

Stig Digs In

STIG DIGS IN

TIMOTHY KRAUSE



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1.

What is your dream?

Call me Stig.

Stig the wanderer.

Stig the dreamer.

Stig the poet.

Stig the dog.

Yes, I am a dog. Does that surprise you? Or is it more surprising that my name is Stig? Maybe both things surprise you.

Stig is a special name. It comes from Denmark. It means “wanderer.” And according to *Cambridge Learner’s Dictionary*, a wanderer is “someone who often travels from place to place, especially without any clear aim or purpose.”

So Stig may not be a surprising name for a dog after all. Dogs love to wander. Well, many do, anyway. They often get into trouble that way. There have been many stories about those kinds of dogs. They get into trouble, and then they get out of trouble. However, there are probably more stories about the troubles of the people who own the dogs. In those stories, the dogs save their owners.

But if you don't like dogs much — if you're not a "dog person" — don't worry. This isn't going to be a "dog story."

It's the story of a poet. It's the story of a dreamer. It's the story of a wanderer. It's *my* story. *I'm* the wanderer. *I'm* the dreamer. And *I'm* the poet.

Every day, my mind wanders.

Every night, my dreams wander.

Every poem, my words wander.

My dream is to live in Paris ... to wander the city and be a poet.

Yes, I want to be that kind of poet. I mean the poet that you are thinking of right now. I mean the poet that you don't always understand. Or do you?

Poetry is like another language. And I know that you, my friend, speak more than one language. You know how to use words in new ways. You know how words *feel* in your mouth. You know how different words can dance and fight and sing. Sometimes you even say things you didn't mean. Often, you say more than you mean, and you don't even know it. Maybe you are a poet, too.

My dream is to live in Paris ... to wander the city and be a poet.

Yes, I mean that Paris. I mean the city that you are thinking of right now. I mean the city that you don't always understand. Or do you?

Paris is like another world. And I know that you, my friend, know more than one world. You know what it is like to travel to a new place. You know what it is like to start a new life. You know how the ground *feels* different under your feet. You know how differently the people dance and fight and sing. Sometimes you even say things

you didn't mean. Often, you say more than you mean, and you don't even know it. Maybe you are a poet, too.

Why Paris? Well, Paris is the city of dreams. It's the city of lights. It's the city of love.

Paris is also 5,123 miles away. And, therefore, it is not an easy dream. You can't just wander down the road to see the famous Eiffel Tower.

Dreams are not easy. They are not easy for poets. They are especially not easy for wanderers.

Dreams are hard. Dreams are difficult. Dreams are sometimes almost impossible.

And yet ... here I am.

Dreams are especially challenging when you are a dog.

Can you imagine it? Can you imagine your new friend Stig packing a small bag, wearing a black beret¹ and hopping on an airplane?

Ha!

It is unlikely. Why? Do you know how much an airplane ticket costs? Do you? Airplane tickets cost a lot of money. They are big bucks! You need a lot of dough, bread, moolah, smackers, and simoleons. Or, as my crazy uncle says: It takes a lot of *scratch* to satisfy that itch!

Sure, I can scratch with the best of them. I am a dog, after all. However, I have no money. Why? The reason is this: No one wants to buy my book of poems. I'm flat broke, penniless, down on my luck. Most dogs beg for food. I, on the other hand, beg you to read my poetry.

But you will. I know it. I feel it in my bones. Someday, big people, little people, old people, young people — people of all kinds in all places will read my words.

1. A beret is a round, flat hat made of soft material. People often think that poets wear these hats.

TIMOTHY KRAUSE

It's my dream. Dreams are not easy, but they are very important. What is your dream?

2.

Portland is not Paris

I live in Portland.

It's a small city in the state of Oregon. There's another small city also named Portland, but it's on the other side of the country. That Portland is in the state of Maine. That Portland is closer to the ocean (the Atlantic Ocean). That Portland is smaller than my Portland.

That is what people tell me, anyway. I have not been there myself. I have no money. Don't you remember? I am a poet, but no one wants to buy my book. So I have no money to go to Paris. I don't even have enough money to go to Portland, Maine.

Portland, Oregon, however, is nice.

Well ...

