

Comprehension

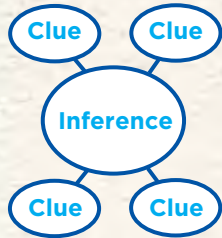
Genre

Humorous Fiction is a made-up story written to make the reader laugh.



Generate Questions

Make Inferences As you read, fill in your Inferences Word Web.



Read to Find Out

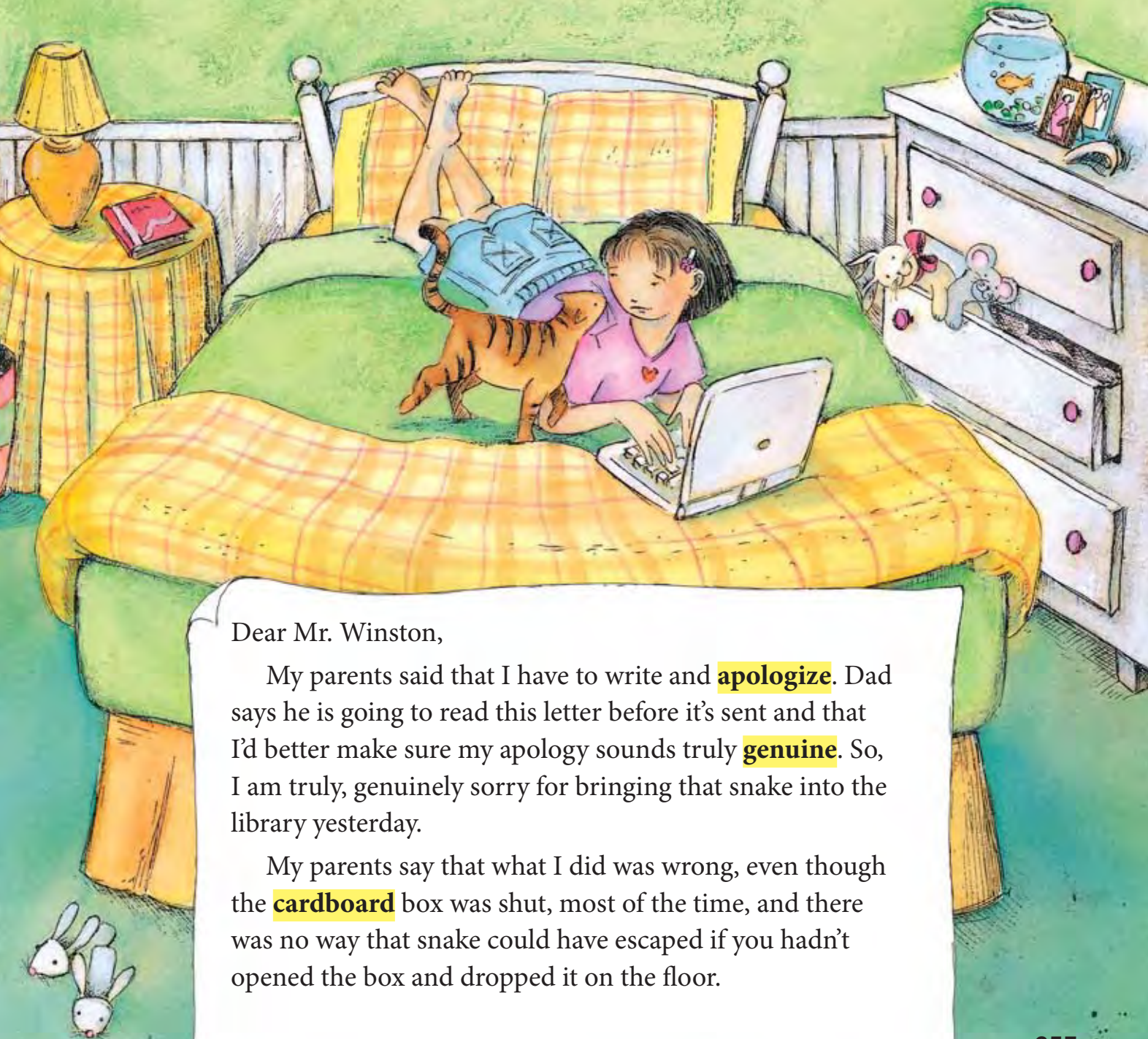
What do you learn when you read between the lines?



