

Years 3 & 4
3rd Place: Ava Tresham
Year 4, Home School

The Wonder of Running Waters

The small wooden door CREEEEEEEEKED . . . and SQEEEEEEKED . . . as it was slowly opened. Myra's little sister peeped in.
"AMELIA! Yuk! Don't go in there!" Myra ran over and pulled her sister away from the small, arched door located under the Botanic Cafe.
"Why not? We always love investigating and adventuring!" said Amelia.
"Because," Myra replied, "there could be anything under there. It's dark and old! There could be snakes, spiders, or anything!"
They looked at each other, scrunched up their noses, and after a moment of holding their breath, said together at the same time,
"GROSS . . . BLAH!"
"Phew," said little Amelia, looking at the door as if they had just avoided a major disaster.

As they stood looking at this mysterious little door, their imagination began to wonder . . . in all the visits to Running Waters Botanical Park, neither of them had ever noticed this little door before. It was as if it was a hidden secret door all this time that has only been seen now.

But why now? What is behind this door? Myra thought to herself.

Oh . . . I wonder? Is it a secret door to a hidden magical land maybe?

After a moment, Myra couldn't help but smile as she said,

"Though, I do wonder what is behind there . . . don't you? Maybe there are magical gnome workers who come through the door without being seen and so they can work in the gardens?" Myra said as she smiled.

"We must discover the answer to this mystery before we leave the park today!"

Amelia tapped her big sister investigator on the arm.

"Myra . . ." she said, "the door is open enough for us to peep in without touching it! Can we go a little closer?"

"Hmmm . . . I don't know Amelia," Myra replied.

Amelia pulled Myra's jacket and gave one of her adorable looks.

"PLEASE! We can be brave together!"

The sisters looked into each other's eyes. Amelia grabbed Myra's hand, and with that, they took a step closer . . .

Then another.

Just as they were about to take another step between all their nervous giggles –

WOOOSSHH! A big gush of wind came along and slammed the door –

BANG! Shut the door.

"OH!" they exclaimed when a pair of gumboots next to the mysterious door toppled over and out popped a piece of paper.

"LOOK!" pointed Amelia, "is that a map?"

"WOW Amelia! Let's look closer." Myra reached down to pick up the map and –

WHOOSH . . . WISSSHH! Another gust of wind came by and flew the paper up into the air. Really wanting to see what this paper was they followed it in a hurry.

"I do love windy days," said Myra, "but today, this wind is making chasing this piece of paper . . . a mission!"

As she looked up she thought to herself . . . *it really does look like a map! But for where?*

The paper kept soaring through the air . . . higher . . . and higher.

"Oh no! We're never going to find it now!" said Amelia, deflated.

"Hey," Myra said to her little sister, "if we want to be real investigators, giving up is not an option." Amelia smiled and agreed.

"Let's do this!" they shouted together in harmony.

The sisters ran across a grass patch, looked up, and saw the paper in a tall tree. And guess what? The closer they got the more it looked like a map! And no ordinary map, but something more mysterious. Myra thought to pull the park map out of her pocket to check if they looked alike, which they did not at all. This made Myra and Amelia more determined than ever to catch this piece of paper . . . somehow?

Just then, Myra turned to see one of the parks gardeners looking through his binoculars, up at the sky, to the map that flew away. She thought it was interesting that he was following the map too. As he walked off, Myra looked down at his feet to notice that he was wearing the same gumboots that had tumbled over, next to the door, under the Botanic café. She thought that was strange.

"Ok Amelia," said Myra, "I think I found the answer to the . . . Amelia? AMELIA! Where are you?" Myra got so worried! She had taken sight off her five-year-old little sister, who was nowhere to be seen! But then she heard a voice –

"MYRA! I'm over here!"

As she followed Amelia's voice, she found her following a beautiful Monarch butterfly. Then there were two. Then three! And more!

