

Face to Face

SUMMER 2004

National
Portrait
Gallery



Dea Birkett on
Women Travellers

My Favourite Portrait
by Hugo Vickers

BP shortlist
announced

Special offer from
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From the Director

The exhibition *Cecil Beaton: Portraits* has attracted an exceptional number of visitors – more than 95,000 at the time of writing, with just over a month to go. Clearly Beaton's ability to make the most of his glamorous sitters has worked its charm across the generations.

I have just completed the judging of the *BP Portrait Award*. As well as being struck by the diversity of sitters – from mothers and brothers to friends and lovers, as well as the many self-portraits – there was a huge variety of poses, giving tremendous energy to the paintings and demonstrating the vitality of painted portraiture. The strength of the record number of entries (955) gave my fellow judges plenty to debate in selecting the exhibition and the shortlist for 2004.

A number of commissions for the Gallery have recently been completed. Terry O'Neill's large-format polaroid photographic portrait of A.A. Gill is currently on display, and Sam Taylor-Wood's *David*, an innovative study of the footballer David Beckham, has just been installed. It is a digital video work, filmed in Madrid during a working day, when the team members take a break in the afternoon. It is a simple and elegant work. Nearing completion is John Lessore's large-scale painting of members of the British Paralympic team, pictured as they celebrated their victories in Sydney in the summer of 2000: a great work to have on display for another Olympic summer.

COVER

Lady Maria Callcott

by Sir Thomas Lawrence

1819

from *Off the Beaten Track*

Sandy Nairne
Sandy Nairne
DIRECTOR

MY FAVOURITE PORTRAIT

Hugo Vickers



Hugo Vickers is a biographer, lecturer and broadcaster, specialising in the twentieth century. He is Cecil Beaton's appointed biographer, royal expert and author of several books, including *The Private World of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor* and *Alice: Princess Andrew of Greece*.

Photo © Elizabeth Vickers

I FIRST CAME to look at *The Royal Family at Buckingham Palace, 1913* when I was a teenager, drawn by an interest in that generation of royalty, an interest that has not waned. I know much about the four depicted, and when I was very young, and they were somewhat old, I saw the Princess Royal and the Duke of Windsor. James Pope-Hennessy's biography of Queen Mary I read at the age of thirteen. It is impossible to look at this picture without wondering how Lavery must have felt as he painted it – the orphan from Belfast, raised by relatives: a farmer with a harsh wife, then the owner of a pawn-shop. His career was boosted by collecting £300 from an insurance company when fire destroyed his studio.

And then the group – George V, a full-dress Admiral of the Fleet with epaulettes, a stalwart old constitutional monarch, who hated London, but never failed in his duty; Queen Mary, who submerged her private interests out of respect for the throne, and blossomed only in widowhood; the Prince of Wales, about to do his duty in the Great War, insofar as he was allowed, but destined to surrender his heritage for an unworthy wife; and Princess Mary, soon to be the heroine of the forces, who married the much older Earl of Harewood, and who, till her dying day, trembled with nerves before every royal engagement.

The war is about to come. The group will ultimately dissolve. A moment of serenity has been captured on canvas.



The Royal Family at Buckingham Palace, 1913
(King George V; Princess Mary, Countess of Harewood; Edward, Duke of Windsor; Queen Mary)
by Sir John Lavery, 1913
© private collection

WINNING THE *BP Portrait Award 2003* was the best start to my career as a professional artist that I could have hoped for, and a wonderful culmination to my degree course.

Obviously there were many benefits to the award, but I think the most important aspect of it has been the recognition of my work through both the popularity of the show itself and the extensive media coverage. One of the most difficult things to do when starting out in a painting career is to find a way to advertise your work to a large audience; I have been very fortunate to achieve this at such an early stage.

For me, this year has largely been about setting up my business, from renting a studio to discovering the ins and outs of being self-employed. It has been a challenging time after the structure and security of the university environment, but a rewarding one from which I have learnt a lot.

Since the award, my work has been mainly concentrated on commissions. The publicity I received ensured that I had quite a lot of offers, and I found I was quite content to have a short break from my own paintings after the intensity of work leading up to the degree show. I was able to rent a studio space with East Street Arts, a Leeds-based organisation providing spaces for around forty artists, and have found working alongside other artists in an active environment to be very positive in terms of my own practice.