Portland, Oregon, is nice. That's true. But that's not the whole story. Portland, Oregon, is weird. And I'm not the only one to think that. Everyone says so! There are bumper stickers and murals and postcards. And they all say *Keep Portland Weird!*

“What makes it weird?” you might ask.

Ha! Where do I begin?

For one thing, there is the Unipiper. The Unipiper is a young man. He wears a mask like Darth Vader from the *Star Wars* movies. He plays the bagpipes while he rides a unicycle. If you don’t believe me, then Google it! People in Portland love the Unipiper and his unicycle.

Cycles of all kinds — unicycles, bicycles, motorcycles — are popular here in Portland. In the winter, thousands of people wear coats, hats, gloves, and raincoats to ride their bikes. They ride their bikes in the cold rain or even the snow. It’s called the “Worst Day of the Year Ride.” In the summer, even more people do the opposite. They don’t wear clothes at all! They ride their bikes naked at night in the “World Naked Bike Ride.”

Portland has hundreds of unusual food carts. One famous place for food sells doughnuts 24 hours a day. There’s also a museum of vacuum cleaners. People make boats out of giant pumpkins to float down the river. And Portland has the world’s smallest park. It is small even for me, a dog. It’s only two feet round, and it’s in the middle of a busy street!

Portland is a growing city. Many things are changing. For example, there are more and more people now. That means there is more and more traffic.

Our growing city is a lot like a growing teenager. Our body is changing. Our voice is changing. We think we’re getting smarter, but sometimes we still make poor choices.

Many people move to Portland. It’s their dream. The mountains are one hour east, and the ocean is one hour west. It’s easy to do what you want to do here. It’s easy to be who you want to be here. In other words, it’s easy to be weird here.

And I like weird. Weird is good. Portland is good. But Portland is not Paris.

I live with Liam and Oliver, my two dads. Well, they call themselves my two dads. They are humans. I am a dog. It doesn't make much sense to me, either. But they love each other. And they love me. And I love them. We are a family.

Liam, Oliver, and I live in a large old house in the middle of the city. They love color, and our house is painted bright blue with orange doors and windows. All the other houses in the street are gray, grayer, very gray, and black. There is one white house, but it is on the corner. So I don't think that it is part of our street. All the other houses are gray, grayer, very gray, and black. In other words, our house stands out.

Liam stands out, too. He also loves color. Liam owns an art gallery downtown. He sells very colorful art.

Sometimes Liam plays a joke. He stands in the window and does not move. Visitors stop by the window. They look at him carefully. First they look at his green hair and sometimes shake their heads.

"Only in Portland," says a man in a cowboy hat. He shakes his head, and his cowboy hat nearly falls off.

"Look at his shoes!" says the cowboy's daughter. Liam's green shoes are the same color as his green hair.

"Which part of him is the art?" asks the cowboy.

"He is all art!" answers his daughter with an enormous smile.

The cowboy walks away. Liam winks at the girl. She blows kisses at him. That is the power of art, Liam thinks.

Meanwhile, Liam's husband Oliver is only a few blocks away. He is at a protest with many people. They want to fight climate change. Many people stand together at Waterfront Park near the Willamette River.

They hold signs. The signs say things like: “The climate is changing; why aren’t you?” The people walk. They chant. They try to get the attention of other people. Oliver believes that most people care, but not enough.

“Everything is easier when you don’t care about things,” says Oliver. But he cares. And he worries — a lot. Oliver is not a dreamer like me. Oliver is not a free spirit like Liam. Oliver worries. He is a worrier. He worries about the past. He worries about the present. He worries about the future.

Liam and Oliver do not have any children. But they have me. And their eyes fill with water every time I talk about Paris. But what can I do? I am a wanderer. I am a dreamer. I am a poet. And I dream of wandering the streets of Paris as I write poetry.

Liam and Oliver almost understand this.

“It is not easy,” they say.

“You can visit me,” I suggest.

“We’re family,” they say. “How can you leave your family?”

That’s when I remember an old Chinese proverb: *Parents must give their children two things: roots and wings.*

Liam and Oliver have given me the roots. They have helped me to grow up. In fact, I have grown up faster than the city of Portland. I know what I want. The city is still deciding what it wants. I have roots, and I won’t forget them. I will always stay connected to the people I love and the things I believe. They helped me to become who I am today. I have the roots. Now I want the wings.

3.

Weird? Or
wonderful?

