

REVISED EDITION

WHAT TO DO WHEN IT'S NOT FAIR

A **WORKBOOK**
for Kids
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Includes:

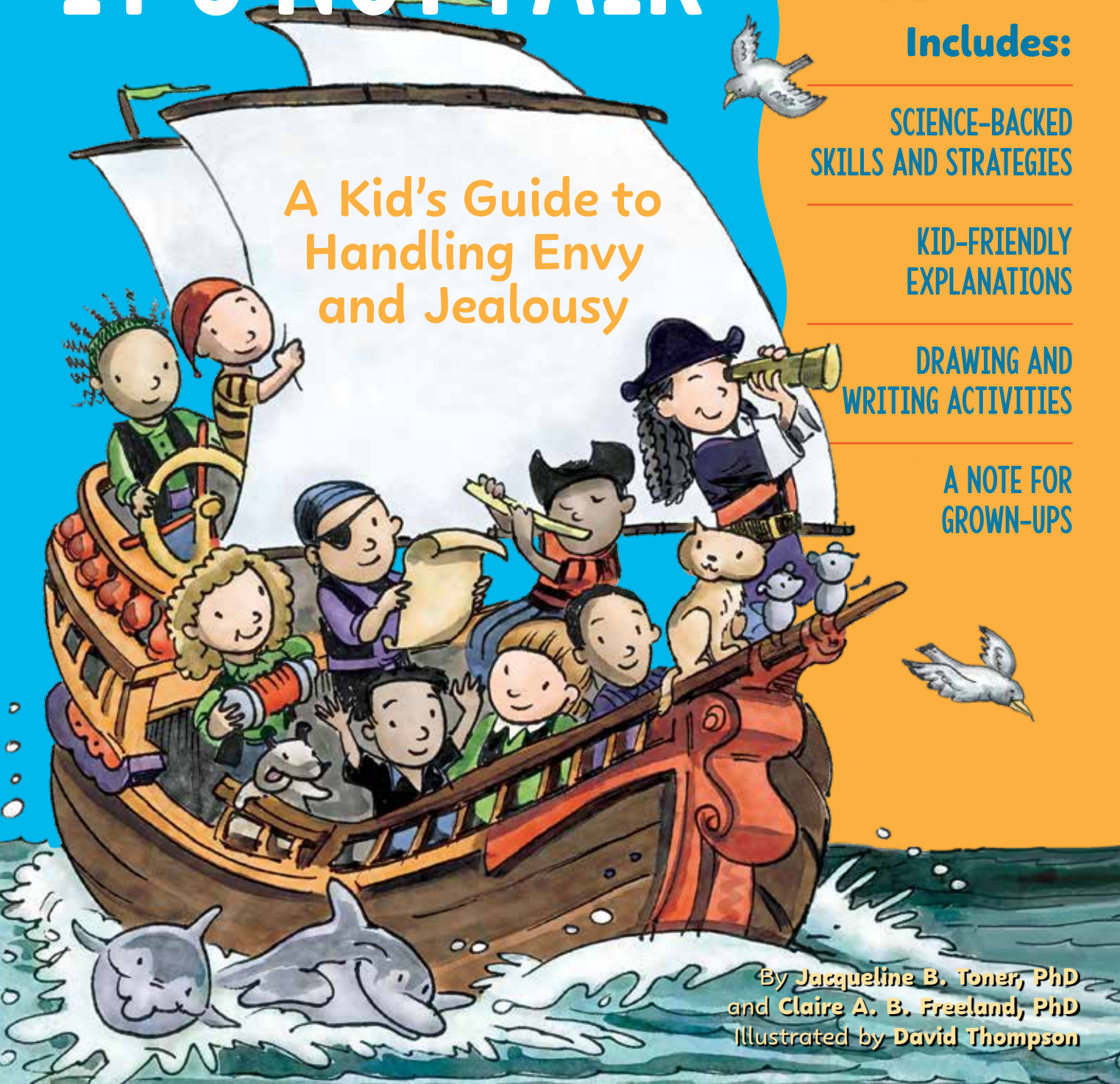
SCIENCE-BACKED
SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

KID-FRIENDLY
EXPLANATIONS

DRAWING AND
WRITING ACTIVITIES

A NOTE FOR
GROWN-UPS

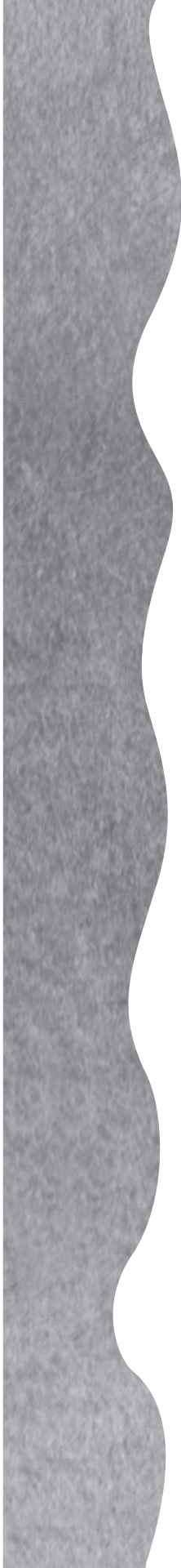
A Kid's Guide to
Handling Envy
and Jealousy



