

READING CHALLENGE

The Girl Who Sailed Around the World

She was only sixteen. She was alone. And she sailed around the whole planet.

Level	A1 (Beginner)
Age Group	Teens (11-16)
Topic	Sport & People
Duration	~12 minutes
Skill	Reading

Imagine you are fourteen years old. You have a small boat. You want to **sail** around the world. **Alone**. No parents. No teacher. No friends on the boat. Just you, the sea, and the wind. Sounds scary? It does. But a girl from the Netherlands did exactly this. Her name was Laura Dekker. And this is her amazing story.

Born on a Boat

Laura Dekker was born on 20 September 1995. But she was not born in a hospital. She was born on a boat! Her parents were sailing near New Zealand when Laura arrived. She spent the first five years of her life on boats. The sea was her first home. Water was normal for her.

Laura learned to **sail** when she was very young. At six years old, she could **sail** a small boat by herself. At ten, she sailed **alone** to England. She was not afraid of the water. She loved it. The **ocean** was her playground.

The Big Dream

When Laura was thirteen, she had a **dream**. She wanted to **sail** around the world. **Alone**. She wanted to be the youngest person to do it. At that time, the **record** was held by a seventeen-year-old. Laura was only thirteen. People thought she was crazy.

Laura told her father. He was worried, but he understood. He knew Laura was a good sailor. He knew she loved the sea. He said yes. But Laura's plan needed a good boat. Her father helped her buy a small sailing boat. It was 11.5 metres long. Laura named it "Guppy." A guppy is a very small fish. It was a funny name for a boat that would **sail** around the world.

The Government Says No

When the Dutch government heard about Laura's plan, they were not happy. "She is too young!" they said. "It is too dangerous!" They went to court. A court is a place where judges make decisions. The government asked the judge to stop Laura. They said a fourteen-year-old should not **sail alone** across oceans.

The case was big news in the Netherlands. Some people agreed with the government. "She is just a child," they said. "She could die." Other people supported Laura. "She is a very good sailor," they said. "She has sailed her whole life. Let her follow her **dream**."

The court battle lasted about a year. Laura was very frustrated. She just wanted to **sail**. Finally, in July 2010, the court said Laura could go. But she had to do her schoolwork during the trip. She had to call home regularly. And she had to be very careful. Laura was so happy. She was finally free to go.

The Journey Begins

On 21 August 2010, Laura sailed out of Gibraltar. She was fourteen years old. Her boat Guppy was small but strong. Laura had everything she needed: food, water, maps, a **compass**, radio, and her school books. Yes, school books! Laura had to study on the boat. She did her homework in the middle of the **ocean**.

Laura's **journey** would take her across the Atlantic **Ocean**, through the Panama Canal, across the Pacific **Ocean**, through the Indian **Ocean**, and back. She would **sail** more than 27,000 nautical miles. That is about 50,000 kilometres. She would **sail** past many countries and stop at many islands.

Alone on the Ocean

What is it like to be **alone** on a small boat in the middle of the **ocean**? Laura wrote about it in her diary. Some days were beautiful. The sun was shining. The water was blue. Dolphins swam next to her boat. She could see stars at night — millions of them. No city lights. Just stars everywhere.

But other days were hard. Sometimes she felt **alone** and scared. There was no one to talk to. No friends. No family. Just the water and the sky. She listened to music. She read books. She talked to her cat — yes, Laura had a cat on the boat! The cat's name was Spot.

Laura also did her schoolwork. She had special lessons by email. She wrote essays. She studied maths. She learned languages. It was strange — doing homework on a boat in the Pacific **Ocean**!

Storms and Danger

The sea is beautiful, but it can be very dangerous. Laura sailed through many storms. The wind screamed. The waves were huge — some as tall as a house. The boat went up and down. Water crashed over the **deck**. Laura held on tight. She was scared, but she did not stop.

