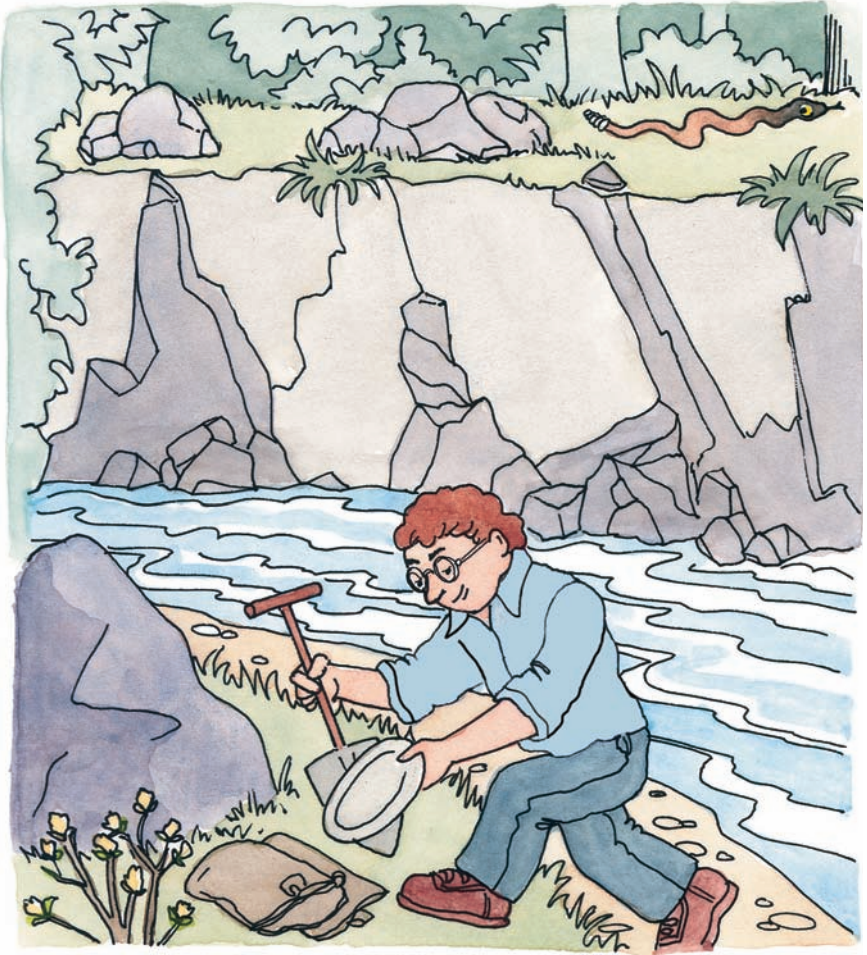




The eyes belonged to a rattlesnake that was lying on the rock ledge. The snake must have been there the whole time while Mr. Campbell was panning for gold.

Mr. Campbell looked at the snake from across the brook and smiled. He knew that rattlesnakes would not bite if no one bothered them. So, Mr. Campbell continued eating his lunch and watching the rattlesnake. After lunch, he went back to work and tried to ignore the snake.



It was late afternoon when Mr. Campbell decided to stop panning for gold. The rattlesnake had dozed off and had slept on the rock ledge the whole afternoon. Finally, it had lazily crawled away.

By that time, Mr. Campbell had collected enough gold to make a ring for his wife. He wanted to surprise her, so he decided to keep it a secret.

