

Vinicius and Ofelia were waiting for them on the city's famous Copacabana Beach. It was crowded with visitors from all over the world. A street lined with elegant hotels, restaurants, and apartment buildings ran alongside the beach.

As soon as Ofelia and Vinicius had welcomed Martin, Ofelia asked, "What should we do first—play soccer, build a sandcastle, or go for a swim?"

"Go for a swim!" Martin said, pulling off his shoes. "I'll race you to the water!"

After the swim, Vinicius told Martin about Rio de Janeiro. "It's the second largest city in Brazil, and it's known for its awesome beaches and carnival celebrations. But..." Joanna pointed to several steep hillsides covered with little shacks, "not everyone here has an easy life. Those are the *favelas*, the neighborhoods where very poor people live."

Martin looked at the tiny houses and felt a bit sad.

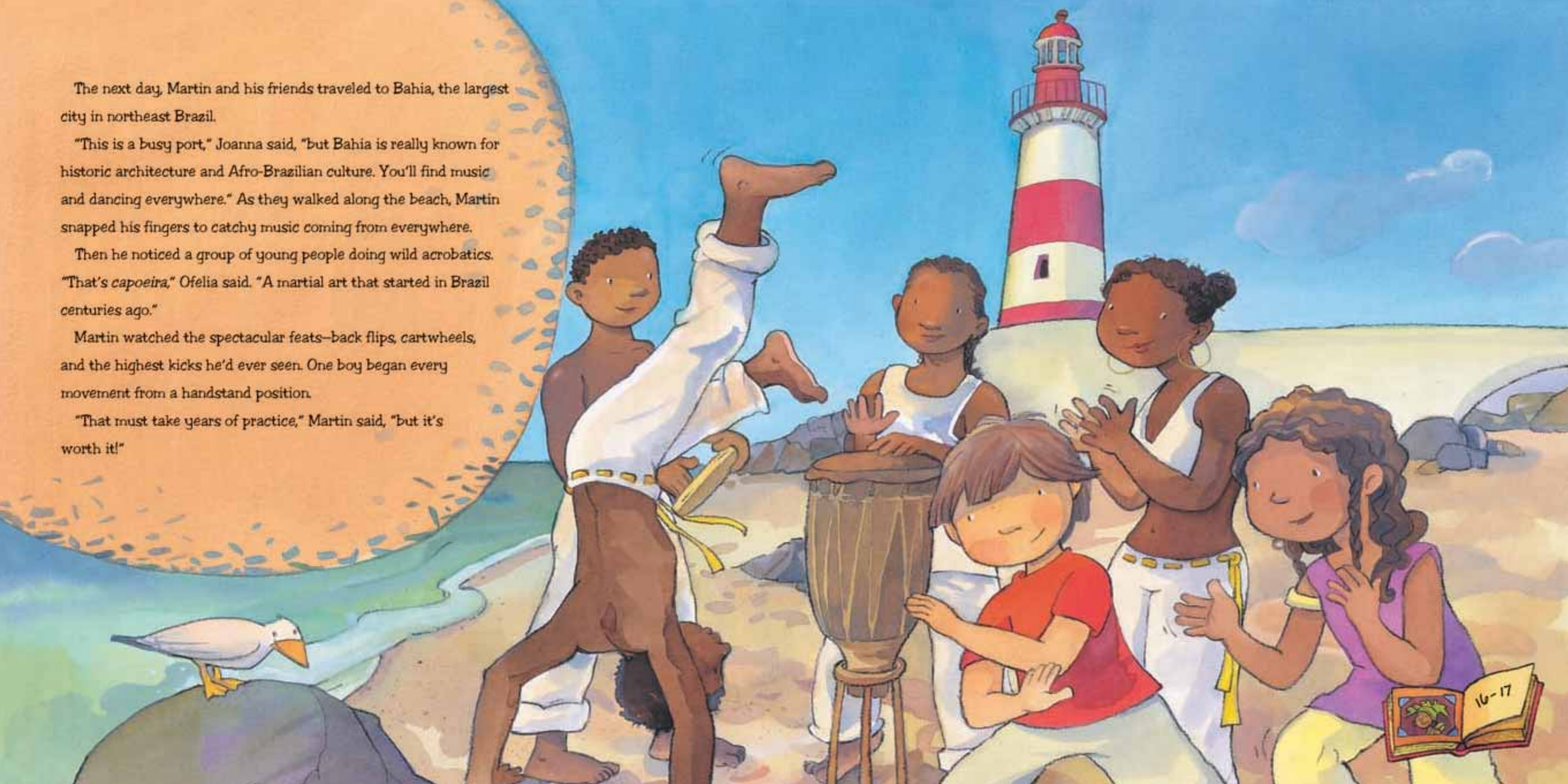
The next day, Martin and his friends traveled to Bahia, the largest city in northeast Brazil.

"This is a busy port," Joanna said, "but Bahia is really known for historic architecture and Afro-Brazilian culture. You'll find music and dancing everywhere." As they walked along the beach, Martin snapped his fingers to catchy music coming from everywhere.

Then he noticed a group of young people doing wild acrobatics. "That's *capoeira*," Ofelia said. "A martial art that started in Brazil centuries ago."

Martin watched the spectacular feats—back flips, cartwheels, and the highest kicks he'd ever seen. One boy began every movement from a handstand position.

"That must take years of practice," Martin said, "but it's worth it!"



On the last day of their river journey, Martin and his friends arrived at Manaus, the capital city of the state of Amazonas.

"You can see the 'meeting of the waters' here," Vinicius said. "The dark water of the Negro River and the sand-colored water of the Solimoes River meet, but they don't mix. They flow side by side for more than three miles."

"A two-tone river!" Martin said. "That's pretty cool!"

"We have one more Amazon sight to see," Joanna said. "Lake Janauari Ecological Park. I've arranged a canoe tour."

Martin spotted giant water lilies on one of the lakes. "I read that some of their leaves are seven feet across. That's big enough for—"

"For a girl to stand on!" Ofelia shouted as she hopped onto one of the leaves.

