

What You Can Make with Freedom

The Story of a Pencil



*Written by Clara Mengolini
and Antonio Saravia*

Illustrated by Elettra Cudignotto

What You Can Make with Freedom

The Story of a Pencil



Written by Clara Mengolini *and* Antonio Saravia

Illustrated by Elettra Cudignotto

2019

Copyright 2019
Clara Mengolini & Antonio Saravia

ISBN: 978-1-7333049-0-0

Printed in the United States

What You Can Make with Freedom is based on the famous
essay "I, Pencil" published by Leonard Read in 1958.

Book design by Burt&Burt

This book was typeset in ITC Leawood.

MERCER
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
Center for the Study of Economics and Liberty

To Lulu and Milo,
and all the wonderful things that
you will make with freedom.

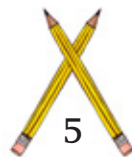
— *Antonio* —

To my adorable “nibblings”
Josefina, Jazmín, Emilia, Victoria, Martín, and Rita.

— *Clara* —



Meet Ed, Lance, and Cid Beaver,
three lumberjack brothers
who live near a beautiful forest
in Northern California.



They wake up before the sun begins to rise and start the day with a hot cup of coffee. Today, their coffee comes from the mountains of Ecuador, a small country in Latin America.

Arturo Peñalote, the best coffee grower in Ecuador, collects coffee beans that he will then sell all around the world.







After enjoying their morning coffee, the Beavers head out to a magnificent cedar forest.

“Brothers,” says Ed, “listen to the wind going through the branches and smell the fresh resin. There is no better office in the world!” Lance and Cid smile.

“TIMMMBERRRRR!” Lance shouts. The impact makes the forest tremble.

