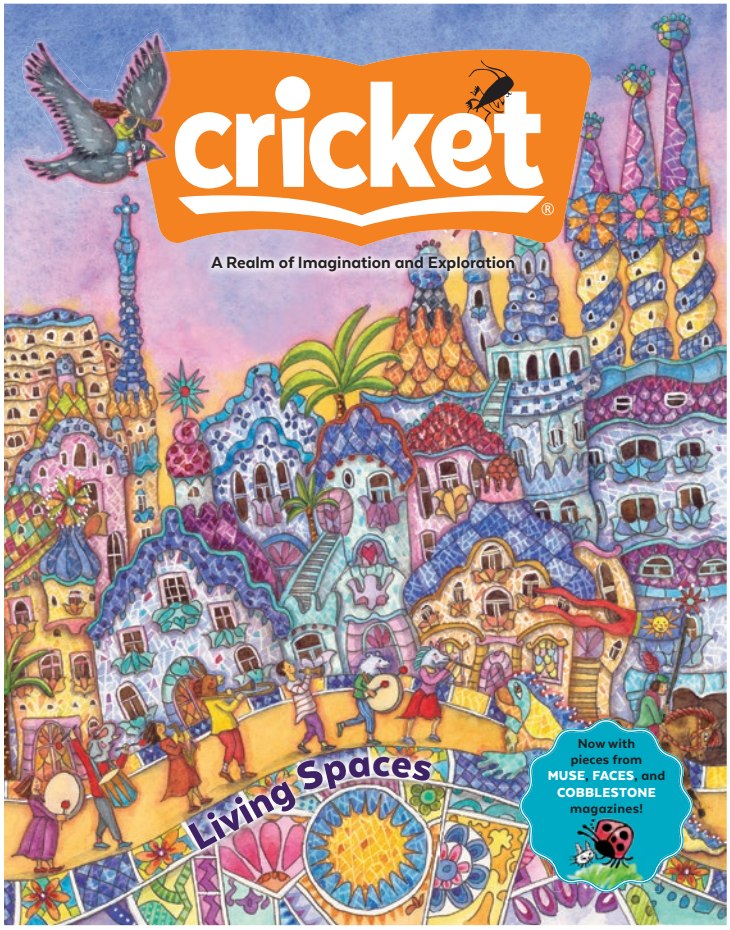
The cricket Companion

Hello, *Cricket* Reader!



We're so glad you're reading *Cricket's* November/December 2025 issue, "Living Spaces"! This issue explores the question: **How do our living spaces shape our lives?** From bustling megacities to eco-friendly Earthships, from creepy attics to daring architectural designs, you'll discover how the places in which we live affect how we imagine, create, and care for the world around us.

In this guide, you'll find cool ways to keep exploring the stories and articles from the issue:

- **Monster Cities**
  Imagine your dream place to live, then write, draw, or speak to show what life there might be like.
- **Mission: Earthships**
  Design your own eco-friendly dream house.
- **The Attic Door**
  Turn a mysterious noise into a comic or mini play.
- **Saving Fallingwater**
  Build and test your own cantilever creation.

Visit **Chatterbox** at **cricketmagkids.com** to post your creative projects and check out what other *Cricket* readers are up to. Share your thoughts about the latest issue of *Cricket* by emailing **cricket@cricketmedia.com** with "*Cricket* Feedback" in the subject line.

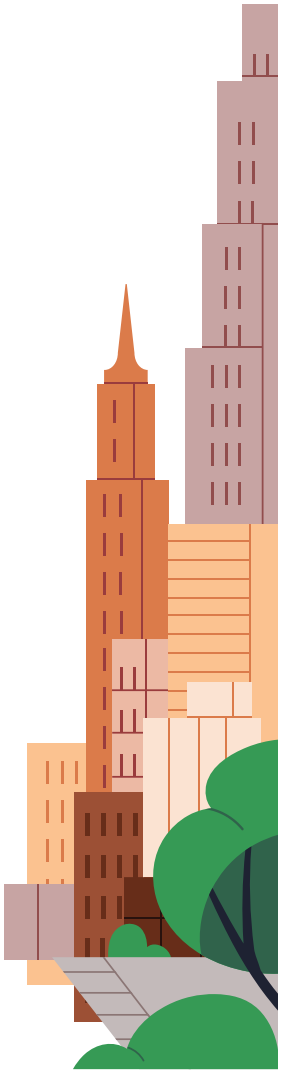
With each issue, enter a new contest for a chance to have your writing or artwork appear in the pages of *Cricket*! Find the Cricket League prompt and the contest rules in the last pages of each issue.

We hope this guide helps you reflect on the November/December 2025 *Cricket* issue and sparks your imagination about living spaces!