Dear Mr. Winston

by Ken Roberts

Illustrated by Nicole E. Wong



Dear Mr. Winston,

My parents said that I have to write and **apologize**. Dad says he is going to read this letter before it's sent and that I'd better make sure my apology sounds truly **genuine**. So, I am truly, genuinely sorry for bringing that snake into the library yesterday.

My parents say that what I did was wrong, even though the **cardboard** box was shut, most of the time, and there was no way that snake could have escaped if you hadn't opened the box and dropped it on the floor.

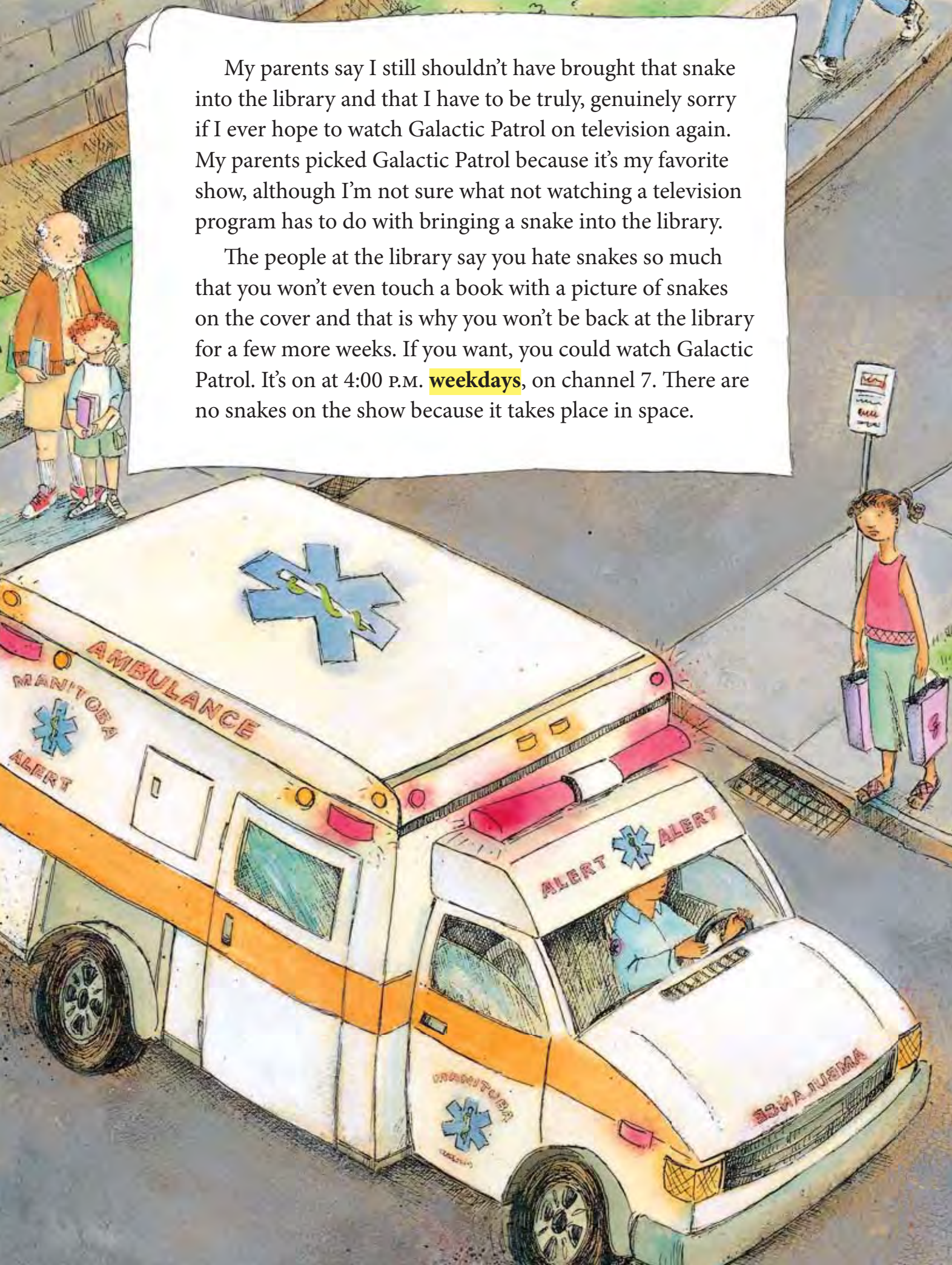


My parents say it's my fault for having brought that snake into the library and I truly, genuinely apologize but I still don't know how I was supposed to find out what kind of snake I had inside that box without bringing the snake right into the library so I could look at snake pictures and then look at the snake and try to find a picture that matched the snake.


I told my parents something that I didn't get a chance to remind you about before the **ambulance** took you away. I did come into the library without the snake, first. I left the box outside, hidden under a bush and tried to borrow a thick green book with lots of snake pictures. You told me that the big green book was a reference book which meant that it had to stay inside the library and I couldn't take it out, even for ten minutes.

My parents say I still shouldn't have brought that snake into the library and that I have to be truly, genuinely sorry if I ever hope to watch Galactic Patrol on television again. My parents picked Galactic Patrol because it's my favorite show, although I'm not sure what not watching a television program has to do with bringing a snake into the library.

The people at the library say you hate snakes so much that you won't even touch a book with a picture of snakes on the cover and that is why you won't be back at the library for a few more weeks. If you want, you could watch Galactic Patrol. It's on at 4:00 P.M. **weekdays**, on channel 7. There are no snakes on the show because it takes place in space.





A girl with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a purple shirt and a blue and white plaid skirt, is standing in a library. She is reaching up to a high shelf to get a book. The shelves are filled with books of various colors. The floor has a large, stylized floral pattern in shades of green and yellow.

Did the flowers arrive? Dad picked them out but I have to pay for them with my allowance for the next two months. The flowers are proof that I am truly, genuinely sorry for having brought that snake into the library. I hope the people who work at the library find that snake soon! Did they look under all the chairs?

