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## MEET THE AUTHOR

**Hello Elspeth, tell us a little about yourself.**

I studied drama at university and then worked for a theater newspaper in London. Later, I decided to train as an English teacher and work in Italy, my favorite country. By a strange twist of fate, I got a teaching job in Istanbul in Turkey and I have lived and worked there teaching and writing ever since.

**How are you inspired to write your stories?**

Story ideas can come from a casual conversation, a visit to a new city or country, an article in a magazine or newspaper or, as in this case, the Internet.



*Elspeth Rawston*

## How did you think of this story?

One day my friend, Halime, was surfing the Net for information about countries around the world. She was fascinated by a site about a Tibetan Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas and she showed it to me. The kingdom was Bhutan, the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon, and when I read about it, I was inspired to write this story.

One thing that struck me when I was reading the article were the King's words: "Gross national happiness is more important than gross national product." Happiness is more important than wealth. Those words stayed with me and inspired me to write this story.

I was also inspired by the fact that Bhutan was isolated and unaffected by the outside world for centuries. The idea formed to write about a country where there are no cars, no TV, no Coca-Cola, no McDonald's or globalization. Of course, the Kingdom of the Snow Leopard is a fictional place and all the characters in it are fictional.

I hope that you will enjoy this story and will be inspired to learn about different cultures and travel to far-off magical places where all kinds of adventures can happen.

1 **trained:** learned to become

2 **wonderful:** great; amazing

## BEFORE READING

- 1 The title of the story is *The Kingdom of the Snow Leopard* and there is a legend about a snow leopard in the story. Read and listen to the information about snow leopards.

### The Snow Leopard

Snow leopards live in Central Asia and the Himalayan Mountains of Bhutan, India, Nepal and Tibet. They are endangered animals and there are less than 10,000 of them alive today.



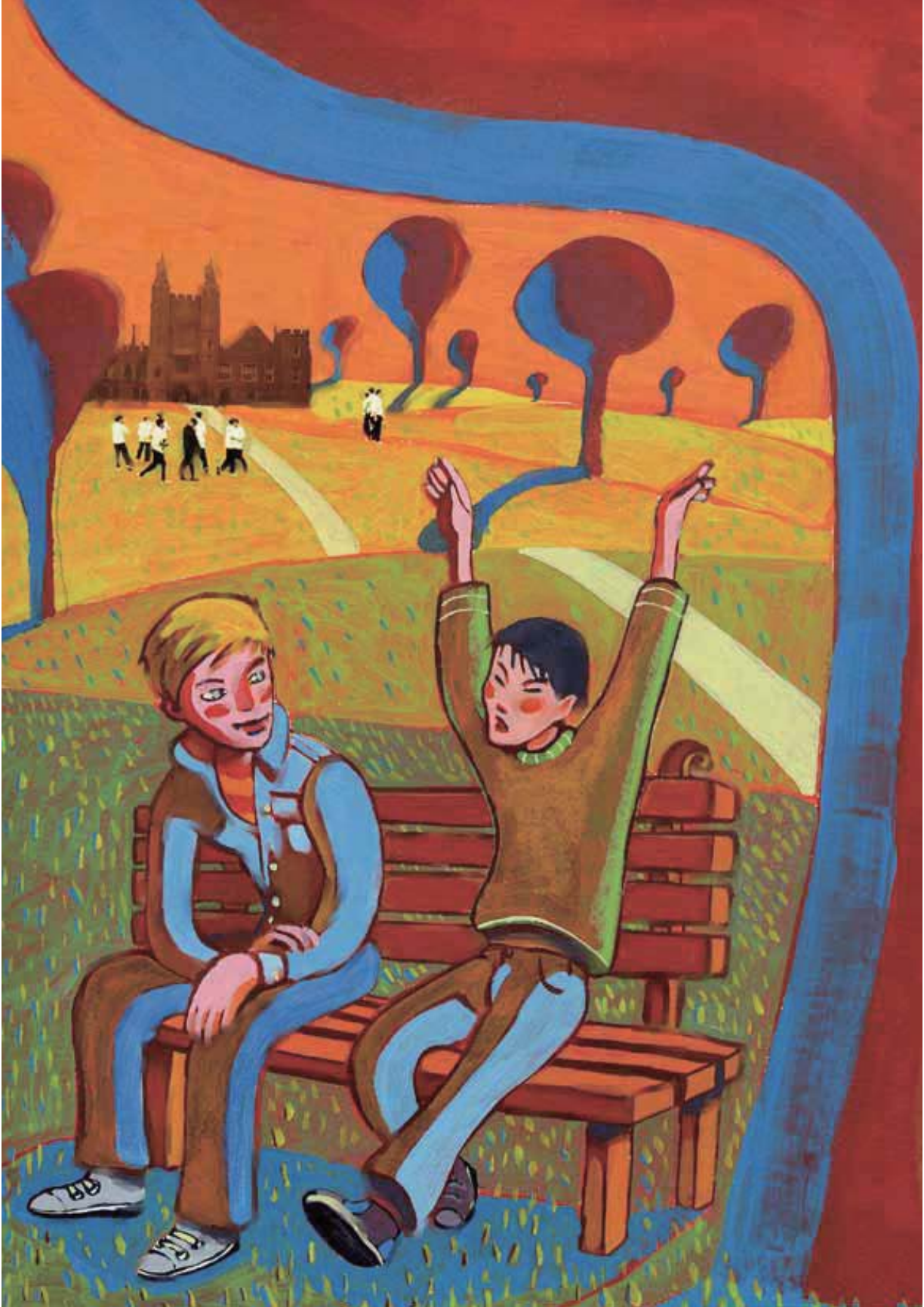
- 2 Listen to Sarah Williams from the WWF talking about snow leopards. Then answer the questions below.

