

All About Kites

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book

Word Count: 768

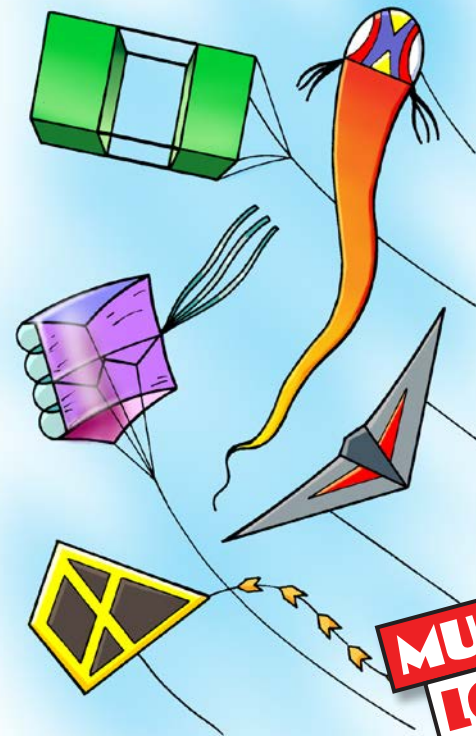


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All About Kites

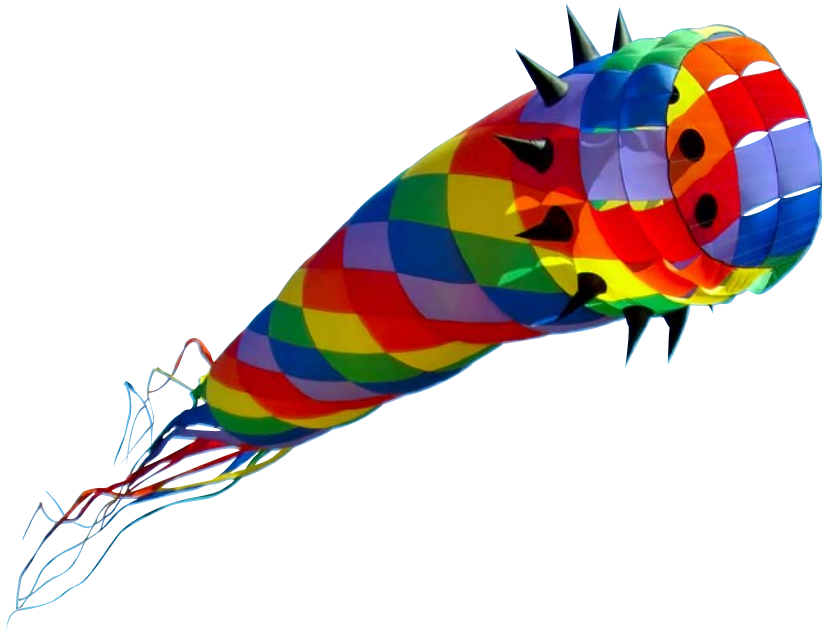


**Multi
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Written by Elizabeth Austin
Illustrated by Maria Voris

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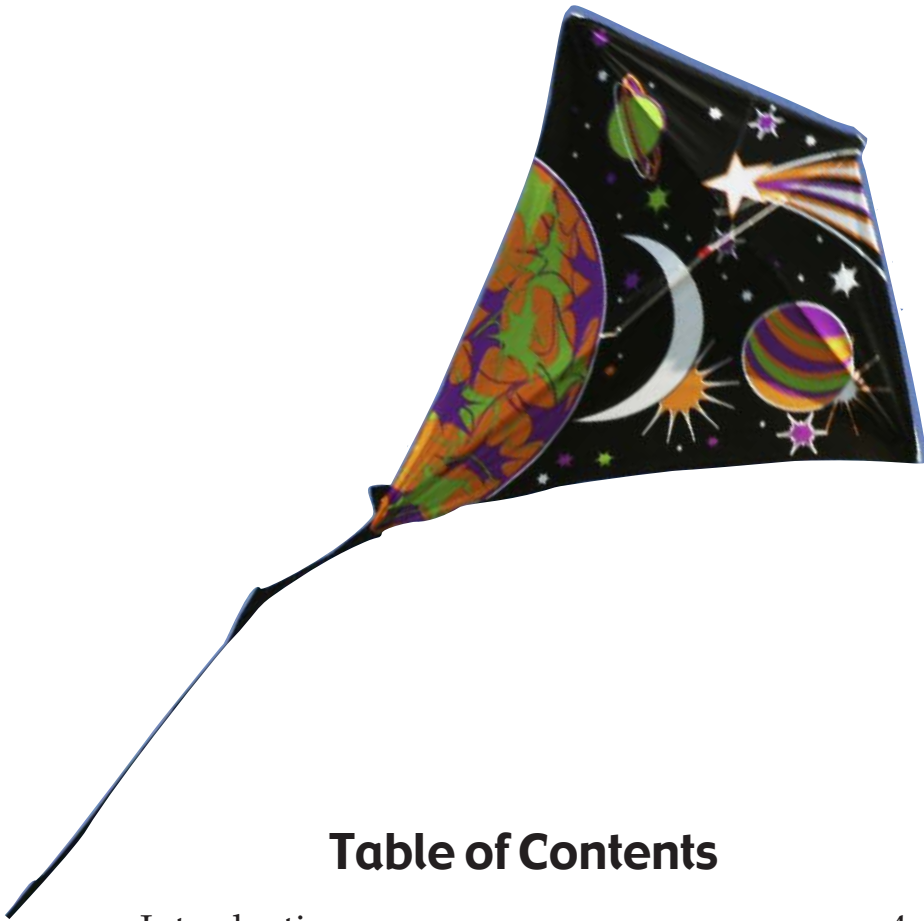


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Introduction

Few things are as bright and energetic as a sky filled with colorful, dancing kites! Each design is competing for your attention—long-tailed dragons, spinning metallic stars, and favorite cartoon characters. Kites are no longer just simple toys. Modern, aerodynamic materials and engineering techniques make new kite designs bigger, lighter, and stronger and allow them to perform like aerial acrobats.