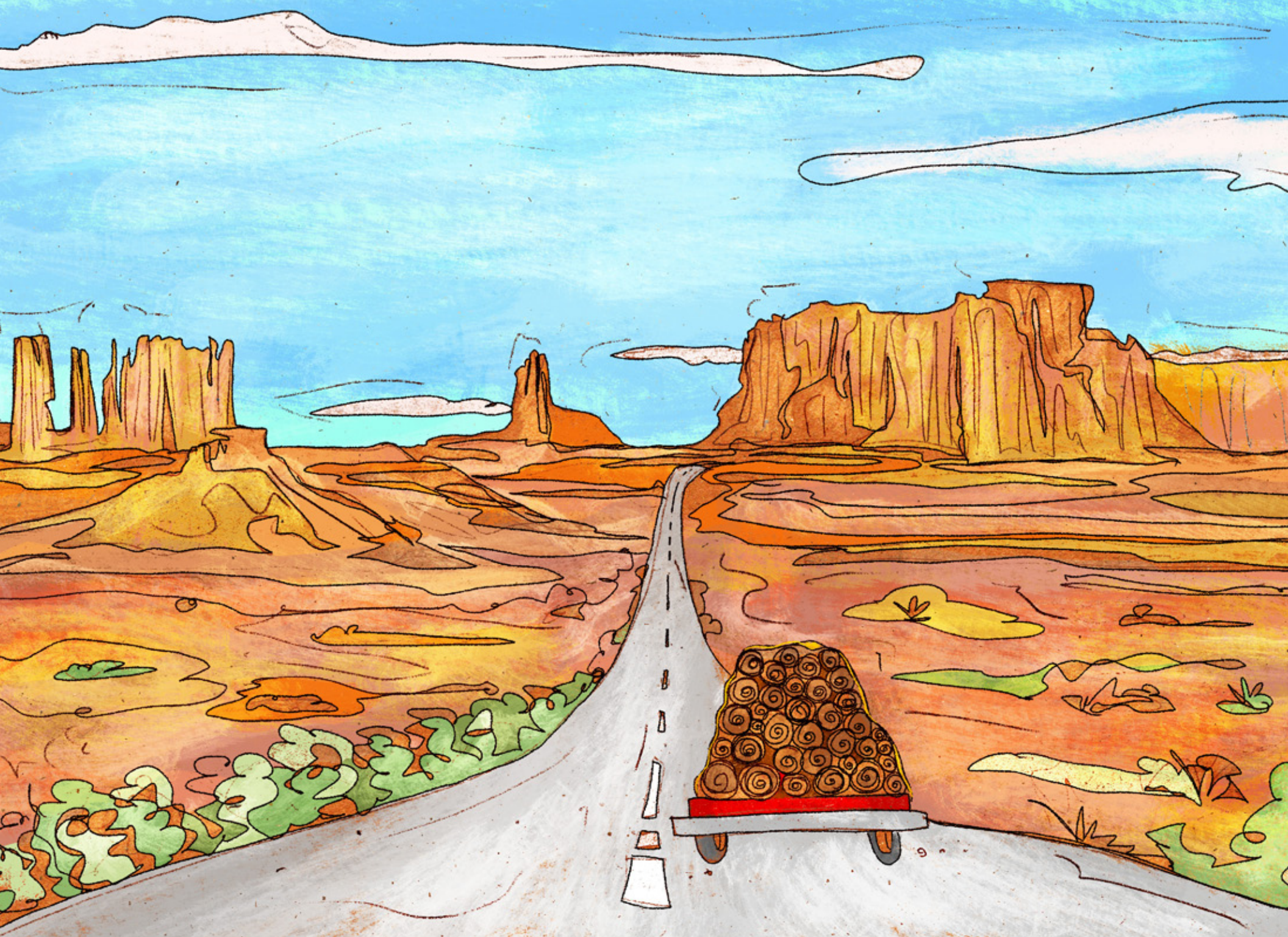


It is not easy to stack such large and heavy logs in the truck. The brothers tie the logs down with very sturdy ropes made of strong natural fibers.

What the Beavers don't know is that only a few months back a young girl named Ikram was responsible for harvesting those fibers. Ikram lives in Tunisia, a country in North Africa that sells natural fibers to India where they make those sturdy ropes.







Once the truck is loaded and ready to go, Lance, Ed, and Cid bid farewell to Earl, the truck driver, as he heads east on Route 66 with the precious load.

Also known as “The Mother Road,” Route 66 is one of the most famous roads in the U.S. It was built in the early 1920s. Thousands of workers took part of its construction.



After driving more than 2,000 miles, Earl arrives at Hungry Logs Wood Mill in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Martin Millard, the owner of Hungry Logs Wood Mill, is waiting at the entrance and together they unload the logs.