- a) Where can you find snow leopards?
- b) How long is an adult male snow leopard?
- c) Why do they need long tails?
- d) Why have they got wide noses?
- e) How do they balance on top of the snow?
- f) What do they eat?
- g) How far can a snow leopard jump?
- h) How much does a baby snow leopard weigh?

- 2** Tigers are also mentioned in the story. Do some research about tigers on the Internet and write a short paragraph about them.
- 3** Look quickly at the pictures in the book and answer the questions.
- a** Where do you think the story takes place? Tick 2 continents.  
 America  Asia  Africa  Europe  Australia
- b** What kind of story is it? Tick.  
 Thriller  Adventure  Detective Story  Romance
- 4** Look at the pictures below. Discuss.



- 1** Which picture do you prefer? Give reasons.
- 2** Which place would you like to visit? Give reasons.





The two boys sat on a bench under a big old oak tree. There was a lawn<sup>1</sup> in front of them and, in front of that, the huge<sup>2</sup> iron gates of the school. The two boys often came and sat here after lessons.

Tom was tall with fair hair and blue eyes. His friend, Mahir, had black hair and dark brown eyes.

Tom was excited and Mahir was smiling.

"Are you sure you want me to come?" asked Tom.

"Yes, of course. I've told you so much about my kingdom. Now I want you to see it for yourself," replied Mahir.

"Fantastic," said Tom. "I'd love to come. I'll have to ask my mum and dad, of course. But I'm sure they'll be fine about it."

"Tom," said Mahir. His voice was serious now. "You've been a really good friend. You stood up for<sup>3</sup> me when the others picked on<sup>4</sup> me. They made fun of my accent and appearance. But you didn't. I hated this school at the beginning and I hated this country and all the people in it. But your friendship changed everything. And I'll always appreciate that. Thanks."

"There's no need to thank me, Mahir. I was on my own too. And you were fun, and interesting."

"Thanks, anyway. I'm really happy here now."

"Good," said Tom. "Now, let's talk about more important things."

"Such as . . .?"

- 1 **lawn:** area of grass    3 **stood up for:** defended  
2 **huge:** very big        4 **picked on:** were nasty to



"My visit to the coolest country in the world," said Tom. "Do I need a visa to go there?"

"Yes, you do. All foreigners need a visa. Only 5,000 tourists are allowed to come every year. My father, the King doesn't want our country to lose its culture. He is afraid that tourists will change the country," said Mahir.

"So it's no Coca-Cola and no McDonald's for a month, then," said Tom.

"Correct," said Mahir and he laughed. "Do you think you can live without them?"

"I think I can—but can you?" laughed Tom.

Suddenly Tom saw a tiny<sup>1</sup> flash of light. "Hey, what was that?"

"It looked like a camera flash," said Mahir.

"I think there's someone down there by the gate!" said Tom and he stood up quickly.

There was another flash. Mahir and Tom ran towards the gate. Tom was sure it was a camera. "Who are you?" he shouted. "What are the photographs for?"

The man didn't answer. He turned and ran away. He was tall and thin. He was bald and had brown eyes. His face was not very memorable except for the long scar<sup>2</sup> that ran from the corner of his left eye down to the corner of his mouth.

"Why do you think he was taking photographs of you?" asked Tom.

1 **tiny:** very small

3 **concerned:** worried

2 **scar:** mark on the skin

4 **combat:** fighting

after you have been hurt