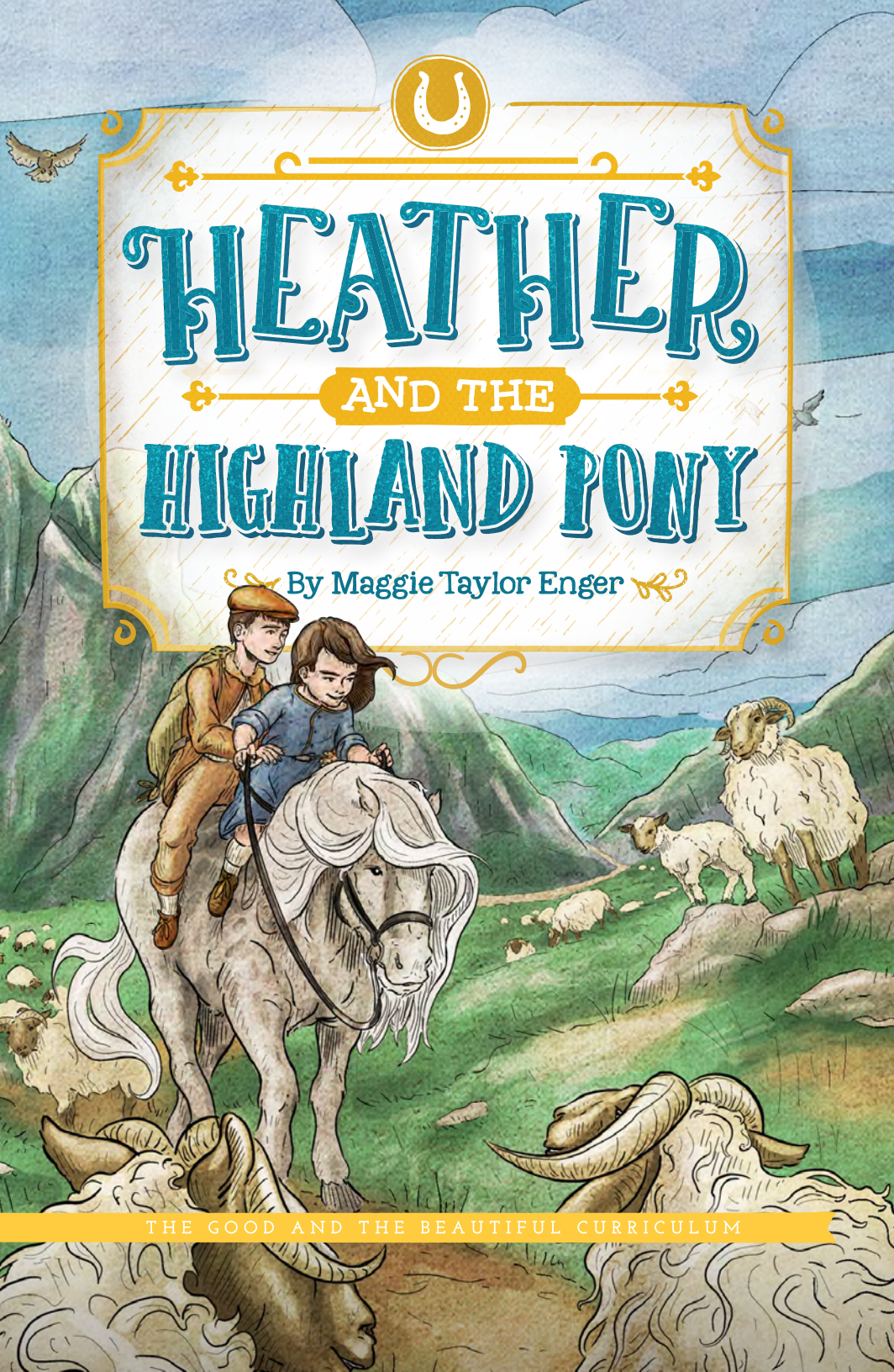
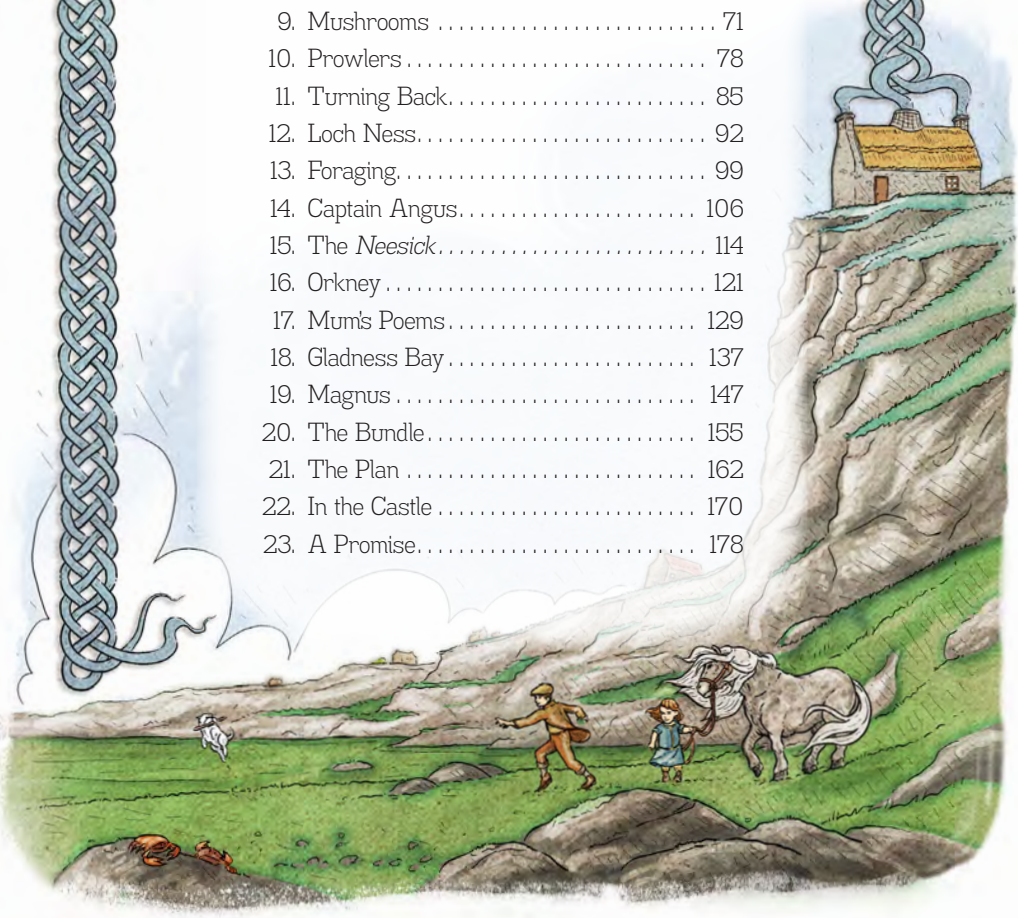

