

# The Royal Camp

*The two vowel friends rule*

- by Beth Sutton

*This basic vowel rule is one of the most useful to learn and it is the base for many others. Therefore, we use it as the base for our story sequence. The four stories that follow this one need to be told in sequence, like chapters in a book. It is best if this has been preceded by work with both The true Name of the King and Vowel Secrets - the principles used in this story and all that follow in this set are established in those two stories.*

*It can be helpful to work with some very specific drawings to bring this "two friends" relationship forward. There are samples for how the letter friends might be drawn to bring the rule forward. We include "ou" as a pair because in the words dough and though they follow the two friends rule - the rest of the time they follow the "gh" rule which comes in down the road. Once the three-fold cycle is completed, it will be important to do many games and movement activities to solidify the children's hold on this rule.*

The dust swirled high behind them; the ground shook with the pounding of hooves, and the horns bellowed off into the distance. The townspeople stood stone still, watching as the Royal Guard rode away, two by two, disappearing in the distance. And then the dust settled, the earth stilled, and all the horns fell to silence. Still the townspeople did not move. One minute and then two – all was still. Three minutes and then four. Nothing moved. Five minutes rolled into ten, ten into twenty, and soon an hour had passed – and no one moved and no one spoke. Finally, a small voice whispered, "The King has spoken. His Highness himself rode straight to our township," the boy said, pointing down the dusty road where the last of the hoofbeats had faded into silence. "The King has given his order and we must obey."

Yes, the King had spoken, and the townspeople had only five days to find the five bravest and strongest children of their township. Five days, five children – they must choose who would go to the Royal Camp.

Quickly, in every village of the township the lords and the councilmen readied the fair grounds for the competition. In no time at all, boys and girls were racing and jumping and swimming and hurling balls and disks and spears through the air. Finally, the week was over and five children were chosen. One, two, three, four, five. Five children stepped out from the crowd and walked straight into the dark wood. Seeing not a soul, hearing only the songs of the birds, the wind in the trees, and their own footsteps, they walked in silence. Farther and farther each walked until the woods opened up and in the clearing they saw the castle. Each of the children looked left and right, and saw four others smiling, and the five children joined hands and ran straight toward the castle gates.

Faster and faster they ran, and the gates grew larger with every step. Faster and faster, until . . . until the gates stood right in front of the five children, rising straight up into the sky. The children tipped their heads back and back and back, but they could not see the top of the gates. And then one gave a little shiver and said, "I don't think I want to go to camp after all." The shiver passed from one to the next and as it rippled through, each child wanted

to go home. The five children turned around and lifted one leg to step forward. But just as they were about to step, behind them the great gates creaked open and a strong voice said, "Good morning to the bravest and strongest of our kingdom. Come right this way, I will be your counselor for the Royal Camp."

The five children turned around. The huge gates stood open and behind them light danced over the castle and the sky was bright and clear. Between the gates stood a tall, thin man. He wore a cap that said Royal Counselor, and on his vest was a big letter C. Across his face was a warm smile. Shivers turned to sighs and sighs turned to smiles, and the five children skipped in through the castle gates and followed the great, big C on the counselor's vest, right to their Royal cabin.

"Before we can begin on your training," said the counselor, "we must get you properly outfitted." The counselor looked from child to child. Each one had been dressed in his or her village's finest camp clothing: white shorts and a white shirt, white shoes and white socks. "Well," said the counselor, "this will never do. At the Royal Camp you are all one team, yes. But each is different. Each of you must present in your own colors." The counselor turned to the first child. "Take this vest," he said, handing the child a red vest with a bright red "A" sewn on the front. The little girl took it, put it on, and stood up a bit taller.

The counselor turned to the second child and handed him a blue vest with a bright blue "E" sewn on the front. The little boy put it on and stood a bit taller. So it went until all the children had colorful vests with a bright team letter sewn on the front. "From this time forward," said the counselor, looking from red to blue to green to purple to a rainbow vest, "you will be known by the letter you now wear; these are your Royal names. Now let the games begin."

All day long the children played and trained and trained and played. Red A ran the fastest. Blue E swam the farthest. Green U shot her arrow right to the bull's eye. Purple O threw his spear the hardest. And Rainbow I jumped the highest. Together they tumbled and tussled, laughed and danced and sang and feasted until the sun had almost set.

Just then the counselor blew his whistle and called out, "Follow me. We must be in before dark or the trouble will begin." In an instant, Red, Blue, Green Purple and Rainbow vests stood in line behind the counselor. He turned and signaled to the children to be silent. Together they marched right back to the cabin. When they arrived the counselor spoke: "Here inside the Royal Gates there are many mysterious beings who seek to steal what is not theirs. In the bright light of day they cannot come out or the sun would burn them up. But with the last of the sun and the first of darkness, every ghost and goblin comes searching for the King's soul. The King has his Royal Guards to protect him, so the ghosts and goblins will come for you."

The children shivered and squealed and begged to go back home. "No," said the Royal Counselor, "there is no need to go home – and you could not go safely now anyway. All around these cabin walls grow special herbs to ward away the ghosts or goblins. You need only stay inside to be safe. But mark my words, if you try to go out at night, the ghosts and

goblins will try to steal your name, and with it will go your soul. By day they slip back into the darkest wood. Do not venture outside these walls until the sun comes to protect you.” With that, the counselor locked the door and left.

With head hanging down, each child walked towards his bed, took off his royal letter vest and his white clothing, put on his pajamas, blew out his candle, and climbed into bed.

In the darkness, whispers began to drift from one child to the next. “How do you think the goblins would steal our names?” Red A said to the little boy in the next bed. “I don’t know, but I bet it is bad.” Blue E replied. Then he turned to the other side and asked Purple O what he thought.

Purple O took a deep breath and then he squealed and pulled the covers over his head, calling out, “I don’t want to know!”

Rainbow I tried to settle everyone down, but try as she might, all the others only shivered and squealed and squealed and shivered. Finally, Green U began to sing and everyone settled down and fell asleep to her soft, sweet song.

Before they knew it, sunlight was streaming through the windows and the counselor was throwing open the door. “Up and at ‘em, lazy bones,” he called out. The children pulled the blankets from over their heads and looked into the smiling face of their counselor. In an instant all their fear was gone and everyone was up and dressed and ready for another day of fun. The counselor blew his whistle and A, E, I, O, and U fell in line right behind him and marched right out the door.

“Today,” the counselor began, “we will have fun and games and feasting, but we will also begin training for the big challenge.”

Whispers skittered from child to child: what was this big challenge? The counselor went on, “All who come to the Royal Camp are trained to become the Royal Guard.”

The children stood up taller and their faces shone with pride. Then suddenly, a small squeal slipped out of little O. “Oh, no,” he cried out, “we cannot be Royal Guards. We would have to protect the King from ghosts and goblins; our names will be stolen and our souls taken with them.”

“Ah,” replied the counselor, standing tall and puffing out the big C on his chest, “that is why we are training. Here at Royal Camp you will find your courage and your strength, and you will work together to find a way to travel at night without letting anyone take you name –and with it your soul. When you do, you will become the Royal Guard.”

From that moment on, each day the children worked hard to learn how to become the Royal Guard. They raced and swam and jumped. They tussled and threw and hurled. And each night, tired from their day’s training, they bid their counselor good night, locked the door, crawled into bed, and pulled the covers over their heads to sleep in peace.