

***THE ENL  
COLLECTION***

**THE KINGDOM  
OF AZERECK**

Advanced

Hal Ames

Based on a story by Chrisvin Jabamani

**A collection of short stories  
and worksheet exercises for students.  
English as a New Language**



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The ENL Collection – The Kingdom of Azereck  
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## ***About the author***

*Hal has enjoyed creating easy to read stories for most of his life. He has transformed this love of writing into useful tools for learners of English as a new language.*

*He began teaching English as a new language when he lived in the Philippines. He began teaching Korean students both face-to-face and via the internet.*

*Upon his return to the United States, he has continued to teach English as a new language to students in Korea, Japan, China, France, Germany, Russia, Estonia, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Brazil, Lithuania, Mexico, Israel, and The Philippines. His students have ranged from 6 years old to 60 years old.*

*He emphasizes that language is about communication and that understanding the function of speaking another language is very valuable in today's society.*

*These stories have been used in his classes to increase vocabulary and comprehension through using fun and exciting adventures. Originally they were created for a summer English camp, where he was the director.*



# ***THE KINGDOM OF AZERECK***

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# *THE KINGDOM OF WAR*



There once was a kingdom that was always at war. It was called The Kingdom of War and it was always attacking the kingdoms in the surrounding region. That kingdom loved war and was constantly making life miserable for all the other kingdoms.

One of the kingdoms they continually attacked was the Kingdom of Azereck. Over time, its king became frustrated because of the constant war. More than half their soldiers had died, and the treasury was almost empty. The king needed to find a solution to this problem.

The king's advisors gave him several suggestions, but none of them ever seemed to work. It was impossible for Azereck to defeat the Kingdom of War, but the king wanted the war to end.

The king was about to go to the king of the Kingdom of War and surrender all he had, but before he could, his daughter, the princess Azul, came to him and offered an idea for him to consider.

"Father, since you're willing to give up all of your kingdom to the king of the Kingdom of War, why don't you offer half of your domain in exchange for kidnapping the king of the Kingdom of War?" the princess said to her father.

"Kidnap the king? Now that's an interesting idea," her father began to ponder the suggestion. "I will offer this reward to our bravest fighters. I'm sure one of them will take me up on this offer. Then we'll stop this useless war and create a

peaceful kingdom for our people!” the king said, very excited at his daughter’s idea.

The next day the king called all the people in his kingdom to the castle. He stood on the royal balcony overlooking the courtyard. The colors of the uniforms and the flags blowing in the wind made the courtyard jump with excitement. Music was playing by the royal band. He had made sure that the event would be as exciting as possible.

“My fellow Azerecks, I have an offer to make to you. We want this war to end, so I’m willing to offer one half of my kingdom to the brave soldier who will go to the Kingdom of War, kidnap the king, and bring him here to me,” the king said, with a booming voice and a serious look on his face.

The crowd went silent. No one stepped forward. The king’s face became sad.

“Is there not one brave man who will save our kingdom? Is there not one of you who will accept half my kingdom in exchange for peace?” the king began to beg.

Still silence. No one stepped forward to accept the king’s plan.

The king looked around. He thought for a few moments, and then added, “I will also offer my daughter the princess’ hand in marriage to the one who completes this task.”

Azul’s jaw dropped.

“I won’t accept this father. You can’t do this to me!” she said panicking at what her father had just offered.

The princess looked out over the courtyard hoping that no one would agree to the king’s offer.

The king gazed out over his subjects. Still there was silence, and not one person moved.

Then to everyone’s surprise, the people in the crowd began to move as if a

mole was moving under the earth. Someone was moving through the crowd toward the king.

Just then a young man emerged from the crowd. He bowed before the king.

“I, Walter Gressler, will kidnap the king for you. I’ll bring him here and stop this war. I will take you up on your offer,” he said.

“Aren’t you the blacksmith’s son?” the king inquired.

“Yes, I am,” he replied.

“Just how do you think you can do this?” the king asked.

“I’ll make my plan as I go to the Kingdom of War. I’m not sure exactly how I will do this, but I will return with the king. I promise you,” the young man stated confidently.

He continued to speak, “I must have your word that you will honor the offer you’ve made for this dangerous endeavor.”

“I swear an oath before all these people that I will honor the offer I have made here today,” the king said loud enough so that all those in attendance could hear him.

As the young man turned to leave, the crowd cheered him and moved aside to let him pass.

The princess said softly to her father, “Father, you don’t intend for me to marry the blacksmith’s son, do you?”

Her father tried to reassure her, “Don’t be worried young one. He will not succeed. I just hope that his bravery will inspire more of our own soldiers to be more courageous. His actions will give us time to rebuild our army and our treasury. I’m sure during that time he will be a distraction to the king of the Kingdom of War.”

Walter went to his father’s shop.

“Father, I have to go on a quest to the Kingdom of War. I’m going to kidnap the king and bring him here. I’ve told the king that I’ll accept his offer of half the

kingdom and the princess' hand in marriage if I'm successful. Do you have any advice Father?" Walter asked.

"Son, what you are planning to do is suicide. You will not return. You're brave, but at the same time it's foolish for you to think that you can accomplish this task. However, I wish you luck. I know that you will not change your mind," his father said as he took his hammer and slammed it onto the red-hot metal he was turning into a sword.

Walter looked at all the weapons his father had hanging around his shop. He only took a small knife and stuck it into his belt.

"I'm off Father. I'll return with the king of the Kingdom of War. You'll see!" Walter said confidently as he turned to leave. "Say goodbye to Mother for me!"

Walter went quietly out of the town. He took a small cart pulled by a pony. It was a two-week journey to the edge of the Kingdom of War.

Once he reached the Kingdom of War, he had to be very careful. Although he was an ordinary looking peasant, the people were very cautious of newcomers. He would tell them that he had come from the Kingdom of Nod.

It was well known that the Kingdom of Nod had been defeated, and many of the people were coming to the Kingdom of War to find work. There was a lot of work making swords, armor, and other fighting weapons in the Kingdom of War. Since Walter knew how to make these weapons, it would be easy for him to find work.

As he entered the town, before him rose the towers of the castle of the king. It was very impressive. It looked as powerful as the army of the Kingdom of War.

After two days in the town, he took a job helping the local blacksmith. He knew exactly what to do, so the blacksmith was very happy to have him work for him. He was able to blend in with the people of the town very easily. That way he would not be suspected of doing something to the king.

One day a messenger from the castle came to the blacksmith's shop.

"The king has ordered that you make him a grand sword. One that is better than anything ever made before," the messenger said.

He then showed the blacksmith a drawing of the sword that the king wanted.

Then the messenger left.

"I have never made anything like this before," the blacksmith said, shaking his head.

"I can help you," Walter offered. "I can make the sword the king wants."

The blacksmith gave him the plans. Walter immediately began to form the metal with the hammer and anvil. The sword began to take shape. Never before had a sword been crafted like this one. It would be the pride of any nobleman.

It took a week before the sword had its full shape and another two weeks before it had the shine of a mirror. Walter engraved designs into the steel that were so impressive the blacksmith invited all his neighbors to come and see.

News of the king's sword traveled to the castle. The king sent his messenger to bring the sword to him.

When the messenger arrived, Walter refused to give it to him.

"I'll present the sword to the king myself!" Walter stated proudly. "I'll bring it to the castle tomorrow."

The messenger warned Walter, "If you refuse to deliver the sword today it will anger the king."

Then he left.

Soon after, a troop of soldiers arrived and demanded that the sword be given to them to take to the king. Walter once again refused. He had hidden the sword in a safe place, so when the soldiers searched for it they could not find it.

"You must come with us. You'll answer to the king for your disobedience," the leader of the soldiers commanded Walter.

Walter went with the soldiers. However, he didn't bring the sword with him.

He had hidden it.

Before they entered the castle, he ran away into the crowd and disappeared.

The soldiers searched for him, but were unable to find him. He had climbed to the top of one of the houses and was looking down on the soldiers as they searched for him.

When the soldiers returned to the castle, Walter climbed down from the top of the house and hid until dark. He then went to the blacksmith's shop, went to where he had hidden the sword, and took it.

Early the next morning, Walter placed the sword in a special box with a purple cloth under it. He used his cart to take it to the castle. As he entered the walls of the castle, people pushed forward to get a view of the king's new sword that was lying in the bed of the cart. The sun shone brightly on the sword showing off its beauty. Walter just smiled as the small pony pulled his cart toward where the king was waiting.

When he got to the entrance of the castle, Walter jumped out of the cart, took the sword out of its box, and raised it above his head; showing it to everyone. At first, there was a gasp and then a cheer.

Walter smiled.

He carried the sword proudly as he walked past the guards at the entrance to the throne room. As he moved past the invited guests, who were on each side of the room, they were in awe of its craftsmanship. He approached the throne, bent down on one knee while holding the sword in both hands above his head in front of the king.

"I'm told you are the one who made this sword, is that correct?" the king asked Walter.

"Yes, your majesty, I made the sword," Walter replied still looking down at the ground.

"Why did you refuse my order to bring the sword to me yesterday? I should

have you put in prison for your disrespect. If this sword does not meet my requirements, I will certainly have you punished,” the king said sternly.

The king got up from his throne and walked toward where Walter was kneeling. The king took the sword, looked at it from end to end and then raised it above his head to show everyone how impressive his new sword was. Everyone cheered.

Responding to the king’s question, Walter answered, “Your Majesty, I wanted to deliver the sword myself. I wanted you to realize how grateful I am to you that you are my king.”

“Come with me,” the king said. “This is the finest sword I have ever seen. I will reward you instead of punishing you.”

The king walked back to his throne, turned around and spoke to his guests. “I declare that this young man is now the royal blacksmith, and that he will have all the honor and respect that is due to him,” the king surprised everyone.

The people gasped. How was such a young man deserving of such a high honor?

“Come up here to receive your ring and your robe,” the king directed Walter. “What is your name?”

“My name is Walter Frenza, your Majesty,” Walter replied, using another name to protect himself, just in case the king had heard about him or his father.

“Well, Walter, you have impressed me beyond my highest expectations!” the king stated.

Walter began his duties as the king’s blacksmith that very day. He worked hard and produced the finest looking weapons the kingdom had ever seen.

The king of the Kingdom of War continued to wage war against the other kingdoms.

One day, after returning from a campaign against the Kingdom of Rasport, the king demanded that Walter come to his throne room.

Walter went immediately before the king.

“Walter Frenza, the weapons you are making for us are terrible. The swords break, the shields shatter, and the armor falls apart. What is going on? I need an answer!” the king said leaning forward on his throne visibly angry. “I have lost the battle. That has never happened before!”

“I was not aware of this problem, Your Majesty. I’ll investigate the problem and I’ll have an answer for you by the end of the week,” Walter said as he bowed and then left the throne room.

Later that week the king received a message. The message said that Walter had discovered the problem, and that he had found a solution. The armor would be better than ever.