Working on commissions has been an interesting experience. It has thrown up questions about my own

practice and about the function of portraiture in general. It has led me to consider whether a portrait of someone unknown to the artist can contain the same depth of feeling as one where the relationship between artist and sitter is close. Examining this question has led me to think more carefully about other elements within the painting, such as composition and space. Perhaps these factors are just as relevant to creating an intimacy within the piece as knowing the sitter.

While working on the commissions, I have continued to submit pieces for group exhibitions and competitions and have had several more paintings on show in London exhibitions and art fairs.

My future plans are fairly flexible. I am currently developing a series of ideas for a fresh body of work which I hope might allow me to have a show of my own in the not too distant future. I am also looking forward to starting the commission for the National Portrait Gallery in the coming months.

Other possible plans for the future include doing an MA in painting or perhaps spending some time concentrating on drawing. I have been looking at the Prince's Drawing School in London and the courses it runs sound very appealing.

Winning the *BP Portrait Award* has created many exciting possibilities and I aim to keep plenty of options open.

Charlotte Harris

ONE YEAR ON: MY YEAR SINCE WINNING THE BP PORTRAIT AWARD



Charlotte Harris, a final-year arts student from Leeds Metropolitan University, won the *BP Portrait Award 2003* with her marvellous, deeply felt portrait of her grandmother.

Following a record number of entries, four artists have been short-listed for the *BP Portrait Award 2004*. They are Paul Harris (b.1967), an artist and stonemason based in Herefordshire, whose portrait is of his business partner Louise Tiplady; Stephen Shankland (b.1971), a Scottish artist and graphic designer living and working in Aberdeenshire, whose painting *The Miracle* is a portrait of Stephen's wife Kelly and son Connor, born prematurely in January 2003; Sara Shamma (b.1975), a Syrian artist living and working in Damascus, whose short-listed portrait is one of an ongoing series of self-portraits; Fergus Mayhew (b.1963), who studied at the Royal Academy and is now a full-time father living in Devon, and whose portrait is of his mother, Bunty. A further fifty portraits have been selected for display at the Gallery.

This year prizes will be announced on 21 June, four days after the opening date of the exhibition, affording visitors the opportunity to consider the short-list before the official announcement is made.

In addition to a cash prize of £25,000, the winner will receive a commission, at the discretion of the National Portrait Gallery Trustees, worth £4,000. The second prize will be £6,000, the third £4,000 and the fourth £2,000. The winner of the *BP Travel Award* will receive £4,000, allowing him or her to expand artistic as well as geographical horizons.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Louise Tiplady
by Paul Harris ©



The Miracle
by Stephen Shankland ©



Self-portrait
by Sara Shamma ©



Head Full of Smiles
by Fergus Mayhew ©

BP PORTRAIT AWARD 2004 & BP TRAVEL AWARD

17 June – 19 September
Wolfson Gallery

A fully illustrated catalogue includes all the paintings in this year's exhibition, with an introductory essay by the poet and critic Blake Morrison. Price £5.99. Patrons and Members of the Gallery receive a 10% discount.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

THREE CENTURIES OF WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Curating the exhibition

7 July – 31 October

Porter Gallery

Sponsored by

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FROM THE OUTSET I wanted to reveal the richness of the National Portrait Gallery's own collections, so only women whose portraits the Gallery already held were selected. I also decided to set a rough end-date of the 1960s, as the advent of mass travel, the effects of globalisation and the gains made by feminism have created somewhat different conditions for contemporary women travellers. The next task was to discover which women travellers were represented in the collections, in paintings, photographs, sculptures or engravings. I consulted reference books, and many people helped by suggesting possible names to look up in the Gallery's catalogues. This produced forty-eight portraits of women who ventured further afield than Europe. I also wanted to include a section on women from those same far-flung areas of the world who travelled to Britain, which I based on research by Dr Caroline Bressey, funded by a grant from the Hollick Trust. These portraits appear in the Gallery's collections largely because it holds the archives of several important London society photographers, and a trip to a photographer's studio took place during these women's visits to Britain.



