

*Benvenuti in Italia!!! (Welcome to Italy)!!* -said Maria as she recognised from the star her boot-shaped peninsula, in the Mediterranean Sea.



Maria: Italy is known as the "Bel Paese" (beautiful country) and it is very famous worldwide for its culture, art, heritage, paintings, sculptures, historic buildings, landscapes and delicious foods!

Italy is a democratic republic. Inside its borders, Italy hosts two (very little) independent states: The Republic of San Marino, in north-central Italy and Vatican City, which is located within the city of Rome, where the Pope lives.



Italians love cooking and eating. Italian cuisine has a great variety of different ingredients which are commonly used, ranging from fruits, vegetables, sauces, meats etc. Everywhere food is good and each region has its tasty regional dishes. Pasta is the main daily meal. Pasta include noodles in various lengths, widths and shapes and it is usually served with sauce. Italian cuisine is also known for its cheese, wine, the Italian coffee "Espresso" and much more...!

And what's the most popular sport? Yanek added

Maria: Italians love football and Italy has won the last World Cup Championship in 2006!

Maria said: Hey Magic Star... please get closer to learn and discover more about my country! Ohhh

Yanek, Zeynep: look at that island that looks like a roughly triangular shape at the toe of the boot! Maria it's Sicily, where I was born!! Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Wow-said Yanek- How far is it from the Italian peninsula? Maria answered: It is separated from the Italian region of Calabria by the Strait of Messina. The distance between the island and mainland Italy by the Strait of Messina is about 3 kms.



Zeynep added: Maria, why don't you tell us something about your island? And Maria went on talking about Sicily  
Maria "Sicily is a beautiful island endowed with amazing mountainous landscapes and marvellous beaches. Crossroad in the Mediterranean sea, with its ancient history and magnificent buildings, Sicily testifies the historical presence of Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, French and Spanish, who contributed to enrich the culture and architecture of the island..." Suddenly from the sky a glittering and mysterious rain of sheets of paper came down, carried by the wind.



"Let's take them" shouted Maria and they three guys jumped on the magic star and tried to catch them. So, Janek, Zynek and Maria, riding the star, followed the sheets of paper, visiting wonderful natural landscapes and ancient historical buildings of Sicily, such as the Aeolian islands, the Greek Theatre of Taormina, le Gole dell' Alcantara, the Temples of Agrigento, the roman mosaics of Villa del Casale in Piazza Armerina, The kids followed the mysterious sheets paper until these fell down on a green hill surrounded by a beautiful landscape, so the three guys ask the star to land off. Maria, in a rush, grasped one sheet of the paper, opened it and she read loudly:

" Welcome to Misilmeri... Help the town to break the spell!! "and she adds: Oohhh..we are in the province of Palermo, the capital of the island.Zeynep says: Hey..look ..there is a description of the city in that sign and it reports: Misilmeri is a hill township about 15 far kilometres from Palermo, where you can admire the ruins of the Arab-Norman castle (dated to the 1000 a.c.) that, with the other existing thirty-nine castles spread along the province of Palermo, testifies the long and important presence of the Arabs in Sicily.



"Interesting" ..says Zeynep reading on some people derive the Arab name from "Menzil el Emir" which means "the village

of the Emir" , while others derive it from " Masel Amer", which means "a flourishing place bathed in water.

Why don't we visit this place before continuing our journey? It seems a very interesting place " suggested Zeynek. " Good Idea. And then"-added Maria- "we have still to solve the mysterious phrase written on the paper!!

So they climbed down the hill and walked towards the town. When they reached the main square of Misilmeri, there, they met a group of children of

the secondary school, preparing sheets of paper, very similar to that they had found before and, because of that, Maria addressed to the schoolmates, asking for more explanations.

The representative of the group answered: ahhh...So you've found the paper!!! we have spread these sheets of paper along Sicily so that brave people may come and help our community to break the spell of the castle of the Emir!

And the young boy of Misilmeri told the legend to Zeynep, Maria and Yanek:

**What are you talking about? What kind of spell?" asked Zeynep "I will tell you the story of a wicked woman and the Emir Giafar....**

Once upon a time, a child was playing on the castle hill until late in the evening and there, he met a woman who had always been living there since ever called "Serra Munachedda". Nobody knew her real name and her age, but she was well known among the local people and among the children, because of her awful appearance and bad temperament. Moreover, it was said that she was used to kill the children who dared to climb up to the castle's hill after the sunset.Yet, when she saw the child, she acted very kind with him, telling many pleasant anecdotes and inviting him to visit her house. So together they entered the cave. Once they were in, the SerraMunachedda told another old story and offered him a slice of cake.