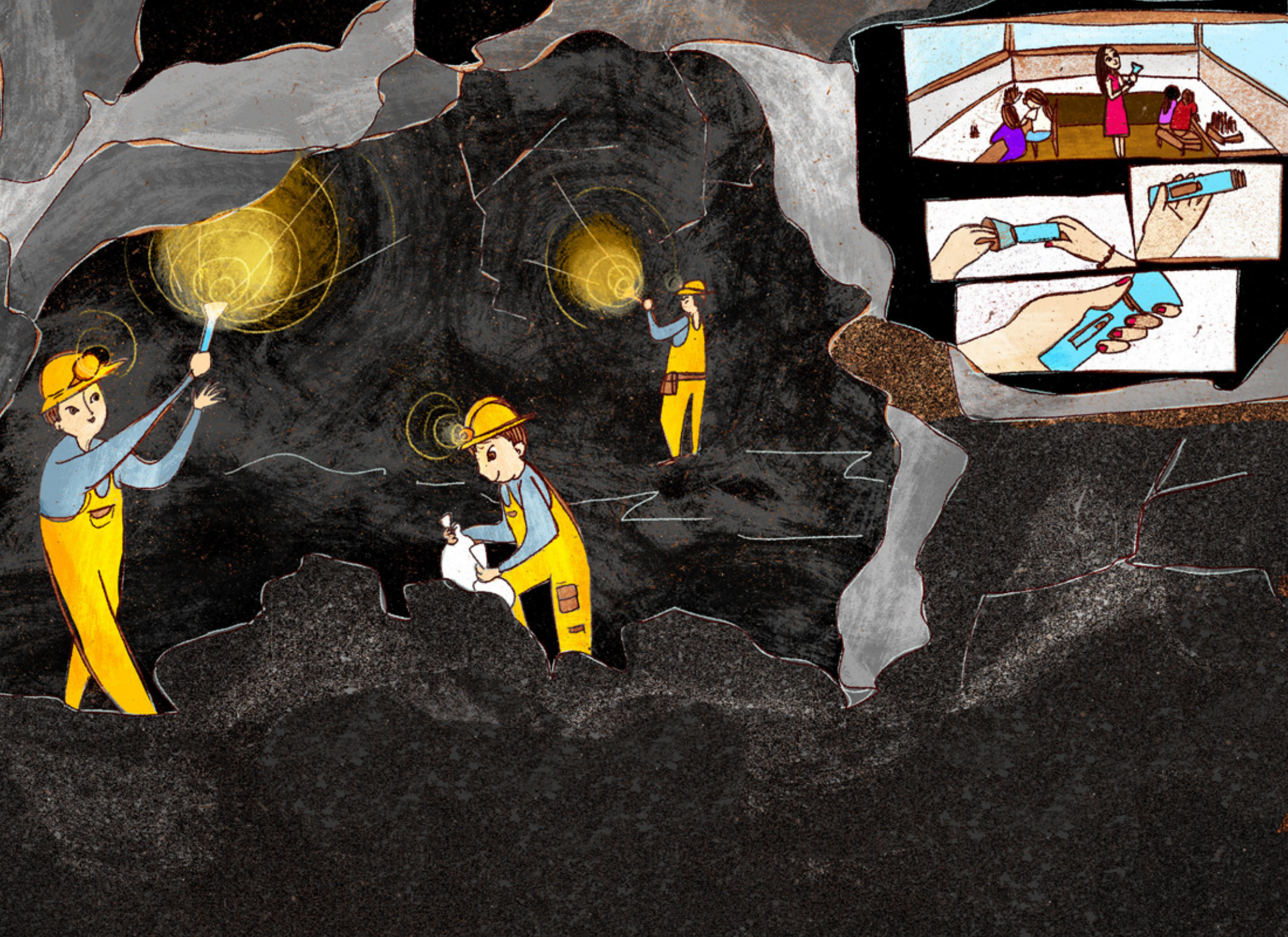




Philadelphia



Hungry Logs Wood Mill



At the same time Earl and Mr. Millard are unloading the logs, three miners in China—Li Jun, Li Min, and Li Jing—are busy extracting a precious material called graphite. The work is hard. Graphite is hidden in dark and deep caves.

“I got us new flashlights!” Li Min shouts eagerly. Li Min’s flashlights were made at Jingjan, an electronic factory in Shenzhen, a city near Hong Kong. A lady called Chenguang, one of the finest employees of Jingjang, was responsible for making them.



Just as Earl transported the trees to Philadelphia, a driver called Kim Chen carries the graphite to a port in Shanghai, China.

At the port, the graphite will be loaded on to a gigantic cargo ship—the largest man-made moving object on the planet.

Captain Chuanli is in charge of the ship. He looks up at the sky. “Hmmm, those are gloomy clouds,” he murmurs. The captain isn’t worried. After all, he has a courageous crew traveling with him.





ATLAS

PORT OF
SHANGHAI



When everything is loaded, the ship begins her long voyage across the sea.

“Goodbye! Safe travels!” calls Kim Chen from the shore as he watches the graphite depart.

