1 mouse and 7 cats

1 មួយ មិនល្វែង 7 អំនាច
This book was made possible through the generosity of the Bengier Foundation. Thank you!
1 MOUNT AND 7 CATS

 Dao nhay luchtaha lao kham yaa phaythawee • damanoi thao jikiu

 Salyanhmean
Numbers are useful! If you can count, and if you know arithmetic, it’s easier to find answers to many questions. Each question in this book uses addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. Try to use arithmetic to find the answer, before you turn the page.
Chanthasone has 3 buffaloes. Today his father bought 2 more buffaloes. How many buffaloes does he have now?
มี 5 ตัว.
5 buffaloes.
3+2=5
Su wove 4 pieces of cloth last month. This month she will weave 5 more. How many will she weave in both months?
9 pieces of cloth.

$4 + 5 = 9$
Keoudone had 2 chickens. But he gave his friend 1 chicken. How many chickens does he still have?
1 chicken.

2 - 1 = 1
There are 5 buffaloes. Each buffalo has 4 legs. How many legs are there?
20 legs.

5 x 4 = 20
The library had 8 books, then 4 people borrowed a book. How many books are on the shelf now?
4 books.
8-4=4
Yesterday there were 5 novices. Today, 2 of them disrobed. How many novices are left?
5 - 2 = 3

3 novices.
Sonesulilat was grilling 8 crickets. He ate 3 of them. How many are left?
8 - 3 = 5

5 crickets.
7 jackfruits are growing on the tree. Khamla picked 4 of them. How many still on the tree?
3 jackfruits
7 - 4 = 3
Bounpheng makes 3 trips a day to carry water, and he can carry 2 buckets each time. How many buckets does he carry each day?
3x2=6
6 buckets.
6 men went fishing, and 4 of them each caught one fish. How many of them still haven’t caught a fish?
2 men.
6-4=2
There are 4 old bikes, and each has 2 wheels. How many wheels are there altogether?
8 wheels.

4\times2=8
There are 3 nagas. Each naga has 7 heads. How many heads are there?
21 heads.
$3 \times 7 = 21$
There are 3 boats, and 4 people racing on each one. How many people are racing?
มี 12 ดิบ。
12 people.
$4 \times 3 = 12$
There are 5 kids. Each has 2 shoes. How many shoes are here?
มี 10 คู่.
10 shoes.
5×2=10
There are 6 logs in the forest. An elephant can pull out 2 logs at a time. How many trips does the elephant have to make into the forest?
3 ตั้งวิ.
3 trips
6/2 = 3
The long piece of wood is 16 cm thick. After Phat and Pang saw it into 4 long boards, how thick is each board?
4 cm.
16/4 = 4
4 people find 4,000 kip. They divide it equally. How much does each one get?
1,000 kip each.
4,000/4=1,000
6 farmers are going to their fields. There are 3 fields. How many farmers will be in each field?
2 farmers.

6/3 = 2
There are 9 eggs and 3 snakes. How many eggs will each snake get?
3 eggs.
3 x 3 = 9
2 cats caught 6 mice.
How many mice can each cat eat?
 Totals 3 mice.

$\frac{6}{2} = 3$
There are 17 steps. A snail climbs up 3 steps each day. There are still 5 steps left. How many days has the snail been climbing?
It has climbed up 12 steps.

17 - 5 = 12

It has been climbing for 4 days.

12 / 3 = 4
Bounchan had 10,000 kip. He bought 3 turnips, and each turnip costs 2,000 kip. How much money does he have left?
ឈ្មោះដូង 4,000 រុប.
4,000 kip.
3×2,000=6,000
10,000-6,000=4,000
4 cats from Ban Paa Naw went hunting with 3 cats from Ban Xieng Muak, but they only caught one mouse. How much does each cat get?
Not enough to bother!

\[ \frac{1}{7} = \text{xxx} \]
Classroom and Family Notes for
ONE MOUSE AND SEVEN CATS

Does your school class want to learn more about Laos? Is your family planning a visit to Laos? These notes will help you read this book together, and understand more about Lao life and culture.

Some of these notes are more suitable for one age or another.

The boy in the picture is probably about 10 or 11. This book might seem too simple for someone that age in your school. But here, this book has some new ideas for him. And from his expression, it looks like we succeeded in making it interesting and fun.
Pages 3-4
Most people in Laos live in a rural village. Their families have farms, and often own one or more water buffaloes. These buffaloes generally have a mild, peaceful disposition, similar to cows, although the males are occasionally disagreeable. Water buffalo are used to plow the fields. They’re also a source of meat and leather, and sometimes milk.

Various types of buffalo live in many parts of the world. The Cape buffalo, in southern Africa, looks similar to our water buffalo. But Cape buffaloes are violent and dangerous, quite unlike our Lao buffaloes.

Pages 5-6
Weaving is a major handicraft in Laos. Many people wear clothes made of home-woven cloth. Different tribes and ethnic groups often weave their own styles and patterns.