Paris takes patience, and patience takes work. So I go to work in my studio every day. When I walk to work, I never go the same way twice. I like to wander, remember? Sometimes I pass a construction site. Actually, I always pass a construction site because the city is always changing. They are building someone's dream, I think. Another tall building with condos is not my dream, but it is someone's dream.

I stop at the corner of every street. Most corners have big wooden poles for street lights and traffic lights and signs that say "Do this!" or "Don't do that!" People staple posters and papers to these poles. There are often many layers. A person can easily learn the history of the city. They can remove each layer and read what is below it.

I stop at the corner of the next street. I add another layer of history to the pole in front of me. Maybe I can't sell a book yet. But I can share a poem with other people. I

believe my poems make their day better. Creativity makes the world better.

My studio is an office for my creativity. It's where my creativity gets to work, gets the job done, gets busy. And my best friend Quang is already there, working.

Quang is an artist.

"Wait," you say. "Poets are artists, too, aren't they?"

Yes! You are right. Poets are artists. Dancers are artists. Actors are artists. Musicians are artists.

Quang is a *visual* artist. He's a painter. Quang paints invisible paintings.

I met Quang four years ago among the sculptures outside of the Portland Art Museum. The museum is in two old brick buildings. They are near the Park Blocks downtown. The two buildings stand side by side. They look like two strangers waiting for a bus. There is a very small park (not the smallest park in Portland, but still very small) with large pieces of interesting art (not the largest art in Portland, but still very large).

It rained (of course). Quang held a very strange umbrella. It looked upside down and inside out. The umbrella caught the rain, and the water ran out of spouts on either side of Quang. When he didn't walk carefully, the water hit nearby people. They gave him funny looks. They thought that he wanted to play a joke on them.

Quang was not at the museum to look at the paintings, the drawings, the photographs or the sculptures. He wasn't there to *see* anything. Quang was there to *listen* to what other people said. He wanted to learn what they did not like about art. And then that is exactly what he would paint — invisibly.

Everybody says, *That Quang is weird!*

But think about it: invisible paintings of art that people

do not like and inside-out, upside-down umbrellas. Is that weird? Or is that wonderful? I think it's genius.

I nod my head slightly at Quang as I enter our studio. I go to my big, old metal desk and my big, old metal chair with wheels. I sit down to write. My chair squeaks.

"A writer must write," people say.

So I close my eyes. I say the first three things I see:

Mr. and Mrs. Borgen-Yorgen

Cookies

Rainy weather in Portland

Really? I ask myself. Are those the best things I can think of? Ha!

Well, I say to myself, at least it's a challenge. And at least my poems do not need to rhyme. (Many poets write poems that rhyme, but I do not have the time. Ha!)

Then I stop and think, why not? Give it a try.

Give it a try.

Look me in the eye.

Let it fly.

Do or die.

Easy as pie.

Shouldn't I—

— at least —

give it a try?

Wait. That isn't the poem I want to write. I pour myself a cup of coffee. I think again about how I should start. Then I remember Japanese poems. They are called haiku.

A haiku is a special kind of poem. It has three lines. The first line has five syllables. The second line has seven syllables. The last line has five syllables. And they usually

talk about something in nature, like rain. I try to think of a haiku:

Watching Portland rain,
the Borgen-Yorgens whisper,
“We need more cookies.”

Ha! I type the words on my big, old metal typewriter quickly before I forget them. And then I decide that I want something sweet. I think of the candy store across the street.

I go to Quang. He is painting an invisible picture of a husband and wife. They are eating cookies in the rain. At least, that is what I see.

“Let’s get some candy.”

We walk downstairs. We walk across the street to Randy’s Candy. We open the door, and there is Randy. He says, “Here!”

Quang looks confused.

Randy puts some candy in our hands.

“Try this shandy candy,” he says. “How is it?”

“Dandy,” I say.

“That’s dandy shandy candy, Randy” adds Quang, though it is difficult to understand him with his mouth full of candy.

Shandy is a drink. It is beer and lemonade. It is bitter and sweet at the same time. I concentrate on the taste of the candy. I remember a poem by my friend Max:

Lemon groves. Full moon.
Sylvia’s yellow dress.

Great ideas come from anywhere. Sometimes they come

from yellow lemons. Sometimes they come from Mr. and Mrs. Borgen-Yorgen eating cookies in the rain.