The note said that he wanted the king to come to the blacksmith’s shop to see the most amazing suit of armor. Walter requested for the king to go for a fitting at the blacksmith’s shop. Walter added that the king should come alone because the suit of armor was to be a surprise to all who lived in the Kingdom of War.

The king went secretly to the blacksmith’s shop to see Walter. He went behind a screen where the armor lay on a table. Walter showed it to him. It was just as the note had said.

The king could not believe his eyes. The metal shined golden yellow in the light of the lamps in the blacksmith shop.

“Why is this armor so much better than what you have been making recently?” the king asked.

“I found out the iron ore we were getting from the mine was not of good quality. So, I discovered a way to make it better, harder and lighter by heating the iron hotter than ever before,” Walter informed the king. “The results have been better than I could have ever dreamed.”

The king was excited. It was the most beautiful armor anyone had ever seen.

“Your majesty, please come here for your fitting. First, we will put on the

breastplate,” Walter directed the king.

The king put on the breast plate. It was so light and strong as well as a perfect fit. Then he put on the lower armor. Again, it was a perfect fit. Last, he put on the helmet.

The king said, “How did you know my size? This is perfect!”

He pulled down the visor and began to move around the room trying out the armor.

All of a sudden, he couldn’t move. He struggled to walk, but he was stuck. He yelled at Walter to help him, but all that Walter could hear was a muffled noise.

Walter backed his small cart up to where the king was standing and pushed him over so he landed inside the cart with a thud. Walter then covered the king with straw and then a blanket.

He drove the little cart out of the castle waving at the people. They loved him and knew him well. He then passed through the village, and they smiled and greeted him as the cart moved slowly down the road. He had done this many times as he delivered weapons to the army fighting other kingdoms.

Walter continued out of the village, and then out of the Kingdom of War toward the Kingdom of Azereck.

Two weeks later, the guards at the castle of Azereck saw a cart coming down the road. They recognized it was Walter. He was older now, but they knew who he was. They ran to the king and told him that Walter Gressler was returning in a small cart.

The people crowded the entrance to the castle as Walter drove his little pony to where the king was waiting.

“I have a present for you my king,” and at that, Walter threw back the blanket and straw to expose the shiny new suit of armor.

The king walked around to see what Walter had in the cart.

“That’s a fine suit of armor, son. Who is it for?” the king inquired.

“It’s for you my king. Open the visor on the helmet. There is a surprise for you inside,” Walter said with a smile on his face.

When the king opened the visor, much to his surprise, he saw the king of the Kingdom of War!

“Let me out of here!” the king of the Kingdom of War yelled.

The king of Azereck was shocked.

“I can’t believe you did this. We thought you had given up. It has been more than a year since you left,” the king said.

There was silence in the courtyard.

Then the king continued, “I will honor my offer to you. Half of my kingdom and my daughter’s hand in marriage are yours.”

Walter surprised everyone with his response, “I didn’t do this for your kingdom or for your daughter. I did this for the people of Azereck. I’m willing to serve you, my king, for the rest of my days,”

He returned to work with his father in the blacksmith shop. The king told his captain of the army that they should only buy weapons from him from then on.

**VOCABULARY** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                     |                                     |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. viable _____     | a. normal, same, not unusual        |
| 2. surrender _____  | b. to take someone by force, abduct |
| 3. domain _____     | c. one who works with metal         |
| 4. kidnap _____     | d. brave, intrepid                  |
| 5. endeavor _____   | e. property, land, kingdom          |
| 6. courtyard _____  | f. open space in a castle           |
| 7. blacksmith _____ | g. to give up, yield, stop fighting |
| 8. courageous _____ | h. feasible, able to be done        |
| 9. suicide _____    | i. struggle, adventure, trek        |
| 10. ordinary _____  | j. to kill one's self               |

**TRUE OR FALSE**

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Walter was the blacksmith's son.                           | T / F |
| 2. The king of Azereck loved to make war.                     | T / F |
| 3. The king of the Kingdom of War wanted a new sword.         | T / F |
| 4. The princess suggested that she marry the bravest soldier. | T / F |
| 5. Walter drove a large wagon to the Kingdom of War.          | T / F |
| 6. Walter was put into jail.                                  | T / F |
| 7. The people of the town loved Walter.                       | T / F |
| 8. The king of the Kingdom of War escaped.                    | T / F |
| 9. Walter wanted half of the kingdom.                         | T / F |
| 10. Walter married the princess.                              | T / F |

## MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. What did Walter make for the king of the Kingdom of War first?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - a) sword
  - b) cart
  - c) uniform
  - d) suit of armor
  
2. What did the king promise to the person who kidnapped the king of the Kingdom of War? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) to become the new king of Azereck
  - b) a new sword
  - c) the princess' hand in marriage
  - d) the kingdom of Azereck
  
3. How long was Walter living in the Kingdom of War? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) two weeks
  - b) over one year
  - c) the rest of his life
  - d) one month
  
4. How did Walter return to the Kingdom of Azereck? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) by bus
  - b) by train
  - c) by pony cart
  - d) by walking

**COMPREHENSION:** (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. Who agreed to kidnap the king of the Kingdom of War?

---

2. What did Walter's father do for work?

---

3. How long did it take to get to the border of the Kingdom of War?

---

4. What did Walter take with him from his father's blacksmith shop?

---

5. What did Walter engrave into the sword?

---

6. What happened when Walter walked into the throne room with the sword?

---

7. What position did the king of the Kingdom of War give to Walter?

---

8. What did Walter refuse when he returned to Azereck?

---

9. Who saw Walter first when he was returning to Azereck?

---

10. At the end of the story, what happened to Walter?

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# ***THE THREE THIEVES***

Based on a story by Chrisvin Jabamani



From the time that Walter had kidnapped the king of the Kingdom of War, peace spread throughout the entire region. Walter's fame grew and grew until his feat became a legend. People told of his heroism far and wide of how he had fooled the king of the Kingdom of War. The story grew as well, as most legends do.

The kings of the other kingdoms were so happy that the wars had ended, that they gave him gifts and even offered their daughter's hands in marriage, but Walter refused them. He wanted to live a simple life with his family.

Walter continued to work with his father, teaching him all the things he had learned while he worked as the royal blacksmith in the Kingdom of War. His father was impressed with his skill. Together they made the finest armor and weapons the region had ever seen.

The problem was that since there was no longer war, no one was buying armor anymore. Walter had to find a new way to make money for his family. He and his father found another way to build their business. They began to make silver plates, cups, utensils and other silver products. Walter would take trips to the other kingdoms to sell his goods.

When Walter arrived in a town, the people always cheered him. They knew who he was and they were very proud of him.

His father had designed a special seal that they engraved on the bottom of each piece of silver. That seal made them famous. People wanted at least one piece

of Walter's silver as a special remembrance of what he had done. Their business grew and grew.

One day, while Walter was traveling down a long road to the Kingdom of Damanon, three bandits suddenly appeared in front of him out of nowhere and attacked Walter and his cart. They tied Walter with ropes, took his bag of silver, and ran off.

It took Walter three hours to untie himself. He was angry that he had not been able to protect himself, but he realized that the robbers knew his schedule and would probably try to steal from him again in the future. He had to come up with a plan to protect himself and to catch the thieves.

He went back to Azereck. His father was surprised to see him. Walter told him about what had happened. He told his father they needed to come up with a plan to catch the robbers.

They talked for several hours. They wrote down the ideas they came up with and drew up a plan. Walter would need help. He wouldn't be able to do this on his own.

Walter went to the king and asked if he could get some help to make his plan work. The king looked at his drawings.

"This looks like a good idea, but I see some things that might be easier for you," the king said, as he took a pen and drew some characters on the paper.

Walter looked on in great interest.

"I think this will work," the king continued to draw.

The king was excited to be helping Walter. The robbers had been stealing from other merchants along the roads out of Azereck for some time now. If Walter were able catch them, the people and merchants of the town would be very grateful.

The king called his military officers to the castle. When they were all there the king explained the plan to them.

“This is a very secret plan. If word of this gets out, the robbers will know of our plan, and we won’t be able to capture them,” the king explained. “Walter will be the leader. We need three good men to help. Will any of you volunteer?”

No one spoke up. The mission was dangerous. The robbers had beaten and even killed some of the people they had robbed. They were infamous in the land, and everyone was afraid of them.

“If none of you volunteer, I’ll have to select three of you to help. I don’t usually force soldiers, but this is a serious situation,” the king stated strongly.

Still none of his officers volunteered.

“OK, Rupert, Jonathon and Travis, you will work with Walter to solve this menace,” the king pointed at the new ‘volunteers’.

Reluctantly, the three recruits went with Walter to the table to review the plans the king and Walter had designed.

“As you can see from our drawings, the robbers have four favorite places to attack merchants,” Walter said as he pointed to the four locations he had marked on the map. “What we need is for each one of you to take one of these roads and watch for the robbers. When you see them, you will send a signal. Then the rest of us will come to help you capture the thieves.”

The three helpers looked over the plan. They discussed many ideas about what kind of weapons they would need, what disguises they would use and what kind of signal would be best.

At the end of the discussion the king told them, “I’ll give you whatever you need to make this happen. Just ask and I’ll give it to you.”

Rupert spoke up first, “We’ll need money to pay for information.”

Jonathon added, “And special clothes so they won’t recognize us.”

“Just let me know what you need, and I’ll provide it,” the king said with a smile on his face.

He knew that if the men caught the robbers his kingdom would be safe

again.

Walter took the men to his blacksmith's shop and showed the weapons his father and he had made. He told them the best way to not be noticed was to look like the peasants of the town. If they had a big sword it would give them away. They needed something small, but effective.

Each of them took a small dagger that was easy to hide in their belts. They were very sharp and cut through leather easily.

The three men gathered food and supplies for their journeys.

Walter made sure that their plan remained a secret. No one knew of this plan except the king, Walter, and the three men.

Jonathan went north, Rupert went east and Travis went south. Walter went to the west.

Days passed and there was no signal. It appeared that the robbers might have found out about the plan and had gone elsewhere to find merchants to steal from. It was tiring to watch all day and into the night.

On the eighth day, the signal came. It was Jonathon. A wisp of smoke rose from his hiding place.

All the men rushed to the spot.

When they arrived, they looked down on the road and saw the robbers tying up the merchants and moving the goods to their cart.

Walter and the three men crawled slowly down the hill and surprised the robbers.

The robbers ran, but to the surprise of the attackers, there were suddenly nine robbers running in many directions. Every time one of them was captured, they would disappear. They were just illusions. After chasing the illusions for an hour, it became obvious that the robbers had gotten away. The robbers had a magic spell and because of it they were able to escape.

Walter untied the merchants and helped them to their feet.

“What happened to our goods?” the merchants asked.

“It appears that the thieves got away,” Walter replied.

“You are a failure, Walter. How could you let them get away with all of our merchandise?” one of the merchants yelled.

Walter shrugged his shoulders, and answered.

