

Social-Emotional Learning Conversations Kit

FOSTERING

SEL



Dear Educator,

Thank you for your interest in the Learning A-Z Social-Emotional Learning Conversations Kit!

We want to support you in fostering a positive, safe learning environment that reflects the diverse identities, experiences, and needs of your students.

To get you started, we've curated a powerful set of Raz-Plus resources focused on social-emotional learning (SEL). These resources will help you spark authentic, respectful dialogue with diverse content appropriate for each grade level.

In this kit, you'll find:

- Books and passages for these two topics (with two texts per grade level)
 - Back-to-School Around the World
 - Moral of the Story
- Discussion guidance to support teachers and students in leading respectful conversations while also demonstrating reading comprehension using texts related to SEL topics
- Discussion cards with starting questions relevant to each text

Our guidelines will help you engage in conversation without positioning yourself as the “expert” on any given topic. It's important that you don't feel you must function in the role of information provider or attempt to answer their questions; rather, your role is to facilitate and motivate students to share their own ideas.

We hope you find this downloadable kit useful in helping you create inclusive classrooms, build connections, and foster empathetic, confident individuals to accelerate positive learning experiences.

If you enjoy using this kit and are ready for more, we invite you to try the new comprehensive SEL resource in Raz-Plus, **Meaningful Conversations**. This resource is designed to help students develop the 5 core SEL competencies outlined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework.

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Topic: Moral of the Story

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Build Reading Comprehension

The resources in this kit can be used to help students make connections, organize their thinking, cite evidence, discuss text effectively, and interpret visual information. Practice with these various skills leads to a deeper understanding of increasingly complex text, allowing students to truly comprehend what they have learned.

How to Use the Kit to Increase Student Comprehension:

- After reading each text, refer to the Discussion Cards and Focus Questions (when applicable).
- Ask students to respond to the questions, citing evidence and examples from the texts.
- Encourage students to speak in complete sentences and build off the ideas of their peers.
- Ask additional comprehension questions as needed.

Teacher Discussion Guidelines for SEL Topics

GUIDELINE	WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE		
Set a purpose for the discussion.	Review the purpose as a class before beginning. Remind students of the purpose if they stray too far off topic. Summarize the discussion, and then link the summary back to the purpose.		
Explain that the goal of discussion is not to come to agreement, but rather to have a better understanding of the topic by sharing different viewpoints and ideas.	Teach and model for students the language around agreeing and disagreeing. Thank students when they contribute a new or different viewpoint.		
Recognize that students may become emotional when challenged or triggered. Teach them strategies to regulate their emotions. Ask students what helps them to feel safe and calm in the classroom.	Students can do the following: • Count to ten silently or take deep breaths. • Repeat a calming phrase silently, such as “I am safe.” • Write their feelings in a notebook. • Acknowledge they are upset by using an “I” statement and a feeling word.		
If discussions become too tense, pause and give students time to reflect.	Acknowledge that the conversation is tense. Ask all students to pause for five minutes and write a reflection on why the tension exists and what they need to reset and engage respectfully in conversation again. If applicable, ask students to list pros and cons for both sides of a heated argument. Adjourn the discussion and let students know you will continue it the next day. Remind students to leave the discussion in the classroom.		
Facilitate discussions by asking clarifying and probing questions.	What does that mean? Can you say more about that? Does anyone else have anything to add to that information?	Where did you learn that? Is that a fact or is it someone’s opinion?	Why do you think that? Are there other viewpoints to consider?

Student Discussion Guidelines for SEL Topics

GUIDELINE	WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE
Practice active listening.	Paraphrase what the other person said. Ask clarifying questions such as the following. • <i>Can you tell me more about...?</i> • <i>Did I hear you say...?</i> • <i>Why do you think...?</i> Display empathy. Make a connection to self. Nod or smile to show listening. Maintain eye contact. Avoid distracting movements.
Take turns.	Let others finish talking before you start. Listen when others are talking and wait your turn. Be direct and to the point when you speak. Allow others a chance to speak.
Disagree respectfully.	Criticize ideas, not people. Before disagreeing, clarify to make sure you heard what they said correctly. Ask at least one question before deciding you disagree. Be kind and don't use hurtful language. Use language such as the following. • <i>I disagree...</i> • <i>I think differently...</i> • <i>Another viewpoint is...</i>
Agree respectfully.	Let someone know you agree with their point by using their name. These are some examples. • <i>I agree with what Zahra said...</i> • <i>I like what Miguel said...</i> Acknowledge others when you build on their ideas. For example: <i>"I want to add to what Lee said..."</i>
Control your emotions if you get upset.	Use "I" statements to share your emotions, such as the following. • <i>I'm angry because...</i> • <i>I feel hurt hearing that because...</i> Remember, others can and will have different points of view. Count to ten before speaking, or take a few deep breaths. Know that it's ok to ask to get a drink of water or walk to a corner of the room if you need to reset.

Busy at School

A Reading A-Z Level C Leveled Book

Word Count: 48



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LEVELED BOOK • C

Busy at School



Written by Brycie Wilson

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Busy at School



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Busy at School
Level C Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL C	
Fountas & Pinnell	C
Reading Recovery	3-4
DRA	3-4



The children are busy
at school.



They sing a song.



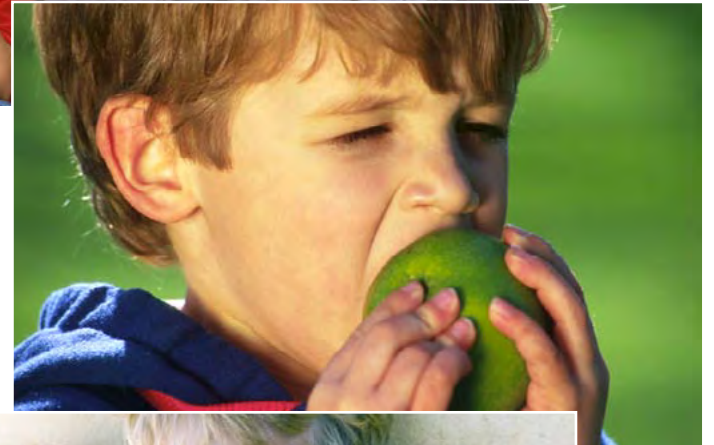
They paint a picture.



They play a game.



They listen to a story.



They eat snacks.



They share toys.



They count numbers.



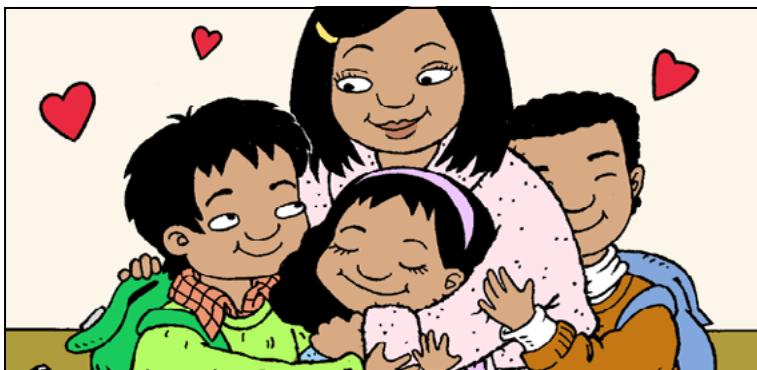
They write the ABCs.



The children are busy
at school.

What other things do
they do?

Carlos Goes to School



Written by Lorena F. Di Bello
Illustrated by Angela Kamstra-Jacobson

www.readinga-z.com

Carlos Goes to School
Level A Leveled Book
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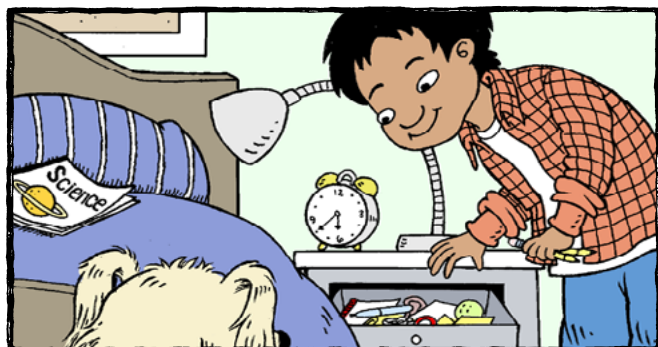
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Correlation