After the first bite, he felt almost asleep and the old woman fastened the young boy. Unexpectedly, at the bottom of the cave, a radiant shape appeared. It was the ghost "Giafar", the wise Emir of the Castle who lived there. Giafar didn't want SerraMunachedda to kill the child, who turned out to be the heir of the Emir. In fact when Giafar was still alive, he had a love relationship with a young woman and this child was born. Giafar ordered the old woman that to go away from the cave so that the young boy could finally claim the castle by inheritance. When the SerraMunachedda acknowledged the truth, being afraid of her adversaries, she became outraged and, with an impetus, she looked the child up, killed the ghost and gagged the child forever.

Even today people say that to set free the child, people have to fill a bowl of water, from the big Fountain located in the main square of the town and go up to the castle on a white horseback, without pouring a drop of water trough via "La Masa". When the young boy ended up with the legend, the magic star proposed to rescue the child with a stratagem: the star would change itself into a white horse and bring the 3 guys to the castle with the filled bowl. After that, they would set free the young boy and defeat the Serra Munachedda for good.

All the children of Misilmeri were totally excited at the idea and they helped Maria, Yanek, Zeynep and the star with their plan. So they rode to the castle and as soon as they arrived in front of the cave by bringing the bowl still full of water, the young boy appeared as if by magic. Finally nobody would hear talking about the witch Serra Munachedda anymore. Satisfied with this adventure, Maria, Yanek, Zeynep were ready to start visiting Palermo,so they called the magic star and took off



When the three children arrived in Palermo, the star became an eagle, the symbol of the city. The eagle brought the children to "quattro canti", Maria said - we are at the "quattro canti" (four corners), this is the old centre of Palermo! - Zeynep: - Mary, what are these four buildings? - Maria: - these buildings belonged to King Charles V, Philip II, Philip III and Philip IV, each building, symbolizes a season and they are dedicated to St. Agatha, St. Oliva, St. Ninfa and St. Cristina -. Yanek:-let's go sightseeing!-. Suddenly the eagle turned into a Sicilian cart. Zeynep:- wow, this cart is wonderful! Yanek:-yes it is very beautiful, I really like those colors



mmm... what are those puppets painted on the cart? Maria:-they are typical sicilian puppets, they are at the Cuticchio 's museum, nearby there is a theatre where there is a puppets' show on!- Yanek:-can we go to the show?- Maria:-yes, I think it will be great fun -Cuticchio' s theatre has been declared an Untangible Heritage by UNESCO. You know that the puppet's show tells about the struggle between Sicilian knights and the fierce Saladin



Zeynep:-think ,a long time ago we were at war but we are good friends now . After the show the three children visited the castle of Zisa .Look this is the castle! Zisa in Arab means splendid! Zeynep:-wow this garden is fantastic –

After the show the three kids went for a walk and they arrived at Massimo theatre where they were amazed for its structure! .Yanek:- it's a very big and wonderful theatre !- zeynep:- the two lions are very beautiful!, who are the two women on the lions?- maria:- it's very beautiful,indeed!, the two women are Lyric and Tragedy!- Yanek:- the entrance looks like a Grecian temple for its columns and the stairs!- Maria:- ... but isn't temple!- there are 1400 seats! and it's the largest theatre in Italy!-



Maria: -this garden, called Genoardo, in Arab was called " jannat "which means garden of paradise!



After eating the children walked to vucciria, another market,!- . maria :- we are at the vucciria, there is a famous painting by Guttuso inserire quadro!, you know that there is a legend... there is an underground river the "papireto" and the legend tells that three crocodiles lived in this river and so people thought that the river



was related with Nile!. The three kids continued the walk on the cart maria:- Look this is martorana church !- zeynep:- is it Arabic?- maria:- yes is it!- yanek:- what's martorana?- maria:- martorana is a fruit shaped-sweet !,- yanek:- look there is a sweet shop!-

Now we walk from here to the Politeama !-. Yanek:- is Politeama another theatre?- maria:- yes- this theatre is smaller than the first one there are 950 seats-.



Zeynep:- but it is amazing as well I'm very hungry!- maria:- now we can visit the three main typical markets of Palermo: ballarò, capo and vucciria and we can have a snack there!, maria:- now we can visit the three main typical markets of Palermo: ballarò, capo and vucciria and we can have a snack there!, we will start with capo, it is near!. Zeynep:- wow there are many typical dishes!- yanek:- what a nice smell- maria: yes!, Look!! there is a panellaro!! He sells pane with panelle!-

maria:- oh fantastic they sell martorana fruit!- yanek:- mmm I have a sweet tooth!!! I like sweets!- zeynep:- mmm it's v delicious! Whats are the ingredients?- maria:-almonds flour!, water and sugar Then the three children arrived at the cathedral and they were amazed by the beauty of the church, zeynep:-wow, It's very beautiful, I really like the dome! Yanek:-yes, but what style is it? Maria:-this is Arab-Norman style. Zeynep:-there is a lot of arab art in sicily!-