“We tried our best. You saw what happened. They suddenly became an army,” Walter replied.

The merchants didn’t care. When they got back to the castle the merchants told about how Walter and his friends had failed to capture the robbers. Now Walter was no longer a hero. He was a failure.

It was going to be even more difficult to capture the robbers now since they knew that there was a plan to capture them. It was time to formulate a new plan.

Walter and the three soldiers went to the Walter’s blacksmith shop to revise the plan. Now that they knew that the robbers were using magic, the new plan would have to be very different.

“What if we bought armor of invisibility?” Jonathon suggested.

“Armor of invisibility? I have never heard of such a thing!” Travis said raising his eyebrows in disbelief.

“I heard about it from a merchant who came to our town from the Kingdom of Nod,” Jonathan said to Travis.

“First of all, where are we going to get the armor of invisibility, and second, how will we pay for it?” Rupert jumped in.

“The king said he would give us whatever we needed no matter what it cost,” Travis interrupted.

“He’s right, now all we have to do is find a place where we can buy it,” Rupert added.

“I think I know of a place. It is in the Kingdom of Nod. When I was there the last time, I saw a shop call The Wizard’s Magic Market. The problem is I think

the robbers may also shop there. That is how they were able to create all of those illusions. We'll need someone else to go and buy the armor of invisibility for us," Walter said, while scratching his head for an idea.

After thinking for a while, Walter jumped up, and said, "I've got it! We will ask the Princess Azul to go to the store. No one will suspect her. Who would ever think that the princess would be setting a trap for the thieves?"

Walter went to the castle.

As he walked through the crowd, the people laughed at him and called him a failure. This was new for Walter, but since he knew the new plan would work, he just ignored the townspeople and what they were saying about him.

After entering the castle, he asked to see the princess.

Walter waited in a large room with many portraits of the past kings.

When Azul came to see Walter, she looked beautiful. Walter had seen her before, but never up close like this.

Walter bowed in respect, and then said to her, "We need your help princess. Your father has asked me to help capture the robbers who have been stealing from our merchants. We need you do something for us that is very important in order for us to accomplish this task. It might even be a little dangerous."

"What is it that you need for me to do?" the princess replied.

"We need for you to go to the Kingdom of Nod and buy something for us," Walter answered.

"What is it that you need" she asked.

"We need you to buy four suits of armor of invisibility from The Wizard's Magic Market in the Kingdom of Nod," Walter explained

"Suits of armor of invisibility? I have never heard of anything like that before," the princess said to Walter very surprised.

"I'm not sure that they exist, but there is a rumor that we can buy them there. We think the robbers may also shop there so we need someone they wouldn't

suspect of trying to capture them to buy these things for us. Also, since you're the princess, you'll have your guards with you so they'll won't try to steal them from you while you are on your way home," Walter explained.

The princess agreed to help.

Walter went to the king and explained the new strategy. Although the king was not excited about Azul going to the Kingdom of Nod and being a part of the plan, he gave Walter the money they needed to buy the armor of invisibility. It was a lot of money, but the king realized that if the plan was successful his kingdom would be safe once again.

The princess contacted the king of the Kingdom of Nod and arranged a meeting with him. By doing it this way the journey became an official trip. The princess had her guards with her, as well as her ladies-in-waiting.

The princess went to the Kingdom of Nod. The trip took two weeks. When she arrived, the king of the Kingdom of Nod met her at the gate. He was excited to have her there. He knew her father very well. A big feast was prepared for her arrival.

"I would like you to meet my son Prince Gary," the king said as he introduced his son.

Prince Gary was a very small person. He had a big smile and was very friendly, but he was just very short. The princess greeted him by shaking his hand. Then they all went into the castle and had a grand dinner. There were dancers and jugglers. The entertainment was wonderful.

The princess was tired, so after a while she asked to go to bed.

The next morning the princess went to the village. Her guards followed her as she gazed into the shops along the road. The people were very happy to see her and invited her to see all the things they had to offer. Along the way, she bought a few things she liked.

When she got to The Wizard's Magic Market, she went inside and asked to

talk to the owner.

The owner, a bald-headed man with a large nose, came out from behind a curtain and greeted the princess.

“How may I help you today, your majesty?” the funny looking man asked.

“I’ve been told that you can make armor of invisibility. Is this true?” she asked.

The owner was surprised. “Where did you hear that?” he questioned.

“I heard a rumor that you had such a thing. My father is very curious about this. He will pay you to make four of these suits. Is that possible?” the princess asked.

Looking around the room to see if anyone was listening.

“Yes, I can do that for you, but it’ll cost you a lot of money. Are you prepared to pay?” the owner said rubbing his hands together with a big smile on his face in anticipation of getting top pay for the suits.

“How much do you need?” she asked.

“It’ll cost you, say, 4,000 farthings per suit. Can you pay that?” the owner grinned and chuckled.

“If that is what they cost, then that is what I will pay. How long will it take you to make these suits?” Azul asked.

“I’ll have them ready for you tomorrow afternoon,” the owner replied.

“I’ll have your money tomorrow. Make sure that no one hears of this or you’ll have a problem with my father,” the princess told him.

“As you command, your majesty,” the owner said as he bowed in respect.

After she left the shop, the princess continued her journey through the town talking to the townspeople and being very friendly.

Walter had secretly followed the princess and watched the entrance to the shop to see if any of the robbers might also be visiting the store. A few people came and went, but none of them matched the faces of the robbers.

The next day the princess returned to the shop. The owner was waiting for her.

“I’ve completed your order. Here are the four suits of armor you requested,” the owner pointed to an empty table.

“Where are they, I don’t see them,” the princess asked looking at the table and seeing nothing.

“Of course you can’t see them, they are invisible,” the owner said smiling.

The princess went to the table and felt for the suits of armor. Sure enough she could feel them, but she couldn’t see them.

“These are perfect! My father is going to love these,” the princess said with excitement in her voice.

“Make sure no one knows about this,” she warned him again.

Her helpers carried the suits to her waiting carriage and put them inside. The princess then climbed in and left the town for the trip back to Azereck.

When she got home her father came to meet her. The princess whispered to her father that she was able to make the purchase.

Walter, who had followed her at a distance, arrived shortly after the princess and met with his three comrades. They talked over the new plan and about how they would make it work.

In the evening, Walter went to the castle to get the suits of armor. He put them into his small cart and brought them to his blacksmith’s shop, and they tried them on. The fit was perfect. Once they were inside of the suits they couldn’t see each other. Only when they talked would anyone know where they were. The suits were very light, and it was easy to move in them.

The next day each of the men, in their armor of invisibility, returned to the places where they had been hiding before. It took three days before the signal came. This time the robbers were on the south road. Travis was the one who sent up the signal. A small wisp of smoke rose above the place where he was hiding.

The others went to the spot overlooking the road. Once again, the robbers had tied up the merchants and were taking the goods out of one cart and putting them into another. The four soldiers moved slowly down the hill. This time the thieves didn't see them coming, so they weren't able to use their magic. They captured the thieves and tied them up.

The merchants were happy, although they had no idea what was happening because they couldn't see the four invisible men.

When Walter and the others took off the armor, the merchants were shocked. When the merchants returned to Azereck they told the story of how Walter and the three soldiers had rescued them and captured the three thieves.

As Walter, Rupert, Jonathon and Travis returned to the castle this time they were greeted as heroes. They had the three thieves tied up in the back of their own cart.

The thieves were taken to the prison and locked up for a very long time. Before they were taken to their prison cells, the guards took away all their magic spells.

The king of Azereck made Walter a knight and gave him a position in his court. Walter became a very important person and was well respected.

From then on Jonathon, Rupert, and Travis became wealthy men because they received pay from the merchants. They would travel from place to place with the merchants protecting them while they used the armor of invisibility.

**VOCABULARY** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                   |                           |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. feat ____      | a. famous for being bad   |
| 2. merchants ____ | b. unsafe, risky          |
| 3. military ____  | c. exploit, deed          |
| 4. dangerous ____ | d. hush-hush, not to tell |
| 5. infamous ____  | e. to offer to help       |
| 6. volunteer ____ | f. vendors, sellers       |
| 7. reluctant ____ | g. change, edit           |
| 8. locations ____ | h. army, armed force      |
| 9. secret ____    | i. unwilling              |
| 10. revise ____   | j. places, sites          |

**TRUE OR FALSE**

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Walter was famous in his town.                     | T / F |
| 2. Five men volunteered to help the king.             | T / F |
| 3. Walter and his father made silver plates.          | T / F |
| 4. Walter had his silver stolen from him on the road. | T / F |
| 5. Rupert, Jonathon, and Travis ran away when chosen. | T / F |
| 6. The king gave them money.                          | T / F |
| 7. The princess married Prince Gary.                  | T / F |
| 8. The thieves killed Walter.                         | T / F |
| 9. The illusions were real.                           | T / F |
| 10. The king was proud of Walter and the others.      | T / F |

## MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. What was the name of the store where the Princess bought the armor? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Merlin's Magic Shop
  - b) The Wizard's Lair
  - c) The Magic Shop of Nod
  - d) The Wizard's Magic Market
  
1. How many soldiers helped Walter catch the thieves? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) none
  - b) 2
  - c) 3
  - d) 12
  
2. How long did it take the princess to get to the Kingdom of Nod? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) 2 weeks
  - b) 4 days
  - c) 6 days
  - d) 2 days
  
3. What did Walter and his father make when weapons were no longer needed? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) copper cups
  - b) silver plates
  - c) bronze swords
  - d) armor of invisibility

**COMPREHENSION:** (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. Where did the princess go to buy the armor?

---

2. What was the name of the prince of the Kingdom of Nod?

---

3. What happened the first time they tried to capture the thieves?

---

4. How many thieves were there?

---

5. What did Walter do after the princess left the magic store?

---

6. What did the king promise Walter and his companions?

---

7. What did the thieves do to the merchants?

---

8. What was the signal they used to say the thieves were there?

---

9. What did the townspeople say to Walter after he failed the first time?

---

10. At the end of the story, what happened to Walter?

---



# *CROWNED PRINCE*



Over time, Walter's reputation grew and grew. The princess Azul fell in love with Walter, and they were married. When the king died, Walter became the king of the Kingdom of Azereck, and he ruled wisely for many years.

As time went by, King Walter and Queen Azul began to want a family. It would be important for King Walter to have an heir to the throne. The years went by and still they didn't have a child. The people of Azereck were concerned that they would not have a king who was ready to take the throne if King Walter were to die.

Some of the people in the kingdom began to discuss the idea of a competition to pick one of the young men to become the prince. The idea began to spread throughout the towns and villages until the idea finally reached the king.

The king and queen heard about what the people were saying. They talked about it between themselves and thought that it might be a good idea. They began to consider the possibility of having a competition to select an heir to the throne. If they didn't have an heir when King Walter died, it would be good to select a prince and bring him to the castle to become king. That way he would have the training he needed in all of the duties of being a king, and when the time came, he would be ready for the throne.