LEVEL A	
Fountas & Pinnell	A
Reading Recovery	1
DRA	A-1

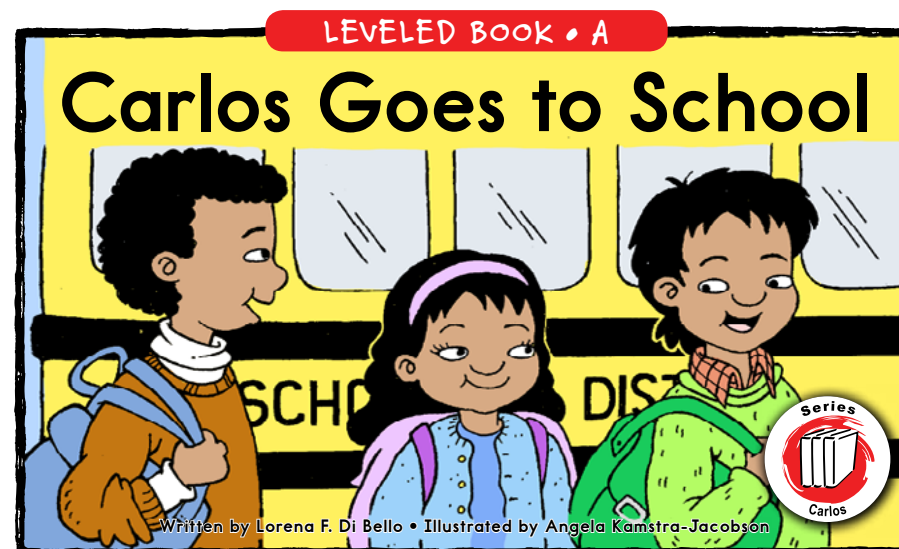
Carlos Goes to School

A Reading A-Z Level A Leveled Book • Word Count: 40

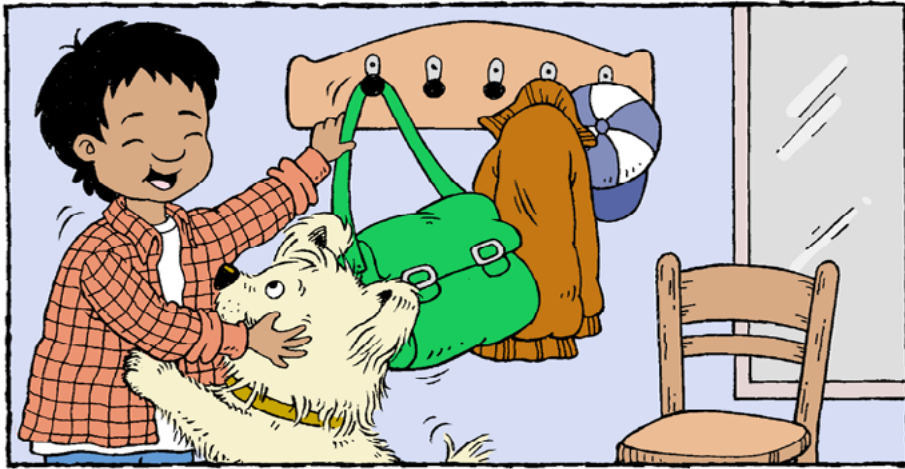


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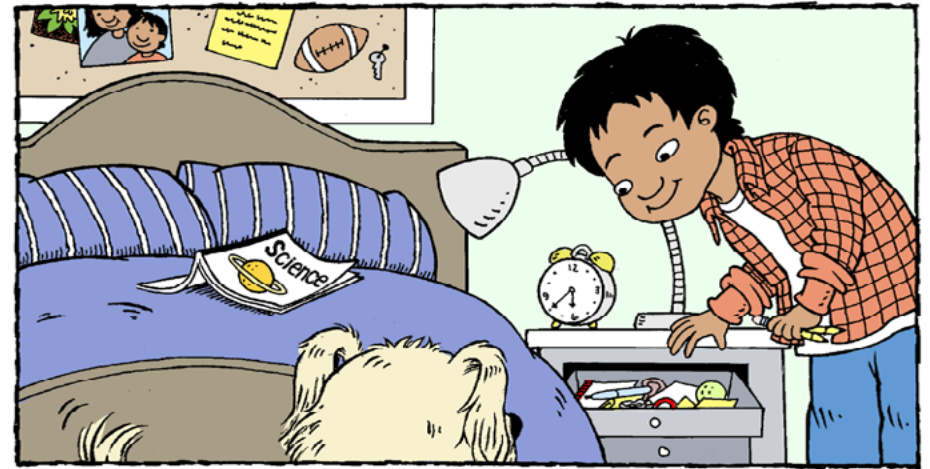
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I get my backpack.

Carlos Goes to School • Level A

3



I get my pencils.

4



I get my ruler.

Carlos Goes to School • Level A

5

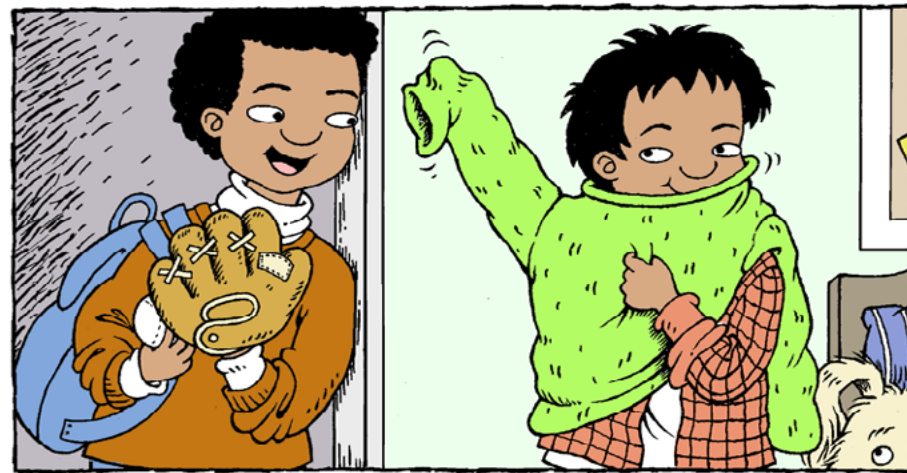


I get my eraser.

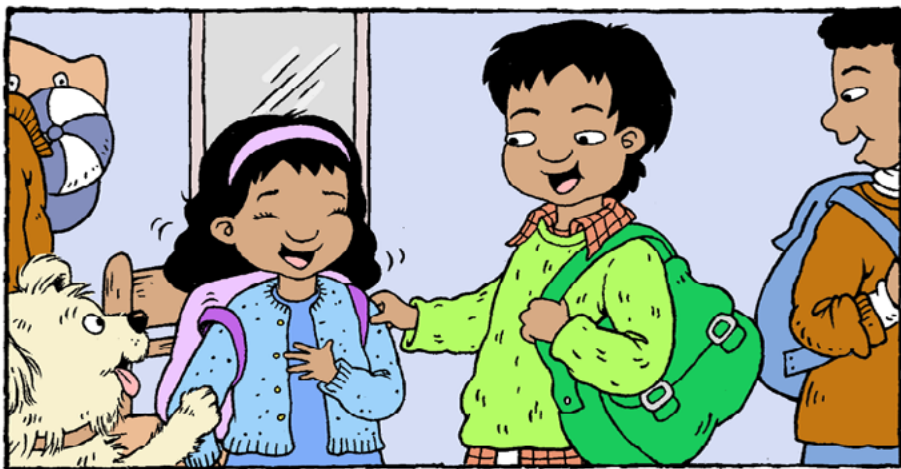
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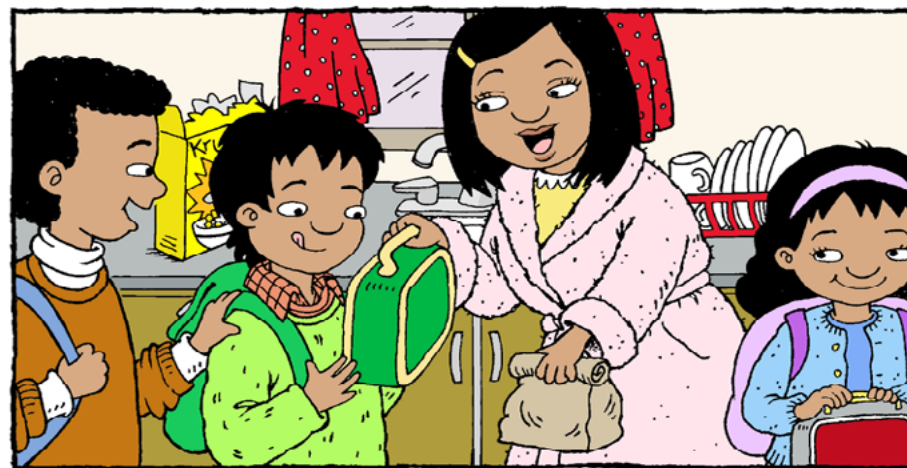
I get my crayons.



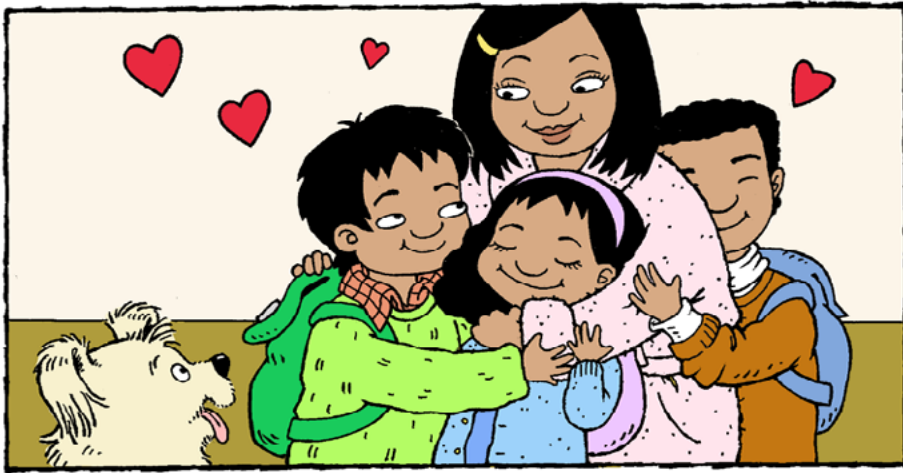
I get my sweater.



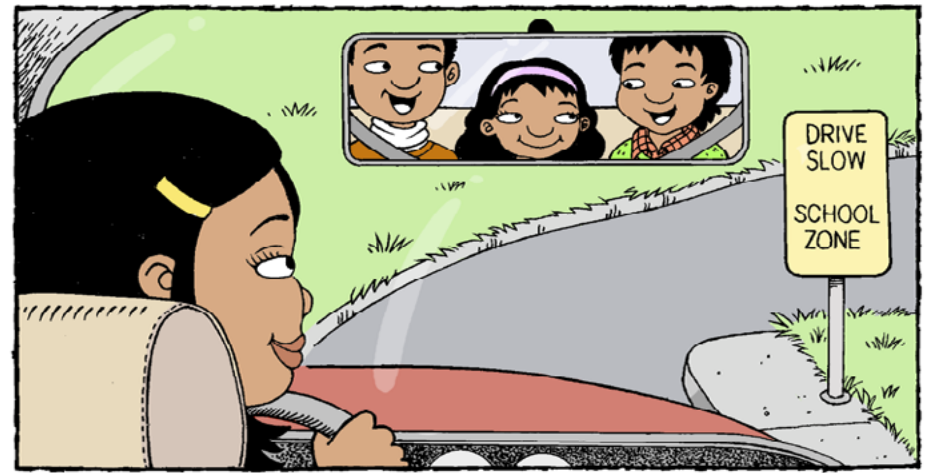
I get my sister.



I get my lunch.



I get my hug.