By **Jacqueline B. Toner, PhD**
and **Claire A. B. Freeland, PhD**
Illustrated by **David Thompson**

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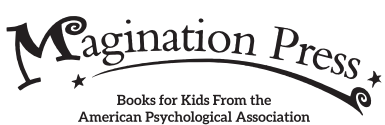
Illustrated by
David Thompson

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To Henry, Julian, Lilly, and Margo, with hugs and snuggles—*JBT*

To my dear children, with thanks for your love and support—*CABF*

To my loving family—*DT*



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NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Envy is part of your emotional repertoire. You may feel envy when you wish you had what someone else has: a bigger house, a better car, a certain vacation. You may become jealous of another person's preferential attention from time to time, such as when your boss favors your co-worker, or your friend is busy with others. And just like you, children confront envy—and its cousin, jealousy—on a regular basis and in many different contexts. However, adults are able to keep in perspective what children haven't learned yet: that desires and envy come and go.

Children who struggle with envy get over-focused on what someone else has that they want. They react inappropriately to the good fortune of others. They crave the attention of parents, teachers, and peers. They feel their own identity is based upon experiences or recognition that others have and that they want. Furthermore, children may not understand or recognize that they are feeling envy, and may act aggressively, have temper outbursts, or exhibit other misbehavior. Alternatively, a child may become withdrawn, giving up on developing a skill or reaching a goal. Envy is a difficult emotion

that can interfere with family relationships, affect friendships, and lower self-esteem. If such problems are rooted in envy, what can you, as a parent, do about them?

What to Do When It's Not Fair, Revised Edition will teach your child how to gain perspective by identifying the thoughts that produce envy and developing alternative thoughts that may not eliminate envy, but will reduce its impact. When thoughts change, inevitably emotions and behaviors do as well. With practice, children can learn to think more realistically. When they do, they are less likely to be thrown off course by envy.

Parents often feel compelled to respond to the behaviors at hand first. A sulky, uncooperative child might be asked to "take five" and come back with a more cooperative attitude. That will likely result in temporarily improved behavior, but you may need to help your child increase her self-awareness and develop coping strategies for the next time envy rears its ugly head. Children who struggle with envy will need extra help dealing with the feelings and behaviors associated with this emotion. Directly addressing their fears—of losing your attention (or that of another parent or adult), of wanting what someone else has, of feeling left out, or of feeling inferior—may be helpful.

Also, parents can teach important lessons about expressing gratitude for what one does have, forgiving and forgetting, and being generous with others. You have

probably tried reminding your children of their good fortune at other times or in other situations. Perhaps you pointed out items or opportunities that they have that others do not. Or maybe you've reminded them of the fun they've had in the past with friends whom they currently feel have overlooked them. If you have more than one child, you've certainly explained repeatedly that fairness doesn't mean always getting one's way and that, in a family, it's important that everyone has an opportunity to have a turn or to make a choice for all. No one person can always choose which show to watch! However, some children have a harder time than others accepting these messages. They need more help recognizing envy and thinking about their experiences differently. Our emotions are not driven merely by what happens to us, but also by how we understand and interpret those events. Parents can gently guide a child to think differently about uncomfortable, unfortunate, or envy-provoking situations. Children can learn to challenge their initial thoughts, and get past their envy.

We hope that this book will aid you in your efforts to help your child learn to cope with envy. We encourage you to read through the book first on your own. A basic understanding of the psychology underlying the techniques in this book will help you to coach your child effectively. Then begin to read with your child, a chapter or two at a time. As you do so, perhaps you will recall recent events your child faced that mirror those presented. If so, consider reminding your child of those occasions. If they became upset at the time, explore ways in which he might think differently now,

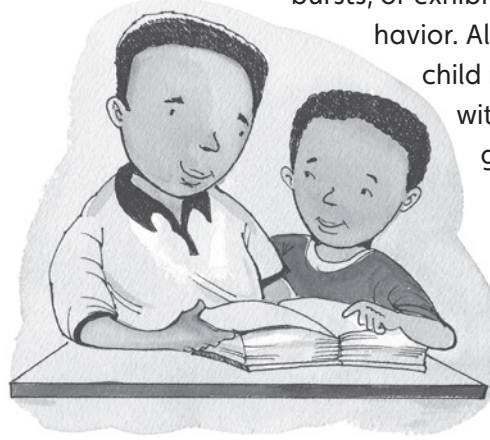
benefitting from examples in the book. And by all means, if they coped well with a situation that prompted envy, praise them for their skill. Inquire about what thoughts they used to manage those feelings of envy. By underscoring such successes, you will encourage your child to use the strategies again.