The king called his counselors and asked them what they thought about the idea. They agreed it would be a good way to select a prince. A competition would be a great test to find a proper prince.

King Walter selected several of his most trusted advisors to help plan and organize the event. For several weeks the organizers selected the different contests they would use and also planned the festival that would surround the big days.

The competition would have to test the courage, strength and intelligence of the winner. The winner of the contest would then become the crown prince of Azereck.

After the plans were finalized, word went out to the entire region. Messengers hung banners from every lamppost and from every tree advertising the event.

As the people heard about the affair, there was excitement throughout the kingdom. By this process they would find an heir to the throne. All of the young men from far and wide came to the castle to see if they could endure the test.

The first event was a complex maze set up in the corn fields next to the castle. The young men who completed the task would continue and those who did not would go home.

The maze was very difficult. The first part of the maze had many mirrors pointing in different directions. If the contestant went the wrong way, he would end up outside of the maze, and therefore excluded.

The second part of the maze included several paths that went to the right and to the left. Again, if they chose the wrong path, the challenger would end up outside of the maze, and likewise out of the competition.

The third part of the maze was designed to give them an even harder task to complete. In this stage the maze became a series of tunnels. If the contender chose the correct tunnels the competitor would arrive at the throne of the king. Otherwise, he would end up out of the maze and out of the contest.

The young men lined up at the entrance to the maze. One by one they entered the maze separated by one-minute interval.

It took two hours for all of the contestants to enter the maze. At the end of

the day, only twenty succeeded in completing the first task. They stood before the king ready for the next part of the test.

The next stage of the contest was to go on a quest to find a silver challis that was hidden somewhere in the kingdom.

They received a paper with a clue.

It said:

*“The prize lies within yet it is without.*

*If you don’t find it, it may find you.*

*Under yet over, the prize will surprise you.*

*Return to the castle with the challis*

*then your next task will await you.”*

They would have three days to find a challis and return to the castle.

They blindfolded them, took them to different places in the kingdom, and then released them to find the treasure.

Two days passed and none of the young men had yet returned. While they were gone, the festival in the town was fun and festive. There was food, entertainment and music for all.

On the third day, around noon, the first of the young men returned. He had given up. He couldn’t find the challis. Soon others followed; none of them had a challis.

As the sun was going down, the last of the competitors walked through the gates. Four of them were carrying a challis. Four of the young men had been successful in their quest!

They were brought to the king’s throne room.

“What are your names?” the king asked.

“I’m Jonas Bartles,” the first answered.

“I’m Rom Freedland,” the second replied.

“I’m Minzo Hardess,” the third responded.

“And I’m Grommell Raltson,” the last one gave the final answer.

“Tell me, how did you find the challis?” King Walter asked.

Grommell answered, “The clue you gave to me told me where to find it. It had to be under something for the challis to be above me. I found it under the bridge leading to the city. Once I figured it out, it was easy to see.”

The others said pretty much the same thing.

Now, there were only four left to compete for the right to become the prince of the Kingdom of Azereck.

The next day the four remaining candidates met the king again.

The king looked at the four young men in front of him, and then gave him the directions for the next part of the test.

“We have a test of your endurance. You must complete all of the parts of this challenge to move forward. At the end of each station you will be given a colored ribbon to tie around your waist. When you return you will need to give me all of your ribbons. Then you will move on to the next stage,” the king explained to the four remaining hopefuls.

Although the young men were tired, they were ready. They went to the gate of the city and with the drop of a flag they began their journey on the road out of the castle.

The first event was walking through deep mud in the bog along the river. It was very difficult to move through the deep mud. It was about a kilometer to get to the other side. At the end of the bog there was a soldier waiting to give them their ribbon. All four of the young men completed this task and received a red ribbon. Grommell was first, Rom, was second, Minzo was third, while far behind was Jonas.

The next test required that they climb a tree and then use a rope to transfer to the next tree by going hand over hand. They had to do this four times.

Grommell fell and hurt his ankle. He tried to continue, but the pain was too

strong. The others were able to complete the task. Jonas was still far behind. They each had two ribbons so far.

Now they had to go through an obstacle course. First they had to go under several logs that were so low to the ground they had to crawl like snakes to get through to the other side.

On the next obstacle they had to climb up a very steep cliff with a rope and then run down the other side between rocks and trees. The last part was swinging from one tree to the next on hanging ropes.

From there they had to run almost five kilometers back to the castle.

Rom was the first to arrive. He fell to the ground exhausted but smiling. Minzo was not far behind. Jonas dropped out of the race after the obstacle course. He was too tired to continue.

After resting, Rom and Minzo were taken to the king.

“I’m amazed and in awe of your stamina. There is one more group of tests you will need to pass tomorrow. The winner of this will be the new crowned prince of Azereck,” the king announced. “Come back here tomorrow and your last challenge will be explained to you.”

Rom and Minzo returned to their homes. They were so tired, they didn’t eat dinner. They went to bed where their mothers rubbed a salve on their sore muscles to relieve the pains and aches. They were so sore, and yet they were so excited about the next day, that neither of them slept well that night.

The next day Rom and Minzo stood before the king ready for the next test.

The king and the two contestants stood on the balcony overlooking the courtyard. The people of the kingdom were there waiting for the king to explain the next competition.

“Today we’ll see your ability in using weapons. You’ll compete in swordsmanship, horse riding, and archery. The winner of today’s events will join us in the castle and will be trained to become the next king of Azereck. The first to

win two of the three events will be our champion!” the king explained.

At the end of the king’s speech, the people in the square gave out a loud cheer. It was the most exciting day of the competition. One of these two young men would be the new prince.

The first event was swordsmanship.

The two competitors were dressed in armor. They were given a large sword. When they left the armory, they saw an area in the courtyard with a rope around it. They entered the ring and took positions in opposite corners.

They were given instructions on how to proceed. The first one to give five blows to the body of the other would win.

The boys adjusted the armor and then moved to the center of the ring. Clang, clang, the swords hit each other. The people around the ring cheered and yelled. Each person had a favorite.

The boys circled each other and then came again to the middle of the ring. Clang, clang, thud! Rom scored a hit on Minzo. Minzo fell back and as he did, Rom attacked and hit him two more times before he could recover.

Minzo pushed Rom away and began a flurry of hits to his waist and his chest.

Now the score was four to three in favor of Minzo. One more hit and Minzo would win.

Minzo raised his arms over his head to deliver the final blow, but as he did Rom ran straight at him. Minzo moved to the side, which made Rom miss. Minzo landed the final blow on Rom’s back. Minzo was the winner of the first match.

Rom was visibly disappointed, but he knew he still had a chance. He would have to win the next two events.

Next was the horse race. The course went from the castle, through the town, across the bridge to the old oak tree on the road to the Kingdom of Nod. They would go around the tree and come back.

The helpers took the boys to a corral so they could look at the horses. They were told to choose the horse they wanted to ride.

Minzo chose a gray horse. The horse was not big, but looked strong. Rom chose a red horse that looked big and fast.

After preparing the horses for the race, the boys climbed into the saddles and adjusted the straps. Rom's horse was much bigger than Minzo's. Everyone was betting on Rom and his big horse.

The boys were sitting on their horses standing side-by-side waiting for the signal to begin.

The flag dropped and the boys were off. Rom took a big lead as they passed through the town. The people were cheering and yelling as they went past.

Rom had a big smile on his face. Minzo looked determined.

They crossed over the bridge and headed for the big oak tree. Dust was flying behind Rom's horse making it difficult for Minzo to see. His little horse was running as fast as it could.

As Rom came around the tree, he saw Minzo was behind him. He smiled at Minzo as they passed each other.

After Minzo had gone around the tree, he bent forward and started to kick his horse. The little horse responded and picked up speed. By the time Rom got to the bridge Minzo was right behind him. As they passed through the town, Minzo's horse began to catch Rom.

Rom tried to get his horse to go faster, but it was tired and had nothing left. The townspeople were screaming and cheering the two riders. As they crossed the finish line Rom won by the nose of his horse. Another meter and he would have lost.

The event was now tied with archery as the last event. Five targets were spread across the lawn like trees in a forest. The targets had a red circle in the middle. The targets were numbered from one to five, and they were placed at

different distances to make it more difficult. The shooters had two attempts at each target. The closest to the center won the target.

On a table, in front of the king, was a table with bows and arrows. The boys looked over the equipment and they chose the bow they thought would give them the best advantage.

The two competitors stood next to each other. They each had ten arrows. Minzo was first. Minzo took an arrow out of his quiver and looked at its shape, running his fingers down the shaft. He placed it on the string, pulled his bow back and released the first arrow. It sailed over the target missing it terribly. Minzo was surprised.

Rom then took his turn. He aimed carefully at the target. It hit the target, but far from the center.

Minzo took his second shot and then the same thing happened to him. The arrow went too high. Rom won the first target with only one arrow. Rom led the contest one target to zero.

Minzo turned around and said something to a soldier who was standing behind him. The soldier went through the crowd and disappeared.

Rom went first for the second target. His shot hit the target to the right.

Minzo took careful aim, but completely missed the target again.

Rom's second shot was a little better.

On Minzo's second attempt, he hit the side of the target, but it wasn't better than Rom's. Rom led by two targets.

Just then the soldier returned with a bow in his hand, and he gave it to Minzo. Minzo pulled the string and flexed the bow. It was very different from the bow he had been using.

Minzo pulled out an arrow from his quiver. He set it on the string and drew the bow back very slowly. He dropped the point of the arrow down and then released. The arrow hit very close to the center of the target.

Rom's eyebrows went up. He looked over at Minzo and his bow. He turned to the king.

"He's cheating! He isn't using the bow you gave him," Rom complained.

"As far as I know, there is no rule that you must use a certain bow," the king replied. "Do you have a bow you would like to use?"

"No sir, this one will do for me," Rom answered.

He turned back toward the target, drew his arrow back and hit the target, but it was not close to the middle. He took his second shot, but again it wasn't better than Minzo's first shot. Minzo won the third target so now it was two targets for Rom and one target for Minzo.

On the fourth target Rom got a very good shot. He smiled as he looked at Minzo.

Minzo drew an arrow looked at it from end to end and then placed it on the string. He pulled back slowly, took careful aim, and then let it fly. It beat Rom's shot. Now Rom had to use another arrow. He took his time and released his second arrow at the target, but it was not as good as his first arrow. At this point it was now tied. Each had won two targets.

On the last target, which was at the farthest distance. Minzo went first. He pulled his bow back and let his arrow go. Something happened and the arrow missed the target. Minzo looked at his bow in disbelief. He shook his head as he watched Rom take out an arrow, smiling at his good fortune.

Rom pulled the arrow to his cheek, let it go, and it was one of his best shots of the day, just missing the center of the target. Rom smiled and said, "Let's see you do better than that!"