ABOVE
Upper part of a dyad of a man and woman against a back slab
© Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, University College London UC15513

BELOW
Nail figure or nkisi
© Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

FAR RIGHT, FROM TOP
Arab sitter by Freya Stark
© John Murray Archive

Chinese landscape
by Isabella Bird, 1890s
© John Murray Archive

The difficulty then was how to give the exhibition a sense of the different regions of the world. My solution was to include, alongside the portraits, objects the women brought back and images they made abroad.

My first port of call was the Ethnography Department of the British Museum. Searching through their index of donors I found an 'M. Stopes' presenting items in 1909 collected from the Ainu, the indigenous inhabitants of Hokkaido in northern Japan. I knew that Marie Stopes, later famous for her work on contraception, had spent time in Japan fruitlessly pursuing a Japanese academic with whom she was in love, and had visited Hokkaido. Two of these objects – a crown with a carved bear's head and an embroidered velvet bag – are in the exhibition. Members of the British Museum staff were most interested, as they had not previously spotted the Stopes connection. They kindly suggested a list of other museums likely to contain similar donations. I am very grateful to them and to the many



curators who patiently trawled through their collections, hunting out further potential loans.

The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford holds Mary Kingsley's souvenirs from West Africa. Her wonderful metre-high Congolese 'nkisi' or power figure (pictured left), made of wood embedded with nails and metal blades, will be a highlight of the



exhibition. Some items required additional research to confirm the link with a particular woman. We discovered that a beautiful Egyptian sculpture of a man and woman (pictured above left), now in the Petrie Museum, London University, appeared in a photograph of Amelia Edwards' study, which proved that it had belonged to her. Wherever possible I chose items mentioned by the women in their books, so that visitors can compare what they said about them with present-day understanding of the objects. Another splendid source of loans was the valuable archive of the publisher John Murray. From it we are borrowing photographs taken by Isabella Bird in China in the 1890s, developed in her makeshift darkroom on board her tiny boat on the Yangtze, and Freya Stark's camera as well as some of her magnificent photographs of Yemen. These are the stories behind the borrowing of just a few of the three dozen objects and images that will appear with the portraits in the exhibition, providing a unique insight into the adventures of some fascinating women travellers.

Clare Gittings

CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION

WOMEN TRAVELLERS sought to wander freely and for long periods of time in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Being in the open air was invigorating. In August 1892, Gertrude Bell wrote to her mother from an expedition in the Middle East, 'I shall be sorry to leave this wonderful Freedom and to be back within walls and gardens.' Abroad, being outdoors was doubly exhilarating for the novelty of the wide open spaces and the rampant foreignness. It was what Vita Sackville-West, when she first saw the Persian landscape in 1926, dubbed 'this question of horizon.' The views were, quite simply, 'enormous'. In *Persian Pictures*, her first book on the East, her friend Gertrude



Bell had shared the adventurer's attraction to 'the boundless plain stretching before him, the nights when the dome of the sky was his ceiling, when he was awakened by the cold kisses of the wind'. Twenty years earlier, Isabella Bird had experienced the same feeling of her heart opening up to fill the vast land stretched out in front of her. On 28 September 1873, she wrote to her sister in tiny Tobermory in the Scottish Highlands that the Rocky Mountains meant 'everything that is rapturous and delightful – grandeur, cheerfulness, health, enjoyment, novelty, freedom, etc, etc. I have just dropped into the very place I have been seeking, but in everything it exceeds all my dreams.'

Isabella Bird was a keen camper, and liked nothing better than to roll out her muslin-lined blanket sleeping-bag in a fresh spot each night. Always precise, even in her speech (Marianne North observed that Isabella talked very slowly and methodically, as if 'she were reciting from one of her books'), she had a thoroughly tested routine that she observed on her travels. In the morning, she would rise and have a cup of tea accompanied by 'stir-about', boiled water thickened with local flour. She then travelled until midday, when she halted for two hours for her carriers, who transported the load of her heavy camera kit and other equipment, to rest and eat. Isabella lunched on chocolate and raisins. She aimed to reach her new camp before six in the evening. Her men would pitch her folding bed, and she would take another cup of tea before sitting down to record the day's events in her notebook. For supper, she had curry, 'always appetising', made with her own curry powder and cayenne pepper.