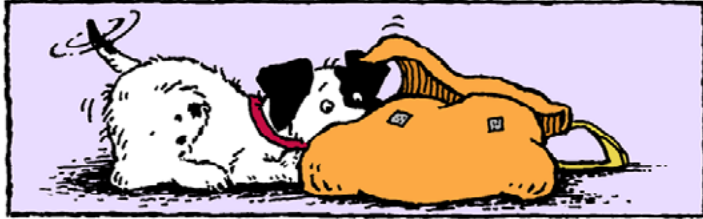


I get my ride.

Notes

Notes

Maria Goes to School



Written by Susan Hartley
Illustrated by Angela Kamstra
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Level A Levelled Book
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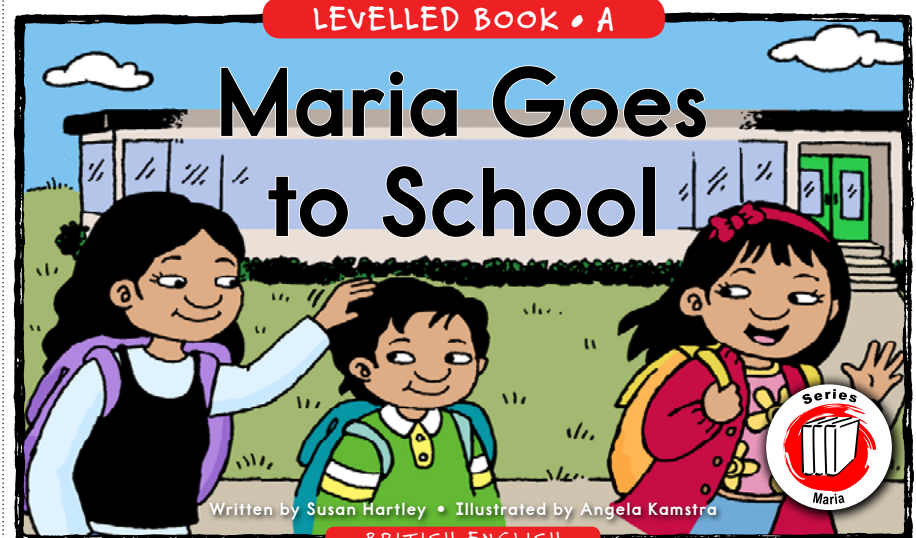
Maria Goes to School

A Reading A-Z Level A Levelled Book • Word Count: 40



Reading A-Z

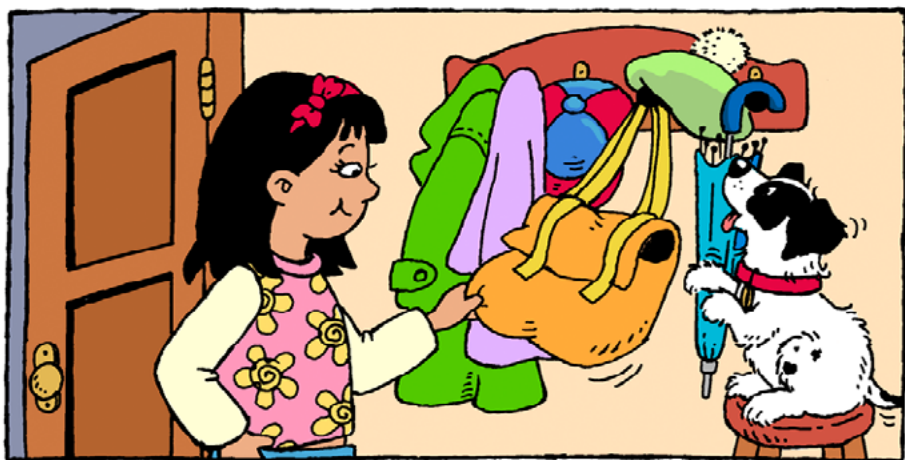
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BRITISH ENGLISH

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I get my rucksack.

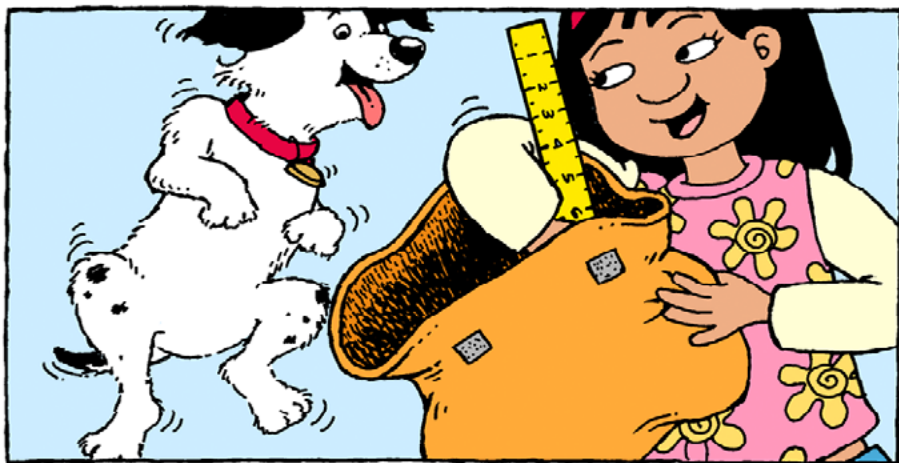
Maria Goes to School • Level A

3



I get my pencils.

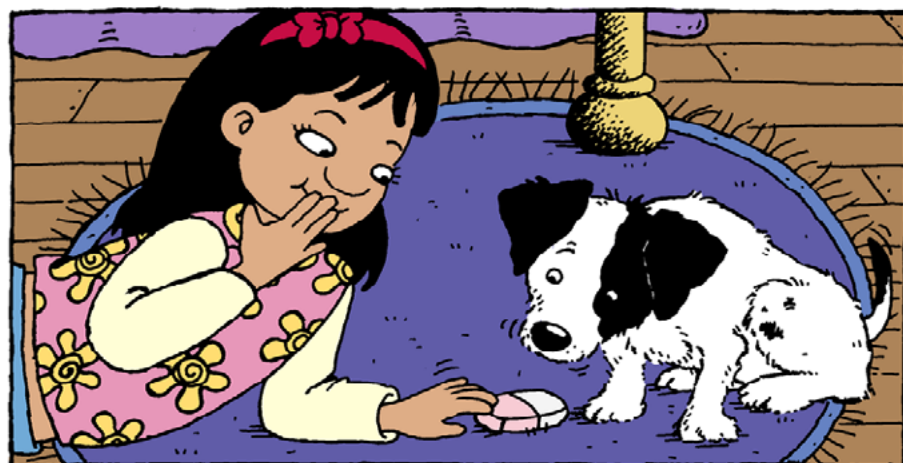
4



I get my ruler.

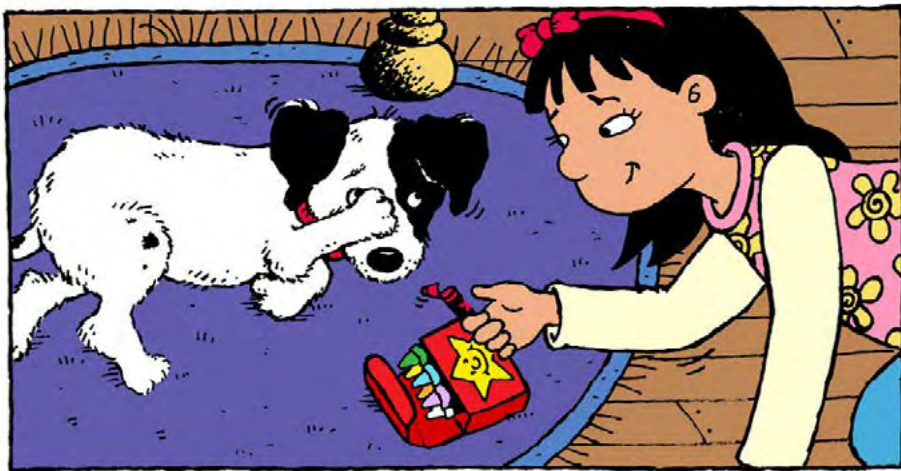
Maria Goes to School • Level A

5

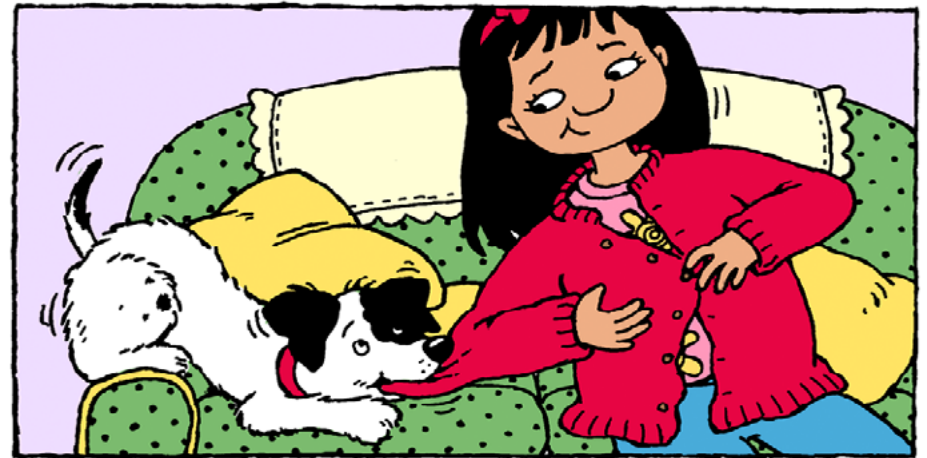


I get my rubber.

6



I get my crayons.



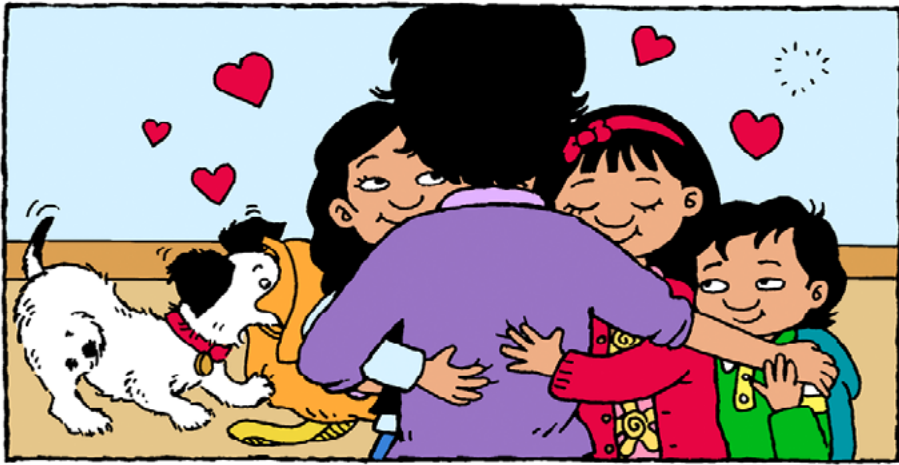
I get my jumper.



