large board.

As the board floated by, Toby reached out and grabbed the pouch. Stuffing it in his shirt, he swam on until he made it to the river's edge.

Along the river there were steep banks, but Toby climbed to safety.

Once on land, Toby could see a small boat taking on passengers, and many other people were in the water, swimming to shore. Toby could see his father helping people get off the doomed vessel. Toby was worried, but knew his father was strong and would be safe.

While Toby watched, the Arabia slowly slipped away. The river roared as water swirled like a tornado around the helpless craft. At last, Toby had heard the river speak, and its voice was loud, angry and fatal.

For a moment he wondered what happened to Johnny Waters. But everywhere around him, Toby could hear cries and screams. He tried to shut out all the noise and worry, and just concentrate on helping people get out of the water and up the bank.

NEXT WEEK: CHAPTER 8 - HEADED HOME

Things to Think About and Do

1. Toby finds the gambler's pouch of gold. Should he keep it or give it to Johnny Waters? Write 100 words telling what Toby should do.
2. Toby was a good swimmer. If you were going on a boat ride, what are some things you should do to stay safe on the boat or in the water?
3. If Toby hadn't known the pouch belonged to Johnny Waters, he could have advertised in the newspaper to locate the owner. Using the guidelines in the Classified section, write an ad to find the owner. Describe the item in a way that would help the owner recognize it without telling what's inside.

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

