

The **cricket** Companion

Hello, *Cricket* Reader!

We're so glad you're reading *Cricket*'s January/February 2026 issue, "Worth It?" This issue explores a big question:

What makes something valuable?

Is it the price tag? Or could it be something else—like kindness, courage, or the way a choice makes you feel?

In this issue, value shows up in surprising ways—from two dollars during the Great Depression to rare tulip bulbs and brave choices that matter more than money.

This Companion Guide helps you keep exploring those ideas with creative ways to dig deeper, try things out, and make the stories your own:

• The Hidden Value Trail

Solve a *Cricket* clue hunt that reveals what truly gives something value.

• Two Dollars

Compare a 1930s grocery list to today's prices and discover how the value of money changes over time.

• Cash for Blood

Create a poster or video script encouraging people to donate blood for something more important than money.

• Rahim's Pangolin

Write a reflective journal entry exploring how Rahim feels after his big choice in the forest.

• Bonus Content: What Makes It Matter

Build a profile card inspired by Guinness World Records to explore what makes achievements meaningful.

• Swan Alert!

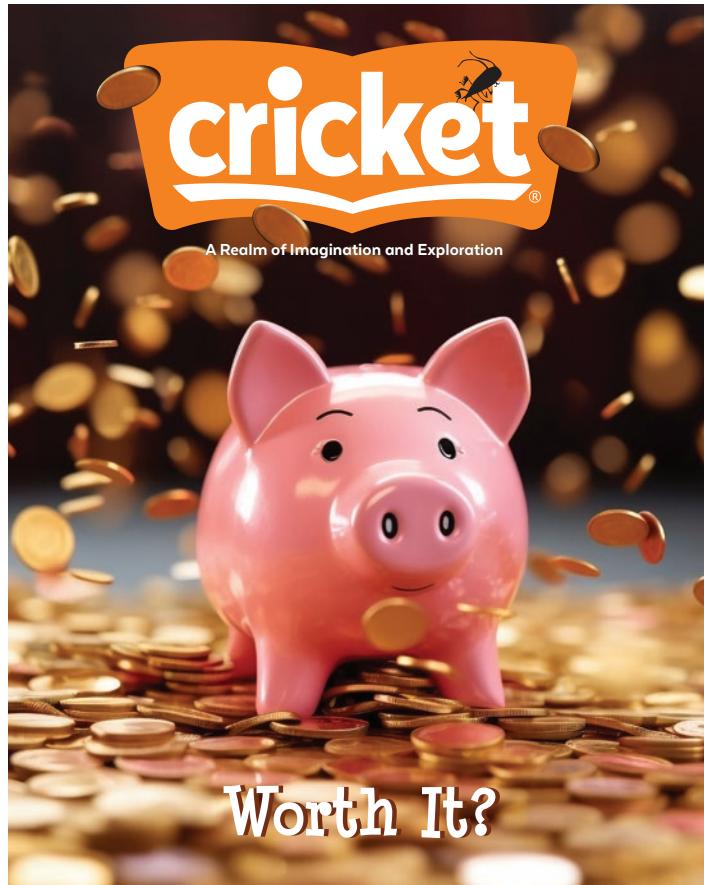
Help mama and papa swan find their missing babies!

You can share your creations and see what other *Cricket* readers are making by visiting Chatterbox at cricketmagkids.com. And don't forget to check out the **Cricket League** prompt at the back of the issue for your chance to be published!

We hope this guide inspires you to think about what matters most—and why.

Happy reading,

Your *Cricket* Companions





The Hidden Value Trail

Value shows up in surprising places throughout this issue. Follow each clue, one by one, to collect letters and uncover a hidden message.

What makes something truly valuable isn't its price, it's its .

CLUE 1 — Two Dollars

“Two Dollars” takes place during the Great Depression, a time when lots of people had very little _____.

Find the word in the story that completes the sentence. Write the first letter of that word in **blank #1** above.

CLUE 2 — Spare Change

In the poem, the speaker thinks about what **spare** might really mean. Search the poem for a word that could mean the same thing as “spare,” as in something you have left over. _____

Write the **first letter** of that word in **blank #2** above.

CLUE 3 — One on One: Ulunda Baker

Ulunda talks about a big milestone—getting keys to her own _____.

Write the **first letter** of that word in **blank #3** above.

CLUE 4 — From Barter to Bitcoin

Check out the timeline showing how systems of exchange have changed over time.

What type of currency was introduced in 1866? _____

Write the **first letter** of that word in **blank #4** above.