I get my brother.

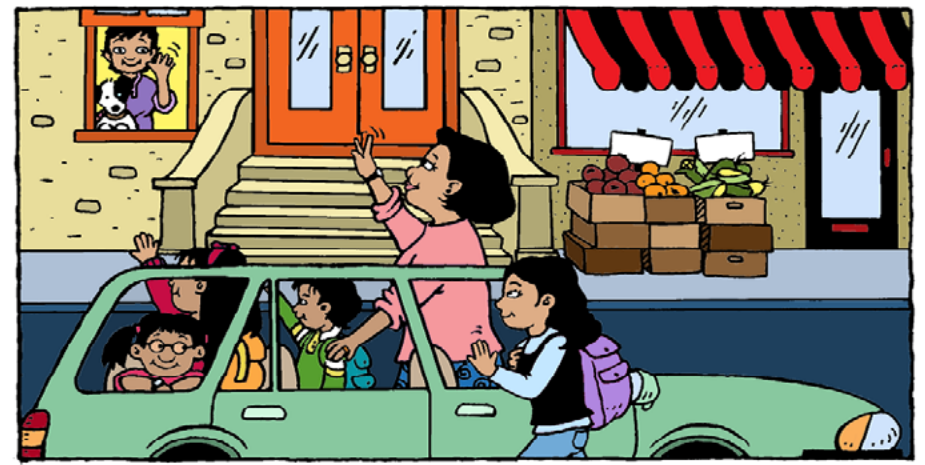


I get my lunch.



I get my hug.

Notes



I get a lift.

Notes

Discussion Cards

Back to School Around the World

Overall Discussion Question:

How does your school experience compare to those you read about?

Busy At School (Grade K)

How does your school day compare to the one in the book?

What do you enjoy most about your school day? Why?

Are there any parts of your school day that are tough for you? Why?

Carlos Goes to School / Maria Goes to School (Grade K)

What do you do to get ready for school?

How does that compare to Carlos/Maria?

Why is each step important?

How We Get to School

A Reading A-Z Level D Benchmark Book
Word Count: 72

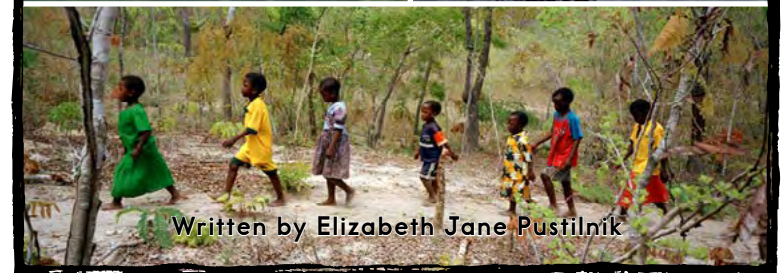


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How We Get to School



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How We Get to School



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How We Get to School
Level D Benchmark Book

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Correlation

LEVEL D

Fountas & Pinnell	D
Reading Recovery	5-6
DRA	6



Children all around
the world go to school.
They get there
in different ways.



Some children walk
to school.



Some children ride
bikes to school.



Some children ride
boats to school.



Some children ride
buses to school.

Some children ride
donkeys to school.



Some children ride sleds to school.



Some children ride trains to school.



Some children climb ladders to school.



How do you get to school?

Are You Okay?

A Reading A-Z Level F Leveled Book
Word Count: 158



Connections

Writing and Art

When have you helped someone?

Draw a picture.

Write how it made you feel.

Social Studies

Why is it important to help others in your community?

Share your ideas with a partner.

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Are You Okay?



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Are You Okay?



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Focus Question

What can happen if
you help others?

Words to Know

fell
help
hook

hung
okay
recess

Are You Okay?
Level F Leveled Book
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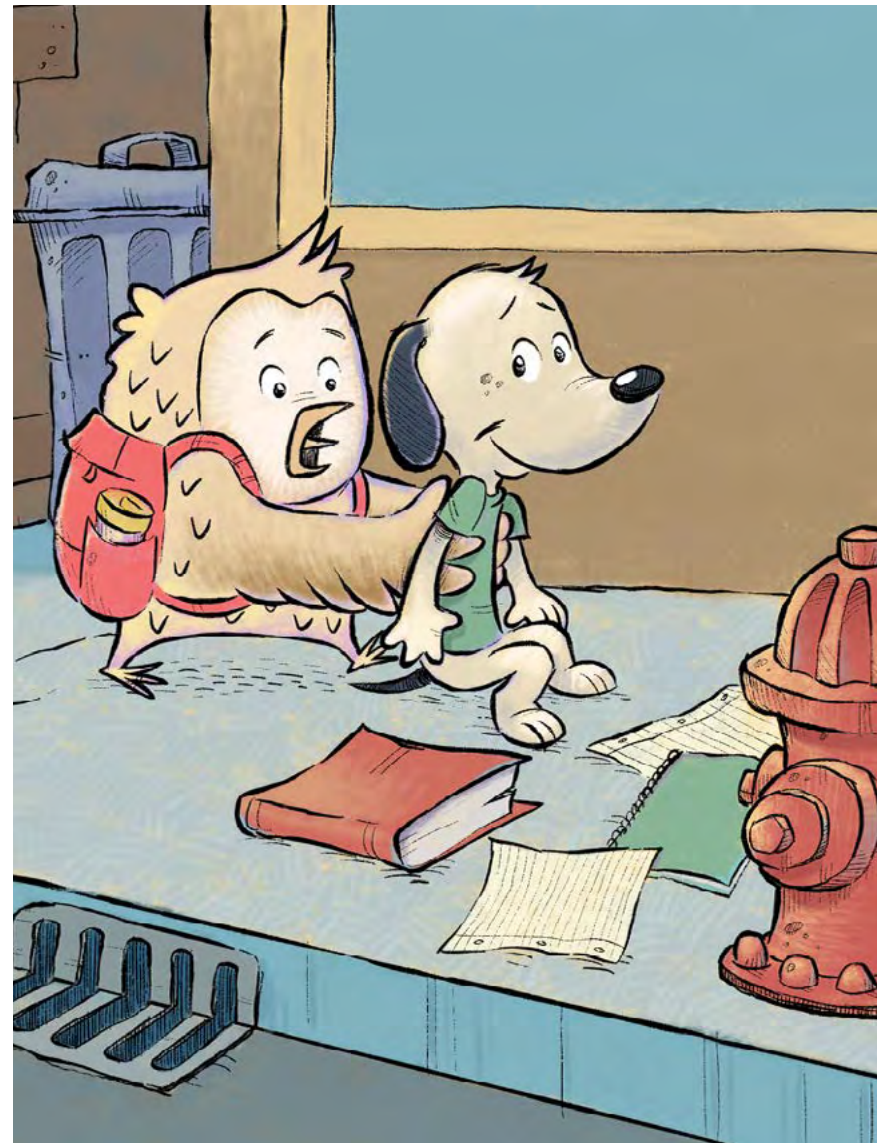
Correlation

LEVEL F

Fountas & Pinnell	F
Reading Recovery	9-10
DRA	10



Owl and Dog were walking
to school.
Dog tripped and fell.



“Are you okay?” asked Owl.
“Yes, I’m okay,” said Dog.
Owl helped Dog up.



Mouse was hanging up
her backpack.
She couldn't reach the hook.



"Can I help?" asked Dog.
"Yes, you can help," said Mouse.
Dog hung up Mouse's
backpack.



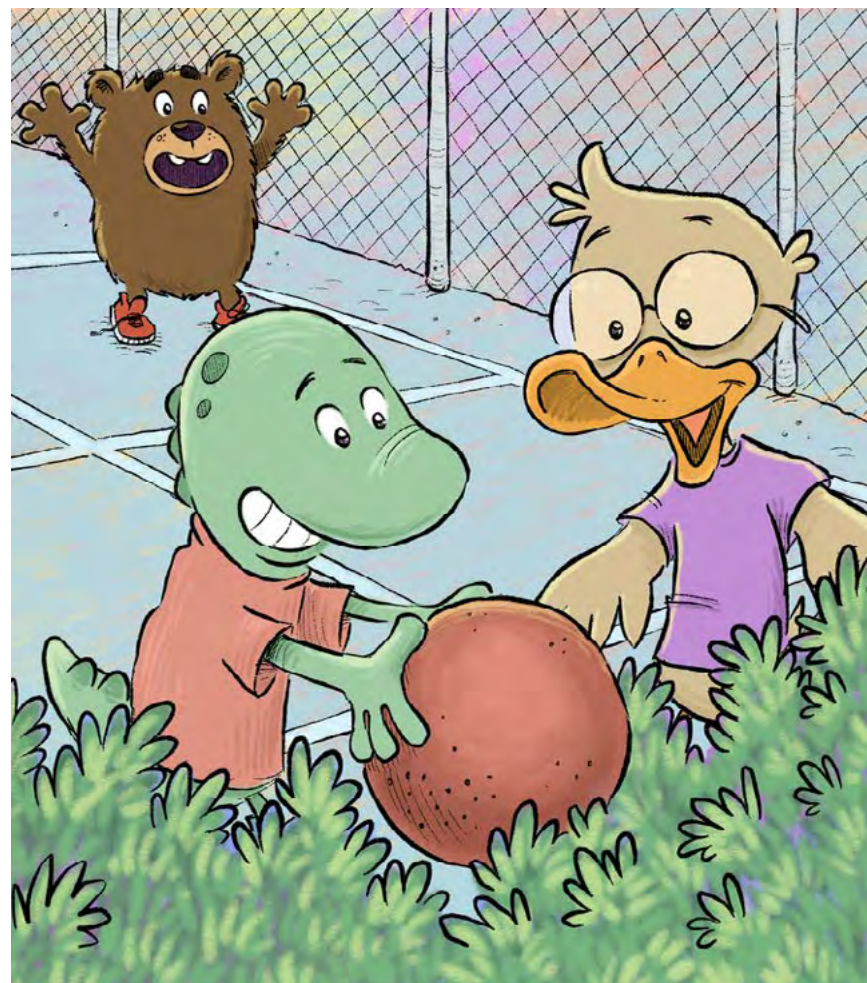
Mouse sat down next
to Lizard at lunch.
Lizard looked sad.



