

Jim the Steelman

When you look down from the 102nd floor of the Empire State Building you see mountains of steel, stone and glass. More and more skyscrapers go up quickly all over Manhattan. Giant cranes lift up long steel beams, and then the steelmen must join the beams together - or 'pin' them together, as they say.

A steelman earns a lot of money, because his job is very dangerous. He must be strong and he needs strong nerves, too. He mustn't be afraid.

Jim is a Mohawk Indian. He is a very good steelman. He knows that he has got 'the steelman's nerve', but he didn't know it till an accident almost happened. Here is his story.

Jim was born near Buffalo, in the north-east of the United States. When he was a boy he climbed the highest trees and played the wildest games. He was never afraid.

Later he went to New York and learned the steelman's job. After three years he started to work on skyscrapers - high up on 'the top', as a steelman says.

Then Jim's troubles began. Every morning, when he went up to 'the top', he was afraid. He didn't know why. It was terrible.

"I must look for another job," he sometimes thought.

One morning he was more afraid than ever before.

"Today is the last day on a skyscraper for me", he thought when he started to climb up. First he climbed the stairs, and then he climbed ladders - higher and higher, up to the 60th floor. At last there was only a steel beam in front of him. This was a terrible moment for Jim. He looked at the long beam. He couldn't walk along it! Only one wrong step and -

"Don't think of it! Don't look down!" he thought, and he stepped slowly onto the beam. Bill, another steelman, was already working at the other end of it. Suddenly Bill slipped and fell onto the beam. He gripped an upright beam with one hand, then his hand began to slip, too - in a moment he was going to fall. "Help!" he shouted. "Help!"

Jim forgot everything. He only thought of Bill. He ran along the beam, jumped, and gripped Bill's arm. Now he was holding him by the arm. But how long could he hold him? Then suddenly another steelman was there with him. The two men held Bill till he could stand alone.

"Whew! That was close!" said Jim. "What happened. Bill?"

"I don't know. I was watching a plane, and then -"

Jim was very happy. Now he knew that he had 'the steelman's nerve'.



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Working with the text

I. Translate the first 2 paragraphs

("When you look down He mustn't be afraid)

II. Answer the questions

1. What is a steelman's job?
2. Where was Jim born?
3. What did Jim do when he was a young boy?
4. Why did Jim want another job one day?
5. On which floor did Jim work that day?
6. Who was Bill?
7. What happened to Bill that day?
8. How did Jim help him?
9. Did Jim still want to look for another job after this had happened?

III. Find words in the text that mean...

1. a very high building
2. to put together
3. something you play
4. work
5. to go up
6. to get hold of

There are 102 floor in the Empire State Building. On the top there is a tall television tower. Mike Miller took two photos of the building because he couldn't get it all on one picture. Can you see where the two parts are joined together?