HEATHER
AND THE
HIGHLAND PONY
By Maggie Taylor Enger
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL CURRICULUM

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Chapter 1: Practice Page

PHONICS

Decoding

Read to the child: A phonogram is a letter or group of letters that together make a sound. You have already learned many phonograms, and this course will not review all phonograms. The letters in green boxes in this course show phonograms that almost always say the same sound. Point to each box and say the sound of the phonogram.

ai	qu	oi	ir	oa	wr
rain	quit	oil	bird	oat	write

Some groups of letters can make different sounds. The phonograms in gray boxes in this course have different sounds. Read the words with different sounds of OU in the orange box.

ou	grouch, bounty, lounge, bough group, souvenir, acoustic, routine country, cousin, nervous, generous

VOCABULARY

Read the vocabulary section to the child. The vocabulary words given on practice pages are included in the chapter and throughout the book.

Distress is a feeling of extreme worry or trouble.
I looked at the broken vase in distress.

Hardy means tough and sturdy.
The hardy plant withstood the cold winter.

Chapter 1: Hurry!

STUDENT

"Wake up, my wee lassie!" came a fierce whisper.

Blinking in confusion, Heather rolled over to face her mum in the dark room. "Mum, what's—"

"No time for questions, lassie," came Mum's frantic voice. "Please take your brother to the big rose bush by the waterwheel. Make sure the soldiers don't see you and wait there for Da and me to come and collect you."

Obediently, Heather propped herself up on her mat and grabbed her wool dress, pulling it quickly over her sleeping gown and not even bothering to tie the sash.

Heather's mum quickly pressed a heavy cloth bag into her daughter's arms. "Heather, if we've not arrived at the waterwheel by sunrise, you should leave town. Look after your brother and take care of this bundle. It will help you. You need to—"

But Heather's mum couldn't finish her sentence. A soldier called her name loudly.

"I love you, Heather," she said instead. "I must go. Stay hidden. Hurry!"