“Are you okay?” asked Mouse.
“Yes, I am okay,” said Lizard.
Lizard smiled at his new friend.



Lizard was playing ball
with Duck at recess.
Duck missed the ball
and couldn't find it.



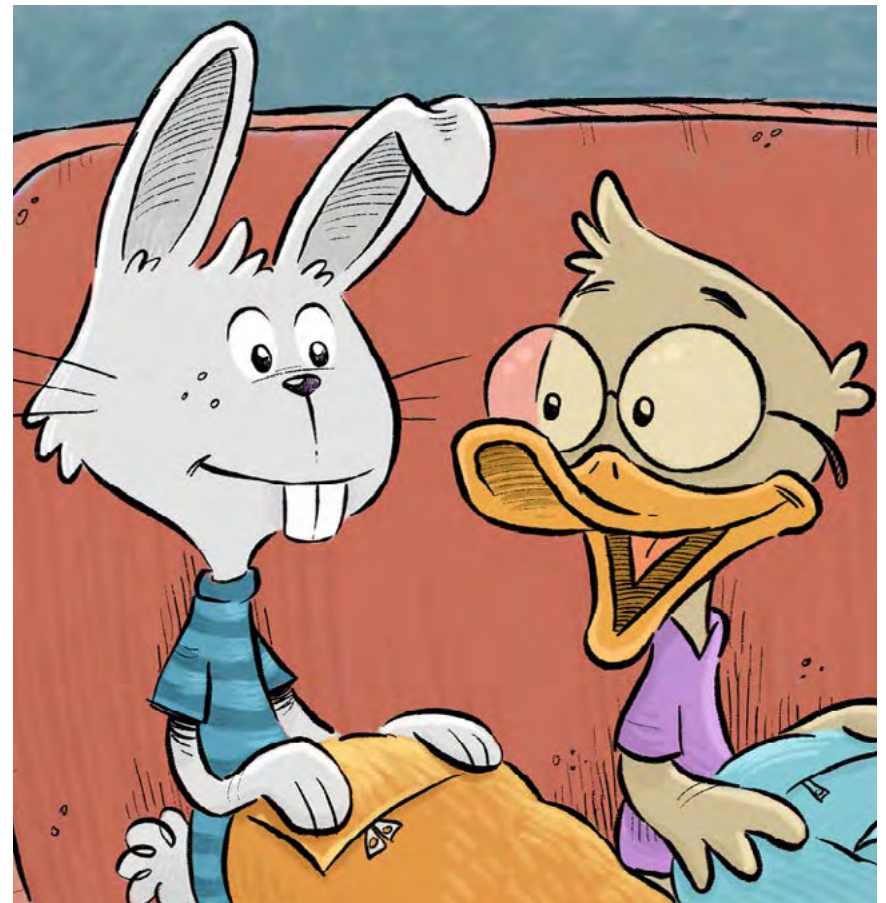
“Do you want some help?”
asked Lizard.

“Yes, I’d like some help!”
said Duck.

Lizard and Duck found the ball.



Rabbit got on the school
bus home.
He saw no friends to sit with.



“Would you like to sit with me?”
Duck asked.
“Yes, I’d like to sit with you,”
said Rabbit.
“Are you okay?” asked Duck.
“Now I am!” said Rabbit.

Discussion Cards

Back to School Around the World

Overall Discussion Question:

How does your school experience compare to those you read about?

How We Get to School (Grade 1)

How do you get to school?

Is there a similar way in the book?

Did any of the other ways to get to school surprise you?

Are You Okay? (Grade 1)

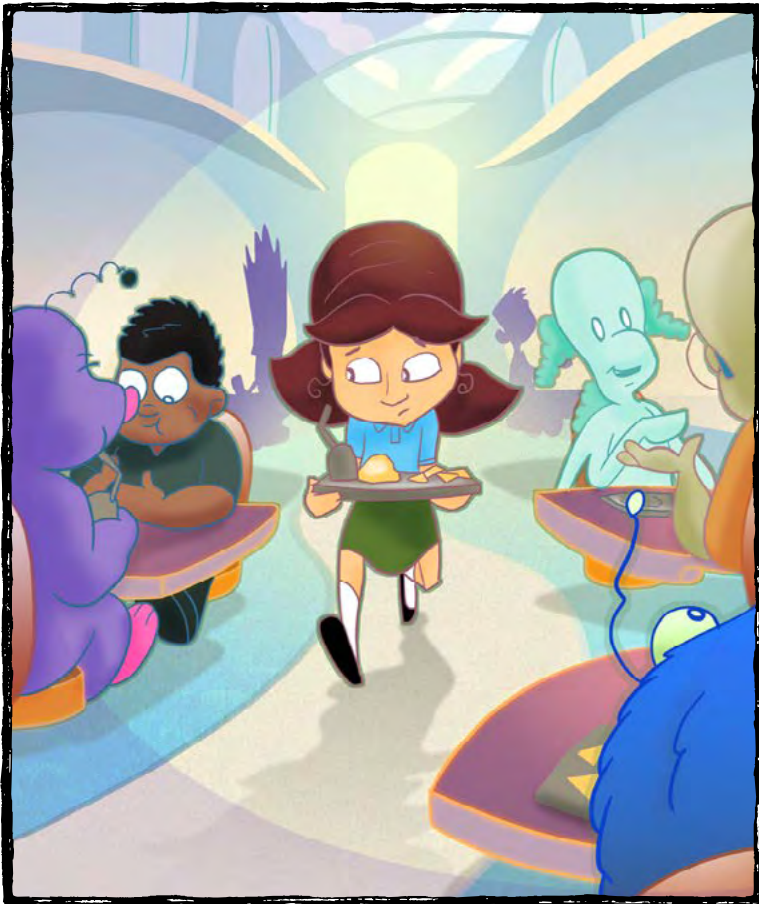
How do you think each of the characters in the story felt before and after another character helped them?

How do you know when someone else may need or want help?

When have you been helpful to someone? How does it make you feel when you are helpful to someone else?

New Planet, New School

A Reading A-Z Level K Leveled Book
Word Count: 404



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New Planet, New School



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New Planet, New School



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Correlation

LEVEL K

Fountas & Pinnell	J
Reading Recovery	17
DRA	18



I had a lot of friends back in my old school, on my old **planet**. When the school year ended, though, my family moved across the **galaxy** to Planet Zox.



Planet Zox has **species** from so many different planets, just walking down the street can be an adventure. So can going to the grocery store.



Actually, I sort of liked my new planet until it was time to start school.

"I won't fit in," I complained to my parents that first morning. "Nobody there will be like me."

"They don't have to be like you in order to like you," Mom said.

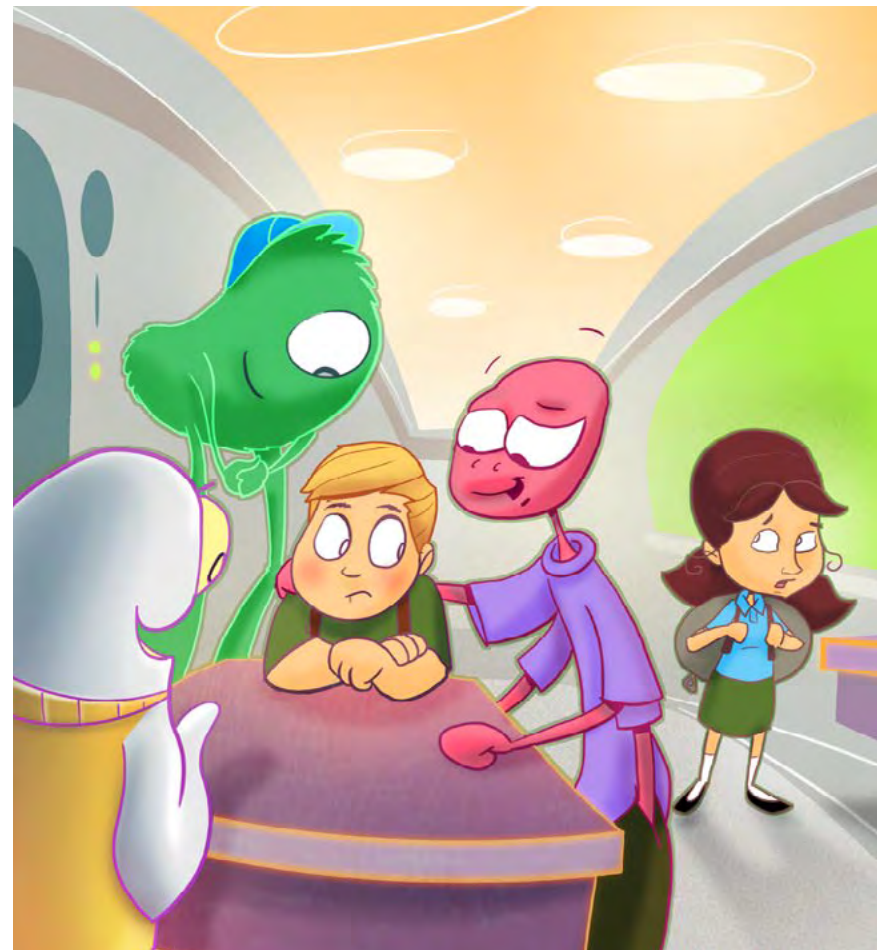
It took me a minute to sort out that sentence.



Once I got to school, I kept my eye out for other humans.



I spotted a few in the halls, but the only one in my class is Swiss Pumpernickel. When I walked in that first day, some of the students started to **tease** him.