Keep in mind that learning to analyze thoughts is a developmental process. Children of different ages will vary in their ability to come up with alternative thoughts. However, you can coach your child to reflect upon their own thoughts and, perhaps, with practice, think differently. At the very least, noticing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors together will give your family a format for addressing emotional experiences.

Of course, simply reading a book with your child won't instantly result in an ability to cope with envy. That will take plenty of guided practice and experience. The examples and discussions in the book are designed to help you talk to your child productively about ways to challenge envy thoughts. By doing so, you are supporting the development of your child's coping skills. We encourage you to reinforce new learning about the connection between feelings, thoughts, and behaviors regularly. Your child won't be freed from all feelings of envy, but you will hear "it's not fair" a lot less often.

Jacqueline B. Toner, PhD, and Claire A. B. Freeland, PhD, are clinical psychologists in Baltimore, Maryland, each with over thirty years of experience in private practice working with children and parents.

David Thompson lives in Baltimore, Maryland. A third-generation artist, he can't remember a time when he didn't draw.



CHAPTER 1

Yo Ho Ho!

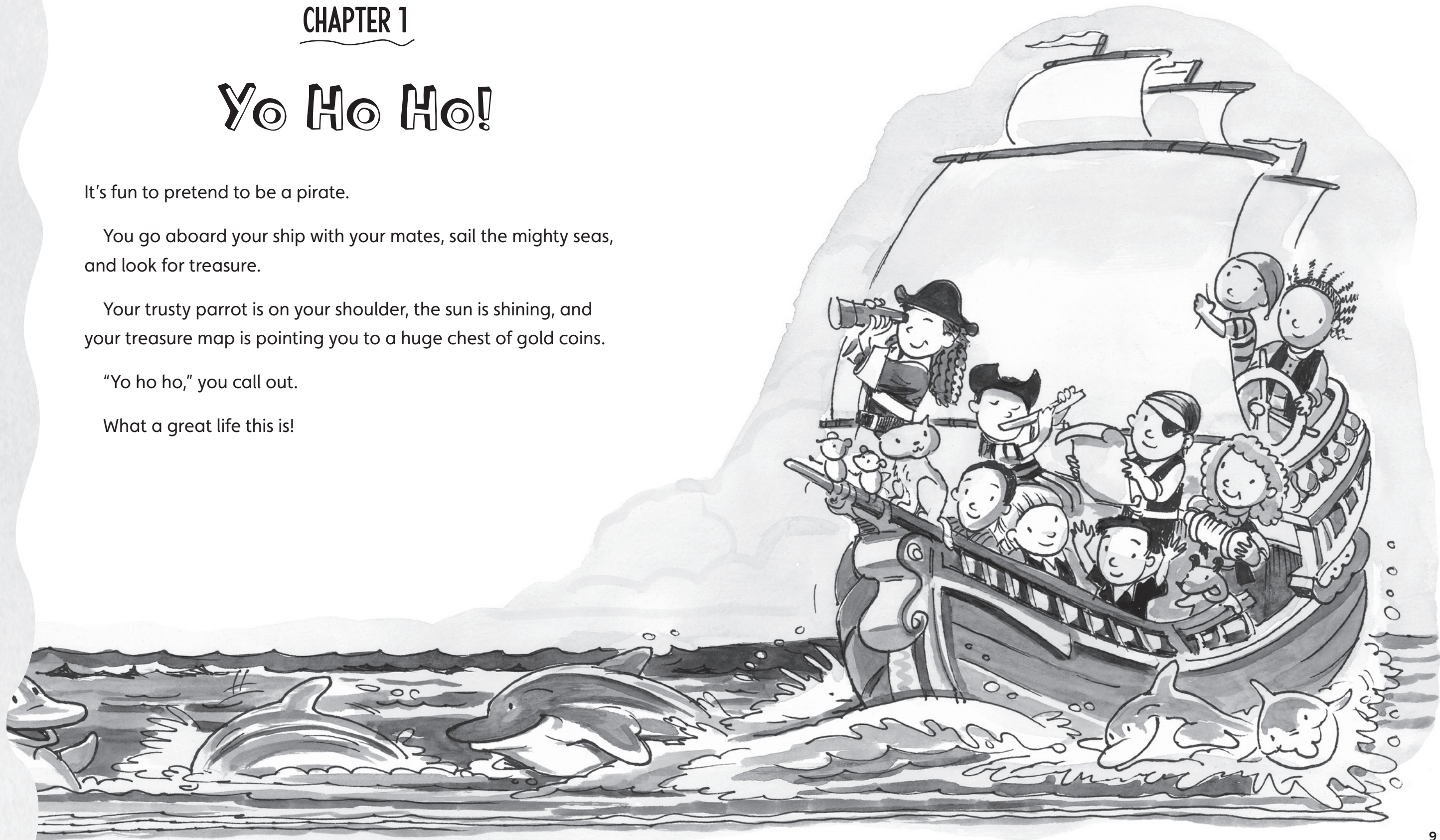
It's fun to pretend to be a pirate.