History of Kites

Thousands of years ago, the first toy kites were named after the kite bird, a large, graceful bird with a very wide wingspan. In imitation, many early kites were shaped like birds, but people continually experimented with kite designs. Slowly, kites became increasingly elaborate and took on identifiable characteristics and consistent flight patterns. Kite flying so captured people's imaginations that stories were written about flyers. One famous Chinese **legend** tells a story about a man who used a kite to attack a fort. Unable to penetrate the walls, he tied himself to a huge kite, flew over the fort's high walls, and frightened the soldiers away.

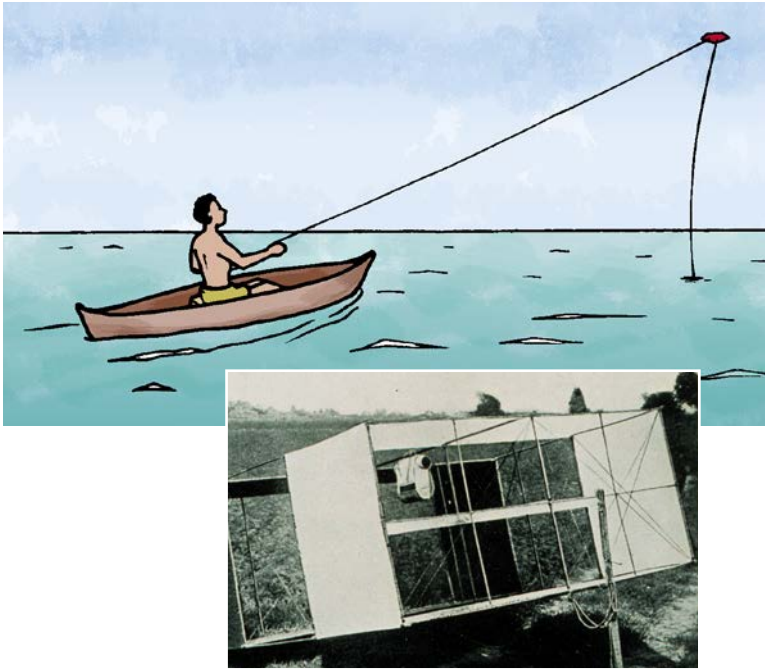
Some kites have made history. The famous American **diplomat** and **inventor** Ben Franklin loved testing ideas. He used a kite to prove his idea that lightning was made of electric current. On