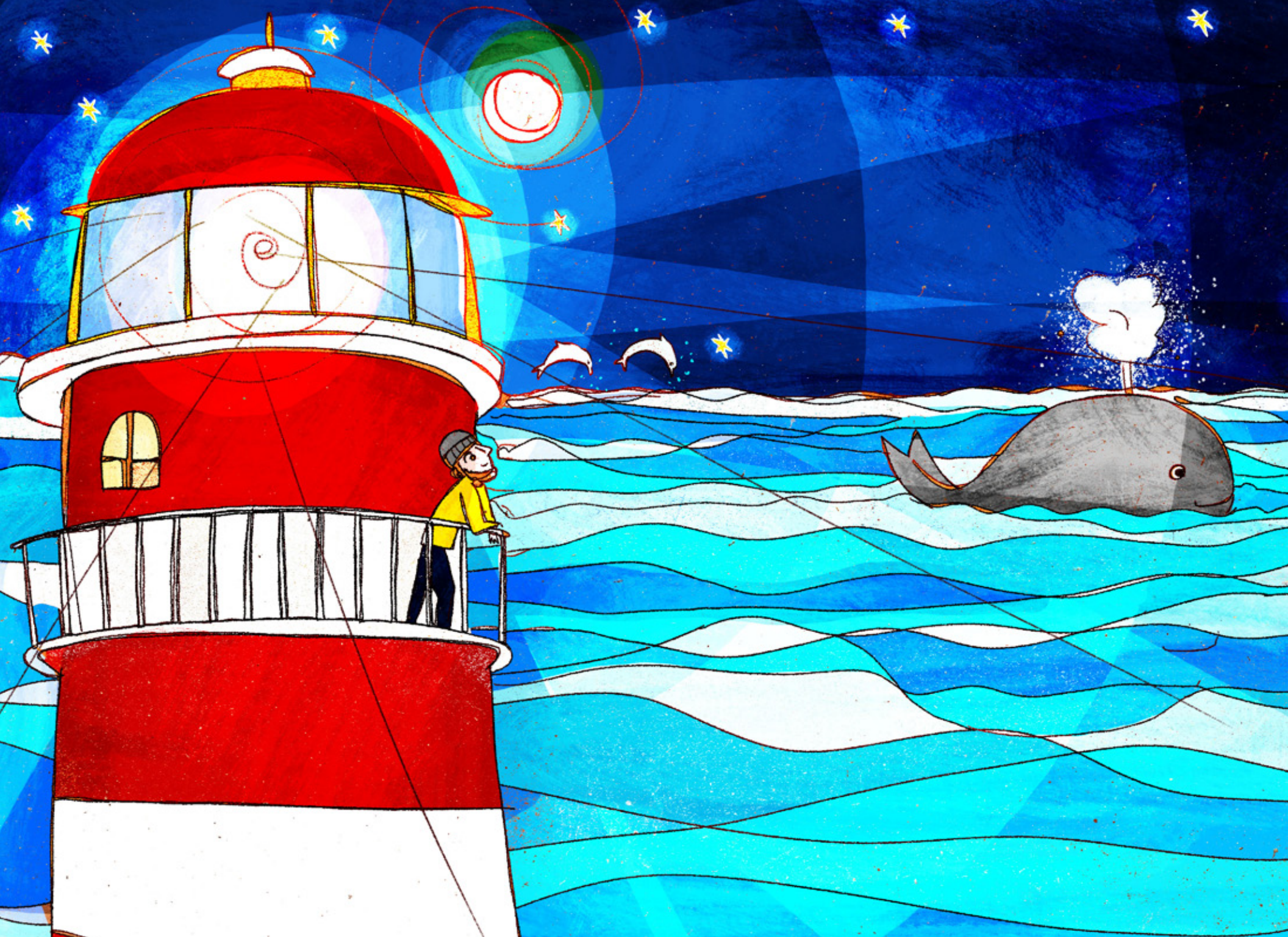


One night, after thirty-two days at sea, a storm shakes the ocean. The waves crash into the vessel with a fierce roar. Captain Chuanli faces the storm head on and without hesitation. “I will keep the ship and her cargo safe,” the captain exclaims!

The captain finally glimpses what he was looking for—a lighthouse—and he orders his sailors to follow it. The ship makes it safely through the storm.







This lighthouse helps hundreds of ships every year. Ferdinand, the lighthouse keeper, knows the importance of his job even though sometimes he gets a bit lonely up there.

Some evenings, the beauty of the marine animals swimming around hypnotizes him. He likes to think that they keep him company.