CLUE 5 — News or Not?

Turn to the article about the amber discovery in Ecuador.

Inside the amber, scientists discovered ancient _____, like flies and beetles, from long ago.

Write the **first letter** of the answer in **blank #5** above.

CLUE 6 — When Fortunes Blossomed

In the 1630s, a tulip craze swept through one European country, sending prices soaring.

The name of that country is the _____.

Write the **first letter** of that word in **blank #6** above.

CLUE 7 — Cash for Blood

Look closely at the picture at the bottom of page 22.

Which word on the image means the same as **donate**? _____

Write the **first letter** of that word in **blank #7** above.

Put your seven letters together to uncover the hidden message!





Two Dollars

In “Two Dollars” by Sharona F. Vedol (page 10), Helen learns that generosity can matter more than money. During the Great Depression, when money is tight for everyone, Helen’s family helps a family in need by not charging them rent and buying them two dollars’ worth of groceries.

The Changing Worth of a Dollar

Imagine you’re Helen, holding two dollars and hoping it will buy enough to help another family. How much would the same grocery list cost today?

Step 1: Look Up Today’s Prices

Use a grocery flyer or with an adult’s help, go to a store’s website to find the prices for:

- bread
- flour
- beans
- milk
- oats
- peanut butter
- two candies

Write each price in the “Today” column.

Step 2: Add It All Up

1930s	Today
1. bread	\$0.09
2. flour	\$0.25
3. beans	\$0.10
4. milk	\$0.14
5. oats	\$0.09
6. peanut butter	\$0.31
7. two candies	\$0.02
Total cost:	\$2.00
	Total cost: _____

How much more do the groceries cost today? _____

What surprises you about the two totals?

What does this tell you about how the value of money changes over time?



Talk About It!

- Why do you think Helen’s father returned the Katz family’s rent money?
- If you could add one item to the shopping list—no matter the cost—what would you choose, and why?
- Why can helping someone feel more valuable than having something?



Dig Deeper

Choose one way to explore the idea that generosity can make a big difference:

Story: Write about a time you helped someone, and it meant more than spending money.

Comic: Draw a before-and-after scene showing how a kind act changed someone’s day.

Interview: Ask an adult: “When have you given something that felt more valuable than the money you spent on it?” Draw or write their answer.



Cash for Blood

“Cash for Blood” by Kathryn Hulick (page 20) explores a real debate: Should people get paid to donate life-saving blood? Blood is incredibly valuable. But does everything valuable need a price? Let’s think about what might inspire people to help others.

Create a Campaign

Imagine you’re encouraging people to donate blood—not for money, but to help others. Choose **one** way to share your message.



1. Poster Power

Create a poster that grabs attention and inspires generosity.

Include:

- A headline that pops
- A message about why donating matters
- One fact from the article
- A symbol of hope (a heart, blood drop, helping hands, etc.)



2. Video Voice

Write a short script for a video you could share in your community.

Include:

- An opening line that pulls people in
- A fact from the article that shows why donation matters
- A reason someone might feel proud to donate
- A final line that leaves viewers feeling hopeful or motivated



Talk About It!

- What reasons—besides money—might inspire someone to donate blood?
- Ask an adult if they’ve ever donated blood. If so, what made them want to give?
- Do you think you might want to donate blood someday? Why or why not?



Dig Deeper

Imagine you donated something to help others—clothes, toys, or even your hair—and later learned someone sold it. Write a short story or opinion piece explaining how you’d feel and why.



RAHIM'S PANGOLIN

In "Rahim's Pangolin" by Kimberly Long Cockcroft (page 28), Rahim must choose between earning money for his family and protecting a mother and baby pangolin. His decision shows what he values most.



After Everything: Rahim Reflects

Rahim has just made a brave and difficult choice. After he arrives home and talks with Dadu, what might be going through his mind?

Write a journal entry from Rahim's point of view. Instead of retelling what happened, explore how he feels now.

You might include:

- What the walk home felt like
- What surprised him about Dadu's reaction
- Which moments keep replaying in his mind
- What still scares him—and what makes him proud
- Why saving the pangolin feels important
- What he hopes will change for his family, Aslam, or the forest



Talk About It!

- Why was Rahim's choice so difficult?
- What do Rahim's actions reveal about what he values?
- How might his decision affect his family or community?



Optional sentence starter:

"Tonight, after everything that happened, I can't stop thinking about . . ."



