



# Key Stage Two English

## Set B Reading Booklet

This booklet contains:  
*Festivals Around the World*  
*Down in the Sewers...*  
*The Call of the Wild*







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# Festivals Around the World

For thousands of years, people have gathered to celebrate significant religious or historical events. These festivals aren't just about having a good time — they also help to strengthen local communities and remind people of their culture. Here are a few of the different festivals celebrated across the globe.

## Holi

Holi is a vibrant springtime festival traditionally celebrated by Hindus in India and Nepal.

The evening before the festival begins, the Holika bonfire is lit. This symbolises the triumph of good over evil. The next day, the chaos begins. Festivalgoers pelt each other with powdered paint and coloured water — the bright colours hail new life and the beauty of spring.

Differences of wealth, age and gender are disregarded during Holi, so no-one's safe from the messy fun — anyone venturing outside can expect to be showered with colour! Musicians also roam the streets, singing songs and playing the drums.



## Up Helly Aa

The small town of Lerwick in the Scottish Shetland Islands plays host to the Up Helly Aa festival. Lerwick's festival began in the 1800s, but it pays tribute to the Shetland Islands' Viking history — some parts of the festival echo Norse rituals brought to Britain centuries before by the Vikings.

Today, it's a dramatic annual event taking place on the last Tuesday of January, and attracting spectators from around the world. On the day, groups of men parade the streets carrying torches made from thick posts topped with paraffin-soaked sacking. The procession is led by the Guizer Jarl, who wears an impressive Viking costume. Later, the participants set a replica Viking longship ablaze and sing traditional songs.



# Día de los Muertos

Visit Mexico in early November and you might see skeletons dancing or cheering in the streets.

It's Día de los Muertos — the Day of the Dead — a festival that traces its roots back to Aztec times, and which honours people who have died. The festival, which initially took place in the summer, was later moved to the autumn to coincide with the festivals of All Souls' Day and Halloween.

Some people might dress up by putting on skull masks or ghoulish make-up. Many women recreate the iconic look of La Calavera Catrina (the Lady of the Dead) — a fictional character with a skeletal face who dresses elegantly and wears an extravagant hat. Families may also make altars known as *ofrendas*, create skulls from sugar, or make sweet breads called *pan de muerto*.



# Las Fallas

The Fallas festival takes place over five days in the middle of March in Valencia, a city on the eastern coast of Spain.

This fiery spectacle of art and sound is believed to have its origins in the Middle Ages. A group of Valencian carpenters are thought to have gone out into the streets and burned their *parots* — wooden devices used to hold their lights — to celebrate the coming of spring and to commemorate Saint Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters.

Since then, the festival has evolved, and instead of simple *parots*, Valencians now make hundreds of elaborate statues, some several storeys high. These statues frequently illustrate social problems such as greed and poverty, or ridicule famous people. The concluding event of the festival is La Cremà, an evening where many of the statues are burned to cinders in the streets of Valencia.



# Down in the Sewers...

Sewers run deep underground beneath our feet, and few people ever enter them. They're a maze of rat-riddled tunnels that take away all our waste water. But they're also one of the most useful inventions of all time...

## The sewage system

The sewage system transports waste water away from homes and businesses to be processed. There's a lot of this water to move, and the sewers have to carry every drop, whether it comes from toilets, showers, baths, home appliances, factories or other sources.

The way waste is processed is often known as the sewage cycle, which begins when waste water enters the sewers from drains, toilets and sinks. The waste then travels through the sewage tunnels to a waste treatment centre.

Here, the waste is filtered to remove rubbish. This can include a bizarre assortment of objects: nappies, face wipes and even bricks are frequently removed during this part of the process. The waste is also specially treated to remove any dirt or infectious bacteria.

The clean water is then pumped into rivers or streams. From there, it's used to irrigate fields, or, after more treatment, it might well flow back into our household taps and toilets, where the whole cycle begins again.





## The history of London's sewers

Today, the UK has extensive systems to treat waste water, but in Victorian London, human waste was collected in open holes called cesspits — or else simply dumped in the street. This waste could then flow down into the drains and wash into the River Thames, which was a vital source of water used for drinking and cooking.

Contaminated water drawn from the river caused many dangerous illnesses: an outbreak of cholera in 1853 killed around 10,000 people. These diseases were made more deadly by overcrowding in the city — London's population had hit 1 million by the early 1800s and was constantly rising.