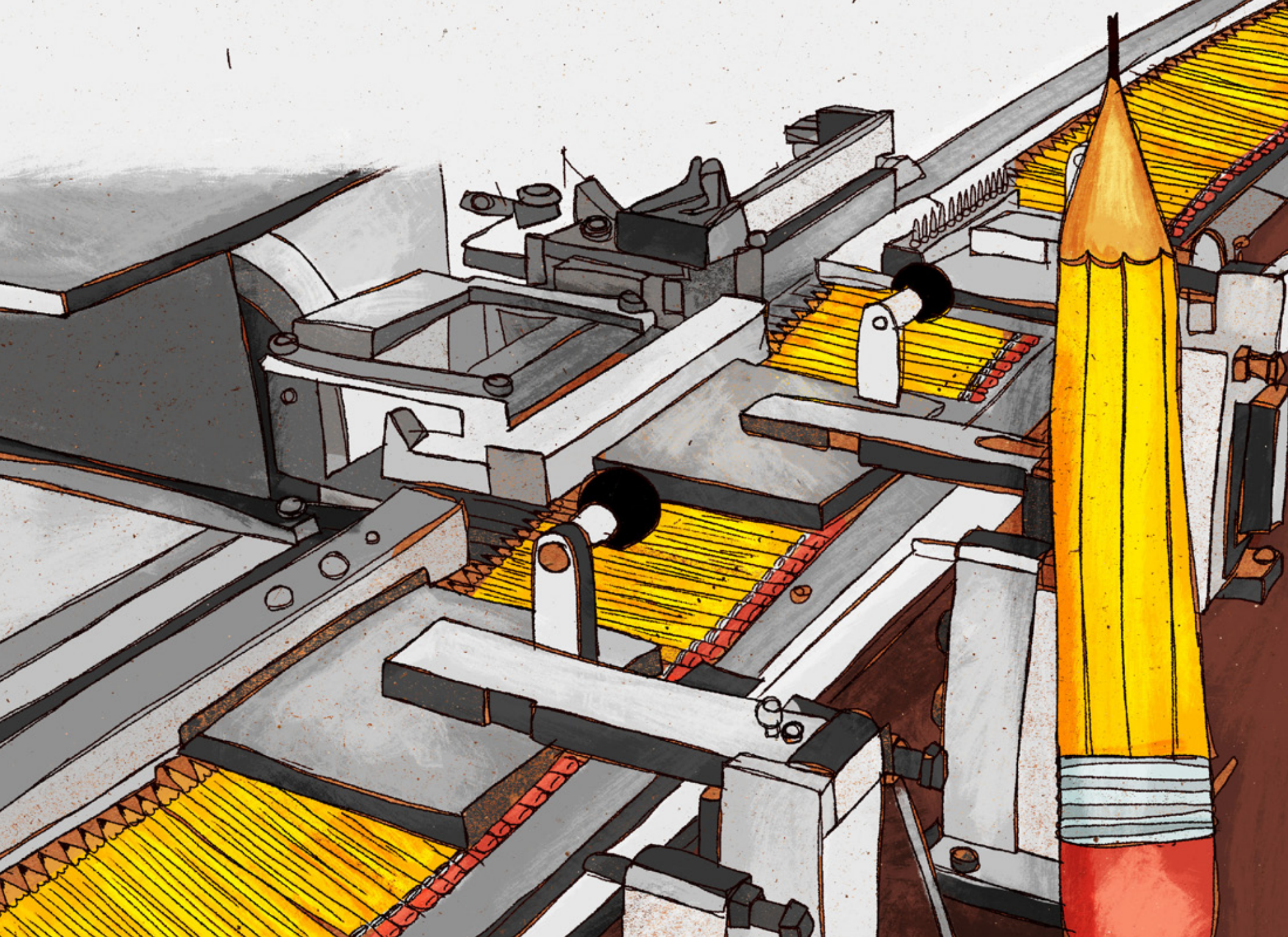
Captain Chuanli and his crew finally arrived at the port of Hamburg, a city in Germany.