Even small, everyday activities could be transformed into sensual pleasures. In 1876, Constance Gordon Cumming wrote from 'The Teacher's House at Limiti, Isle Ngau', how a bath was no longer a 'humdrum tub, filled by a commonplace housemaid' but was taken in the open air, in an 'exquisite stream . . . just deep



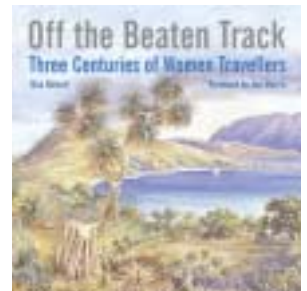
enough to lie down full length', overarched by great tree ferns and palm fronds 'through which you see peeps of the bluest skies'. She confessed that, stumbling across such spots when alone, she simply undressed and waded in, her long blonde ringlets, usually so formally and old-fashionedly arranged, becoming damp and unkempt. After she had bathed, she picked ripe oranges from the tree, peeled and ate them. Being alone like this in the Fijian forest was far from frightening. Ten years later, she was boasting in her book, *Wanderings in China* (1886), 'physical fear is a sensation which I have never experienced.'

A determined fearlessness when faced with a physical threat was shared by many women travellers. Violet Cressy-Marcks had already trekked the Cape to Cairo route and sleighed across the frozen north to Murmansk before tackling the rivers and swamps of South America in 1929. She was sleeping on the ground in the Amazon when she was woken by a snake slithering over her. She grabbed it just below the head, crawled out from under her mosquito net and walked until she found a rock to smash the snake's head against. 'I was afraid I should cause too much commotion if I fired,' she explained in *Up the Amazon and Over the Andes* (1932). She had been bitten below the knee. Not knowing whether the snake was poisonous or not, but taking no chances, she used her scalpel and cut across the bite, pushing in two halves of a tablet of permanganate of potash. She examined her face in a mirror ('I hadn't used one for months') to see if she were turning grey or her lips were a strange colour. Apart from being thinner than when she had last looked, 'nothing seemed to be amiss.' Anyway, she mused, 'if I was going to die it was a fine spot for it.'

Dea Birkett



ADVENTURERS
'physical fear is a sensation which I have never experienced'



Dea Birkett is a distinguished broadcaster and writer. She is author of several books including *Mary Kingsley and Serpent in Paradise*.

This extract is taken from *Off the Beaten Track: Three Centuries of Women Travellers*, the fully illustrated book by Dea Birkett to accompany the exhibition, with a foreword by Jan Morris. Price £18.99.

FAR LEFT FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

Gertrude Bell
by Flora Russell, 1887
© Estate of Flora Russell

Vita Sackville-West
by Gisèle Freund, 1939
© Gisèle Freund / The John Hillelson Agency

TOP
Constance Gordon Cumming
by Herbert Rose Barraud, 1893

LEFT
Violet Olivia Cressy-Marcks
by Lafayette, 7 August 1926

BUILDING THE COLLECTION

SIR WILLIAM BEECHEY AND ROGER MAYNE

THE GALLERY has recently acquired two extraordinarily diverse items: a late eighteenth-century account book of the leading portrait painter Sir William Beechey, and a wonderful vintage print of the photographer Roger Mayne taken by his fellow practitioner, John Deakin. The connection between these two acquisitions is that they were both made possible by a recent legacy. They were acquired with the help of a bequest from Dr Clementine Wheeler, an American who loved art and spent ten happy years living in London, visiting the Gallery on many occasions. We know little about Dr Wheeler's precise interest in the Gallery, but we felt that it would be appropriate to acquire two London-related items to mark her generosity. Such help is indispensable if the Gallery is to continue to acquire fine items for the collection at a time when its purchase grant is static and prices are rising.

Roger Mayne is one of the most significant realist photographers of the 1950s and 1960s and is celebrated for his pictures of children in Southam Street, North Kensington. This image by John Deakin was taken in 1957 in Addison Place, a mews in Notting Hill round the corner from Addison Avenue where Mayne lived over a vet's premises. It shows Mayne, camera in hand, and a boy by the name of Malcolm Revill, posed against a graffiti-covered wall marked 'Elvis' and with a chalked figure of Hitler.