Happy reading,

Your Cricket Companions

MONSTER CITIES



In "Monster Cities" by Mary Beth Cox (page 14), you read about megacities—urban areas with more than 10 million people. These giant cities come with both big promises and big problems that shape how people live, work, and move every day.

Now it's your turn to imagine where you might live—today, or when you're older. Would you thrive in a sky-high city, a peaceful countryside, or a whole new kind of place that doesn't exist yet?

CHOOSE YOUR CHALLENGE

Pick one (or more!) ways to express your ideas:

- **Write It!**

  Imagine you're messaging a friend who lives somewhere very different from you.
  - If you live in a city, message a friend in the country.
  - If you live in the country or a small town, message a friend in a big city.
  - If you've never lived in either, imagine a place you *might* want to live someday—maybe a mountain town, a floating city, or a future space colony—and message a friend who lives there!

  Write at least three back-and-forth messages between you and your friend.

  In your exchange:
  - Describe what daily life looks like in your environment.
  - Compare how your surroundings shape what you do, hear, and notice.
  - End with a question that invites your friend to reply or keep the conversation going.

  Use emojis, timestamps, or nicknames to make it feel like a real chat thread!

- **Draw It!**

  Create a comic strip, city map, or scene that shows what you see, hear, and do in your environment.

- **Speak It!**

  Write a short persuasive speech or record a video explaining why your chosen place would be amazing (or challenging!) to live in.

  As you write, draw, or perform, think about:

  - How do people get around where you live?
  - What sounds or sights fill the air?
  - Where do people meet, play, or rest?
  - What are the best parts? What are the most challenging? Use details from the article about crowds, jobs, open spaces, and transit to inspire your own creation.

Talk About It!

- Would you rather live in a megacity, on a farm, or somewhere in between? Why?
- What are some benefits of big-city life? What are some challenges?
- How might your surroundings shape your daily life, interests, or dreams for the future?

Dig Deeper

Create something to convince others about your hometown—should they move there or not? Choose one:

- Write a blog post with three reasons for or against moving.
- Design a poster or travel ad that shows what makes your area unique.
- Build a 3D model, collage, or digital map of your hometown.

MISSION: EARTHSHIPS

In "Mission: Earthships" by Charles C. Hofer (page 36), you read how architect Michael Reynolds designs homes that use Earth's natural systems to keep people comfortable and protect the planet. Now it's your turn to design a sustainable home that follows his six principles!

BUILD A HOME THAT WORKS WITH NATURE

Step 1: Design by Principle

Use the article to remind yourself what each principle means, then sketch or write how your sustainable home will meet each need.

1. Use Recycled and Natural Materials What reused or local materials will you build with?	
2. Passive Heating and Cooling How will your home stay warm in winter and cool in summer without wasting energy?	
3. Solar and Wind Energy Production How will your home make its own power?	
4. Food Production What kinds of plants or gardens could grow inside or outside your home?	
5. Water Harvesting Where will your water come from?	
6. Graywater and Sewage System How will your home reuse water safely?	

Step 2: Put It All Together

Draw your full home design showing how these parts connect. Label each feature and explain how it will work.

Step 3: Rate Your Home!

Give yourself +1 point for every feature that helps both people *and* the planet.

Total: _____

0–3 points: Nice start—you've got the basics of a sustainable home!
4–6 points: You're a planet helper! Keep improving your design.
7+ points: Eco-genius alert! You're thinking like a real Earthship architect.

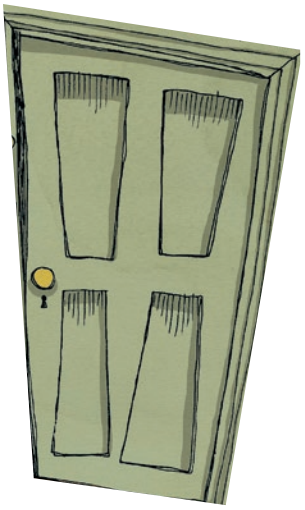
Talk About It!

- Why is it important to design and build homes that work with nature?
- How might living in an Earthship change your daily life?
- Which Earthship principle was easiest or hardest to include in your design?

Dig Deeper

With a grown-up, research different kinds of sustainable homes (tiny houses, treehouses, floating homes, passive houses). Compare their features to your own dream design.

THE ATTIC DOOR



In the story "The Attic Door" by Linda Anderson (page 40), a strange nighttime noise turns out to be—spoiler alert—nothing more than the wind.

Sometimes our homes surprise us, especially when a sound or shadow makes us imagine more than what's really there.

Make a Comic Strip!

Imagine two characters investigating a mysterious sound at home. Show the discovery in the spaces below.