Minzo knew he had to be perfect. He took out an arrow, and looked at it, running his fingers down the shaft, and then threw it onto the ground. He had only one shot left. He took out a second arrow and again examined it carefully. He took his time as he put his eyes on the target farthest from the line. He set the arrow on

the string and pulled it back slowly and carefully. He released the arrow and it ended up just inside of Rom's, but still wasn't in the center.

Rom looked at the target. He was now very serious. He only had one shot left.

He took out an arrow from his quiver. It had to be perfect. He looked at the arrow very closely. He ran his fingers across it to feel if there were any bad spots. When he was satisfied, he then put the arrow onto the string. He pulled back slowly and took careful aim. He released the arrow. It hit the target between Minzo's arrow and his own. Rom's head dropped in disbelief. He had missed by so little, but now Minzo became the champion.

The people in the crowd exploded in cheers. They picked up Minzo, put him onto their shoulders and carried him to the castle. Minzo was to be the new crowned prince of Azereck!

**VOCABULARY** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. heir _____       | a. web, labyrinth             |
| 2. counselors _____ | b. holder of arrows           |
| 3. contestant _____ | c. competitor, participant    |
| 4. maze _____       | d. doubt, mistrust            |
| 5. challis _____    | e. try, make an effort        |
| 6. armory _____     | f. successor, inheritor       |
| 7. quiver _____     | g. advisors, consultants      |
| 8. flurry _____     | h. arsenal, place for weapons |
| 9. attempt _____    | i. silver cup                 |
| 10. disbelief _____ | j. burst, quick               |

**TRUE OR FALSE**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. Walter and Azul had a son.                        | T / F |
| 2. All of the young men came to compete.             | T / F |
| 3. The first competition was the maze.               | T / F |
| 4. Thirty finished the maze successfully.            | T / F |
| 5. Rom, Grommel, Minzo, and Jonas finished the race. | T / F |
| 6. Grommel and Minzo shot arrows.                    | T / F |
| 7. Rom won the horse race.                           | T / F |
| 8. Rom won the swordsmanship.                        | T / F |
| 9. Minzo asked for a different bow.                  | T / F |
| 10. Minzo became the new heir to the Kingdom of War. | T / F |

## MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Why did they decide to have a competition? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) to find an heir to the throne
  - b) for the annual festival
  - c) to find the best athlete in the kingdom
  - d) to give a special award
  
2. How many finished the maze? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) 30
  - b) 20
  - c) 37
  - d) 12
  
3. Who won the obstacle course? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Rom
  - b) Grommel
  - c) Jonas
  - d) Minzo
  
4. What did the riders go around in the horse race? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) the town
  - b) the castle
  - c) the bridge
  - d) the old oak tree

**COMPREHENSION:** (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. Who started the idea of the competition?

---

2. Why did the Kingdom of Azereck have a contest?

---

3. Where were the banners hung?

---

4. What was the first stage of the obstacle course?

---

5. Who was injured on the obstacle course?

---

6. Who won the swordsmanship?

---

7. How many arrows did Minzo use for the archery?

---

8. What did the townspeople do when the horse race entered the town?

---

9. What did Minzo ask for during the archery contest?

---

10. Who was the winner of the contest?

---



# *RIVALRY*



The Kingdom of Azereck now had a crowned prince, or so people thought.

The city was happy. The party went on through the night. The news that the kingdom would now have an heir was spreading to all the other kingdoms.

It had been a long day and night and Minzo was very tired. Even though he was excited about winning, he still wasn't sure what his future would be like.

Minzo went home to see his family to pack his things and prepare for his move into the castle.

His family greeted him when he entered his house. Everyone was excited for Minzo. He looked across the room and he saw his mother. She was smiling with tears running down her cheeks. She was so proud of her son. He walked over to her. His mother gave him a big hug.

“Are you sure that you want to move to the castle?” she asked with tears in her eyes.

“Yes, mother. As soon as I'm able I'll bring you and the rest of the family to the castle with me. I'll give you a good life,” Minzo said as he hugged his mother back.

Minzo reached into his bag. “I almost forgot. I've got a letter from the king for you,” Minzo said as he pulled a rolled paper out of his shoulder bag.

He handed the letter to his mother.

The letter said:

*Dear Alize.*

*It gives me great honor to ask you to allow your son Minzo to be our heir and for you to give him to us to raise as a prince of the Kingdom of Azereck.*

*In appreciation of your gift to us, we ask that you and your family join us in the castle and become members of our household. You will be able to see your son whenever you want.*

*We are proud of your son and what he has done to deserve this high honor.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*King Walter*

Alize began to cry. “We’ll never be hungry again. I’m so proud of you my son!”

The whole family started to jump up and down in excitement. And with that the family began to pack their things to move to the castle.

Unknown to Minzo, after the competition was over, the King made an unexpected decision. He decided that because Rom and Minzo had been so closely matched in all of the events, he would bring both of them into the castle. Both of them would be trained to become king. Walter and Azul now had two sons.

This choice would prove to be one of the worst decisions Walter ever made.

Rom was also summoned to the castle. King Walter asked both of them to come to his throne room. When they arrived they were very surprised to see each other.

Minzo was upset. “What’s *he* doing here?” Minzo asked the king.

“I’ve decided that you will both be trained to be a king. You had a very close competition. I’ll treat you both as sons,” King Walter said with a big smile.

“*What?* You told us that the winner would be the crowned prince and would become king upon your death,” Minzo argued with the king.

“I’ve made up my mind. You’ll both live in the castle and study with the best teachers in the kingdom. That’s my order. Now, go and begin your studies,” King Walter looked seriously at the boys.

Minzo and Rom looked at each other. How were they going to do this? Two crowned princes? Was it going to be another competition?

Rom’s family was also invited to move into the castle.

Things did not work out well from the beginning. The two families did not like each other. Everything in the castle became a competition.

Who was best at this? Who was best at that? Who had the handsomest children? Who had the smartest kids? Everything became a competition.

In the classroom, the two boys worked hard to be the smartest. On the athletic field, the two boys always wanted to win. During fighting lessons, the two boys competed to be the very best.

Over time, the two families became heated enemies. They would not talk to each other. They did not want to be seen together. The children were told not to play with each other. It became a big feud.

King Walter was too busy running the kingdom to notice the fighting that was going on in his castle. He was proud of the reports he was getting on the progress they were making in all of the subjects.

The people of the kingdom began to take sides in the feud. Some said that Minzo would be the best king, while other supported Rom. The kingdom was becoming divided.

One day the king decided to have a festival for the kingdom. He knew that the people of the kingdom enjoyed such events.

He invited all the residents of the kingdom to have a carnival at the castle. There would be music, dance, food, and best of all competitions that would be

open to anyone who wanted to participate.

While this idea was a good one during normal times, it would prove to be a very bad one at that time.

Messengers sent out notices throughout the kingdom about the big festival. The day of the celebration came and the castle filled with people ready to enjoy the day.

There were clowns and dancing ladies. There were jugglers and entertainers. There was food and drink. Everyone was enjoying the day.

The first event was the horse race. Just like when Minzo and Rom were competing, the horse ran out of the town, across the bridge, around the old oak tree and back into the castle.

There were twelve riders. The flag dropped and the riders raced out of the castle toward the old oak tree. Dust flew into the air as the racers flew down the dirt road in a crowded pack.

As the horses turned around the old oak tree, two riders fell off of their horses into the dirt, the rest of the racers headed back.

After the race was over the two riders, who had fallen off their horses, came walking into the town leading their horses behind.

It was Minzo and Rom. They had been fighting for position when they pulled each other off of their horses. They were dirty and scratched. They did not look much like princes. The people recognized them and began to laugh. Minzo went to the right and Rom to the left. They did not have anything to say to each other.

Rom had also secretly entered the sword fighting while Minzo had secretly entered the archery event.

There were sixteen men entered in the sword fighting. It was easy for Rom to hide his identity under his armor.

During his training to be a prince, he had practiced every day.

Rom won his first three matches easily. He was strong and remembered how he had lost to Minzo in the competition to become a prince. Instead of being aggressive, he held his ground on each strike waiting for his opponent to make a mistake.

In the final round, his challenger proved to be very good. As the fight went on, more and more people came to watch. Blow after blow the two circled the ring.

“Clang, clang, thud.”

The noise resounded off the walls of the castle.

Rom scored the first hit, then another. He stood waiting for his rival to make a move. They walked slowly around the ring looking at each other waiting for the opportunity to strike.

“Clang, clang, thud.” Rom was hit on the chest sending him backwards into the rope. The attacker came at him, but before he could drop his sword, Rom hit him on the side and then again across the helmet.

His foe lay on the ground not moving.

Rom took off his helmet and when the crowd realized it was Rom, they cheered.

The king was not so happy. He had ordered his princes not to compete.

Two men came to help the fighter on the ground. When they took off his helmet Rom was surprised to see his brother Klem.

Rom bent down hoping he had not killed his brother.

Someone threw water on Rom’s brother and he came to.

“What do you think you’re doing, Klem?” Rom asked his brother when he sat up.

“I just wanted to see if I could beat you,” Klem said with a smile.

Rom helped his brother to his feet and they walked together to the armory.

Minzo had entered the archery event. It was very similar to the archery contest he had won against Rom. Five targets at different distances were spread

across the lawn.

A large crowd came to see the event.

Minzo wore a cape with a hood so no one would recognize him. He used his own bow, and he had selected his arrows very carefully the day before. He was ready.

By the last target, Minzo was in the lead, but there were still other archers in the contest close behind his score. Minzo had won two targets and the other two had each won one. If either of them won the last target, they would have to shoot one more round.

The three lined up and one-by-one took their first shot. They all hit the target, but Minzo's was the farthest from the center. On the second try, Minzo went first and had the best shot of the day, but one of the others, Thomas, put his arrow in the very middle.

Minzo and Thomas had to shoot at one more target.

Thomas went first and put his arrow in the center of the target once again. Minzo came close on his next two arrows, but Thomas won the contest.

Minzo was upset, but he went over to Thomas to tell him congratulations. Minzo took off his hood and it was then that the crowd realized that it was Minzo.

The people were impressed with Minzo at how he handled himself after losing.

The main event for the day was the joust. In this event, two knights ride on horses toward each other with long wooden poles. They try to knock the other rider off of their horse. The one who is successful at doing this, is the winner.

Minzo and Rom joined the joust without the king's permission. It was not customary for the crowned prince to take part in jousts for fear that he might be injured or, even worse, killed.

Neither Minzo nor Rom knew that the other had entered the joust.

It took all day to complete the contest. Many of the competitors ended up on

the ground looking up at the sky after being knocked off their horses.

As one might have expected, Rom and Minzo ended up riding against each other in the final event. They would have three passes to knock the other off their horse. Neither one of them knew that the other was going to participate, nor did they know who the person was they were riding against.

The king decided in the late afternoon to attend the final rounds of the joust. The king found it to be entertaining to watch the skill of the knights as they rode toward each other and then the clash of the wood as it splintered into a thousand pieces after striking the armor of the other rider.