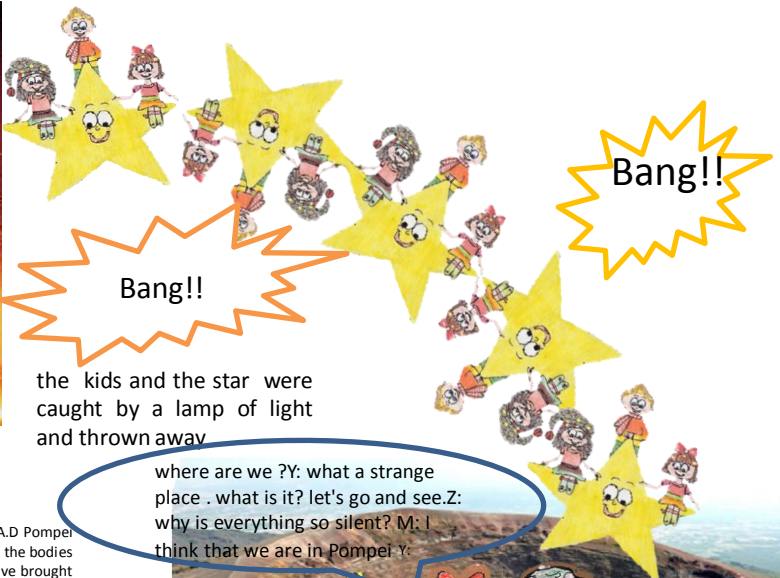
yanek:-I want to try it! ..... mmm it's very good - zeynep:- hugh! It's disgusting! - yanek:- no It's very good!!! Do you want to taste it? - zeynep:- mmm... just a little bit!.....mmm ooh it's delicious!!



M :There is another place I want to show you Y: what is it ?M: it's a surprise B.S. I' m curious too .....Z: super This beach is really terrific, let's get closer...M :This is Mondello one of the best-known beaches in Italy...Y:why don't we have a swim ?..ZM: Yes



Z:I'm having great fun, what is that mountain over there ?M: It' s Monte Pellegrino. Y:I'd like to see it....But the Bright Star came and said...I'm sorry, we have to go , There is a lot to see, come on, please. While the three kids were flying on the star, they heard a loud noise and soon they were surrounded by a rain of fire .Y: what's going on ? M:We are flying over the Volcano Etna, the highest one in Europe and it's erupting, I'm afraid



the kids and the star were caught by a lamp of light and thrown away

what happened here?

M: a long, long time ago Pompei was a rich roman town In the autumn of 79 A.D Pompei was the victim of a strong eruption of Vesuvio. The ashes of the volcano covered the bodies of the victims and then solidified so the bodies became statues .Excavations have brought to light wonderful roman villas,shops and baths In 1997 l'unesco declared Pompei a World

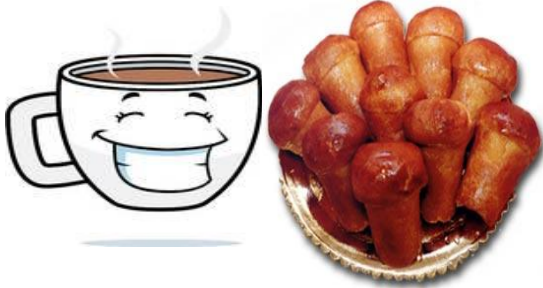
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Z ;I can see a very big city over there,Why don't we go and have a look ?M: That city is Naples ,it's one of the biggest city in South Italy Y:But: what is this nice smell? M: It's pizza Z: I'm starving, but what is pizza? M: it's a typical dish created by a neapolitan cook.Z: ok let's try it. the kids entered the pizzeria.



Waiter: Good morning (buon giorno) can I help you? M: yes, please we'd like a pizza. Waiter: small, medium or large? Y,M,Z: medium, please. Y: I'd like a margherita with tomato and mozzarella cheese. Z: I'll have a romana with tomato, mozzarella cheese and ham. M: and for me a capricciosa with tomato, mozzarella cheese, ham, mushrooms and artichokes waiter: anything to drink? M: yes, water please. waiter: sparkling or still? M: sparkling, please. one hour later... Z,Y: the pizza was delicious. M: it's late... can we have the bill please? W: yes, it's thirty euros. (our currency is euro)Y,Z,M: good bye.(arrivederci) good bye. Z: I don't feel like walking..... bright star, where are you? BS: I was having a nap on the volcano are you ready to go? Y: I hear the sound of a mandolin (jamme, jamme...) let's follow it. The three kids arrived in Naples.

Z: what's that building? It looks a bit gloomy. M: you are right, first it was a fortress then a prison. The kids went on walking M: let's go to Piazza del Plebiscito. Z: It's really beautiful!! Y: I see a coffee shop I'd like a neapolitan espresso..it's famous all over the world, M: It's the traditional drink for Italian people Y :I'm a little bit hungry Z :Again?Yes I see those sweets and...M:you're a sweet tooth..those sweets are Babà,please have a taste!! Y: I feel better now, where shall we go ?



We can cycle to Rome through one of the oldest streets in Italy