4.

Does art matter?

Quang and I leave Randy's Candy. We walk past Oliver and the climate protest near the river. We even walk past Liam's art gallery. (He is not in the window ... and that makes me wonder: Where is he? What is he doing?)

Quang and I walk past the mural that says *Keep Portland Weird!* We walk past the Unipiper in the park. He is playing his bagpipes while tourists take selfies to post on Instagram. We walk past a tiny toy horse tied to a metal ring in the sidewalk.

I stop to look at the horse. It's brown, but its tail is a rainbow of colors. I look at Quang. He does not seem impressed. I am not impressed, either. But I'm curious.

I bend down to look closer at the toy horse. I see a note tied to the horse. I open the note. This is what it says:

"A horse is a horse, of course, of course.
And this one'll talk until his voice is hoarse.
You've never heard of a talking horse?"

"That's not really a poem," says Quang.

"How do you know?" I ask.

And then Quang begins to sing the words:

"A horse is a horse, of course, of course.

And no one can talk to a horse, of course.

That is, of course, unless the horse

Is the famous Mister Ed!"

"Who's Mister Ed?" I ask.

"A talking horse," he answers.

"Of course," I say. That makes Quang laugh.

"It's a song about a talking horse. His name is Mister Ed," Quang explains.

Now I am beginning to think *That Quang is weird!*

"It was a famous TV show in the 1960s," he says.

I look around. I think Quang is joking. He's not. I Google it. It is true.

"Why does somebody leave a tiny toy horse tied to the sidewalk? Why does it have a note with the words from a song of an old TV show?" I ask Quang.

He replies: "Why do you post your poetry on every other street pole?"

Ha! I nod my head.

We arrive at our favorite park bench. This is where Alma is waiting. Alma and Quang are dating. They have been dating for more than 10 years.

Alma is a baker. She studies pies during the day. At night she plays a ukulele in a coffee shop at the university on the other side of downtown. She dreams of writing songs about falling in love, but she is afraid she does not know the subject well.

We say hello to Francisco. He plays music in the park during the day. At night he is an architect. He dreams of

buildings that are upside down. I secretly believe that he made Quang's umbrella. I want to ask Francisco if he ever made an inside-out building.

Instead, we sit and share the dandy shandy candy from Randy.

No one is brave enough to speak of their dreams today.

Except me. I say this with complete confidence: "I will be going to Paris very soon."

They all nod, but they say nothing. I have said this before. I have said this many times before.

We sit in silence. I think about Quang's invisible paintings. I wonder if I really see what Quang sees. Then I think about my poems. I wonder if Quang really understands what I write. Does anybody really understand art?

If people do not understand art, then does art matter? Does it matter if I write poems in Paris or Portland? Does it matter if I even write poems at all?

If nobody wants to read my poetry, then maybe I should give up.

5.

Suddenly the world is different

Quang, Alma, Francisco, and I sit quietly on the park bench. I am thinking about the toy horse. Then I hear a voice.

“Stig!”

I look left. I look right. I look up. I look down.

“Stig!”

Someone is calling my name from behind me.

“Stig! There you are! I was looking everywhere for you!”

The voice is from Fiona Ocean. She is walking to me from across the park. She is carrying a yoga mat.

Fiona is my agent. Do you know what an agent does? In many stories, an agent “smokes a cigar, takes your writing, tries to sell it, never does, and gets 15%.”

Fiona, however, does not smoke a cigar. Instead, she chews mint gum. She spends her lunch hour at a yoga studio. She sucks down smoothies of avocado and strawberry. Then she takes your writing, tries to sell it, never does, and still gets 15%.

"Oh, Stig," she always complains. "What is 15% of nothing?"

I am never sure how to answer that because I am a poet. I am not a mathematician.

Still, it is unusual for Fiona to call me. It is more unusual for Fiona to find me in the park. So I am very curious to know what she wants.

"What do you want, Fiona?" I ask.

"Stig!" she says again. She is very excited. She can't breathe well.

"Yes, Fiona? What is it?"

"It's happened, Stig. I did it. I sold your book."

"Wait. What?"

"I sold your book. For two million dollars!"

"Two million what?"

"They wanted to pay only one million dollars. But I said it's two million dollars or nothing!"