You go aboard your ship with your mates, sail the mighty seas,
and look for treasure.

Your trusty parrot is on your shoulder, the sun is shining, and
your treasure map is pointing you to a huge chest of gold coins.

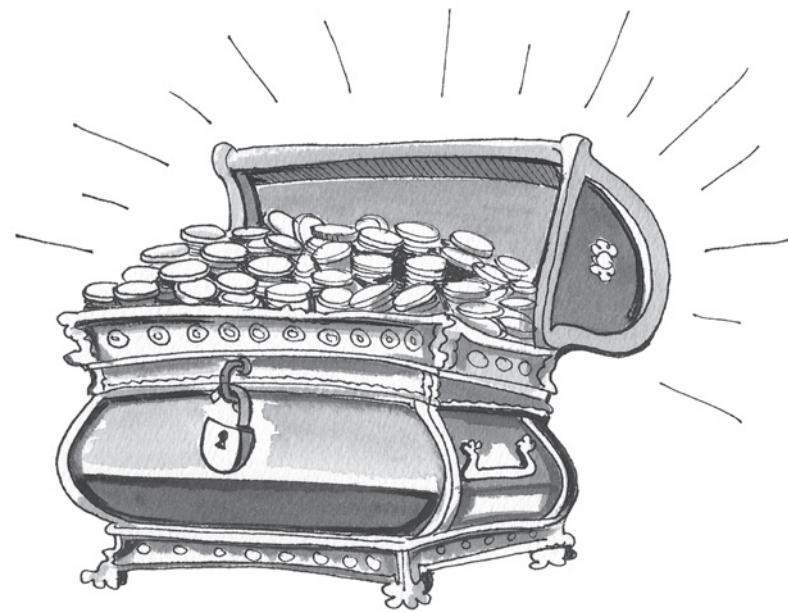
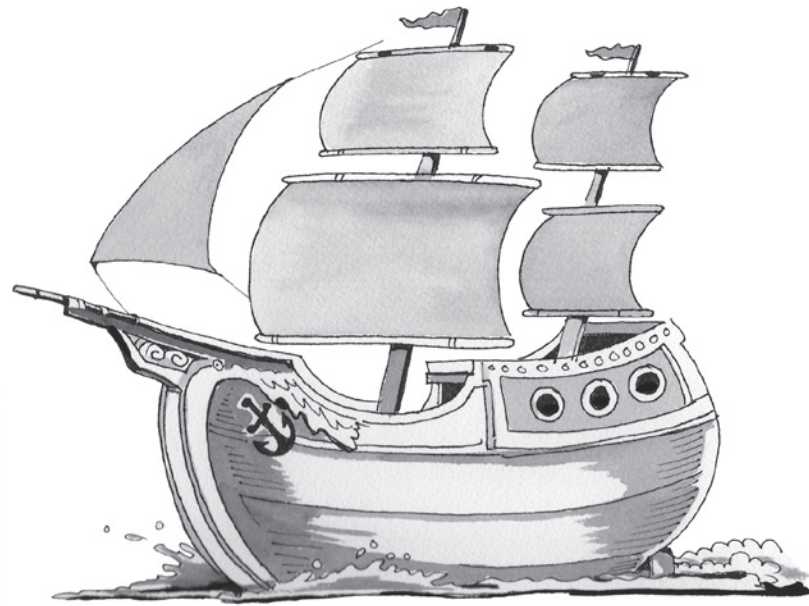
"Yo ho ho," you call out.

What a great life this is!



A fantastic day for a pirate or an adventurer might include:

- A big sturdy ship with a crew of strong and courageous shipmates.



- An enormous chest of the finest gold coins.

- A loyal parrot for a pet.



Draw or write about a great day for a pirate.

Now that you've created an adventurer's dream day, imagine one of your own.

What makes you happy?

Lots of kids feel that an especially happy day might include getting special attention, receiving a new toy, winning a game, or going somewhere super cool.

It feels good to win and to have special treats and activities.

What's your idea of a fantastic day?



Draw or write about a great day for you.

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a child to draw or write about their great day. The box is outlined in a simple black line and is positioned on the right side of the page, below the instruction banner.