“Way to go, Pumpernickel. Looks like you finally got yourself a girlfriend,” they said.

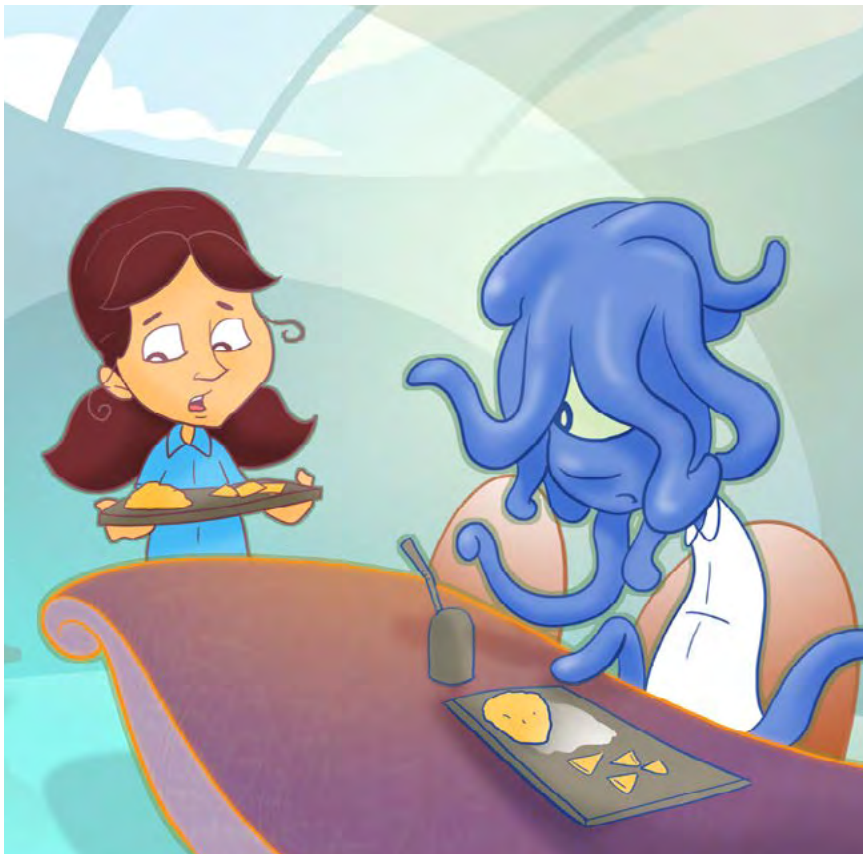
Swiss Pumpernickel turned red, then glared at me—as if it were my fault for being human!



After that, nobody talked to me all morning. I looked for some humans to sit with at lunch, but they were all sitting with other species.



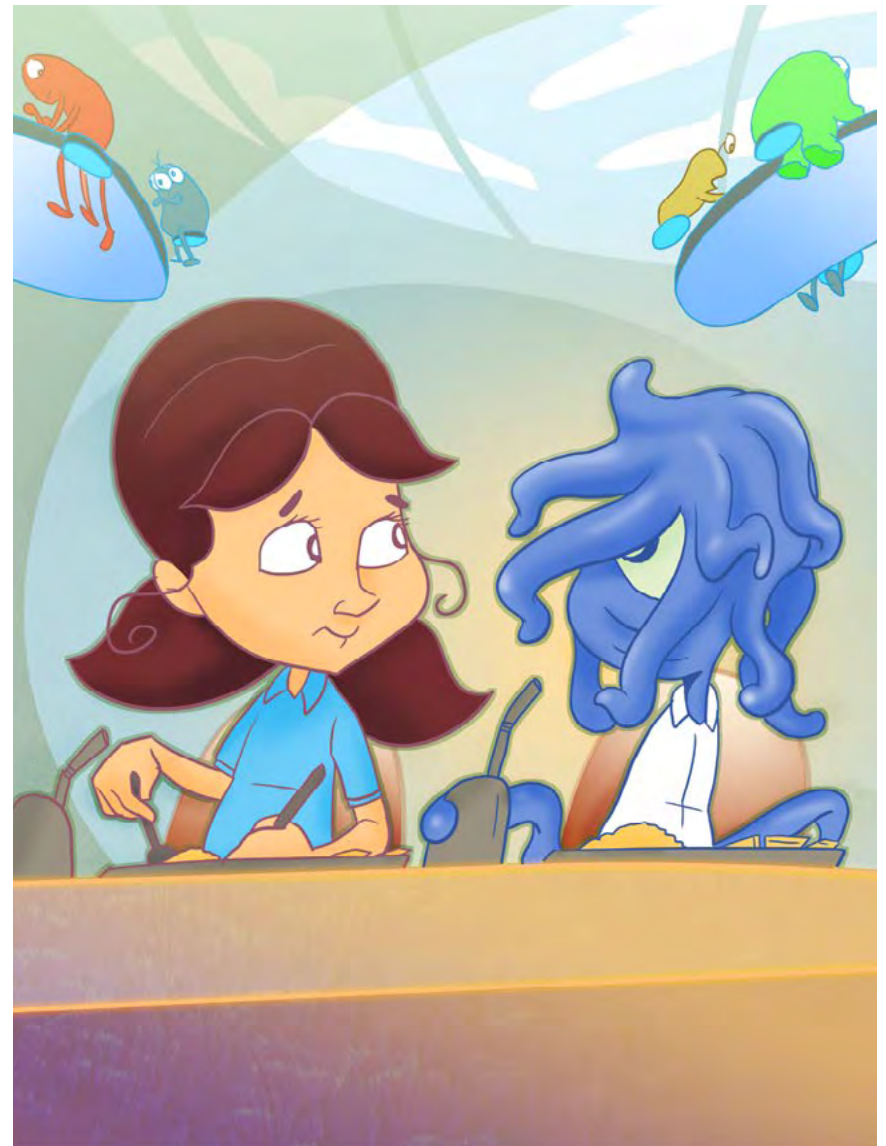
I only found one table with any empty chairs. There, alone, sat one of my classmates, Hululialana. She was so wrapped up in her **tentacles**, I couldn't find her face.



I approached with caution and spoke with great care.

“Hello, Hululialana,” I said.

Slowly, several arms lifted. Then one arm unwound itself, floated toward me through the air, and pulled out the closest chair.



I took a seat. “Thank you,” I said.

We looked at each other, then away. She began to wrap herself up again.



“How’s your first day going?”
I quickly asked.

Hululialana shrugged—I think. “I wish I were still at my old school,” she said.

“Me, too,” I said.

She looked shocked, and I laughed.

“I mean, I wish *I* were still at my old school,” I explained.



“At least you’re not the only human,”
Hululialana said. “I’m the only
Hulu.”

I thought for a moment. “That makes you special,” I said.

“That makes me a **freak**,” she said.

“Well, let’s be freaks together,”
I suggested.

Then, for the first time, Hululialana
smiled.



From that day forward, school on Planet Zox has been pretty fun.

Glossary

- freak** (*n.*) one who is abnormal or unusual in appearance or behavior (p. 14)
- galaxy** (*n.*) a large group of stars, planets, gases, and dust (p. 3)
- planet** (*n.*) a large, round object that travels around a star (p. 3)
- species** (*n.*) a group of living things that are physically similar and can reproduce (p. 4)
- tease** (*v.*) to make fun of; to provoke in a playful way (p. 7)
- tentacles** (*n.*) long, flexible limbs on an animal, especially an invertebrate (p. 10)

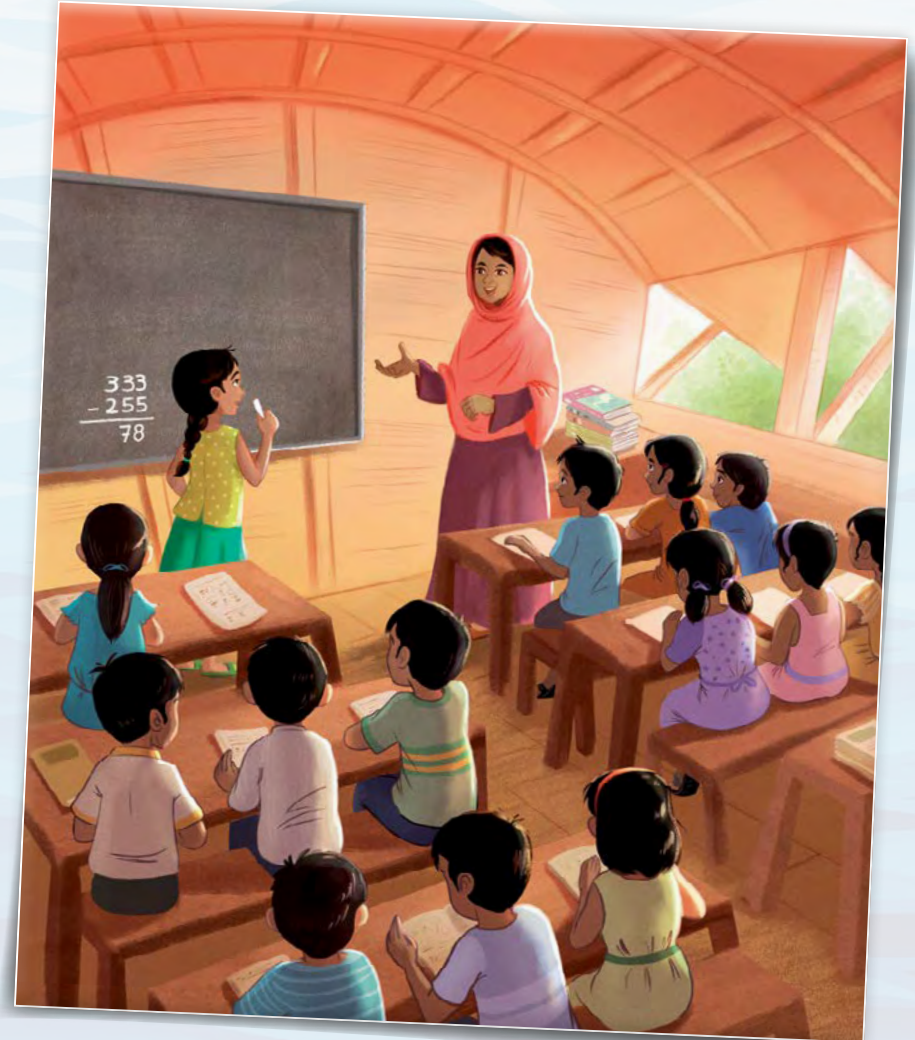


My School Floats!