“Good morning. How was the trip?” Otto Giesler asks. “Nothing a brave crew like mine couldn’t handle,” Captain Chuanli answers. Otto Giesler is the man responsible for transporting the graphite to its next destination—a huge factory.

Mr. Esmerild, the factory manager, is waiting for him. Mr. Esmerild is a busy man. That day he already received a truck loaded with wood, another one with metal, and another one with natural rubber.







Mr. Esmerild's factory is where all of these materials that have traveled from distant places finally come together.

Once wood, graphite, metal, and natural rubber are combined, the magic happens. After cutting, processing, molding, and gluing, I come to exist.

I, Pencil!



Now think of all the people who participated in the process of my creation by simply doing what they do: the coffee grower, the lumberjacks, the truck drivers, the rope makers, the road builders, the factory owners, the miners, the ship captain and crew, the lighthouse keeper, and so many others.

Here is the miracle of my creation: No one wakes up in the morning and commands all of these people to do what they do so that I can exist. They just do it, and because they do it, I happen!







Don't you find this fascinating?

Literally millions of people, naturally and spontaneously, cooperate in my creation.

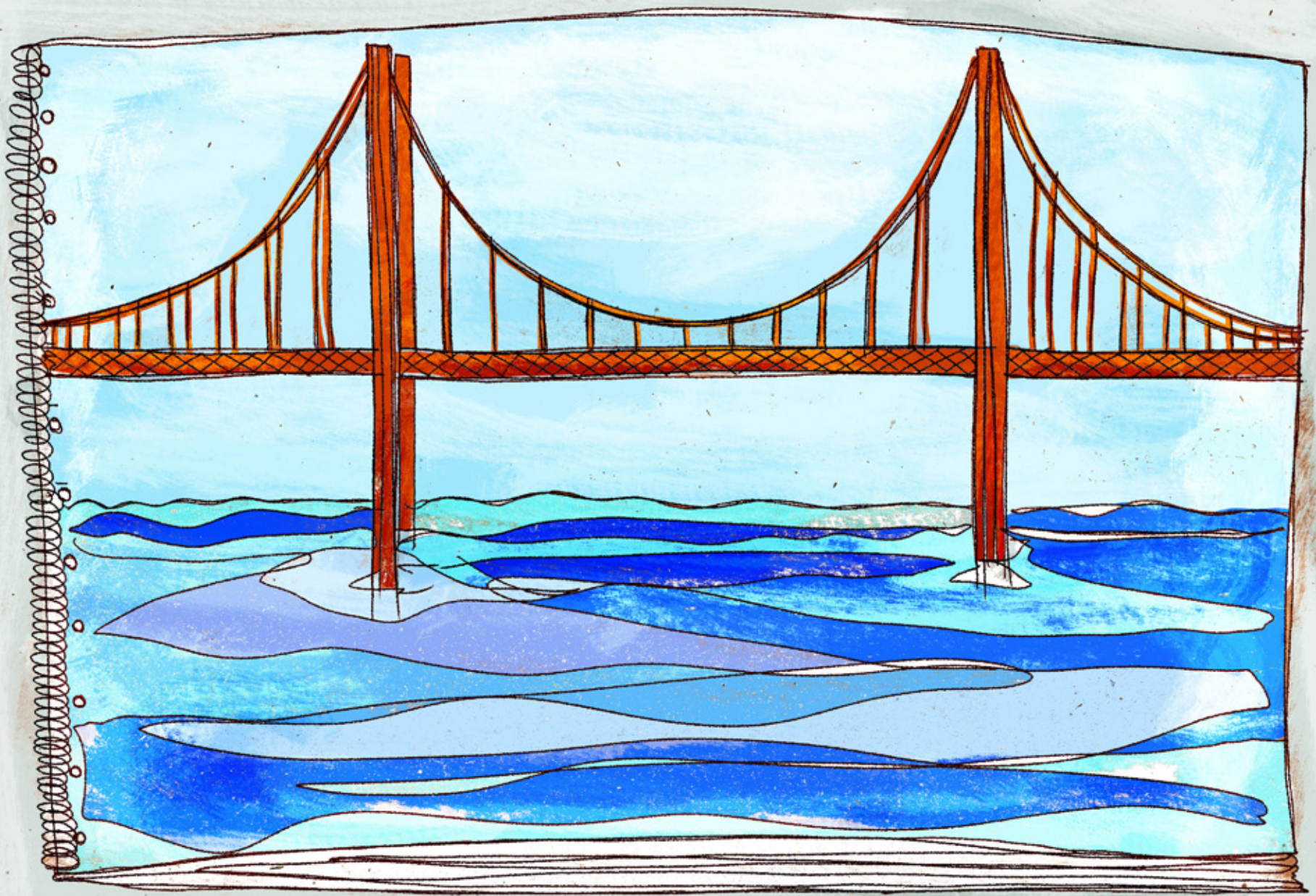
Most of them don't even know that they are creating me or want to create me. They only care about their work. And yet they end up cooperating so that I can exist!