The situation reached crisis point in 1858, when the city suffered the 'Great Stink'. Warm weather caused the stench of the foul river water to become unbearable. Parliament resolved to fix the issue and this led them to give the Metropolitan Board of Works £3 million to build a new sewer network, based on plans drawn up by the engineer Joseph Bazalgette. The building project began in 1859 and by 1868 most of London was connected to the new sewage network.

Crucial to the project were new embankment structures on the River Thames. Part of the riverbank was extended, so that some of the new sewer network could be built at the edge of the river. The embankments also resolved some other important issues: they made space for an extension of the London Underground, and new roads were built above ground. The embankments were also to have a series of gardens planted on them for public enjoyment.

Joseph Bazalgette's ambitious project didn't just solve the city's sewage problem — it also helped to better the lives of people across London.



## Stories from the sewers...

Although dank, dark and dirty, the humble sewer has occasionally been an unlikely godsend for those in need of refuge. During World War Two, when Jewish people were being persecuted by the Nazis, the Chigers — a family from Lvov, in modern day Ukraine — took to the sewer network to hide for fourteen months, surviving against the odds in the filthy conditions.

You might assume that the contents of sewage pipes would be worthless. However the sewers may actually contain surprising quantities of gold! This is partly a result of ordinary actions — when people brush their gold teeth or knock their rings together while washing their hands, minuscule amounts of gold wash down the sink. It's estimated that the value of the gold flowing through sewers each year could be in the millions of pounds. That's about as much as you would find in some gold mines!



Due to their dark and grimy nature, the sewers have often been imagined to house all manner of outlandish and dangerous creatures. In New York in the 1930s, an urban legend arose about an alligator roaming the sewers, known as the 'sewer gator'. Newspaper articles described the discovery of alligators down drains in vivid detail. Some people at the time thought that the cause of this was the flushing of unwanted pet baby alligators down the toilet, although there was no evidence for this.

As the years have passed, people have grown sceptical about the claims of the sewer gator's existence: they assert that alligators simply couldn't survive in the sewers. But the reports of alligator sightings have continued to emerge with no rational explanation. So when you next sit on the toilet — watch out! You might just get an unexpected visitor...

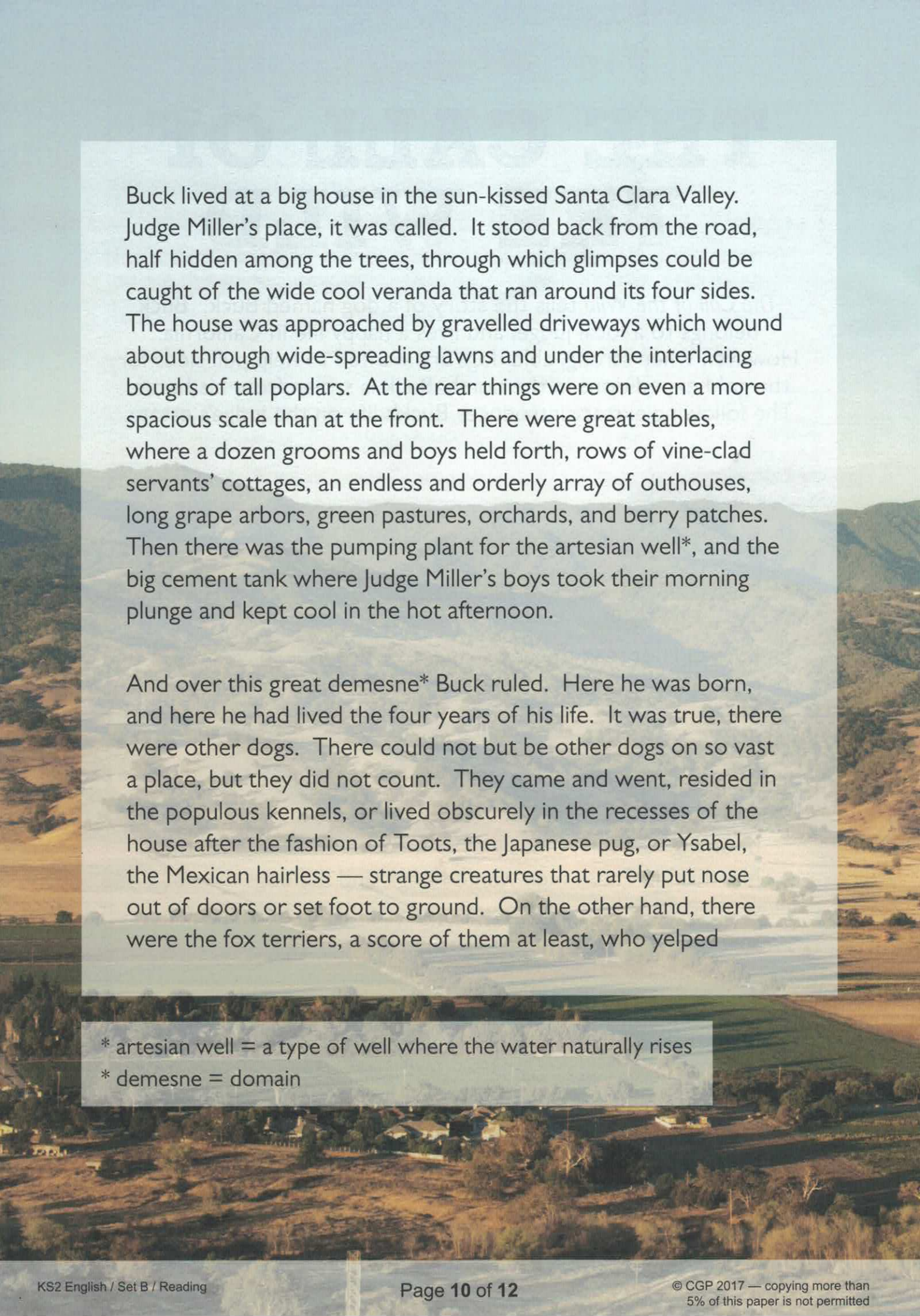
**The development of sewers changed our health and our hygiene — and they've got more than a few secrets of their own.**