It takes 2 or 3 days to weave a simple cloth, like these. When the weaver is creating a complex pattern, as many do, it can take a week or more.

Pages 7-8
Did you know there are more chickens in the world than any other bird? We have our share here in Laos. They’re a source of eggs and meat. Usually they walk around the village in the day, going wherever they wish, then go home at night.
Pages 9-10
In recent years, some farmers have tried plows that use a motor, instead of a buffalo, to get their field ready for planting. These are quite expensive in a poor country, so a group of farmers may share one. But many farmers have gone back to using buffalo, because fuel costs are high. Also, the heavy motorized plows damage the land, pushing down the earth under their wheels and making it too hard for plants to grow.

Buffalo serve another purpose for rural people. They’re the bank. Most people have no access to a bank. When they have extra money, they buy a buffalo. If it has a baby, that’s like getting interest. When Khamla became the first person in his family to go to college (in fact, he was the first one to finish primary school), his family sold 4 buffaloes to make it possible.

Pages 11-12
Your school library probably has more than 8 books. Most schools in Laos have no library at all. Some have just a few books, usually not as many as 8. Big Brother Mouse is trying to change that. Right now (in 2009) when we have a book party at a school, we give every student a book, and leave 50 to 80 more with the school, to begin a library.
Pages 13-14
Many Lao people practice a religion called Buddhism. Buddhist monks live at the temple, and wear orange robes. Boys often become a sort of junior monk, known as a novice. They go through an ordination ceremony, when they become novices, and their family is very proud. Some become novices just for a few weeks, others for many years. When they stop being a novice, they stop wearing the orange robe. We say they have disrobed.

Pages 15-16
Have you ever eaten insects? Crickets are popular in Laos, and they’re a healthy food. Grasshoppers are popular, too. The foods that we eat as we grow up often determine what we’ll like when we’re older. Most people in Laos would turn up their nose if you offered them bleu cheese: They’ve never seen it before, and it smells bad! Would you turn up your nose at a grilled cricket, or would you try it?

Crickets are tasty, but they’re not cheap. One kilogram costs about $10 USD. But that’s enough for a lot of people.

Pages 17-18
Jackfruits are a big fruit with sharp spines sticking out. They’re popular in south-east Asia. Do you have them in your country?

Jackfruits are a close relative of a famous Lao and Thai fruit: Durian. A ripe durian smells like an open sewer, or an old garbage pit on a hot day. Many people think if you can get past the smell, the taste is delicious. But first, you do have to get past the smell. Some hotel elevators in Thailand have a “No Durians!” sign by the door.
Page 19-20
Bounpheng is unlucky. Usually the job of getting water is done by the youngest child who can handle it. Perhaps he doesn’t have any younger brothers or sisters. Children in hilltop villages may spend a half hour or more in the morning, to get water.

When water is that hard to get, people use it carefully. Bounpheng’s water will probably be used for cooking and drinking and for the animals. To wash clothes and bathe, people will go down to the river, if it’s not too far.

Page 21-22
Fish is a major source of protein for many people in Laos. Unfortunately, the same thing is happening here as in much of the rest of the world: More and more people are trying to catch fish, and they’re each catching less. Large fish were once abundant in the Mekong River, now they’re quite uncommon. The only solution, in Laos and everywhere else, will require education. After people understand the problem, and what causes it, they can think about solutions, and work together to make those solutions happen.

Pages 23-24
Weaving is a major craft here, and you cannot weave without first spinning the thread. Thread can be made from cotton or silk. Many very thin, weak threads must be twisted together to make a thread strong enough to use for weaving.

In the past, spinning wheels were made of wood. Now, in towns and larger villages where people sometimes use bicycles, old bicycle wheels are often made into spinning wheels.
Pages 25-26

The naga is a mythical serpent in Lao folktales. Nagas often lived in the Mekong River and had magical powers, sometimes taking human form. Some had 7 heads, some had 3, some only 1.

Many Buddhist temples are decorated with carvings of nagas. The rail, along the steps going up to the temple, may be carved to look like a long naga.

Pages 27-28

A major religious period in Laos is called Buddhist Lent in English. It’s three months long, from July to October, which is the rainy season. The end of this season, in October, is marked with big boat-racing festivals. Different teams in the village make long, narrow boats, and practice paddling them. It’s quite exciting to watch, and everybody cheers for their favorite team.

Pages 29-30

When we say “shoes” in Laos, we mean what you see in this picture, called flip-flops or sandals in many countries. Shoes that cover your foot are rare, except in a few large cities. Many people have never worn shoes at all.

In Laos, as in many countries, you always take off your shoes before you go inside. This picture shows a beautiful green lawn, but the truth is, there’s a lot of mud around, too, especially in rainy season.
Laos is heavily covered by forests – but not as much as it once was. Trees grow back after they’re cut, and there’s enough wood in Laos for people to build houses for themselves, as this man is doing. But widespread illegal logging, for wood that is exported to wealthier countries, is causing Laos to lose its forests. In 1992, 47% of the country was forest. Twelve years later, that was down to 41%.