All I need to exist is free people!

And because all of the people in this story are free to follow their own passions and interests, they end up, as if guided by an invisible hand, making me—a pencil.







"FAITH IN FREE PEOPLE"
LEONARD E. READ

Freedom *can* make a pencil, but I am only one example.

Freedom can also make bikes, cars, toys, games, phones, books, televisions, parks, roads, boats, railroads, bridges, houses, cities, and much, much more.





CLARA MENGOLINI is Assistant Professor of Spanish Literature at Mercer University. She received her Ph.D.

in Spanish Literature from Vanderbilt University, her M.A. in Spanish Literature from University of South Carolina and her B.A. in Latin-American literature from University of Buenos Aires. Her academic interests lie on children's literature and Latin American fantasy literature. During her free time, she likes to write short stories, swim, and create art with collage and watercolors.



ANTONIO SARAVIA is Associate Professor of Economics and Director of the Center for the Study of Economics and Liberty at Mercer University. He holds

a Ph.D. in Economics from Arizona State University, an M.A. in Economics and Social Policies from Georgetown University, and a B.S. in Economics from Bolivian Catholic University. His research interests lie in the areas of institutional economics, political economy, and the determinants of economic freedom. He is a frequent speaker on college campuses and academic and business conferences around the world. He is also a recurrent commentator for media outlets such as NPR, CNN, and Fox News.



ELETTRA CUDIGNOTTO is a freelance illustrator from Vicenza, Italy.

She holds a B.A. in Visual Arts from Universita IUAV di Venezia and an M.A. in Economics and Management of the Arts from Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She works mostly on digital illustration and loves to include textures, vivid colors and irregular lines in her drawings. You can follow her on Instagram @elettraillustration.

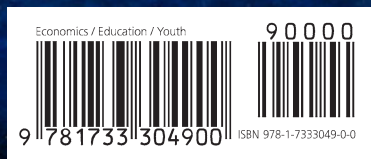


What You Can Make with Freedom is based on the famous essay “I, Pencil” published by Leonard Read in 1958. “I, Pencil” describes the complex process of making a pencil listing the different material components and workers involved in it. In *What You Can Make with Freedom*, the authors describe this same process using simple language and beautiful illustrations.

As it was the case for “I, Pencil,” the objective of *What You Can Make with Freedom* is not to describe the technical process of making a pencil but rather to highlight the invisible key ingredient present throughout—freedom.

The many people involved in the process of making a pencil participate in it only because they exercise their freedom to pursue their own goals, and in most cases, these workers are not even aware of the end product. They just want to do their best at cutting the wood or collecting the graphite so they can get paid and pursue their life goals. But the global and decentralized market process acts as an invisible hand that gathers all of these efforts into the creation of a pencil.

The authors explain that this is precisely the way everything in the world gets done. From a simple pencil to the creation of high-end technology to buildings and planes and massive ships. Everything is done and can be done if people are free to pursue their goals. *What You Can Make with Freedom* presents young readers with a simple way to understand these basic economic ideas and the miracles that free people can accomplish.



MERCER
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
Center for the Study of Economics and Liberty