"Really?"

"Yes! Yes! They love it, Stig. They love it!"

"Two million dollars? For my poetry?"

"Yes, Stig. They want your poetry for a book. And they will pay you two million dollars!"

Ha!

"Poetry from a dog!" says Fiona to Alma, Quang, and Francisco. "Everyone will want to buy that book!"

Alma, Quang, and Francisco look at me. They are surprised. I am, too.

Fiona continues, "You can finally go to Paris! You will have so much time to meander. You can meander from here to there — and from there to here! You will meander so much that you will find your way home before you even get lost! You're lucky, Stig. You've got it made."

Fiona opens her purse. She takes out more mint gum.

She says that she has to leave. Her yoga class starts in five minutes. She will call me tomorrow.

I say nothing. My head is spinning. My mind is like a blender. I can't stop on one single thought. My mind is turning to mush like one of Fiona's avocado and strawberry smoothies.

Suddenly the world is different. Until now, everything was OK. I had a nice home in a nice city. I had a nice family. I was able to write nice poems about nice people. They eat nice cookies in the nice rain.

Before this, I was just another dog. Now I am a hot dog! Hard work pays off, I think. All of my dreams are coming true.

Quang nods his head. The others do not know what this means. To me, however, it means both "Congratulations!" and "I'll miss you!"

Alma says she will bake a lemon pie and write a song for me.

Francisco only eats more shandy candy and smiles.

I smile, too.

Then I rush home to tell Liam and Oliver.

6.

Poetry at a party

By the time I get to the house, it is dusk. Do you know what dusk is? It is a very magical time. Afternoon becomes evening. The very last bit of sunlight fades away. The lights on the street poles turn on, one by one. The stars in the sky do the same. Dog people walk their dogs. Cat people look for can openers. Work is over, but the day is not. It is a time of transition, a time of change.

And, I learn, it is time to get ready for a party, a soiree, a shindig.

“Good! I’m glad you’re home, Stig” Oliver says. “You are going to be a star!”

That’s right! The light of my star has turned on. But how does he know that already?

“We are having a big party!”

For me, I wonder? Already?

“We are having a big party with many guests. We want you to read a poem,” Oliver explains. “But first, please, help me with the food. Help me with the drinks. We must get ready.”

That is when I understand something: The party is not for me, and Oliver does not know about my news yet.

"There is something I have to tell you, Oliver," I say.

"Later, Stig. Later. We have guests coming. I have to get dressed."

Oliver disappears into his bedroom. I try to talk to Liam, but he can't hear me. He is wearing his headphones. He is choosing music for the party.

I take out big plates from the cupboard, and I fill them with sweet and salty snacks: nuts and olives, figs and dates. I add a bowl of crackers and another plate with vegan cheese. I gather plates, napkins, and utensils. I even find a fancy tablecloth. It has pictures of French poodles with city maps. It seems appropriate. Then the guests begin to arrive.

Who do I see first? Cousin Abdi. He plays the drums. He is cool.

But then I open the door and see Kensho Holfina. Kensho Holfina is another agent. He is also the rival of my agent, Fiona Ocean.

"Ah, Stig," says Kensho. "Are you still writing sad haiku? Are you still writing those silly odes to an Idaho potato ... or some smart part of a golf cart ... or some other bo-o-o-o-oring thing? That is the kind of writing that nobody likes to read, Stig. You can trust me about this. Now bring me something to drink, will you? Bring Kensho something to drink."

Kensho is one of *those* people. He likes to hear his own name. So he says his own name — often. Instead of saying "I went to some fancy restaurant last night," he says "Kensho went to some fancy restaurant last night." Ha! Maybe Kensho is why people think Portland is weird.

I growl at him. Grr! I want to nip him in the knee. I want

to bite him in the behind. Then I see Liam and Oliver, so I bite my tongue instead. In other words, I stay quiet. But I secretly hope that Kensho Holfina will get what he deserves.

Liam plays music. Oliver serves food. I pour drinks. The party is a blur. Then Liam says, "My dear friends, please sit down. We are ready to begin."

I am not the only person to do something in this show. First, cousin Abdi plays the drums. They are so loud that they make my heart skip a beat.