Before each round, if the king attended, the riders were required to ride before the king and show respect. They were to ride slowly before the king, take off their helmets, and bow to the king.

This was going to be a problem. The king would recognize the boys and make them quit.

Rom called one of his squires. "Harry, come here quickly, I need your help," Rom called out to his helper.

"What is it your majesty?" Harry replied.

"Quick, get into my armor. I want you to ride before the king and show him respect," Rom said as he took off his armor piece by piece and gave it to Harry who then put it on.

"I can be put into prison for impersonating a knight. Are you sure you want me to do this?" Harry answered not sure if this was such a good idea.

Reluctantly he finished putting on the armor, which was big on him.

The other helpers lifted Harry onto the horse. He looked very uncomfortable and looked like he had never ridden a horse before.

"Are you sure this is going to work?" Harry asked as he lifted up the visor on his helmet.

"I have no other choice. If I want to compete, the king has to think you are

the knight who is riding the horse. As soon as you get back, I'll switch with you," Rom tried to console Harry.

Harry rode the horse out onto the field toward the king. He looked very awkward riding the horse. In fact, people began to laugh.

Some yelled, "He's drunk!"

Harry turned the horse to face the king. He bowed to the king and waited for the other rider to come.

The other rider appeared. He looked confident and fit. He trotted out onto the field and the people cheered. The rider lifted his hand into the air and waved at the crowd of people.

He also stopped in front of the king.

When Harry took off his helmet, there was a gasp in the crowd.

They were saying, "Is this young man really going to ride against the other more impressive knight? Is he even a knight at all?"

The second rider pulled on his helmet. It would not come off. He tried again and it still did not come off. It appeared that it had been damaged during the competition and was stuck on his head.

The king waved for them to leave. He did not care if he saw the face of the rider or not. He was there to see the joust.

When Harry got back to the tent, Rom quickly traded places with him. He put on the armor, mounted his horse and rode out to begin his joust.

The riders, at opposite ends of the field, stared at each other. They adjusted their saddles and shields. They were each given a long lance, which they held onto tightly.

The horses were eager to run. The starter stood in the middle and then dropped the flag to begin the first pass.

The horses bolted toward the center of the field. Both of the riders leaned forward pointing their lances at the other. When they got to the middle there was a

loud crash. Splinters of wood went flying in all directions. Both lances had hit the target, but neither of the boys fell off.

Rom returned to his tent. There was a big dent in the armor where the lance had hit him.

“Wow, that was a hard hit. I almost fell off,” he said as he looked down at the spot where the lance had hit him.

The blacksmith took a hammer and fixed the breastplate as best he could. Rom was now ready to battle again.

He rode out of the tent and took his position again. It was a few moments before Minzo was also ready for the next round. He had a big dent in his visor. It would be difficult for him to see.

The horses bolted once again toward each other. When they reached the middle once again the wooden poles broke into small pieces with a loud crash.

The crowd went crazy. Both riders stayed on their horses however, they were bouncing from side to side. Both lances were broken again, so each rider had two points each, they were still tied.

Rom’s horse went into his tent. When they tried to talk to Rom he did not answer. Harry took off the helmet and saw blood running down Rom’s forehead. He had been knocked out, but he had not fallen off his horse. Harry threw water in his face.

“That really hurt,” Rom said when he came to and as he rubbed his head. “Did I stay on my horse?” he asked.

“Yes, your majesty, but so did the other rider,” Harry informed Rom.

The blacksmith attempted to repair the helmet, but it was badly damaged. Rom put it on and could only see with one eye.

“This is going to have to work,” Rom said as he left the tent to return to the competition.

The other rider was waiting for him this time.

Once again they lowered their lances and rode toward the middle of the course.

Crash! Wood went everywhere. The horses continued to run, but both of them were empty. The two knights were on the ground. They had both fallen off of their horses. They lay motionless on the ground. The people were in shock.

“Are they dead?” a child in the crowd yelled out.



**VOCABULARY** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. future _____       | a. put into a bag      |
| 2. appreciation _____ | b. fighting families   |
| 3. pack (v) _____     | c. fair, festival      |
| 4. handsomest _____   | d. shatter, fall apart |
| 5. athletic _____     | e. violent, forceful   |
| 6. feud _____         | f. upcoming, later     |
| 7. identity _____     | g. to do with sports   |
| 8. aggressive _____   | h. gratitude, thanks   |
| 9. splinter (v) _____ | i. self, who one is    |
| 10. carnival _____    | j. best looking        |

**TRUE OR FALSE**

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| 1. Minzo moved into the castle.                     | T / F |
| 2. Rom went to live on a farm.                      | T / F |
| 3. Rom won the sword fighting.                      | T / F |
| 4. Minzo won the archery.                           | T / F |
| 5. Minzo and Rom rode in the horse race.            | T / F |
| 6. The king knew the princes were going to compete. | T / F |
| 7. The people of the town loved Walter.             | T / F |
| 8. Minzo fell off of his horse.                     | T / F |
| 9. Harry rode the joust for Rom.                    | T / F |
| 10. The princes died.                               | T / F |

## MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Who did Rom fight in the sword fight? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Klem
  - b) Harry
  - c) the king
  - d) Minzo
  
2. What happened to the princes in the horse race? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Rom won
  - b) Minzo won
  - c) there was a tie
  - d) they fell off their horses
  
3. Who won the archery contest? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Klem
  - b) Harry
  - c) Thomas
  - d) Minzo
  
4. Who rode the horse before the king for Rom? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Thomas
  - b) Minzo
  - c) Harry
  - d) A squire

**COMPREHENSION:** (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. What did the king do that made Minzo angry?

---

2. What events did Rom join for the carnival?

---

3. What events did Minzo join for the carnival?

---

4. Who did Rom fight in the last round of the sword fighting?

---

5. Who helped Rom when he had been knocked out?

---

6. What happened to Minzo's helmet when he was in front of the king?

---

7. What did the blacksmith fix on Rom's armor?

---

8. How many times did the princes ride at each other?

---

9. Who fell off their horse in the joust?

---

10. What did the young boy yell at the end of the match?

---



# CIVIL WAR



Panic spread through the crowd as they watched the two knights lay motionless on the dirt. The squires of both competitors ran to help their fallen knights.

When Rom's helmet came off there was a gasp from the crowd. No one had expected *him* to be in the competition. There was an even louder noise when the second knight turned out to be Minzo.

It was quite a while before Minzo sat up. He shook his head trying to clear his mind. He looked over and saw Rom lying on the other side of the barrier.

Shocked and surprised Minzo said to his helpers. "Where did *he* come from?"

"It appears that Rom was the other rider," his squire told him.

His assistants helped Minzo to his feet. He still was not able to walk well on his own.

He looked over at Rom who was still lying unconscious on the ground.

"Did I *kill* him?" Minzo asked.

"No, your Majesty. He's just knocked out. He should come around in a minute or so," one of the men tending to Rom answered.

His squire threw a bucket of water and then Rom coughed. His mouth had blood on it and he had a big bump on his head. He rolled over and coughed again. One of his aides gave him some water to drink.

While Rom was still on the ground the king approached him.

"What's going on here? What've you done?" the king asked looking at Minzo. "You know that I don't approve of this! You both have much to answer for.

I'll see you in the morning,"

And with that the king walked away shaking his head and muttering something under his breath that did not sound like it was going to be a good morning for either of them.

Rom was raised slowly to his feet. He looked over at Minzo in surprise.

"Did I just fight you?" Rom asked.

Minzo nodded his head and then turned to return to his shelter.

Rom had to be carried to his tent.

The doctor came and inspected Rom to make sure he was OK. He had broken his right arm, and had a slight concussion, but other than that he would be OK.

The crowd of people went home talking about what had happened that day. The event had ended in a draw. There would be no winner, but the people had great respect for both of the princes. Nothing like this had ever happened before.

The next day Rom and Minzo stood before the king. Rom had a bandage on his right arm and it was in a sling hanging from his neck.

At first the king just looked at the boys standing in front of him. He did not say a word. Rom and Minzo were very uncomfortable.

Finally, the king spoke up, "What you did yesterday was very thoughtless. I've invested too much into your education for you to do something as foolish as that.

"I've decided that you need to learn that there is too much for you to lose to be doing something like you tried to do yesterday.

"Do you really believe that I wouldn't find out?" the king asked not really expecting an answer.

The both of the boys shook their heads realizing that the king would have discovered they had been in the joust after the contest no matter who had won.

"Here is what I have planned for you. Rom, you are to go to the east. You

are to talk to all of the subjects in the kingdom to the east of Azereck. You are to collect the taxes that are due to me and bring them here in one month's time.

“Minzo, you are to go to the western half of the kingdom and you are to do the same,” the king explained the mission the princes would have to complete.

Tax collectors were the least popular persons in the entire kingdom. The tax collectors were mean and the people didn't like paying their taxes in the first place. What the king was asking them to do was not only unpopular but very dangerous.

“This will be a test to see if you can build loyalty among the subjects in the kingdom. I'll see you one month from now.”

After that the king walked out of the throne room with Queen Azul by his side.

Minzo and Rom looked at each other. This was not going to be an easy task.

The next morning Rom left the castle riding his favorite horse. He had two squires with him who rode in a small cart behind him.

Minzo left in the afternoon after having said good-bye to his family. He also had his squires with him.

Rom headed toward the border of the Kingdom of Nod. He decided he would go to the farthest point and then return collecting the taxes on the way back.

He had no experience in collecting taxes. He did not know how to talk to the farmers. His family had always lived in the village just outside of the castle.

On the other hand, Minzo had grown up on a small farm and had met the tax collectors many times before he moved to the castle.

It took a little more than a week for Rom to reach the border of the Kingdom of Nod.

The first family he visited was happy to see a stranger coming to visit. They were even more excited when they learned that he was a prince of the Kingdom of Azereck. They were not excited when they found out that he was coming to collect their taxes.

Rom and his men pulled up in front of the small cottage. Rom jumped down from his horse and knocked on the door. No one answered.

He knocked again, still no one answered.

Rom then walked around to the back of the house. He heard soft voices coming from inside.

He looked into the window and saw the family sitting at the table whispering to each other. When they saw Rom they jumped in surprise.

Through the window, Rom pointed to the entrance. The father of the house went to the door.

“What can I do for you, sir?” the man asked.

“I am Rom, a prince of the Kingdom of Azereck, and I have come to collect your taxes,” Rom stated as much like a prince as he could.

The man replied, “I don’t have your taxes right now. Can you come back in two days and I’ll pay you then?”

Rom agreed and left.

The next house he came to, he got the same response, “I don’t have your taxes right now. Can you come back in two days and I’ll pay you then?”

Then the next man gave the same response.

After seven different homes, Rom began to realize that collecting taxes was not going to be easy.

That night Rom stayed at an inn along the road. The innkeeper was a nice gentleman. Rom started talking to him and shared what had happened during his travels.

The innkeeper gave him an idea.