Dig Deeper

Choose an endangered animal from anywhere in the world. Create a one-page poster that shows:

- What the animal looks like
- Why it is endangered
- One action people could take to help protect it



Bonus Content

WHAT MAKES IT MATTER

In “What Makes It Matter” (page 38), creators from Sensical share what they treasure most about their work. In this bonus section, you’ll hear directly from Guinness World Records about how they see value.

Guinness World Records

People have been setting records for ages—running faster, building higher, and always finding new ways to amaze the world. For 70 years, Guinness World Records has been keeping track of these remarkable feats. Their series on Sensical tells the stories behind the records, revealing the creativity and determination that make each one possible.

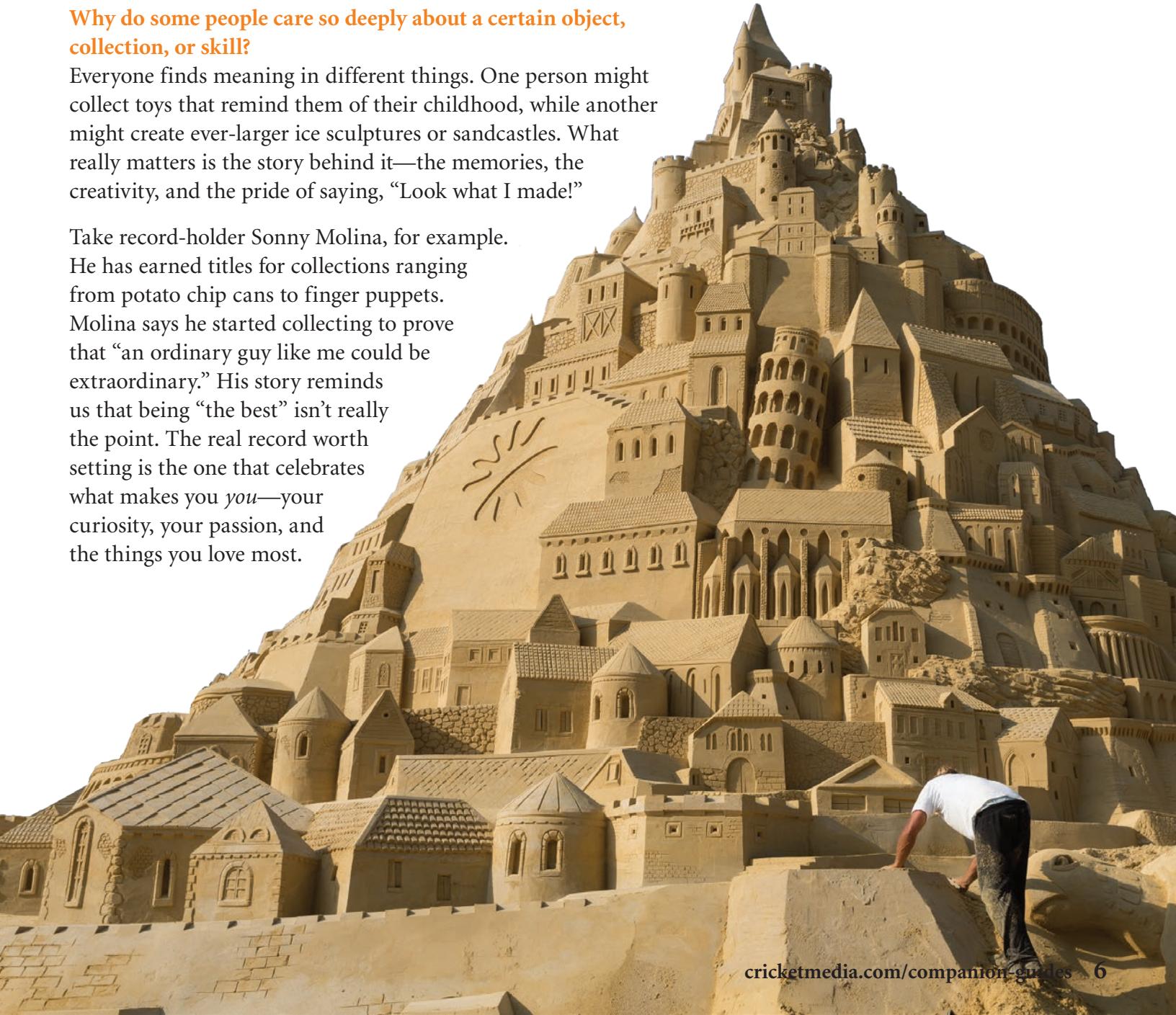
Why do some people care so deeply about a certain object, collection, or skill?