# THE CALL OF THE WILD

*The Call of the Wild* tells the story of a dog named Buck. Buck belongs to a local judge, and lives a happy life in California. However, when strong, able dogs are wanted to help pull sleds for the gold expeditions in the north, Buck is stolen from his home. The following extract introduces Buck's life on the judge's estate.

Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming\* the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost.

\* booming = advertising



Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. Judge Miller's place, it was called. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide cool veranda that ran around its four sides. The house was approached by gravelled driveways which wound about through wide-spreading lawns and under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars. At the rear things were on even a more spacious scale than at the front. There were great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants' cottages, an endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches. Then there was the pumping plant for the artesian well\*, and the big cement tank where Judge Miller's boys took their morning plunge and kept cool in the hot afternoon.

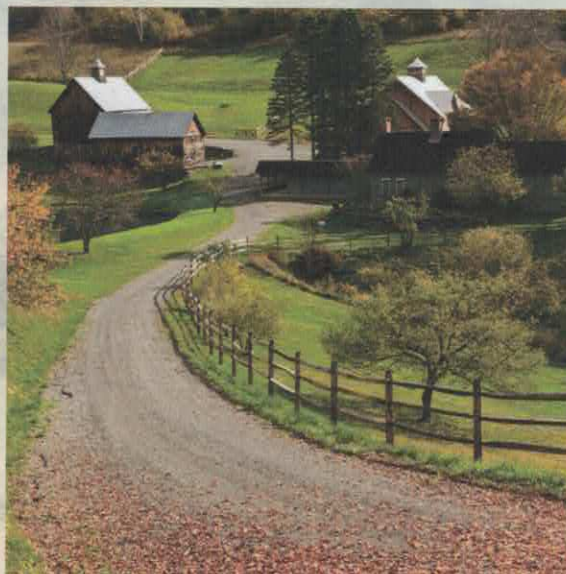
And over this great demesne\* Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. It was true, there were other dogs. There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count. They came and went, resided in the populous kennels, or lived obscurely in the recesses of the house after the fashion of Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless — strange creatures that rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground. On the other hand, there were the fox terriers, a score of them at least, who yelped

\* artesian well = a type of well where the water naturally rises

\* demesne = domain

fearful promises at Toots and Ysabel looking out of the windows at them and protected by a legion of housemaids armed with brooms and mops.

But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge's daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king — king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included.



An extract from *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London