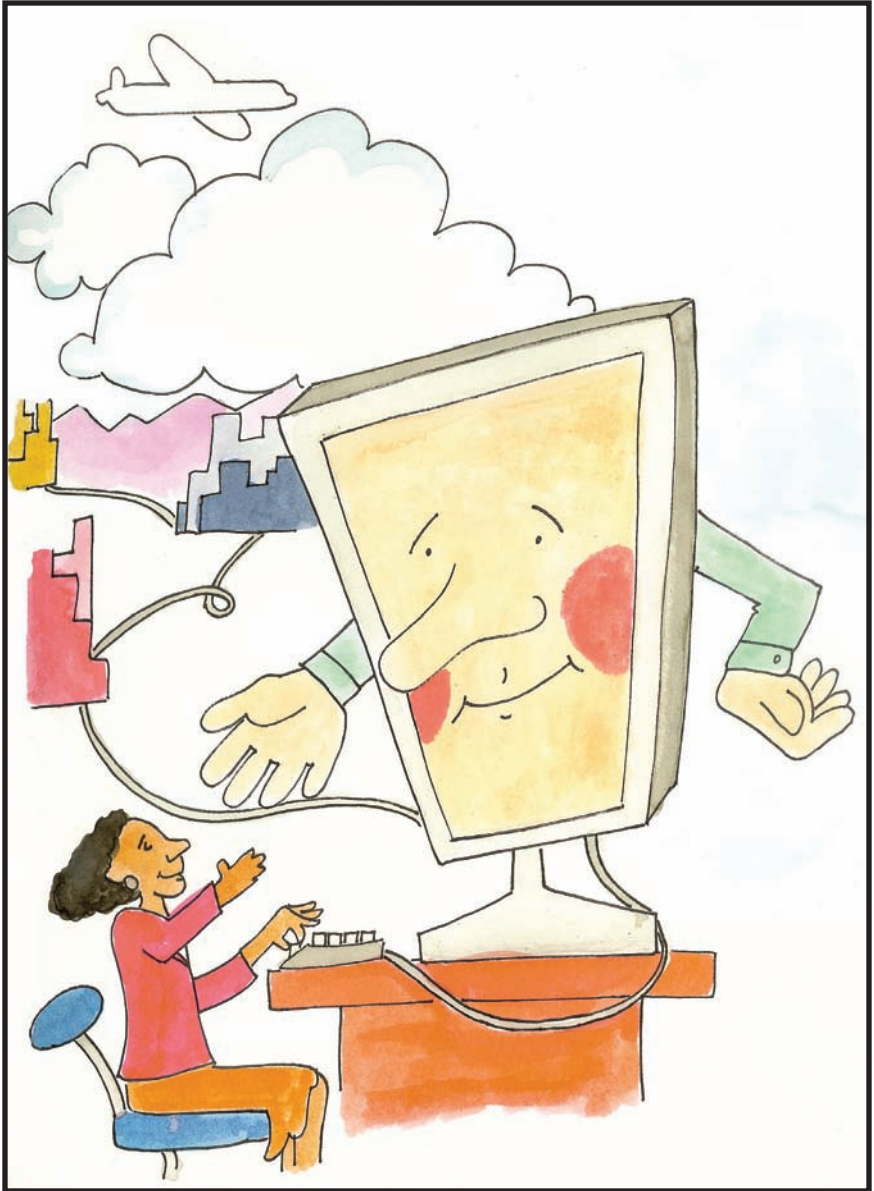
When Mr. Campbell got home, he found some relatives and friends who were visiting at his house. They asked him, “Did you have any luck finding gold?”

“Yes,” he replied, “but I did not find very much gold.”

Then, Mr. Campbell told them the story of the rattlesnake. His relatives and friends were surprised because he had not tried to kill it. They asked, “Why didn’t you kill it? You know that rattlesnakes are poisonous, don’t you? That snake’s bite could have killed you!”

Mr. Campbell replied, “The snake didn’t bother me. Why should I bother it?”

Computers



Computers are amazing machines! Computers help guide airplanes into the airport. Computers help newspaper editors write their stories. Telephones and TTYs use computers to communicate information from one home to another. Computers are used to travel into space and to study volcanoes. Computers are used in school to help students and teachers. What do you know about computers?

Some people think that computers are magic, but there is nothing magic about computers. Computers are machines. Scientists call them *electronic digital computers*. *Electronic* means that the machine uses electricity. *Digital* means that the machine uses numbers for directions instead of words.

Computers are machines that help us solve problems. The early computers were used to help the army. They helped soldiers plan wars and discover secret codes. The early computers were slower than those today, but they were faster than people working without a computer. The first electronic digital computer was built in 1945 in Pennsylvania. It was called ENIAC. The computer was huge. It filled one floor of a very large building. Today, a computer can fit in your hand!

Most of the computers we use today are much smaller than the ENIAC. Today, personal computers, or PCs, are very popular. Many people have personal computers in their homes, at work, or in school. Personal computers that are small and can be carried in your hand are called hand-held computers.

Some people think that computers are smart. This isn't true. Computers are only as smart as the information that we put into them. Computers use information that we put into the computer. This information is called *input*. People input information into the computer in "computer language." There are many different computer languages. Computer programmers are the people who write the information that is put into the computer in a computer language. The computer keeps the information in its memory. The memory is an electronic device that keeps information. *Output* is the information that the computer gives to the computer user.

Computers have changed the way we do things. Before computers, people could only dream of traveling into space. Today, computers help guide spaceships to the moon. Before computers, weather forecasters had to guess about the weather. Now, computers traveling in space send pictures to the earth that help the weather forecasters know exactly what the weather will be around the world.

Computers help us communicate, too. Messages can be sent from a cell phone or a video phone to a computer. The computer keeps the message until someone calls the computer and takes the message out.

You can find computers everywhere. They are in grocery stores and shopping malls. They are in schools and factories. Hospitals use computers to test blood. The car mechanic uses computers in the service station to solve problems with our cars. Computers are in our homes, too. Can you find the computers in your house?