Then Lorena, a neighbor from upstairs, dances. She does a tap dance. She does a tap dance from her apartment upstairs. Tappa, tappa, tappa. Everyone watches the ceiling. There is nothing to see on the ceiling, but we imagine Lorena dancing in her apartment above our heads. Maybe she wears two tutus, too.

Quang shows his invisible paintings of Mr. and Mrs. Borgen-Yorgen. Everyone says "mmm" and "interesting."

Alma is next. She plays her ukulele and sings a song about a pie in the sky. "What goes up must come down ..." I don't pay attention until Alma throws a lemon pie up in the air. The lemon pie flies across the room and comes down on the face of Kensho Holfina. Ha!

Finally, it is my turn to perform. I am excited. I am scared. I begin to read from a blank piece of paper:

The future won't come
when we make too many plans.
It meanders away.

The future is quick
when we are only dreaming
and never doing.

The future is now.
It is always becoming
our present today.

Make plans and share dreams
to make your future come true,
but be ready now.

The room is silent. I look around. I add one more thought:

Zip, zip, zippity doo.

Everyone begins to clap. They clap louder and louder.
They stand up and cheer.

“Stig! That is wonderful! You are a wonderful poet!”
I guess some people like poems to rhyme.

7.

Now I say "Adieu!"

Soon, the big day arrives. Today is when I leave. Can you imagine it? Can you imagine your old friend Stig packing a small bag, wearing a black beret, and hopping on an airplane?

I feel happy, and I feel sad. I feel bittersweet. How can these two feelings (bitter and sweet) make one word?

Everyone is here to say goodbye. I look at my family and friends:

Liam and Oliver, my two dads who I love very much

Quang, my best friend who paints invisible paintings

Randy, the man from across the street who makes shandy candy

Alma, the baker who also plays the ukulele

Francisco, the musician who wants to be an architect

Fiona, my agent who gets 15% of my two million dollars

Abdi, my cousin who plays the drums ... loudly

Lorena, our neighbor upstairs who tap dances on our ceiling

Even Mr. and Mrs. Borgen-Yorgen come to say goodbye. They bring me chocolate chip cookies for the trip.

The only person who is not here is Kensho Holfina, the man who does not like my writing anyway.

This is the day that I have been waiting for. This is the day that I leave Portland. This is the day that I travel to Paris. This is the day that I become a poet in Paris. This is the day that I follow my dreams.

Oliver and Liam say nothing.

“Be brave, Liam. Be brave, Oliver,” I say. “We will meet again. Portland will always be my home. But you know I live in my dreams. And my dreams are in Paris. So I must live in Paris.”

“Remember your roots,” says Oliver.

“Remember your wings,” says Liam.

We hug. All of us together, we hug. One big hug, in a huddle like a football team.

“Time to fly, Mister Lemon Pie!” I say.

That doesn’t mean anything. It’s just a fun way to leave without crying.

Soon I am in the clouds above.

Later, Liam and Oliver receive a postcard from Stig:

Portland to Paris —
I have made my dream come true.
Now I say “Adieu!”

Ha!

P.S. All the city maps are useless, and I like them that way.

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Appendix 1: Vocabulary

Chapter 1

- airplane
- beg
- dream/dreamer
- famous
- impossible
- poem/poetry/poet
- satisfy
- scratch
- ticket
- wander/wanderer

Chapter 2

- chant
- climate change
- cycle (unicycle, bicycle, motorcycle)
- cowboy
- float
- mask

- meanwhile
- postcard
- roots
- wings

Chapter 3

- creativity
- dandy
- genius
- invisible
- layer
- patience
- pole
- rhyme
- sculpture
- syllable

Chapter 4

- architect
- brave
- confidence
- curious
- horse / hoarse
- impress
- mural
- sidewalk
- tiny
- ukulele

Chapter 5

- agent
- blender
- complain
- mathematician
- million
- quietly
- rush
- smoothie
- spin
- yoga

Chapter 6

- blur
- ceiling
- clap
- dusk
- fancy
- guest
- rival
- transition
- upstairs
- tutu

Chapter 7

- adieu
- bitter
- bittersweet
- clouds
- football

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- huddle
- hug
- musician
- team
- useless

Appendix 2: Comprehension

Chapter 1

1. A narrator tells the story. Who is the narrator?
2. Characters are people or animals in a story. Who is the main character? Describe him.
3. What does Stig want?
4. Why can't Stig get what he wants? What is the problem?
5. Stig says *I can feel it in my bones*. What does this idiom mean? Why does Stig say this?