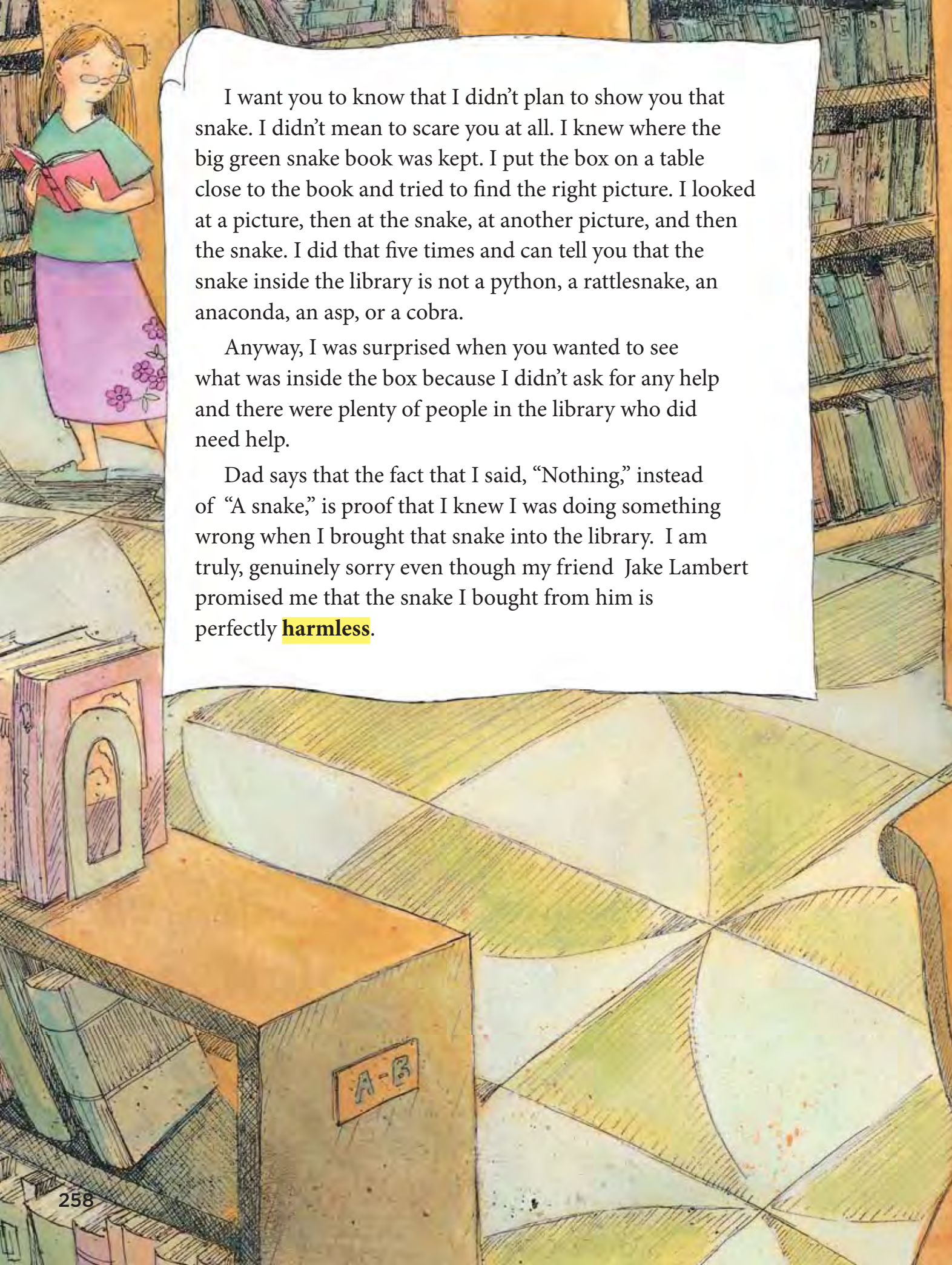
That snake isn't dangerous. It is a local snake, and there are no poisonous snakes in Manitoba. The people at the library say you know that too because that was one of the reasons you decided to move here. I bought that snake from a friend. I paid one month's allowance for it, which means that snake has cost me a total of three months' allowance and I only owned it for one hour!

Mom says I don't have to tell who sold me that snake so I won't tell you either because Dad says he is going to read this letter. Besides, I don't want you to be mad at anyone else when I am the one who brought that snake into the library yesterday. I am truly, genuinely sorry.



Make Inferences

Do you think the girl is truly, genuinely sorry for bringing the snake into the library? Why or why not?


A colorful illustration of a library. In the upper left, a girl with glasses, wearing a green shirt and a purple skirt with floral patterns, stands reading a pink book. The background is filled with tall bookshelves packed with books. In the foreground, a wooden table is partially visible, with a small sign that says 'A-B' on its side. The floor has a geometric pattern of overlapping shapes in shades of green and yellow.

I want you to know that I didn't plan to show you that snake. I didn't mean to scare you at all. I knew where the big green snake book was kept. I put the box on a table close to the book and tried to find the right picture. I looked at a picture, then at the snake, at another picture, and then the snake. I did that five times and can tell you that the snake inside the library is not a python, a rattlesnake, an anaconda, an asp, or a cobra.

Anyway, I was surprised when you wanted to see what was inside the box because I didn't ask for any help and there were plenty of people in the library who did need help.