“Your majesty, if you want your taxes you have two options. The first option is to take the money by force. The problem you have is that you only have two squires with you, and the farmers are not afraid of you.

“The second option is to offer a discount. If they pay you a percentage of the

taxes now, you will forgive the balance. If they don't agree, then threaten to double the tax," the innkeeper explained.

Rom thought about the innkeeper's idea and concluded that this was an excellent idea.

The next day he went to the first house. The farmer came out of his house when he saw Rom approaching and went to meet him.

"I told you I would pay for two days. Why are you back so soon?" the farmer asked.

Rom explained his offer to the farmer. The farmer thought about it and then agreed.

Rom gave the farmer a receipt for the entire tax that was due stating that the bill was paid in full.

The idea worked so well that Rom was able to complete his task a week earlier than expected.

The farmers were very happy and said very nice things about Rom. He made many friends and they welcomed him to come back. He became well-liked by the citizen's in east.

For Minzo, the job was a bit harder.

Minzo was very direct in his approach to the peasants. He and his squires had little success in their attempt to collect the taxes. He spent many days returning to collect money that the farmers had no intention of paying.

One day Minzo heard about the way Rom was collecting his taxes. He decided to give it a try. The new plan worked. The farmers were happy to make a deal with the prince reducing the tax they owed the king.

Minzo was now well liked by the people in the western half of the kingdom.

On the day the king told the two princes to meet with him in the throne room, Minzo and Rom were both waiting.

The king looked over the accounting of the taxes collected.

“It is very interesting what I see here. You each collected less tax than what was due from each subject, but the total amount is far greater than the money collected by the regular tax collectors. What was your strategy?” King Walter asked.

Rom started, “I spoke with an innkeeper in Forestville. He suggested that if we collected a portion of the tax, the farmers would be more willing to pay now. Otherwise they would make us wait, most likely not willing to pay any of the tax. I thought a portion is better than no tax, so I made agreements with each the farmers. They all paid a portion of the tax,” Rom explained.

“What about you Minzo. How’d you do this?” the king asked him.

“To be honest, I was told about what Rom was doing and I copied it. I wasn’t having any luck the way I was doing it,” Minzo said not really wanting to give Rom the credit.

“I’m impressed. You are both honest people, that is one of the reasons why the tax collection is so good. Usually my tax collectors keep some of the money for themselves. You have done the kingdom a great service. I commend both of you, especially you Rom,” the king praised the princes.

After the meeting with the king, each of the princes went to their homes not knowing the purpose of the task, but they were happy it was over.

The next day a fight broke out in the courtyard of the castle. It was Rom’s brother Klem and he was fighting Minzo’s brother Grol. As the fight went on, people from the village came to watch. Some were for Klem and some were for Grol.

As the crowd grew, word got back to Rom and Minzo that their brothers were fighting in the courtyard.

The boys ran to the courtyard to try to stop the fight, but when they got there, the fight had grown. Some were fighting for Klem and others for Grol.

Soon it was as if the whole town was fighting.

Rom went to find his brother. As he was going through the crowd someone yelled, "There's Rom! Let's get him!"

Rom ducked as a rock went sailing past his head. Rom stayed low, hiding as best as he could behind the carts the vendors parked along the street, and found his brother. He pulled him out of the fight and into a doorway.

"What's going on?" Rom asked Klem.

"Grol said that you were a poor excuse of a prince and that you have no right to be in the castle. I had to stand up for you," Klem answered.

"What did *you* say?" Rom questioned.

"I said that Minzo is a jerk and that he isn't fit to be king," Klem told his brother.

They looked out of the doorway and the entire town was fighting in the streets; some for Rom and the others for Minzo.

Rom pulled his hood over his head so that no one would recognize him. He and his brother managed to get through the crowd and back to their house.

They looked out over the courtyard and the fight continued.

"Look at what you've started! How are we going to fix this?" Rom asked his brother.

The fight went on for hours. Word spread of the fight in the castle to the surrounding countryside. Farmers decided to go to the castle to fight for their prince.

Those from the east came to fight for Rom, while those from the west came to fight for Minzo.

It was turning into a civil war. No one knew how to stop it.

The fighting became more intense. Family was fighting family.

King Walter was caught completely by surprise. He had no idea how the fighting had begun and he had no idea how to stop it.

Word of the civil war in Azereck spread throughout the surrounding

kingdoms. Some of the kings had expected that something like this would happen when they learned that King Walter had selected two princes.

The Kingdom of War was still angry at the Kingdom of Azereck for kidnapping their king. Now they had a chance to get even.

They had been planning to attack the Kingdom of Azereck for quite some time. Now they saw they had an opportunity to defeat them easily.

The new king of the Kingdom of War was not very experienced in the strategies of war. His father had taken care of all of that. He called the best military men in his army to come to the castle to plan an attack on the Kingdom of Azereck.

Every day the new recruits were drilled in the fields. The foot soldiers learned to use their swords. The commanders taught the foot soldiers how to fight without their weapons in hand to hand combat.

The archers practiced hour after hour, day after day.

The horsemen learned to ride fast in their armor, and they learned how to use their swords on horseback.

The spear throwers trained day after day.

They built catapults and put them onto wheels so horses could easily move them. The engineers constructed a big ramrod to knock down the gates to the castle. After they were built they tested them to make sure they would destroy the walls of Azereck.

In matter of a couple of months the Kingdom of War was ready to attack the Kingdom of Azereck.

Now the king of the Kingdom of War knew that the Kingdom of Azereck would be unprepared and with the civil war happening, they would be easy to defeat.

The king of the Kingdom of War began to make plans on how to invade the Kingdom of Azereck.

His generals met in the palace and drew up a plan of attack that would be very difficult for any kingdom to repel even if they were at full strength. With the Kingdom of Azereck weakened by the civil war, it should not take very long to accomplish the task of invading the kingdom and destroying it.

The king of the kingdom of War wanted everything to be ready before he attempted to attack.

**VOCABULARY** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                    |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. peasants _____  | a. payments to the king       |
| 2. mutter _____    | b. kind man, older man        |
| 3. gasp _____      | c. common people              |
| 4. taxes _____     | d. surprised sound            |
| 5. unpopular _____ | e. reduction of cost          |
| 6. innkeeper _____ | f. say softly, not understood |
| 7. whisper _____   | g. proof of payment, paper    |
| 8. gentleman _____ | h. speak with no voice        |
| 9. discount _____  | i. not liked                  |
| 10. receipt _____  | j. owner of an inn            |

**TRUE OR FALSE**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. Rom and Minzo had to collect taxes.                       | T / F |
| 2. The people paid the tax on the first visit.               | T / F |
| 3. Minzo talked to the innkeeper.                            | T / F |
| 4. Rom went to the east.                                     | T / F |
| 5. Minzo used to live on a farm.                             | T / F |
| 6. Minzo attacked the farmers for the taxes.                 | T / F |
| 7. The princes collected more taxes than the tax collectors. | T / F |
| 8. Klem and Grol were best friends.                          | T / F |
| 9. The Kingdom of war wanted to attack Azereck.              | T / F |
| 10. Rom and Minzo went to fight for the Kingdom of War.      | T / F |

## MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Who told Rom how to collect taxes? d
  - a) the king
  - b) Minzo
  - c) the farmer
  - d) the innkeeper
  
2. How long did it take Rom to collect the taxes? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) one month
  - b) three weeks
  - c) two weeks
  - d) one year
  
3. Who was fighting in the streets? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) townspeople
  - b) soldiers
  - c) farmers
  - d) all of the above
  
4. Who was coming to attack the Kingdom of Azereck? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Kingdom of War
  - b) Kingdom of Nod
  - c) Kingdom of Rasport
  - d) King Walter

**COMPREHENSION:** (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. Who won the joust?

---

2. Who went to the west to collect taxes?

---

3. Who suggested that Rom should give a discount on the taxes?

---

4. How long did it take Minzo to collect the taxes?

---

5. Why was the king happy about the taxes?

---

6. Who began the fighting in the streets?

---

7. Who came to join the fighting at Azereck?

---

8. Who was surprised about all of the fighting?

---

9. Who was happy about the civil war in Azereck?

---

10. What did the Kingdom of War plan?

---



# ***BATTLE FOR AZERECK***



The fighting in Azereck continued to get worse. Although most of the fights were only yelling at each other, sometimes people got hurt. It hadn't turned into all-out civil war, yet.

Those who supported Minzo demanded that he be made the king. They wanted him to replace King Walter.

Those who supported Rom wanted the same thing for him. King Walter was confused. His kingdom was now at war with itself and he had no way to stop it. Even his soldiers had taken sides in the conflict.

Azereck was defenseless against an attack by any of the other kingdoms.

Minzo and Rom enjoyed the loyalty of their followers. They had meetings with them and helped to plan strategies against the other.

One day a rider on a fast horse approached the castle. He was carrying the Azereck banner. Once inside the castle walls he asked to see the king.

"Your majesty," he said as he bowed in respect before the king. "I have some very bad news to give to you. The new king of the Kingdom of War is preparing to invade your kingdom. They're looking for revenge because you kidnapped their king. They're making ready the attack as we speak. The Kingdom of War has been preparing for this for over two months. They're ready to begin the attack. They know that our kingdom has split. This is what the king of the Kingdom of War has been hoping for.

"Your majesty, you don't have much time. The army is ready to attack you.

They are marching toward your kingdom and will be here in three weeks. They have a large army,” the messenger gave the bad news to Walter.

“Bring Rom and Minzo here NOW!” the king yelled. “I’ve had enough of this nonsense. I want them in my throne room NOW!” the king yelled in a manner no one had ever seen before.

It took several hours for the soldiers to find Minzo and Rom. At first they didn’t want to respond to the king’s request, but after they heard the news about the Kingdom of War, they rushed to the throne room.

Rom arrived first. He was out of breath. He sat at the table in front of the throne and waited for Minzo.

Minzo got there a few minutes later. He was also winded from running to the castle. As soon as he sat down the king entered. Then everyone in the room bowed in respect.

King Walter sat down on his throne. He did not look happy.

Sounding very much like a king, Walter looked at the boys and then said to them, “I’m tired of all this fighting. I was hoping it would all go away. It’s my fault for selecting two of you to be princes, I realize that now, but we have a much bigger problem in front of us. The Kingdom of War is ready to attack. We don’t have much time before they get here. We’re not ready. Thanks to the two of you our kingdom is divided against itself. As things stand now, we might as well open our doors and let them in. We have no defense.

“Do either of you have any ideas on how to stop this ridiculous conflict and prepare ourselves for the army of the Kingdom of War?” the king finished still looking deep into the eyes of the two princes.

Rom and Minzo looked at each other.

The king continued, “You realize that if we are defeated by the Kingdom of War, neither one of you will have a throne to sit on, nor will you likely survive. I suggest you figure out a way to resolve this or we will all be killed.”

The two princes heard the king and realized that he was right. Somehow they had to stop the fighting and build an army to defend the kingdom.