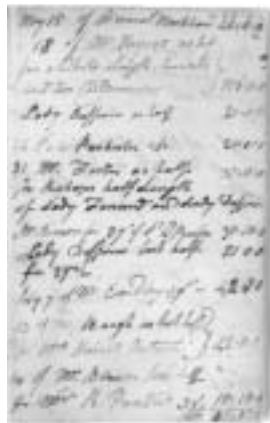
This purchase was made directly from Roger Mayne, now aged seventy-five, and at the same time we acquired six examples of his own work, which join eighteen other images by him already in the collection, mainly of artists and writers. All twenty-four photographs may be viewed on the Gallery's website. Many of these, including portraits of Ann Jellicoe,

Tony Richardson, Lindsay Anderson, Doris Lessing and Gillian Ayres, will be exhibited at the Gallery this summer in a new display, *Seizing an Instant: Photographs by Roger Mayne*, from 12 June to 5 December.

Sir William Beechey was one of the leading portrait painters of the reigns of George III and George IV, working at first in Norwich before settling permanently in London in 1787. This modest but fascinating account book contains miscellaneous notes relating to the artist's life in Norwich in 1784, a list of portraits painted between 1789 and 1791, a record of miniatures completed between 1795 and 1798 and a further list of portraits of the period 1808 to 1813, together with some notes on their picture frames. In the page reproduced here, listing payments made to Beechey from May to July 1809, the most expensive item is a part-payment of £126 for a whole-length portrait of a Mr Myers with two children; a similar payment was made on 4 October once the portrait had been completed, in total equivalent to about £25,000 in today's money.

With the account book came a collection of rather slight landscape drawings which appear to be the work of the artist's son, the painter and explorer Henry William Beechey. The book joins the Gallery's collection of important manuscript account books, sitter books, studio ledgers and diaries of various artists including Charles Beale, Joseph Wright of Derby, George Romney, James Northcote, John Partridge and George Richmond. Northcote's was published some years ago and we would like to do the same for Beechey's when circumstances allow.

Jacob Simon CHIEF CURATOR



ABOVE
A page from the Account Book of Sir William Beechey, May to July 1809

RIGHT
Roger Mayne
by John Deakin, 1957
Courtesy of Roger Mayne

As part of our ongoing efforts to build the collections, if you would like to have further details of these acquisitions or to indicate areas that you would like to support, please contact the Chief Curator at jsimon@npg.org.uk or on 020 7312 2416.





CHELSEA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SCHOOL Following on from the success of the pilot outreach access project that took place with Great Ormond Street Hospital School in 2003, the Gallery has extended its outreach provision to other hospital schools in London.

Over the past seven months children from Chelsea Children's Hospital School based at Chelsea & Westminster Hospital, the Royal Brompton and Collingham Gardens Child and Family Unit, have taken part in a series of innovative workshops led by the Gallery's freelance artists, actors and photographers and its Access Officer.

The aim of this creative project, supported by corporate member Towers Perrin, was to deliver a cross-curricular programme based upon the Gallery's collections. The workshops covered the areas of art, history, literacy and citizenship and drew inspiration from paintings, sculptures and photographs from the Gallery. Working with photographer Elizabeth Doak, children were given the opportunity to dress as figures from British history and popular culture to create their own photographic images.

Children from around the country attended the classes; the number of participants varied according to any medical treatment they were receiving or the extent of their stay in hospital. The project will culminate in an exhibition of the children's work at Towers Perrin and will then transfer to Chelsea Children's Hospital School.

Lucy Ribeiro ACCESS OFFICER

VIDEO-CONFERENCING is a project that the Education Department has been running for the last eighteen months, with support from the Dulverton Trust and the Department for Education and Skills. The DfES has loaned us all the equipment and provided high-quality training and support as we develop a new range of educational skills.

Video-conferencing allows us to teach pupils all over the country – we have worked with schools in Hull, Devon, Lancashire and even the Isle of Mull. We can see and hear the children and they can see and hear us, so we can show them portraits and ask them questions, just as we do in sessions at the Gallery. The images and sound are transmitted down two telephone lines – all we have here is a television screen with a small camera on top of it, and the schools have similar equipment. Video-conferencing enables us to work with all sorts of groups, such as children in hospital schools, who cannot otherwise visit the Gallery.

As a national institution with a remit extending to the whole country, we find it a wonderful way of providing wider access to expert teaching about the Collection.