Dad says that the fact that I said, "Nothing," instead of "A snake," is proof that I knew I was doing something wrong when I brought that snake into the library. I am truly, genuinely sorry even though my friend Jake Lambert promised me that the snake I bought from him is perfectly **harmless**.



The background illustration shows a room with bookshelves filled with books. On the floor, a green snake with a yellow diamond pattern is slithering. In the foreground, an open book with various snake illustrations and an open cardboard box are visible.

I did tell you that I didn't need any help and I did have a snake book open in front of me, so I don't know why you insisted on looking inside the box if you are so afraid of snakes and everything. I don't know why you picked up that box before opening a flap, either. If you had left the box on the table and maybe even sat down next to it, then maybe the box would have been all right when you screamed and fainted. You wouldn't have fallen so far, either, if you were sitting down.

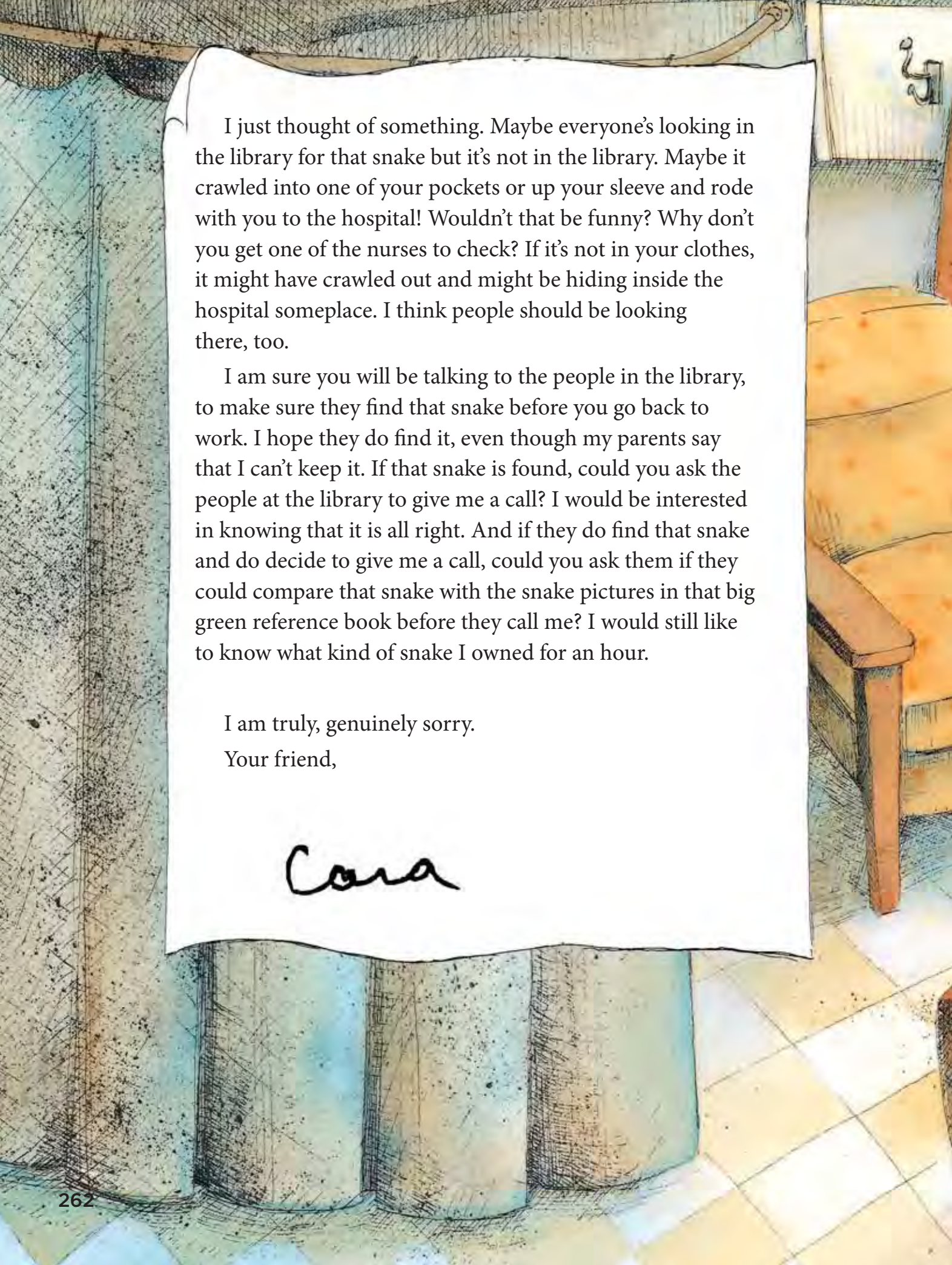
Did you know that you broke out in a rash after you fainted? I thought a person had to touch something like poison ivy to get a rash. I didn't know it was possible to get a rash by just thinking about something but my parents say it really can happen. I think maybe you did touch something. Maybe, when you were lying on the floor, that snake **slithered** over to you and touched you! Did you know that snake skin feels dry, not wet and slimy at all?



