

# A City of Water

Imagine a city of islands. Friends wave across the water to each other. There are no cars and no streets. People walk or take boats. Houses do not have green yards. Instead, front doors open to a **canal**.

This is Venice (VEN-is), Italy. It may sound like a fake city, but it is real. Once, Venice was one of the most powerful cities in the world. Now, it is fighting to survive.





Venice, Italy,  
from above

The symbol of Venice is a lion with wings. It is called the Lion of St. Mark.

# Escape to the Lagoon

Venice is in a **lagoon** (luh-GOON). A lagoon is an area of shallow water separated from a larger body of water. In Venice, a thin area of land makes a natural wall. This land forms the lagoon and keeps the sea from sweeping in.

For a long time, few people lived in Venice. They had a hard life. The water in the lagoon is salty, so safe drinking water was hard to find. In the summer, bugs filled the air.

Then, armies invaded an area near Venice. People fled that area. Some came to the lagoon. It became a safe place.

This photo of Venice was taken from space.

Adriatic Sea





natural wall

lagoon

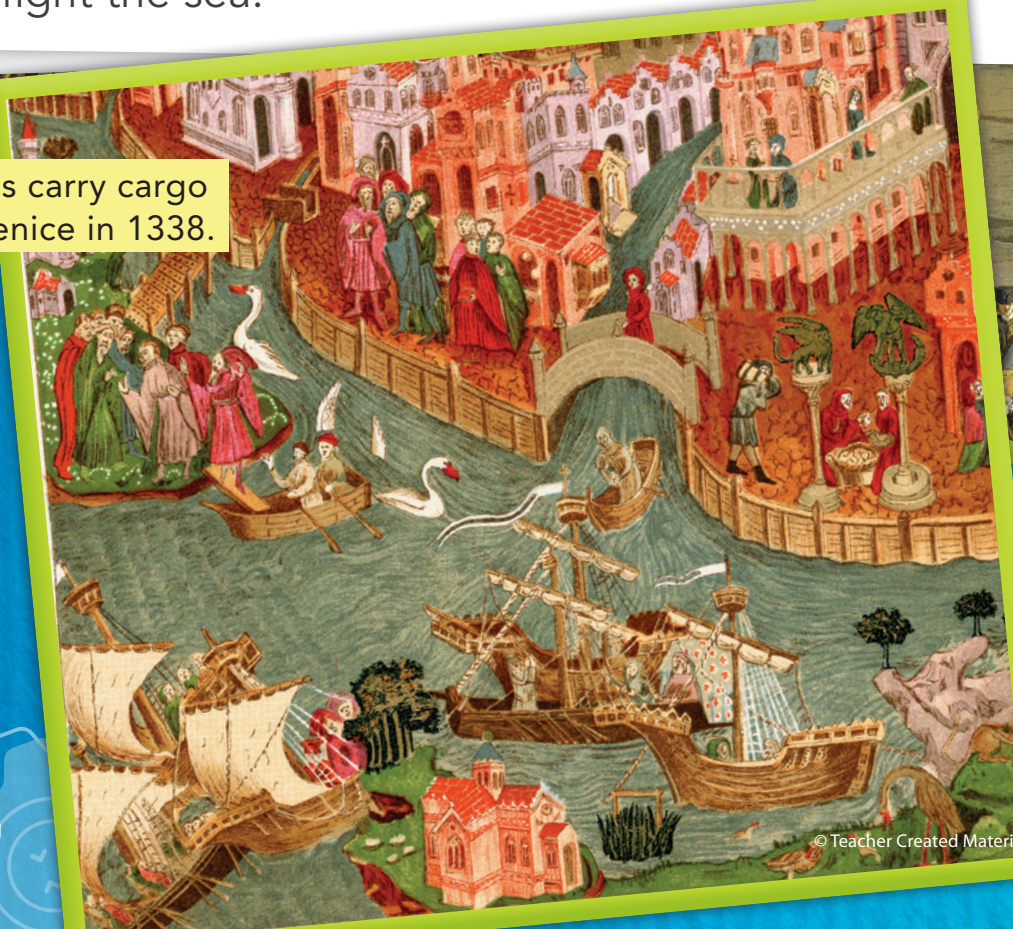
Venice, Italy

The islands in the lagoon were wet and swampy. Building with heavy stones would be a bad idea. The weight of the stones would cause the buildings to sink into the wet ground.

Over the years, people learned how to live in Venice. Many people became traders. They bought and sold things. Ships sailed to and from the city. The **cargo** on the ships made people in Venice rich.

The city grew quickly. But it was still a city built on water. People in Venice have always had to fight the sea.

Ships carry cargo in Venice in 1338.





This painting from the 1740s shows traders in Saint Mark's Square in Venice.

Venice used to be its own country. People have lived in the area since around AD 568.