



SAPPHIRE BLUE

1 There it was, just off the port bow of the ferry — a small dot rising out of the sapphire blue waters. The ferry was cutting through the water at great speed and the island grew bigger by the minute.

This was the first time that Popi's parents had allowed her to visit her Nanna and Papa by herself, and she could barely contain her excitement. She had packed a small suitcase for the two-week stay and her bicycle, so she could travel around the island independently. Her grandparents had reminded her to bring her bike if she didn't want to use their donkey again, a slow and uncomfortable means of transport on an island that didn't permit the use of cars.

2 Popi could see Nanna and Papa waiting with Zac, their old donkey, ready to take her up to the small white villa perched high above the harbour. This was one of her favourite places in the world. After the mandatory hugs and kisses, Papa strapped her suitcase onto the very top of Zac's saddle. Long woven string bags tumbled over both sides of the poor animal, jammed tight with fresh fruit, vegetables and long sticks of bread.

3 In one of the narrow and twisting cobblestone lanes, about halfway to the villa, they came across a girl on an old rusty bike. Popi noted a large tattered basket strapped awkwardly over the front handlebars of her two-wheeler relic. Nanna spoke

to the girl for about a minute and then placed several pieces of fruit and a piece of cheese into the girl's basket. The girl smiled shyly and then continued her journey down the hill.

"That's Foula Pappas," explained Nanna, "she lives alone with her sister. They are very, very poor."

Popi watched as the girl wheeled her bike carefully down the steep lane and out of sight. She wondered how a girl, who looked no older than her, could scrape enough money together to survive on this little island.

4 It was the next day when she got her first clue. Papa had forgotten to get fresh milk, so he asked Popi to ride down the hill to the little market opposite the new harbour. On her way home she noticed Foula's distinctive old bike leaning against the wall, at the back of the baker's shop. For some reason curiosity got the better of her, so she wheeled her mountain bike over to take a closer look. The basket on the old bike was empty, except for two small dry bread rolls that had obviously been discarded by the baker earlier that morning. Popi felt embarrassed now, encroaching on the girl's privacy, so she dropped the change from the milk into the bike's basket and rode off quickly.

5 The hot, dry days seemed to fly by. Popi filled her time exploring the far side of the island on her bike, swimming near the new harbour, or watching the fishing boats unload their catch onto the tiny wharves.

One afternoon, while catching her breath on the hill overlooking the point, she noticed a slim figure picking its way along the shoreline below. It was Foula. Popi watched the girl regularly stop and prise shellfish from the rocks; it was clear she was gathering food for her dinner.

6 When Popi returned to the villa, she found her grandparents talking excitedly. The local police had just questioned Papa. He explained the police believed that thieves from the mainland were using the island to distribute stolen sapphires. It seemed the precious stones were being hidden inside fresh scallops and clams and then smuggled out on fishing boats. There was a large reward being offered for any information.

As Popi listened to the conversation, her mind returned to what she had seen at the point earlier in the afternoon. Did she hold the key to this investigation? She thought it was sad that poverty would drive someone so young into crime.

7 The next morning dawned bright and blue, just as it had done everyday on the island. Popi leapt out of bed, dressed quickly, ate breakfast and packed her lunch ready for the day's investigations.

Popi rode quickly to the point and hid her bike behind a large bush. Carefully, she picked her way along the edge of the cliff until she found a comfortable ledge, from which she could clearly see the rocks below. She waited.

8 The day crawled along, prompting Popi to quiet her stomach with delicious dolmades. The last one was not long in her mouth before she spied her suspect wandering along the rocks. She was collecting shellfish again, and Popi wondered if this meant that the next load of gems was ready to go. Popi returned to her bike, so she could follow the girl at a safe distance.

It wasn't difficult to keep up with Foula as she cycled slowly back to the village, but it was a challenge to remain out of sight. It was this need, to keep well back, that ended the chase. Popi lost sight of Foula in the tight, twisting lanes.

9 Cycling furiously, Popi raced up and down the lanes, looking for the old, rusty bike. Her plan hadn't worked out exactly as she had hoped and she knew that if she didn't find Foula soon, the sapphires and the thieves would vanish. Popi was just at the point of giving up when she pedalled past the rear of the baker's shop. There was the old bike, leaning up against the wall, just as it had on that first morning.

10 Still puffing from her recent exertions, she walked her bike up to the baker's back door and peered into the girl's basket. There were no clams, scallops or shellfish of any description to be seen in the basket, just two loaves of bread. With horror, Popi realised she had misjudged a poor girl, whose only crime was to barter the fresh shellfish for a few loaves of bread. It was the baker who was the criminal mastermind on the island.

11 There was no time to lose if she was going to catch the villains in the act, so she mounted her

bike again and cycled around to where the shop faced the harbour. Pedalling at full speed, she arrived at the baker's door just in time to collide with a fisherman carrying a large basket of bread rolls. The impact sent the basket spinning from the man's grip, throwing bread rolls right across the pavement.

12 Shoppers, who stopped to help with the clean up, were surprised to find both bread rolls and a variety of shellfish scattered about. Two passing police officers stopped to help the fisherman, opening some shells as they did. Closer examination of the clams and scallops revealed a treasure trove of sparkling blue sapphires.

Later that afternoon, the local police thanked Popi for her help, telling her that the mainland police would be giving her a large reward. Her investigations had cracked the smuggling racket, after all. Popi thanked the officers and smiled. She knew whom she would share the reward with.

Questions

1 How was Popi going to travel around the island?

- a on foot
- b on a bike
- c on a donkey

2 Foula's bike was

- a very fast.
- b very old.
- c a mountain bike.

3 Who gave Foula some fruit and a piece of cheese?

- a Papa
- b Popi
- c Nanna



4 What did Popi pack for lunch?

- a Popi packed dolmades.
- b Popi packed milk and bread.
- c Popi packed scallops and clams.

5 Why did Popi lose Foula when she was following her?

- a Foula rode too fast.
- b Popi had to stay well back.
- c Popi had misjudged Foula.

6 Who do you think Popi was most likely to share the reward with?

- a the police
- b Foula Pappas
- c Nanna and Papa

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- 7 Something that is compulsory (2)
- 8 Unique or standing out (4)
- 9 To send out (6)
- 10 To trade goods in exchange for others (10)
- 11 An illegal or dishonest activity (12)

Grammar

The words in **BLUE** appear in the text. Match them by writing the correct **synonym** shown in **RED**.

E.g. *under/below*.

- | | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 12 cutting | exist |
| 13 allowed | slicing |
| 14 survive | searching |
| 15 exploring | permitted |

Back To The Text...

16 Whose bike do we see in the illustration on the front of the card?

- a Popi's
- b Foula's

17 If this story had a moral it would be:

- a Don't Bite the Hand that Feeds You
- b Don't Judge a Book by its Cover

18 In which part of the library would you find this text?

- a fiction
- b non-fiction

Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

19 a Popi found two rolls in Foula's basket.
b Nanna placed fruit in Foula's basket.

20 a Popi had dolmades for lunch.
b Popi lost sight of Foula in the lanes.

21 a Popi caught her breath on the hill.
b Popi pedalled furiously up and down the lanes.

Think About This

22 In which paragraph does Popi realise the truth?

- a six
- b eight
- c ten
- d twelve

23 Which of the following best describes Popi?

- a poor and withdrawn
- b inquisitive and determined
- c zealous and devious

Challenge Option

Research: Sapphires are precious gems. Find the names of 5 other gems.