On a stormy day, he and his son tied a metal key to a kite string and flew their kite high into the storm clouds. Just as he predicted, electricity from the clouds ran down the wet string to the metal key. When



he reached toward the key, the electricity jumped from the key and gave him a **shock!**

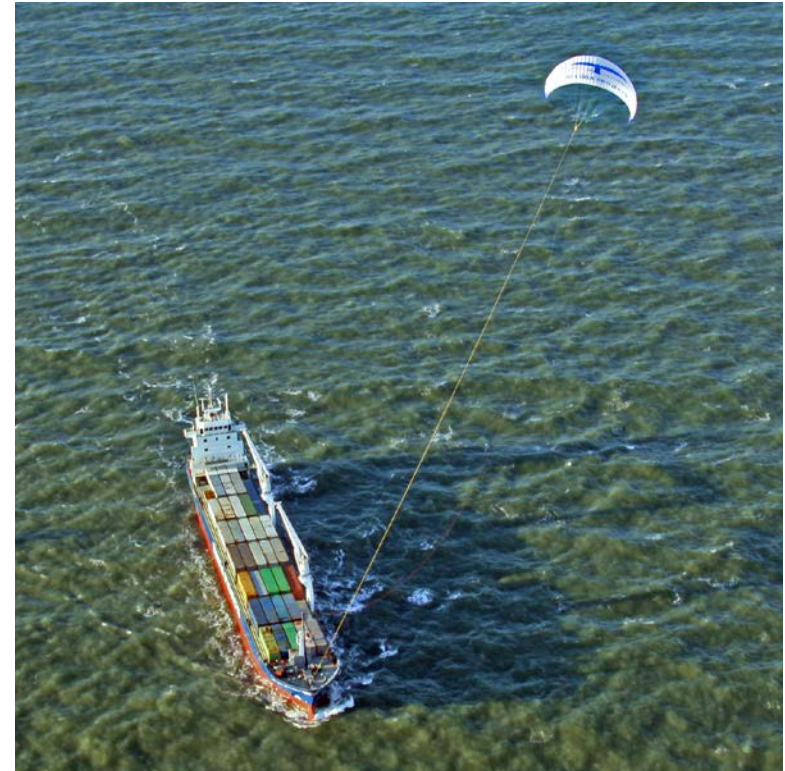
Warning: Don't try this experiment! When Franklin tried it again, he was hurt badly.



Unusual Uses for Kites

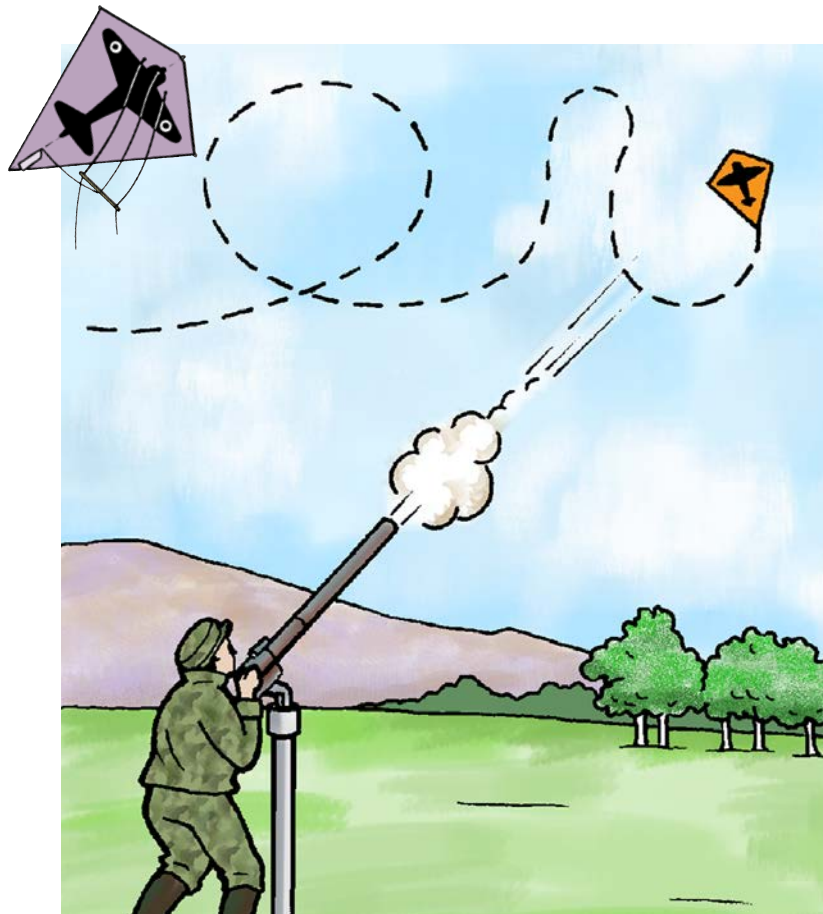
Fishing: Fish like to chase things in the water. To reach fish that swim far from shore, some people attach a shiny, baited **fishhook** to the long tail of a kite. The airborne kite skips the bait through the water so the fish can see it, bite it, and be caught and reeled in.