My name is Tripty, and I live in Bangladesh. It often floods in the area where I live. Then the only way out is by boat. In fact, my school is a boat. It floats!

In some places, students take a bus to school. Here, the boat is both the bus and the classroom. It goes along the river picking up all the second graders who live around here. There are twenty-eight students in my class. Once we are all on board, class begins.

The boat has one classroom and one teacher. We sit on benches, three to a bench, and face a blackboard at the back of the boat. We have textbooks. We also have a computer that runs off solar panels.





Another boat is new this year—a floating library and playground. It has a slide on either side of the boat and swings on top. I like the library, but I love the playground!

We go to school for three hours, six days a week. (My big brother has class on the same boat after lunch.) Mom says if it weren't for the floating school, I probably wouldn't be in school at all. Thank you, boat.



Discussion Cards

Back to School Around the World

Overall Discussion Question:

How does your school experience compare to those you read about?

New Planet, New School (Grade 2)

Have you felt that you don't fit in?
How do you know when someone feels this way, and what can you do to help?

Is it important to be like everyone else?

If you're worried about fitting in, is it?

My School Floats (Grade 2)

How does your school compare to the one in the passage?

What might be exciting and also challenging about the school in the passage?

What do you enjoy most about your school? Why?

First Day of School

A Reading A-Z Level Q Leveled Book

Word Count: 651

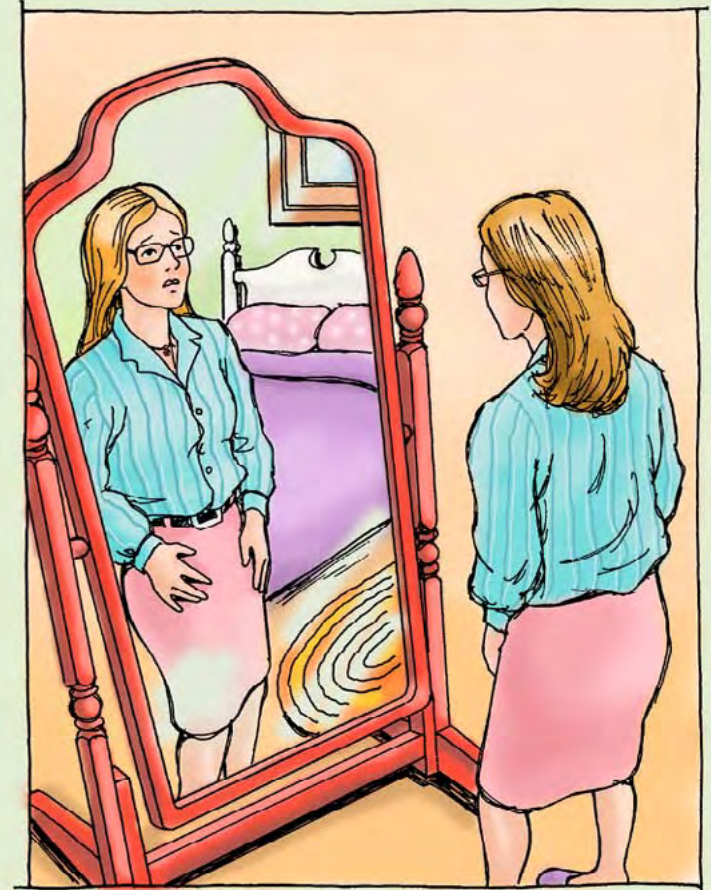


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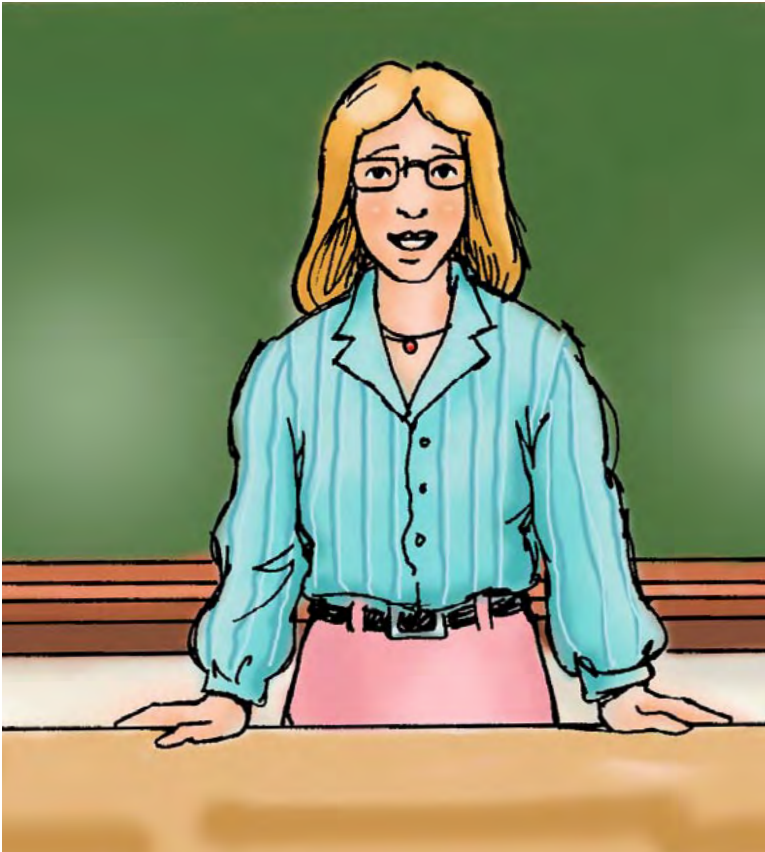
First Day of School



Written by Katherine Follett
Illustrated by John Kastner

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First Day of School



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Correlation

LEVEL Q

Fountas & Pinnell	N
Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30



Sarah had never been so apprehensive about school before. She stood in front of her bedroom mirror, smoothing her skirt; leaving it folded for too long had formed creases down the sides. She ran her hands down the sharp ridges again and again, hoping the sweat and heat from her palms would act as a steam iron. She also hoped no one would notice the subtle brown stain under the hem of her shirt, left over from spilling ketchup on her lap the last time she ate French fries. She scolded herself for not buying at least one new outfit for the school year. Even the cuffs of her shirt were beginning to grow a bit threadbare where she nervously rubbed them between her fingers.

She trudged down the stairs to fix herself breakfast. She was trying to balance two opposing feelings inside her—one was a nervousness that made her energetic and fidgety, and the other was a reluctance that made her slow and clumsy. Kent had already wolfed down his Frosted Flakes and dashed out to catch the bus, so Sarah didn't have anyone to banter with. Kent helped her calm down, even if he did mock her for being nervous. He'd been picking on her for a whole week.

"What if you're eating lunch and someone makes you laugh and the milk comes out your nose? Huh? What about that?" he'd said the night before. Sarah smiled a little at the memory—she knew he really cared about her and was only joking with her to make her laugh. He'd left his dirty bowl on the kitchen table, with three Frosted Flakes crusted on its rim. She rinsed the bowl, put it in the dishwasher, and tried to find something to eat.

Sarah had just moved to this new house in a new town. She kept forgetting where the food and dishes were kept, and had to rummage through almost all the cupboards before spotting a Pop Tart. She wanted to eat something better, something healthier, but the butterflies in her stomach were too active this morning.

Being new is always difficult, she thought to herself. Everyone always feels uncomfortable at first, but eventually everyone makes friends. She'd been reciting these things to herself for weeks: Since it was the beginning of the year, she probably wouldn't be the only new one. It wasn't as though she'd never been to school before. The kids here were exactly like kids everywhere else.

But still, each time anything reminded her of school, or even anything school-related, she felt the flutter in her tummy. Flutter when she bought her folders and pencils. Flutter when she saw a TV commercial that took place in a classroom. Flutter as she retrieved her bag and made the last few adjustments to her hair and glasses before stepping out the door.

Her new house was close to the school, so she walked. Other people were walking, too—there were students everywhere, it seemed. Some ran, some walked in groups, some got dropped off by their parents. None of them paid any attention to her. She tried to relax. “They don’t know that you’ll be at their school, so of course they won’t pay attention to you. They just assume you’re going somewhere else.”

But she still felt completely ignored when she walked inside the building. She had visited the school a few weeks ago and knew where her classroom was, so she got there early. She put her books on her desk and sat quietly, waiting anxiously for all the kids to come in and sit down around her. When they did, they barely looked at her. After the bell rang, she took a big, deep breath and stood up.

“Hello,” she said, trying to hide the waver in her voice. “My name is Ms. Parker, and I’m going to be your teacher this year.”



Lucia's New School

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,098

Connections

Writing and Art

Research to learn more about Ellis Island. Create a poster to show the history of the immigration station. Share your work with your class.

Social Studies

Lucia is from Italy. Locate Italy and where you live on a map. How could you travel to Italy from where you live? Explain to a partner why you chose to travel the way you did.

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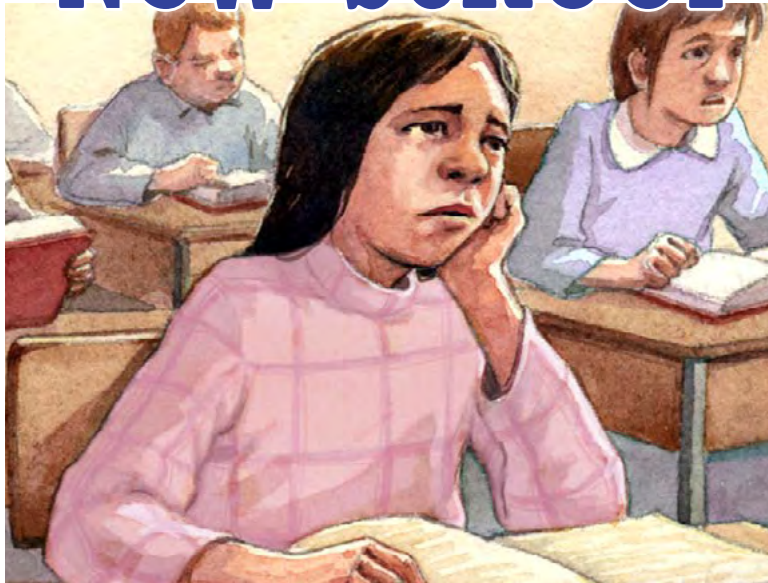
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Lucia's New School

Written by Jessica Malordy
Illustrated by Gabhor Utomo

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Lucia's New School



Written by Jessica Malordy
Illustrated by Gabhor Utomo

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Focus Question

How do Lucia's feelings about her new school change during the story, and how does meeting Teresa help her?