One time, a big **wave** hit the boat at night. Everything inside fell on the floor. Laura's food, books, and clothes were everywhere. Water came into the boat. Laura had to work fast. She had to get the water out. She had to **repair** things. She worked for hours in the dark. She was tired. She was wet. She was cold. But she fixed everything. That is what being **brave** means — being scared but doing it anyway.

Beautiful Places

Laura did not **sail** non-stop. She stopped at many places along the way. She visited the Canary Islands near Africa. She sailed to the Caribbean. She went through the Panama Canal — a famous waterway that connects the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. She stopped in the Galapagos Islands. She visited Tonga, Fiji, and Australia. She sailed past the **coast** of South

Africa.

At each **harbour**, Laura met friendly people. They gave her food. They helped her **repair** her boat. They invited her to dinner. Laura made friends all over the world. She was **alone** on the **ocean**, but she was never really **alone**. Kind people were everywhere.

The Finish Line

On 21 January 2012, after 518 days at sea, Laura sailed Guppy into the **harbour** of Sint Maarten, a small **island** in the Caribbean. She had done it. She had sailed around the world. **Alone**. She was sixteen years old.

People were waiting for her at the **harbour**. Her father was there. Her friends were there. Journalists from all over the world were there. Laura smiled. She was tired but very, very happy. She had sailed about 50,000 kilometres. She had crossed three oceans. She had survived storms. She had done her homework. And she had followed her **dream**.

After the Journey

Laura did not want a big celebration. She was a quiet person. She did not like being famous. She wrote a book about her **journey**. It is called “One Girl, One **Dream**.” She also made a film about her trip.

After the **journey**, Laura did not go back to a normal life in the Netherlands. She stayed on her boat. She lived on the sea. That is where she was happiest. Laura once said: “The sea is my home. I do not need a house. I need a boat.”

What Can We Learn?

Laura’s story teaches us that age is just a number. She was fourteen when she started. People said she was too young. The government said no. But Laura believed in herself. She did not give up. She worked hard. She learned. She prepared. And she did something amazing.

Her story also teaches us about being **brave**. Being **brave** does not mean you are not scared. Laura was scared many times. The storms were scary. Being **alone** was scary. But she kept going. She faced her fears. And she came out stronger on the other side. You do not need a boat to be **brave**. You just need a **dream** — and the courage to follow it.

Vocabulary

Term	Definition
sail	to travel on water in a boat that uses wind to move
ocean	a very large area of salt water, like the Atlantic or Pacific
alone	with no other people, by yourself
brave	not afraid to do something dangerous or difficult
storm	very bad weather with strong wind, rain, and sometimes thunder
wave	a line of water that moves across the surface of the sea
harbour	a safe area of water near land where boats can stop
compass	a small tool that shows you which direction is north
journey	a long trip from one place to another
island	a piece of land with water all around it
record	the best result ever, like the fastest time or the youngest person
repair	to fix something that is broken
coast	the land next to the sea
dream	something you want very much to do or have
deck	the flat top part of a boat where you can stand or sit

Comprehension Quiz

1. How old was Laura when she started her trip around the world?

- A) Twelve years old
- B) Fourteen years old
- C) Sixteen years old
- D) Eighteen years old

2. What was the name of Laura's boat?

- A) Sea Star
- B) Little Dream
- C) Guppy
- D) Ocean Girl

3. Why did the Dutch government try to stop Laura?

- A) Because her boat was too old
- B) Because she did not have a passport
- C) Because they thought she was too young and it was too dangerous
- D) Because she did not go to a sailing school

4. How long did Laura's journey take?

- A) 100 days
- B) 300 days
- C) 518 days
- D) 700 days

5. Where did Laura finish her journey?

- A) In the Netherlands
- B) In Australia
- C) In the Caribbean island of Sint Maarten
- D) In New Zealand

Answer Key

#	Answer	Question
1	B	1. How old was Laura when she started her trip around the world?
2	C	2. What was the name of Laura's boat?
3	C	3. Why did the Dutch government try to stop Laura?
4	C	4. How long did Laura's journey take?
5	C	5. Where did Laura finish her journey?