Weather charts: For years, scientists used a specially built box kite to carry delicate weather **instruments** aloft—to chart and record wind speeds and air **temperatures**.

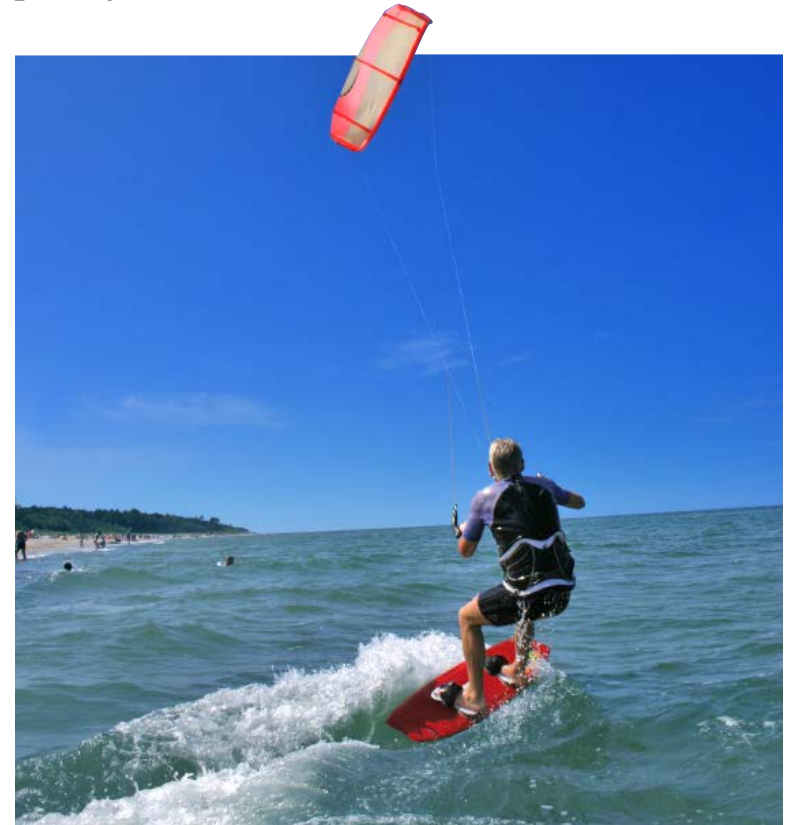


Real wind power: Long-distance cargo ships burn large amounts of fuel and contribute to air pollution. One German shipping company is experimenting with special kites to help reduce both problems. The big kite helps to pull the ship so the ship's engines will burn less fuel every day. As they burn less fuel, the amount of air pollution the engines produce will also be reduced.

Not all spies are well-trained human snoops. For years, armies attached small, powerful cameras to kites to fly over and spy on enemy locations. Armies have also used kites for shooting practice. These special kites could twist and dive, dodging bullets and imitating the evasive moves of military fighter planes.



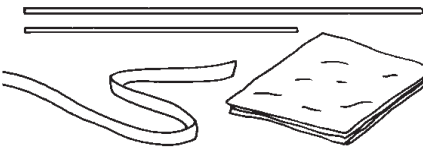

Watching a kite sail lightly through the sky still makes everyone smile—just as watching the kite bird did long ago. With a little practice, almost anyone can assemble a kite and learn to fly it. One day, you may want to test your new kite-handling skills with multiple-stringed stunt kites. Or you may want to participate in an extreme kite sport, such as *kitesurfing*—where a big power kite pulls your surfboard!