Heather's heart pounded. How she wished she had said, "I love you, too, Mum," but her mum had already turned and disappeared out of the dark room.

Suddenly, she heard her da's raised voice just outside. "I know nothing about stolen items nor how the MacKinnons's things ended up in my barn!" His voice was confident, and Heather knew he was being truthful.

I have no idea what is happening, Heather thought. All she could piece together was that some soldiers were accusing her da of stealing from the MacKinnons. *How absurd! My da is no thief, and who are the MacKinnons anyway?* Heather hurried over to her brother's mat in the opposite corner of the room and shook him gently.

"Archie, put on your coat and come with me."

At only nine years old, Archie was three years younger than Heather, but he was already several inches taller. Like their mum and da, Archie was average height. Heather was the only person in her family born with dwarfism.

Archie sleepily shrugged on his wool overcoat. He tried to ask Heather what was happening, but she simply told him, "Not now!" The siblings crept through the small, dark house to the back door. It creaked loudly as it swung open, and the children froze, afraid they would be discovered. But the raised voices at the front of the house never changed.

A light rain, not much more than mist, sprinkled their faces—a familiar feeling to anyone who lived in the Scottish Highlands. It took a brave and hardy person to embrace the constantly changing and sometimes harsh weather of that beautiful, wild land.



STUDENT

In the dim early morning light, the children could barely see their way down the path, which was lined by a stone wall. However, they had been to the waterwheel at the iron forge so many times that they probably could have found their way with their eyes closed. All the while, painful words rang in Heather's ears. *Stolen items. MacKinnons. Stay hidden.*

Hurrying down the path, the siblings stayed close to the wall and moved farther and farther from the voices outside their home.

As they approached the waterwheel, Heather knew exactly where her mum wanted them to hide. A huge patch of wild rose bushes spread across the hill just behind the stone wall of the iron forge. Three or four years ago, Heather had discovered a small tunnel-like opening in the stone wall. Being a wee lassie, she had crawled into the opening and found a network of these openings in the rose bushes.

On a few different occasions, she had seen little bunnies in the tunnels. At first, they had been afraid of her, but eventually, they had grown to trust her as she had never caused them any harm.



STUDENT

Now Heather tugged Archie's hand and said, "We need to crawl under here and wait. No time for questions."

Archie crawled on his stomach to squeeze through the gap in the wall first, and then Heather passed the bag to him. Just as she got on her hands and knees to crawl through behind him, the glow of a lantern caught her attention. In its warm light, she saw two soldiers leading her family's beautiful Highland pony, Bonnie, down the path. They were coming in her direction. Without another thought, Heather scrambled through the hole as quickly as she could, hoping her legs had not been seen by the soldiers.

Holding her breath, she listened as they passed.

"Why'd you even bring the old pony?" one soldier asked.

"It might be old, but it's still strong and healthy," the other responded. "It'll be worth a few pounds at the factory."

Highland ponies are a tall and very strong breed that can live for thirty years. Bonnie was around twenty, so she still had many years left. More importantly, she was a gentle and noble friend to Heather and her family.



Heather's distress was nearly too much to bear, and she blinked back tears. *I want to be brave for Archie,* she thought, *and there's nothing I can do for Bonnie just now*. Heather laid her head down near Archie. She tried to hang on to the hope that her mum and da would come to collect them in the morning, help get Bonnie back, and reassure them that everything was once again normal.

Beside her, Archie sniffled and began to cry quietly.

"Here," she said gently as she sat up and pulled his head into her lap. With calming hands, she stroked his hair and sang softly. Soon, he quieted and began to breathe slowly and deeply as he fell asleep. Often, Heather felt irritated with her younger brother, and they squabbled at times, but at this moment, she realized just how important family was.

Wearily, Heather leaned against the bag and closed her eyes. Events from that evening replayed through her mind, and she couldn't understand what had happened. Why were men accusing her da of stealing things? He was an honest man, a longtime blacksmith at the iron forge. Everyone in town knew he was a skilled, diligent worker.

Then Heather's thoughts turned to her mum. What had she said? "If we've not arrived by sunrise . . ." A lump grew in Heather's throat as she tried to ignore the possibility of her parents not showing up in the morning.

And what about Bonnie? Heather wondered as images of the tall, stocky, noble pony whirled in her mind. Heather had always thought Bonnie's long white mane and tail flowed and glistened like waterfalls. Soon, Heather's thoughts turned into dreams of sparkling waterfalls. All was quiet as the moon shone down on the rose bush and stone wall that hid two sleeping children.



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