You can help. Please don’t buy tropical hardwoods unless you can be sure they were legally cut, from forests that are being managed for re-growth. Often, there’s no way to be sure, but as more people ask, the business that sell wood will find ways to be sure it is not contributing to deforestation.

In the poorest and most remote villages, most people live in houses made of bamboo. For the walls, they slit the bamboo vertically, open it flat, then these pieces are woven into panels. Those with more money use wood, such as this, for the frame, and perhaps the walls. Today, more and more people can afford a 2-story house, with the ground floor made of concrete or bricks, which stop termites, and the top made of wood.

These boys are cutting a log, such as the elephant was pulling, into long planks, like the ones they’re sitting on. It takes about 50 minutes to cut each plank. That may seem like a long time, but in 6 or 7 hours, they’ll have about 8 strong, thick planks. How long would someone in your country have to work to earn enough money to buy 8 planks like that? Perhaps just as long. And these boys won’t have to work out at the gym afterwards.
Pages 35-36

The “kip” is the currency of Laos, just as other countries use the euro or dollar. These kids aren’t quite as rich as you might think. One US dollar is worth about 8500 kip. There are no coins in Laos, only paper money.

Adults can remember when a 1-kip note was worth something. Not anymore. Laos went through a period of heavy inflation. The government printed a lot of money, so it could buy things, but when there is a lot of something, it’s not worth as much. The Lao kip lost value against most other currencies. But today, the Lao kip is very stable. If an American, and Australian, and a Lao person had each put $100 in the bank in their country in 2005, today the Lao person would have the most money.

Pages 37-38

Most people in Laos are farmers. Rice, grown in large fields, is the main crop. Many people also have a small garden for vegetables. We’re close to the equator and the sun is strong. Wide hats provide some protection. The small buildings also provide a place to rest in the shade.

The easiest way to grow rice is in flat field, called a naa. Then you can flood the field with water, which kills the weeds. But most fields are not perfectly flat; they’re a little higher at one end or the other. The lines in these rice fields are short dirt walls. They divide each field into level sections, which can be flooded.

People who don’t have flat land must grow rice on the mountainsides. On a steep mountain, they cannot flood the rice, so they must work extra hard, pulling out the weeds. These fields are called hai.
Outside of the arctic, only a few places in the world have no snakes. Do you know where they are? In Laos, most snakes are harmless. In general, people here consider green snakes to be dangerous, and brown snakes to be safe. These snakes seem closer to brown than to green, so they’re probably safe. Unless you’re an egg.

People are more likely to bite a snake, than the other way around. Sometimes you can buy a thick slice of python at the market. It tastes like chicken.

Cats in Laos eat mice, just like cats everywhere else. People eat mice and rats, too. Boys, and occasionally girls, set traps to catch the rats that eat the family’s rice, then grill the culprits over a fire.

Many times, the Lao language combines two existing words to make a new word. To say “mouse,” Lao people say “little rat.” So for the English translation of our name, instead of “Big Brother Mouse”, we could say “Big Brother Who’s a Little Rat.” Which name do you think is best?
Pages 43-44

The snail is climbing up to a statue of Buddha. Buddha was the founder of Buddhism, the religion practiced by many people in Laos, as well as Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and other countries in southeast Asia.

Buddha was a prince, who lived 2550 years ago. He believed that human suffering is caused by wanting things, and that we would all be happier if we could stop wanting so many things.

Pages 45-46

Do you eat turnips? Some Lao vegetables and fruits are probably very familiar to you. Onions, cabbage, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, corn, long green beans and many leafy green vegetables are popular in Laos.

Pages 47-48

“Big Brother Mouse”, or perhaps we should say “Big Brother Who’s a Little Rat,” was quite annoyed that we wanted to put this picture in the book. “Picking on a poor little mouse! What’s so funny about that?” he demanded. But in the interests of education, he finally agreed to allow it go in.

THANK YOU for coming on this tour of Laos with us.

We hope that one day, you will visit in person.
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’yha thom dxioliey!

1. yah teuy duk.
2. yah teuy bierm.
3. yah jiah ti thom si bemp duchay, yitae bemp yotthom da.
4. thuok jiah thakong bemp ngay teuy duk. ti moy sta. tay ybahalik tia jiraklang bemp vai tedii.
5. thuok jiah oj pum dach thamaam med ograme lao tay oj thbalim bai lai ev yit kum biae oang ma.
This book was written by Uncle Sasha with help from Noykham, an intern at Big Brother Mouse. Gikong, one of our staff artists, drew the pictures. Gikong (left) has illustrated several other books, including the Lao Animals Coloring Book, and he’s working on a book about Hmong life and customs.

Big Brother Mouse makes literacy fun for children in Laos. You can help!

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