"Phew! I thought I had lost you!" sighed Myra in relief.

The sisters had a lot of fun watching the butterflies that they even forgot about the map.

Their Mum called them to come back closer to the picnic rug. Before leaving, Myra stretched out her hand out to see if a butterfly would land. Instead, and to her surprise, the very map they were following fell from the tree to the ground, right in front of her! She quickly grabbed the map before it could fly off again, and opened the folded paper, showing Amelia, who was extremely pleased. She read the map aloud: "The Wonder of Running Waters."

Together, the girls decided that more exploring would be fun! So, they asked their Mum if they could follow the map to see what was at the end. Thankfully, their mother said, "Yes." So, with that, the sisters set off on an even bigger journey of following a real treasure map.

They followed the map alongside beautiful rose bushes, comforting daffodil patches, and lovely frangipani trees. They walked over wooden bridges; and ran beside a creek that flows through the parkland. They stopped to look at flowers, ferns, and so much more that they could never name all of what they had seen.

Still following the map with only a few steps to go, the sisters puffed their final steps up many stone steps until they reached the top.

“Oh no!” Myra said to Amelia, still puffing for air as they tried to catch their breath. “We’re right back where we started at the cafe! I hope we are not being led back to that little door, as I am still not going in there!”
The girls took a deep breath . . . and then . . .
Burst out laughing! They laughed . . . and laughed . . . and laughed until they could not laugh anymore. Their tummies were so sore from laughing that Amelia said, “No! Please stop! I don’t think I can laugh anymore!!”
Then, they giggled a little more.
“How can this be! I can’t believe we just did a whole lap of Running Waters!” said Myra confused, but still with a hint of laughter in her.
In that moment, their mum came up the many stairs puffing for breath, and said, “Hello giggle-pots, looks like you are having the best day out in nature!”
Myra told her mum of their adventures. She thought the girls were living their best life, and that adventures like theirs are what kids’ dreams are made of.

But just then, as Myra was showing her mum the map, she realised that the ‘X’ that marked the treasure spot was in fact located behind the Café. Amelia asked their mum to join in on the adventure, and she got very excited!
“Lead the way,” she said. “Let’s see where this adventure leads us, as now I really must know too!”
The three of them walked around the Café only to see more stairs. This time thankfully there were only a few, so up the stairs they went. Next, they walked past a big old tree. They took fifteen steps to the location of the ‘X’ to then find –
“HUH! An EMPTY flower bed!?” cried Myra.
“How can this be?” questioned Amelia.
“WWHHAAAA!” wailed Myra, as their mum just stood there puzzled.
The family was so confused, and at the same time, so upset and deflated all-in-one.
“WHHAAA,” the sisters moaned again.
In that moment, the gardener with his gumboots on, appeared with a friendly smile, “Ahhh!” he said. “I see you found my map, and the treasure spot. That means the map works!”
“Huh!” is all Myra could sigh. They were so confused.
“What do you mean? All it led us to is an empty flower bed!” little Amelia said.
“Well,” said the Gardener, “our annual Tulip Festival is in Springtime. Four tulip bulbs are planted here together, so they stand out from the rest. Those who follow the treasure map and find this special planting will receive free entrance to the park for a whole year. But here is the thing, only one map will be hidden somewhere in the park each day!”
The girls were so excited!
“Oh my gosh, I hope we get to come to the Tulip Festival!” exclaimed Amelia.
But the gardener just smiled at her, reached into his pocket, and said, “I hope you get to come too!” And with that, he handed each of them a free ticket to the annual Tulip Festival.
“WOW! I can’t believe we are the ones to find this mystery map AND get treasure!” jumped Amelia excitedly.
“We can’t wait to come back to Running Waters Botanical Park and find our next mystery adventure, thank you!” Myra said to the gardener happily while showing the tickets to Amelia and her Mum.
The Gardener smiled and said, “Remember, always keep the wonder of mystery and magic alive.”