Chapter 2

1. The setting is the place and time of the story. Where and when does this story happen?
2. How is the city changing? Describe.
3. Who are Liam and Oliver? Describe.
4. How many children do Liam and Oliver have?
5. How do Liam and Oliver feel about Stig's dream?

How do you know?

Chapter 3

1. What does Stig do every day on his way to work? Why?
2. What is in Stig's studio? Describe it.
3. Who is Quang and what does he do? Describe him.
4. What is a haiku? Explain.
5. Who is Randy? What does he want?

Chapter 4

1. Where do Stig and Quang go?
2. What do Stig and Quang see on the street?
3. Is Mister Ed a real person? How do you know?
4. Who is Alma? Describe her.
5. Who is Francisco? Describe him.

Chapter 5

1. Who is Fiona? Describe her.
2. Fiona is not like other agents. How is she different?
3. Fiona has a message for Stig. What is it?
4. How does Stig feel about the message from Fiona?

5. Stig can sell his book for \$2,000,000. How much does Fiona get?

Chapter 6

1. Oliver is planning a party for Stig. True or false?
2. Who is Kensho? Describe.
3. Who are Abdi and Lorena? Describe.
4. What happens to Kensho?
5. Stig reads a poem. What is it about?

Chapter 7

1. Why does Stig feel bittersweet?
2. Kensho is not there to say goodbye. Why not?
3. How do Oliver and Liam feel?
4. *Soon I am in the clouds above. What does this mean? Where is Stig?*
5. Who is the postcard from? Where is it from?

Appendix 3: Discussion

Chapter 1

1. *Poetry is like another language.* How? Explain. What do you know about poetry?
2. *Paris is like another world.* How? Explain. What do you know about Paris?
3. *Dreams are not easy, but they are very important.* Explain. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. What is your dream? Describe it. What do you hope to do someday?

Chapter 2

1. *Keep Portland Weird!* Why do people say this? What makes Portland “weird”?
2. *Parents must give their children two things: roots and wings.* Explain. What does this mean?
3. *Everything is easier when you don’t care about things.* What does this mean? Is this a good thing or a

bad thing? Why?

4. What is another proverb from your culture? Explain it.

Chapter 3

1. *Paris takes patience, and patience takes work.* What does this mean? Explain.
2. *Quang paints invisible paintings.* Why? Give your opinion.
3. *A haiku is a special kind of poem. It has three lines. The first line has 5 syllables. The second line has 7 syllables. The last line has 5 syllables. And they usually talk about something in nature.* Write your own haiku. Share it with your classmates.
4. *Great ideas come from anywhere.* Do you agree? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

1. Think about the toy horse. Is it art? Is it a joke? Is it something else? Explain your ideas.
2. Nobody wants to talk about their dreams. Why not? Explain your ideas.
3. Alma and Quang are dating. Are they a good couple? Why or why not?
4. *If people do not understand art, then does art matter?* Explain.

Chapter 5

1. Did Stig expect this news from Fiona? How do you know?
2. *All of my dreams are coming true.* How? Explain.
3. *Quang nods his head. That means both "Congratulations!" and "I'll miss you!"* What does this mean? Explain.
4. If you have two million dollars, what do you do first?

Chapter 6

1. Stig waits to tell Oliver about his news. Why?
2. Alma's pie hits Kensho. Why does Stig laugh?
3. *But be ready now.* What does this mean?
4. At the end of his poem, Stig adds: *Zip, zip, zippity doo.* Why?

Chapter 7

1. *Time to fly, Mister Lemon Pie!* What does this mean?
2. *All the city maps are useless, and I like them that way.* What does this mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. It is not easy to leave family or friends. What was your experience? Describe.
4. Will Stig be happy in Paris? Share your opinion.

Appendix 4: Activities

1. Write a haiku about Portland. Put your classmates' poems together to make a poetry book.
2. Find or draw pictures to illustrate each chapter. Add a quotation from the story.
3. Write another chapter at the end of the story: What happens to Stig in Paris?
4. Make a book of proverbs from each student's first language. Try to find a matching proverb in English. If there isn't one, then write one.