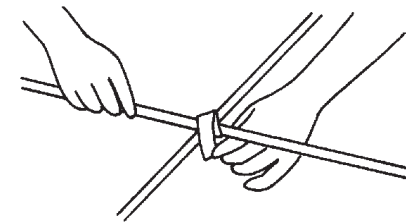
Make Your Own Kite

You'll need:

- two lightweight, smooth sticks, one 3 feet (90 cm) long, the other 2 feet (60 cm)
- a large plastic trash bag, cut open 
- a long strip of lightweight cloth or plastic for the tail
- scissors 
- strong tape
- a very long string

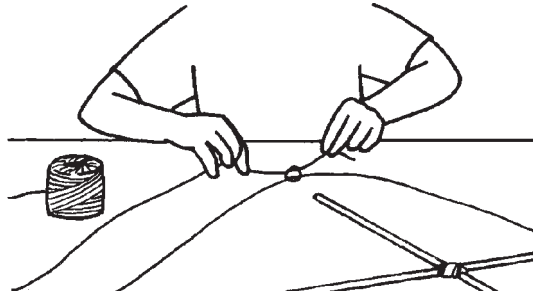
Step 1:

Form a cross shape with the sticks. Wrap tape around the sticks where they meet.



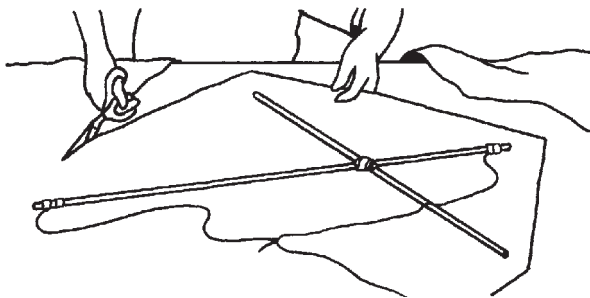
Step 2:

Cut off a 4-foot (120 cm) piece of string. Tape each end of the string to each end of the long stick. This string is called the **bridle**. Tie one end of the rest of string to the middle of the bridle.



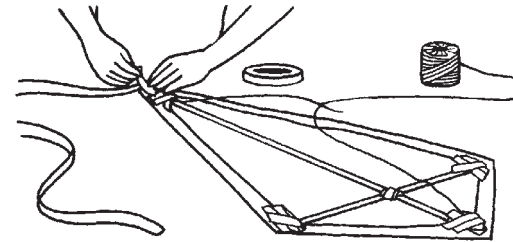
Step 3:

Lay the cross on the open plastic bag. Cut a diamond shape around it. Make sure to cut the diamond shape wider than the ends of the sticks.



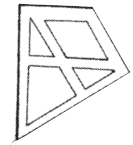
Step 4:

Fold the corners of the diamond over the ends of the sticks. Tape the corners tightly to the sticks.



Step 5:

For a tail, tape the strip of cloth or plastic to the bottom of the kite.



Kite Safety

- Remember to choose an open, safe place to fly your kite.
- Don't fly your kite near power lines. Keep away from trees, roads, and airports.
- Don't fly a kite in the rain or when you hear thunder.
- Be sure nothing is on the ground to trip over.

When it's time to test your first kite, pick a breezy day and take it to a flat, open area, even a beach, if one is nearby. Look around you to be sure that there are no power lines or big trees to tangle your kite. Make sure that there is nothing on the ground that you could trip over.

Ready to start? Hold your kite up by the bridle and run into the wind. When you feel it tug, let go of the kite! Let out a little string, slowly, until you feel the wind pulling your kite. Keep letting out more string until your kite is flying high!



Glossary

- bridle** (*n.*) a kind of harness that guides movement with ropes or strings (p. 13)
- diplomat** (*n.*) a person who represents his or her government to another government (p. 6)
- fishhook** (*n.*) a curved metal hook put on the end of a fishing line (p. 7)
- instruments** (*n.*) tools used for making or recording measurements (p. 7)
- inventor** (*n.*) a person who invents or creates a new device or process (p. 6)
- legend** (*n.*) an old story that is well known but cannot be proved (p. 5)
- shock** (*n.*) a sharp jolt when electric current touches your body (p. 6)
- temperature** (*n.*) the level of how hot or cold something is as measured on a thermometer (p. 7)