Clare Gittings EDUCATION OFFICER

THE PHOTOGRAPHS by Lucian Freud's studio assistant, David Dawson (b.1960), currently on display in the Contemporary Galleries, offer a fascinating insight into a modern master at work. Focusing on Freud's studio activity, the photographs give a rare glimpse of portrait sittings, studio visits and paintings in progress.

During his mornings at Freud's studio, Dawson has photographed the daily goings-on. The seventeen remarkable images in this display include Hockney sitting for Freud; Freud painting his grandson Albie; Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles posing; and Freud painting a grey gelding. Dawson also captures some of the few visitors to Freud's studio including artist Frank Auerbach and British Museum Director Neil MacGregor.

David Dawson studied painting at the Chelsea School of Art and the Royal College of Art. He met Freud when he was working part-time for the artist's then dealer, James Kirkman, in the late 1980s and has been Freud's assistant for twelve years, spending his mornings at Freud's studio in Holland Park and his afternoons at home, working on his own paintings. Dawson has also modelled for Freud, for the painting *Sunny Morning – Eight Legs* among others. He will be exhibiting in a painting show at Marlborough Fine Art in the autumn.



EDUCATION OUTREACH PROJECTS

CHELSEA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SCHOOL AND VIDEO-CONFERENCING

FAR LEFT
Arts and Education Outreach Project,
Chelsea Children's Hospital School

LUCIAN FREUD IN THE STUDIO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID DAWSON

Until 1 August
Room 40

LEFT
Freud painting *The Brigadier*
by David Dawson
© David Dawson

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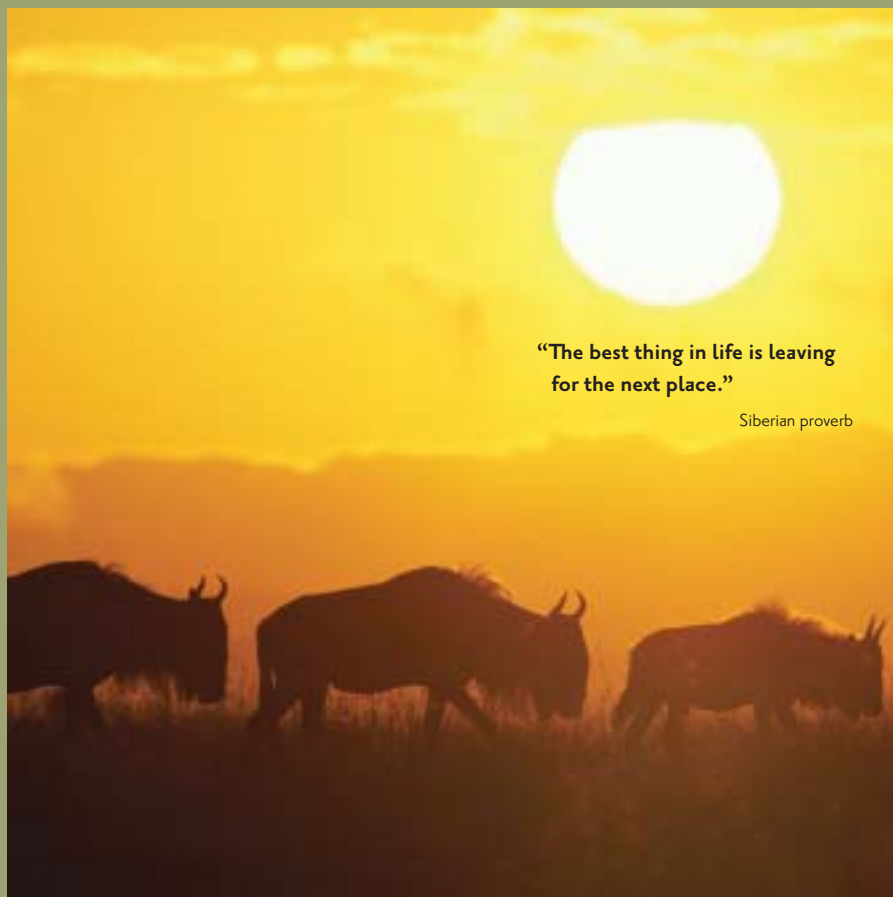
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