Make Inferences

Is the girl taking full responsibility for what happened to Mr. Winston? What makes you think so?





I just thought of something. Maybe everyone's looking in the library for that snake but it's not in the library. Maybe it crawled into one of your pockets or up your sleeve and rode with you to the hospital! Wouldn't that be funny? Why don't you get one of the nurses to check? If it's not in your clothes, it might have crawled out and might be hiding inside the hospital someplace. I think people should be looking there, too.

I am sure you will be talking to the people in the library, to make sure they find that snake before you go back to work. I hope they do find it, even though my parents say that I can't keep it. If that snake is found, could you ask the people at the library to give me a call? I would be interested in knowing that it is all right. And if they do find that snake and do decide to give me a call, could you ask them if they could compare that snake with the snake pictures in that big green reference book before they call me? I would still like to know what kind of snake I owned for an hour.

I am truly, genuinely sorry.

Your friend,

Cara



Mr. Winston

GET WELL

Identify the Author and Illustrator

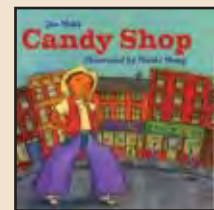


Ken Roberts is actually a librarian. He often writes funny stories with unusual characters, like the girl in this piece. Ken has many talents. He is a storyteller, puppeteer, juggler, and magician. He was once a champion runner, too.

Nicole E. Wong has been interested in art all her life and even went to college to study it. She has been very fortunate to have turned her passion and training into her career in illustration. Nicole's artwork has appeared in several books, including Jan Wahl's *Candy Shop*, and various magazines. Nicole lives in Massachusetts with her husband, Dan, and their dog, Sable.



Another book illustrated by Nicole E. Wong



Find out more about Ken Roberts and Nicole E. Wong at www.macmillanmh.com

Author's Purpose

Why did Ken Roberts write *Dear Mr. Winston*? Did the fact that he is a librarian affect his purpose? What clues helped you decide if he wrote to entertain or inform?





Comprehension Check



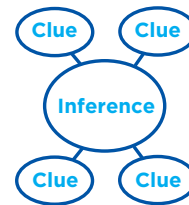
Summarize

Summarize *Dear Mr. Winston*. Include the main characters and tell the most important events in the correct order.

Think and Compare



1. Was Cara's apology to Mr. Winston truly **genuine**? Use your Inferences Word Web to help you decide. Tell what clues helped you make this inference. **Generate Questions: Make Inferences**



2. Reread the second paragraph of the story. Who does Cara seem to say was responsible for the snake's escape? Use story details in your answer. **Analyze**
3. How would you have avoided Cara's mistake? **Synthesize**
4. Do you think that Mr. Winston will ever be able to see the humor in this event? Explain your answer. **Evaluate**
5. Read "Name That Reptile" on pages 250-251. How is the problem that Mark is trying to solve similar to Cara's problem? How is it different? Use details from both selections in your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

