

CHAPTER 1

My uncle is called Professor Otto Lidenbrock. I lived with him in Hamburg. He came home early one day. I was in my bedroom.

He shouted, “Axel!” and went to his study.

“I’m here!” I said and went to his study.

My uncle was a bad-tempered man. He wasn’t a bad man but got angry very easily. He was a bit stingy and didn’t like sharing money.

He was an expert in rocks and minerals. He taught people about minerals and he ran a mineral museum for the Russian ambassador.

He was my uncle and my guardian. He looked after me because I was an orphan. His study had many rocks and minerals in it. I liked going into his study.

“What a book! What a book!” he said.

“What is the book?” I asked.



“What a book! What a book!” he said.

“*The Heims-kringla of Snorri Sturluson*. He was a twelfth century author from Iceland,” said the professor.

“Is it a translated book?” I asked.

“No, it’s the original book,” said the professor.

He started talking about the Icelandic language in the book. An old **parchment** fell out of it. My uncle picked it up off the floor.

“What is this?” he asked and put it on his desk. He carefully opened the parchment. There were strange marks on the parchment.

“What are those marks?” I asked.

“They are **runes**. They are the same as the ones in the book. What does this mean?” the professor said.

The maid knocked on the door of the study.

“Lunch is ready,” she said.

“Go away!” the professor shouted.

The maid ran out of the room because she was afraid of him. I went to the dining room but the professor didn’t come. I ate my lunch. The professor studied the parchment. I ate his lunch for him.

“Axel! Come here!” the professor shouted.

I went back to the study.

parchment (n) the skin of a sheep or goat used for writing on in the past

rune (n) any of the letters of an alphabet used by Germanic people in the past

“Sit down. I need you to write something for me,” he said. He read out the letters that matched the Icelandic runes. I spelled out the words:

mm.rnllsesreuel seecJde
sgtssmfunteiefniedrke
kt,samnatrateS Saodrrn
emtnael nuaect rrilSa
Atvaar .nscrc ieaabs
ccdrmi eeutul frantu
dt,iac oseibo KediiY

“What does it mean?” the professor asked and said, “Ah! It’s a **cipher**! There’s a hidden meaning in these letters. He has mixed them up **on purpose**.”

The professor picked up a magnifying glass and tried to read the words.

He said, “The book and the parchment are written by different people. One of the runes on the parchment comes from the 16th century. There’s a stain on the parchment. Some of the letters are rubbed out.”

He looked at the stain and wrote down the letters.

cipher (n) a combination of letters or symbols that have a secret message
on purpose (idiom) intentionally



*The professor picked up a magnifying glass
and tried to read the words.*

“What does it say?” I asked.

“Arne Saknussem!” shouted my uncle, “He was an alchemist in the 16th century. I wonder what he’s hiding.”

“Is the cipher in Icelandic?” I asked.

“No, I think it’s in Latin,” the professor said, “we must unscramble it.”

We spent a long time **working out** what the letters said.

“Ah! I have it!” said the professor.

Then he slammed his hands on the desk and said, “No! It doesn’t make sense.”

He **stormed out of** the study and left the house.

I went to bed. I tried to sleep but I kept thinking out the **riddle**. Suddenly, I leapt out of bed. I went to the study and read the parchment again. I had worked out the riddle.

“I can’t tell my uncle! He’ll want to go on this journey,” I said and shook my head.

“He might work out the riddle. I must burn the parchment.” I thought.

As I was going to the fireplace, my uncle opened the door. I put the parchment back on the desk. He sat down at his desk and looked at the parchment. He worked for three hours.

I went back to bed.

work out (phrasal verb) to solve (a problem, a question)

storm out of (idiom) to leave a place quickly and angrily

riddle (n) something (a question, a problem) difficult to understand

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Test-1

Are the following sentences True (T) or False (F)?

1. Professor Lidenbrock was an expert in rocks and minerals. T / F
2. Professor Lidenbrock had worked out the riddle before Alex. T / F
3. Gräuben didn't want to go to Iceland with them. T / F
4. They went to the volcano by land with the guidance of Hans. T / F
5. They went to Copenhagen by plane. T / F
6. They found water in the crater. T / F
7. Steam from springs meant there would be an eruption. T / F
8. They saw eight giant monsters in the sea. T / F
9. They used climbing ropes to go down the steepest parts of the path. T / F
10. Alex wasn't scared when he got lost. T / F
11. Hans built a raft for the group. T / F
12. They saw only animal bones in the crater. T / F

Test-2

Who said this in the story?

*Professor Lidenbrock, Alex, Gräuben,
Hans or Mr. Fridriksson*

1. “What a book! What a book!”

.....

2. “Uncle, read it backwards.”

.....

3. “Yes! I'll go anywhere with you.”

.....

4. “Your library doesn't have many books.”

.....

5. “You'll have to go by land.”

.....

6. “We must go higher.”

.....

7. “There it is! That's the vent!”

.....

8. “I think we're now under the sea.”

.....

9. “We'll reach land soon.”

.....

10. “There are only two animals.”

.....

GRAMMAR CHECK

Test-1

Fill in the blanks with the prepositions below. Use each of them only once.

away **over** **from** **down**
out **on** **for** **across**

The next day there was a storm. My uncle didn't let us take
1..... the sail or the mast.

The storm blew us 2..... the sea. My uncle was knocked
3..... . Hans steered the ship. The storm went on 4.....
four days.

On the third day, the mast broke and the sail flew 5..... with
the mast. We were all very scared.

A ball of lighting came out of the sky. The raft hit some rocks.
Hans carried me 6..... of the sea. He carried my uncle too. He
also saved our supplies 7..... the sea.

Test-2

Fill in the blanks with the phrasal verbs below.

worked out **got off** **went on**

1. The celebrations for two weeks.
2. He the problem on his own. He didn't need my help.
3. We the train and went straight to the hotel.