“I hope you come up with a plan soon. It’s all in your hands young men. We will live or die by your decisions,” King Walter said just before he left the throne room.

Rom looked at Minzo. Minzo was looking at the floor. They were both thinking about what the king had just said.

Minzo looked over at Rom.

“I think he’s right. We have to stop fighting and protect Azereck. I’m willing to stop if you are,” Minzo said as he put out his hand for Rom to shake.

Rom stood still for a moment and then took Minzo’s hand and shook it.

“How do we start?” Rom asked.

“I have an idea. Follow me,” Minzo said as he was already heading out of the throne room. He ran up the stairs followed closely by Rom. They burst into the upper chamber and threw open the doors to the balcony that overlooked the castle courtyard.

(This was the same place where the king of the Kingdom of Azereck had asked for a volunteer to go the Kingdom of War and kidnap the king.)

Rom and Minzo stood side-by-side showing the people that they were united in defending the kingdom.

Minzo yelled out in as loud a voice as possible, “People of Azereck! We are your princes. Listen to us!”

Some of the people below looked up. They began to call others to come. Soon the entire courtyard was full of people curious as to why the two princes were standing together on the balcony.

Both Minzo and Rom motioned for the people to be quiet.

Minzo began, “My fellow Azerecks. We face dire dangers. The Kingdom of War is preparing to invade our kingdom. We only have a little time to prepare

ourselves. Rom and I have agreed to settle our differences. We ask that you do the same!”

Minzo then turned to Rom and gave him a hug. Rom returned the hug and then held each other’s hand they held their hands in the air.

Rom spoke up, “We need your help if we are to defend our kingdom. Will you join us?”

A resounding noise arose from the courtyard. It got louder and louder until everyone in the courtyard was yelling in agreement.

“Spread the news that we need all the capable young men we can find to help us defend our kingdom. Tell them that Rom and Minzo are united in the fight to protect what belongs to all Azerecks,” Rom spoke loudly and clearly to the people in the courtyard.

Rom and Minzo summoned the best soldiers to the castle. They met in the dining hall and laid out the plans to defend the kingdom. They knew that they would have to do something very different. If they locked themselves in the castle, the Kingdom of War would be victorious.

They spent all night in the dining hall, not even stopping to eat. Many ideas were shared and many were rejected. Rom and Minzo used the knowledge of warfare they had learned in their classes to help with the strategy. They looked at ancient texts to find ways to surprise the oncoming troops. As the sun was coming up in the morning, the meeting ended with a cheer. They had a plan and they were certain it was going to work.

Men poured into the castle volunteering to fight. Some were loyal to Rom and some were loyal to Minzo, but at this moment, it didn’t matter. They were there to defend Azereck.

The training began. The princes had assigned generals to be in charge of each phase of the plan. The castle and the surrounding fields were busy day and night with the sounds of metal striking metal as the new soldiers learned how to

handle a sword.

King Walter instructed the blacksmiths in the kingdom on how to create of fine weapons. They were light yet very strong. King Walter was seen in the blacksmith shop working on weapons himself. He was happy and he was working hard. He told those around him that he missed the days of working with his hands. Walter was faster at making weapons than any of the other blacksmiths in the kingdom, and his weapons were of the best quality.

The new recruits worked hard. They listened to the instructors, and they were trained for very special missions. The people of the kingdom were once again united.

Rom and Minzo walked around the training grounds giving advice and instructions themselves. They were seen together most of the time showing that they were committed to working as a team. King Walter could not have been prouder of them.

After two weeks of intense training, a messenger arrived. He told Minzo and Rom that the army of the Kingdom of War was on its way. They were marching toward Azereck and they would arrive within two weeks. He told them that the King of the Kingdom of War knew that they were preparing for the fight, but he was sure that the civil war had taken a big toll on the army and that Azereck would not be able to defend itself.

This was good news for Rom and Minzo. If the king of the Kingdom of War was overconfident, then their job would be much easier.

Now the plan was going into effect.

Minzo was in charge of the defense from the west and Rom the east.

The next day the army assembled in the courtyard. Minzo, Rom and the king stood on the balcony.

King Walter addressed the crowd, “My fellow Azerecks. Today is the most important day in the history of our kingdom. The army of the Kingdom of War is

approaching. They think that we are divided and that we are unable to defend ourselves. I tell you today, we are ready for this battle and we will be victorious!”

The crowd let out a boisterous cheer that echoed throughout the valley. The army was ready.

A week later Minzo made plans to leave the security of the castle under the protection of darkness.

That night, after midnight, Minzo and his men left the castle and headed toward the east. They would travel by night so that the spies from the Kingdom of War would not be able to report their position to the king of the Kingdom of War.

Two nights later Rom did the same going to the west.

The king felt nervous. What if Minzo and Rom decided to fight again? They each had a well-trained army under their command. He could only hope that they had truly decided to work for Azereck.

One platoon of men remained in the castle. They would be under the king’s authority. They took their positions along the walls of the castle alongside dummies made of straw. The idea was to make it appear that the castle was well defended. At the top of the walls were large metal bowls filled with oil. The moat around the castle was full of water. Sharpened poles pointed at an angle, making it difficult for horses to get through. Large ditches were dug and filled with water to make it more difficult to move the catapults close to the castle. Big holes had been dug into the ground with straw covering them so marching soldiers would fall into them. Piles of dried grass were put in the field approaching the castle that could be lit on fire from arrows shot from the castle. The castle was ready to defend itself from an attack.

Three days later the flags of the oncoming army were seen rising above the horizon. The bright reds and yellows of the flags foretold the army’s arrival. The townspeople had left and gone to the countryside. It was silent except for the sound of the soldiers marching toward the castle and the drums of the drummers. It was

an eerie sound and it grew louder the closer as the army of the Kingdom of War approached.

King Walter stood on the wall of the castle and looked out at the approaching army. The flags went as far as the eye could see. If it was not for these circumstances, the sight of the soldiers would have been very impressive.

They were about a half day away from the castle when the army stopped and set up their camp.

White tents popped up on the hills to the south of the castle. Men were moving from place to place and horses carried soldiers from right to left. They began to spread in an attempt to surround the king and his soldiers.

As the sun went down the yellow glow of fires lit up the night sky. Chants and songs echoed across the expanse of the open field in front of the castle.

As the night grew darker the fires began to grow dim. The sounds of singing and chanting died down and the only thing in the air was the smell of smoke. Crickets chirped and frogs croaked. The night became very quiet.

Suddenly there was the loud scream of hundreds of men as Minzo and Rom attacked the sleeping soldiers. Minzo from the left and Rom from the right.

At first a thousand burning arrows poured down from the sky onto the tents. The entire encampment began to glow. The soldiers from the Kingdom of War were running in circles. They did not know what to do.

Minzo's men ran into the camp swinging their light but sharp swords. Rom and his men did the same from the other direction. In a short time, the army of the Kingdom of War was defeated. They were completely surprised.

The king of the Kingdom of War was taken to the castle at Azereck. He was brought before King Walter.

"We have defeated you and now it is time for you to give up your kingdom. I have defeated you the same way I defeated your father," King Walter said to the king of the Kingdom of War.

“So, you are the one who kidnapped my father. Now you have me. You have done well King Walter. You have surprised everyone. No one thought that a blacksmith’s son would be so clever,” the king said to King Walter.

With that, the king was taken away.

“Bring Minzo and Rom here. I want to speak to them,” King Walter ordered his sentries.

It wasn’t long before Minzo and Rom were before the king.

“You’ve made me and the people of Azereck very proud. You’ve proven yourselves worthy to be princes. The Kingdom of Azereck is in your debt.

“I’ve made a decision. I’m stepping down as king of Azereck. The past few weeks have shown me that I prefer a simpler life. I want to return to being simply Walter Gressler.

“Therefore, before I leave my duties as king I’ve decided the following.

“Minzo, as the winner of the contest to become the crowned prince of Azereck, I declare that you’ll be my successor.

“As for you Rom, I’m giving you the throne of the Kingdom of War. I hope you don’t find that war is your friend. I hope that you and Minzo can remain friends and that between the two of you peace can remain in the region,” the king said.

He took off his crown and placed it on Minzo’s head. He then took the crown he had taken from the king of the Kingdom of War and placed it on Rom’s head.

He then bowed before the two kings and waved good-bye as he left his robe across the throne.

Walter and Azul would live the rest of their lives as simple people. Walter made the finest weapons and silver products the region had ever seen.

Minzo and Rom ruled their kingdoms wisely and fairly. Never before had the region experienced such peace and cooperation.



**VOCABULARY** (*Match the word to its definition*)

- |                      |                                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. defenseless _____ | a. attack, occupy              |
| 2. invade _____      | b. d                           |
| 3. revenge _____     | c. silly, absurd               |
| 4. nonsense _____    | d. joined, together            |
| 5. ridiculous _____  | e. payback, reprisal, get even |
| 6. resolve _____     | f. unprotected, helpless       |
| 7. chamber _____     | g. give up, yield              |
| 8. united _____      | h. teacher, coach              |
| 9. reject _____      | i. foolishness, rubbish        |
| 10. instructor _____ | j. large room                  |

**TRUE OR FALSE**

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. The people were fighting for their favorite prince. | T / F |
| 2. A messenger said the Kingdom of Nod was coming.     | T / F |
| 3. Rom and Minzo joined hands.                         | T / F |
| 4. The castle of Azereck was destroyed.                | T / F |
| 5. Rom became king of Azereck.                         | T / F |
| 6. King Walter worked as a blacksmith.                 | T / F |
| 7. The Kingdom of War invaded Azereck.                 | T / F |
| 8. The king of the Kingdom of War escaped.             | T / F |
| 9. Rom stayed in the castle to protect it.             | T / F |
| 10. Walter gave his crown to Minzo.                    | T / F |

## MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. Who told Walter about the Kingdom of War? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Rom
  - b) messenger
  - c) soldier
  - d) Minzo
  
2. Why did the King of the Kingdom of war attack? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) revenge
  - b) to be like his father
  - c) because Azereck was weak
  - d) all the above
  
3. Where did Rom and Minzo talk to the people? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) on the road to the Kingdom of Nod
  - b) in the moat
  - c) on the balcony
  - d) in the throne room
  
4. What did Walter make for the battle? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) swords
  - b) armor
  - c) shields
  - d) all the above

**COMPREHENSION:** (*Write a complete sentence to answer the question.*)

1. Why were the people of Azereck fighting each other?

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2. How did Walter find out about the Kingdom of War's plans?

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3. Who told Minzo and Rom they had to work together?

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4. What would happen if the Kingdom of War defeated Azereck?

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5. Which direction did Rom go when he left the castle?

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6. Where did the Kingdom of War put their tents?

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7. What did Walter do to help the soldiers?

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8. When did Rom and Minzo attack the Kingdom of War?

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9. What did the army of Azereck do first when they attacked?

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10. To whom did Walter give the crown to the Kingdom of War?

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