- Draw the setting (kitchen, bedroom, basement, etc.).
- Use speech bubbles for dialogue.
- Show the characters' emotions through expressions, gestures, and poses.
- End by revealing what is really making the sound.

Talk About It!

- How can a home feel different at night than during the day? Why?
- What sights or sounds at home make you feel comforted instead of afraid?
- How do discoveries about our homes shape the way we live in them?

Dig Deeper

Write a Scene from a Play!

Now try it another way! Take the same characters and situation you created in your comic strip and write it as a short scene from a play. In your script:

- Begin by describing the setting (kitchen, bedroom, basement, etc.).
- Write dialogue, using the characters' names before each line.
- Use stage directions in parentheses to show actions or emotions.
- End with the characters discovering what's making the sound.

EXAMPLE

(Setting: Granddad's house)

JAKE: *(whispering)* Did you hear that thump?

MARIA: *(nervously)* Maybe it's just the wind . . . right?

SAVING FALLINGWATER

In "Saving Fallingwater" by Rebecca Hirsch (page 48), you learned how architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed a house to "float" over a waterfall. This bold decision shows how a home's design can change the way we see the world around us. Check out some of the benefits and limitations of using cantilevers, a structural element that uses support on one end but not the other.

Build a Cantilever at Home

1. Place a ruler so that part of it sticks out over the edge of a table. Use a heavy book to hold down the other end of the ruler. This ruler is your cantilever (fixed on one end, unsupported on the other).
2. Stack coins or small blocks on the part of the ruler that sticks out. How many items can you stack before it tips? Try different variables to come up with different results.
3. Now try the experiment again, but this time swap the ruler for another flat object (such as a cereal box flap or a strip cut from sturdy cardboard). How do the results compare?

SAFETY NOTE
Keep breakable or heavy items out of the way, since your cantilever might tip or fall. Use small, safe objects like toys or coins as weights.

Record Your Results

FOUNDATION	CANTILEVER	MOST WEIGHT HELD	FARTHEST DISTANCE EXTENDED BEFORE TIPPING
book	*ruler*	*30 quarters*	*4 inches*

Challenge

- Can you find a combination that holds more weight than your first design?
- Can you find a design that is both strong and long-reaching?

Talk About It!

- What makes Fallingwater a special house? Would you want to live there?
- Why might building a house over a waterfall be both exciting and risky?
- If you could design a house in nature, where would you put it? Why?

Dig Deeper

With a grown-up, explore other amazing cantilever designs around the world such as:

- The **Forth Bridge** in Scotland
- **One Za'abeel** in Dubai
- **CCTV Headquarters** in China

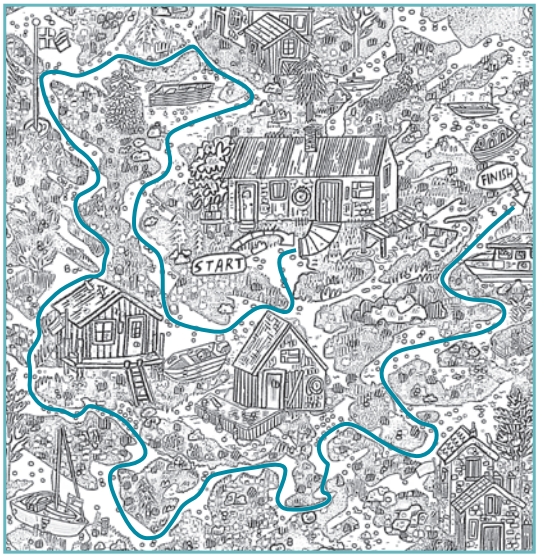
Which is your favorite and why?

SWEDISH WATERWAYS

Find your way through the maze of waterways in this Swedish archipelago and visit different structures along the way. Which one is your favorite?

ANSWER KEY

SWEDISH WATERWAYS



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STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

ACTIVITY	KEY SKILLS/FOCUS	ALIGNED STANDARDS
Monster Cities	Creative writing, sensory language, repetition, onomatopoeia	CCSS.ELA.W.4.3; CCSS.ELA.W.4.4; CCSS.ELA.W.4.9; Social Studies; Creative Arts
Mission: Earthships	Observation, environmental awareness, research, poster design	CCSS.ELA.W.4.2; CCSS.ELA.SL.4.5; Environmental Literacy; STEM Engagement
The Attic Door	Historical understanding, civic responsibility, vocabulary, critical thinking	CCSS.ELA.W.4.3; CCSS.ELA.RL.4.5; CCSS.ELA.SL.4.4; Creative Arts; Language Development
Saving Fallingwater	STEM experiment, engineering design, problem-solving, architecture	CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP.1; CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP.4; STEM Literacy; Visual Literacy