Everyone finds meaning in different things. One person might collect toys that remind them of their childhood, while another might create ever-larger ice sculptures or sandcastles. What really matters is the story behind it—the memories, the creativity, and the pride of saying, “Look what I made!”

Take record-holder Sonny Molina, for example.

He has earned titles for collections ranging from potato chip cans to finger puppets.

Molina says he started collecting to prove that “an ordinary guy like me could be extraordinary.” His story reminds us that being “the best” isn’t really the point. The real record worth setting is the one that celebrates what makes you *you*—your curiosity, your passion, and the things you love most.



Guinness World Records on Sensical

To check out their record-breaking series, visit sensicaltv.com/guinness or scan:



Talk About It!

- Why do people try to set records?
- If you could try for a world record, what would it be, and why?
- Can something be valuable to one person but not to another? Why?



Name: _____

Record: _____

Why It Matters:

Dig Deeper

Create a Profile Card

Choose one real Guinness World Record to explore.



Research:

- Who set the record
- What they collected, built, or practiced
- What makes this record special or meaningful

Then create a profile card.

A profile card is a one-page snapshot of a person or achievement. It includes the most important facts, a picture or symbol, and a short explanation of why it matters.

Profile cards are meant to be short, simple, and visual—like a trading card, a character card in a game, or a mini biography on one page.



SWAN ALERT!

Nine silent swan babies have wandered off! Help the mama and papa find their children.



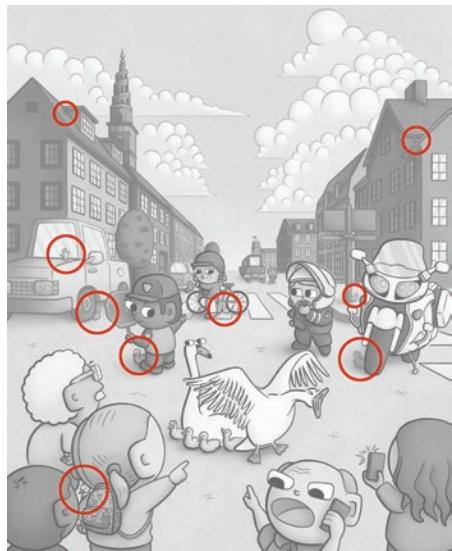


ANSWER KEY

The Hidden Value Trail

What makes something truly valuable isn't its price, it's its meaning.
money (M)
extra (E)
apartment (A)
nickel (N)
insects (I)
Netherlands (N)
give (G)

Swan Alert!



Credits

Art Credits: 5 (TR) art © 2019 by Lucia Sforza; 8 art © 2020 by Nic McDougal

Photo Credits: cover Eez/Shutterstock.com; 2 (BR) Zerbor/Shutterstock.com; 3 (C) GoodStudio/Shutterstock.com; 4 (TR) HobbitArt/Shutterstock.com; 6 (B) Ant Palmer/Shutterstock.com; 7 (T) Adwo/Shutterstock.com



STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

ACTIVITY	KEY SKILLS/FOCUS	ALIGNED STANDARDS
Two Dollars	Historical reasoning, comparing past and present, data interpretation, personal finance awareness	CCSS.ELA.RI.4.3; CCSS.ELA.W.4.2; CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.4.MD.A.2 (interpreting data); Social Studies—Economic Decision-Making
Cash for Blood	Persuasive writing, audience awareness, ethical reasoning, civic engagement	CCSS.ELA.W.4.1; CCSS.ELA.SL.4.4; Health & Civic Literacy
Rahim's Pangolin	Reflective writing, character insight, empathy, environmental awareness	CCSS.ELA.W.4.3; CCSS.ELA.RL.4.3; SEL—Responsible Decision-Making; Environmental Literacy

For Parents, Educators, and Grown-Ups

The activities in this Companion Guide invite kids to explore the big ideas in this issue of *Cricket*—what we value, why things matter, and how meaning can be found in unexpected places. Each activity offers flexible ways to respond through writing, drawing, building, or discussion, so children of different ages and learning styles can jump in with confidence.

You don't need to "teach" these activities to make them meaningful. Join in where it feels natural—talk through a question, help gather materials, or simply enjoy what your young reader creates. Listening to how children explain their thinking can be just as powerful as the activity itself.

Thank you for reading and exploring together. Your curiosity, encouragement, and time help turn stories into lasting learning.

For questions or feedback, we'd love to hear from you at cricket@cricketmedia.com.