Words to Know

apologized
confusion
immigrant
impatiently
orchard

poverty
tenements
tongue
vendors

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Correlation

LEVEL R

Fountas & Pinnell	N
Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30



The new school sat on Orchard Street, but there wasn't an **orchard** in sight. Instead, the street looked like the rest of the Lower East Side, an **immigrant** neighborhood in New York City. It was 1909. There were run-down **tenements**, grimy gutters, strange smells, and more people than Lucia (loo-CHEE-ah) could count. Pushcart **vendors** made their way through the crowds, hawking their goods.

"Bratwurst! Sweet and spicy bratwurst!" a big man bellowed.

"Pickles! Two cents each!" shrieked a skinny lady with a kerchief.

"Fresh-roasted corn coming right up!" a boy shouted.



Not that Lucia could understand a word—the pushcart vendors spoke in a **tongue** she didn't understand. Maybe it was English, maybe German or Yiddish, maybe all three. In any case, Lucia only spoke Italian. She had just arrived in America a few weeks ago. In her first home, a little village in southern Italy, the roads had been plain dirt, surrounded by quiet fields and fruit trees. On windy days, the air smelled of lemons and oranges and the sea. But one day, her parents had decided to sell their goats, bundle up their belongings, and board a ship to America.

“We are leaving for a better life,” Lucia’s mother had told her. “In America, you will be able to go to school. In Italy, for farmers like us, there is only **poverty**.”

Lucia was thankful for the opportunity to go to school for the first time. Back home, the only school had been many miles away. Still, as she walked up the stone steps of Public School 42, she could not help but feel afraid.



The school’s long hallways and tile floors reminded her of Ellis Island, where she and her family had been inspected before being allowed into America. The school nurse checked Lucia’s hair for lice, though nurses at Ellis Island already had.

The principal scribbled Lucia’s name and classroom number on a slip of paper. He handed it to her, then pointed sharply toward the stairs. When Lucia found her new classroom, she took a deep breath before knocking on the door.

The teacher answered the door. “Class, it seems we have a new student. What is your name?” she asked Lucia.

Lucia did not understand and shook her head.

The teacher sighed **impatiently**. “What is your name?” she asked again.

Lucia bit her lip. She didn’t understand the question any better than before.

There were forty students in the class, all of them watching with wide eyes. When the teacher grabbed the slip of paper out of Lucia’s shaking hand, they giggled.



Students play chess during an after-school program at P.S. 42 in New York City.

The Lower East Side of Manhattan has housed huge numbers of immigrants for nearly two centuries. The Benjamin Altman School (aka Public School 42) has always been a great sample of the neighborhood’s population. When the school opened in 1898, the students were mostly Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe. Today, the students are 94 percent Asian.

One thing hasn’t changed, though. Kids in New York City refer to their public school by its number, not its name. So they don’t call it the Benjamin Altman School. They call it P.S. 42.

“Her name is Lucia Giordano,” the teacher announced as she walked Lucia to a desk at the back of the room. Lucia heard her name and felt her cheeks turn hot with shame as she passed her new classmates. She should have realized what the teacher was asking, but how could she have been sure? It all sounded like nonsense to Lucia’s ears.

The rest of the day passed in a blur. Everything was in English: the textbook, the writing on the blackboard, the teacher’s instructions. English was awful, Lucia decided, with its clunky consonants and ugly-sounding vowels. All day long, the strange sounds surrounded her like a dark fog Lucia feared she would never escape.



“I hate school!” she told her parents that night. “I don’t know anybody, and nobody will talk to me. I can’t even see the blackboard from where I sit . . . not that it matters. I don’t have any idea what’s going on, because it’s all in English.”



"It's the same for me at the brickyard," Lucia's father said. "The boss speaks English, so I must learn to speak English."

"This is a new country, Lucia, and we are all going to have to learn its language," her mother said.

"What for?" Lucia asked. "Why did we have to leave everything we know for this crowded country and its horrible language?"

"We did this for you," Lucia's father said in a firm voice. "In America, you have the chance for a better life. Now finish your dinner—school starts early tomorrow."



All week, Lucia did her best to follow along at school, but her **confusion** continued. She tried asking a classmate for help, but the girl shook her head and looked away. When Friday finally arrived, Lucia raced out of the building, eager to escape. She ran so fast, however, that she slipped down the stone steps and banged into another girl.



"*Mi scusi!*" Lucia **apologized** in Italian before she could stop herself. The words just slipped out.

To her surprise, the girl she had bumped into grinned. "*Tranquilla,*" she replied.

"You speak Italian?" Lucia cried.

"Of course," the girl replied. "My name is Teresa. We moved last summer from Naples. We live on Mulberry Street now."

They were still speaking in Italian as they walked together down the street.

“Are there mulberries on your street?” Lucia asked. “We live on Elizabeth Street, but nobody seems to know who she was.”

Teresa laughed. “Not a mulberry tree in sight! But sometimes I like to sit on the fire escape and pretend I’m at the top of a very tall tree.”

“What a wonderful idea! I’ll have to try that, too,” Lucia said. “I’m so glad to meet a friend. None of my classmates like me. I tried to ask someone for help today, and she wouldn’t even look at me! I’ve never met such unfriendly people before.”



“They’re not unfriendly,” Teresa explained. “I’m sure they’d like you if they understood you! Look around—all the kids here are immigrants like you and me. Nobody speaks English, not yet anyway.”

“Really?” It had not occurred to Lucia that others were struggling, too.

“Really! And from all over,” Teresa continued. “Hungary, Poland, Russia . . . it’s tough to find someone you can talk to. Lucky you bumped into me!”

Lucia looked around. It was the same busy street as before, but suddenly the bustling Lower East Side looked different. Maybe it was just that Teresa’s words had changed the way Lucia saw it. Suddenly the many languages, and the different types of dress, and the strange foods, and the crowded buildings didn’t seem so scary or overwhelming.

“Everyone came here for a better life, just like we did,” Lucia said. “Everybody probably feels just as alone and afraid as I do.”

"But you're not alone," Teresa said. "We can learn English together." Then she grabbed Lucia's hand and said the word again, but in English. "Say it with me."

Lucia grinned. "To-ge-ther," she said.



Glossary

apologized (<i>v.</i>)	showed that one is sorry for saying or doing something wrong (p. 12)
confusion (<i>n.</i>)	a state in which one is unclear or uncertain about something (p. 11)
immigrant (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a person who comes to live in a new country, especially for the purpose of settling there (p. 3)
impatiently (<i>adv.</i>)	in an annoyed manner, usually because of having to wait for something (p. 7)
orchard (<i>n.</i>)	an area of land that is planted with fruit trees or nut trees (p. 3)
poverty (<i>n.</i>)	the state of being poor (p. 5)
tenements (<i>n.</i>)	houses or other buildings divided into apartments, especially ones that are overcrowded or in disrepair (p. 3)
tongue (<i>n.</i>)	the language a person speaks (p. 4)
vendors (<i>n.</i>)	people who sell things (p. 3)

Discussion Cards

Back to School Around the World

Overall Discussion Question:

How does your school experience compare to those you read about?

First Day of School (Grade 3)

What feelings are associated with the first day of school? Who has those feelings?

What surprised you most about this story? Why?

Lucia's New School (Grade 3)

What part of Lucia's story can you relate to?

How does Teresa help change things for Lucia? What makes a friend a friend?

What does it look like when someone needs a friend? Has someone helped you when you are in need of a friend at school? Have you helped others?



In California, an unschooler checks on his animals on a typical school day.

Unschooling

Some parents believe “unschooling” is the best way for children to learn. In the United States and Canada, 10 to 15 percent of children who learn at home are unschooled. Unschooling is a growing trend in almost every country around the world. So, what is unschooling?

Unschooling is different from home-schooling, where parents teach their children at home. Home-schooled children study the same subjects that students learn in a formal school. Parents follow states’ rules on teaching and testing. Unschooling parents, however, do not follow any rules or use school lessons, homework, or testing.

Unschooling is built on the idea that children are full of wonder and are eager to learn. They learn best when they choose subjects that interest them. Parents become guides who help them find information and materials they need to learn. Homes, museums, parks, and farms provide learning opportunities and give children the chance to experience the real world.

Photo credit: Page 1: © Sacramento Bee/
ZUMAPRESS/Newscom

Some advantages of unschooling are that children follow their interests and learn at their own pace. They don’t have to worry about test grades or how they are doing compared with other students. They also don’t need to be troubled about fitting in at school or being bullied.

Unschooling benefits children when parents understand how to help them. Parents need time, energy, and money to support learning. If parents don’t know what to do or have jobs that take up their time, children might learn very little. Even with the best help, children could still miss subjects they need to enter college. Also, if they don’t get to be with other children, they can become lonely. They may not have as many chances to learn how to work and play with others.

Formal schooling and unschooling each have benefits and disadvantages. Going to school is a good way to make friends and learn to get along with others. When children work together on projects, they also learn from each other. Unschooling allows children to be creative and find their own path of study.

Do You Know?

Unschoolers read books like regular students, but they also learn to read in creative ways. Some things they read are:

- billboards
- cereal boxes
- comic books
- maps
- menus
- postcards
- street signs
- text messages

Unschoolers as Adults

Some formal higher education	75%	In 2013, a survey of unschoolers showed that most went on to college and found creative jobs.
Graduated or in college	58%	
Work matches childhood interests	88%	
Career in the arts	79%	

The Super School Bus System

A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,263

Connections

Writing

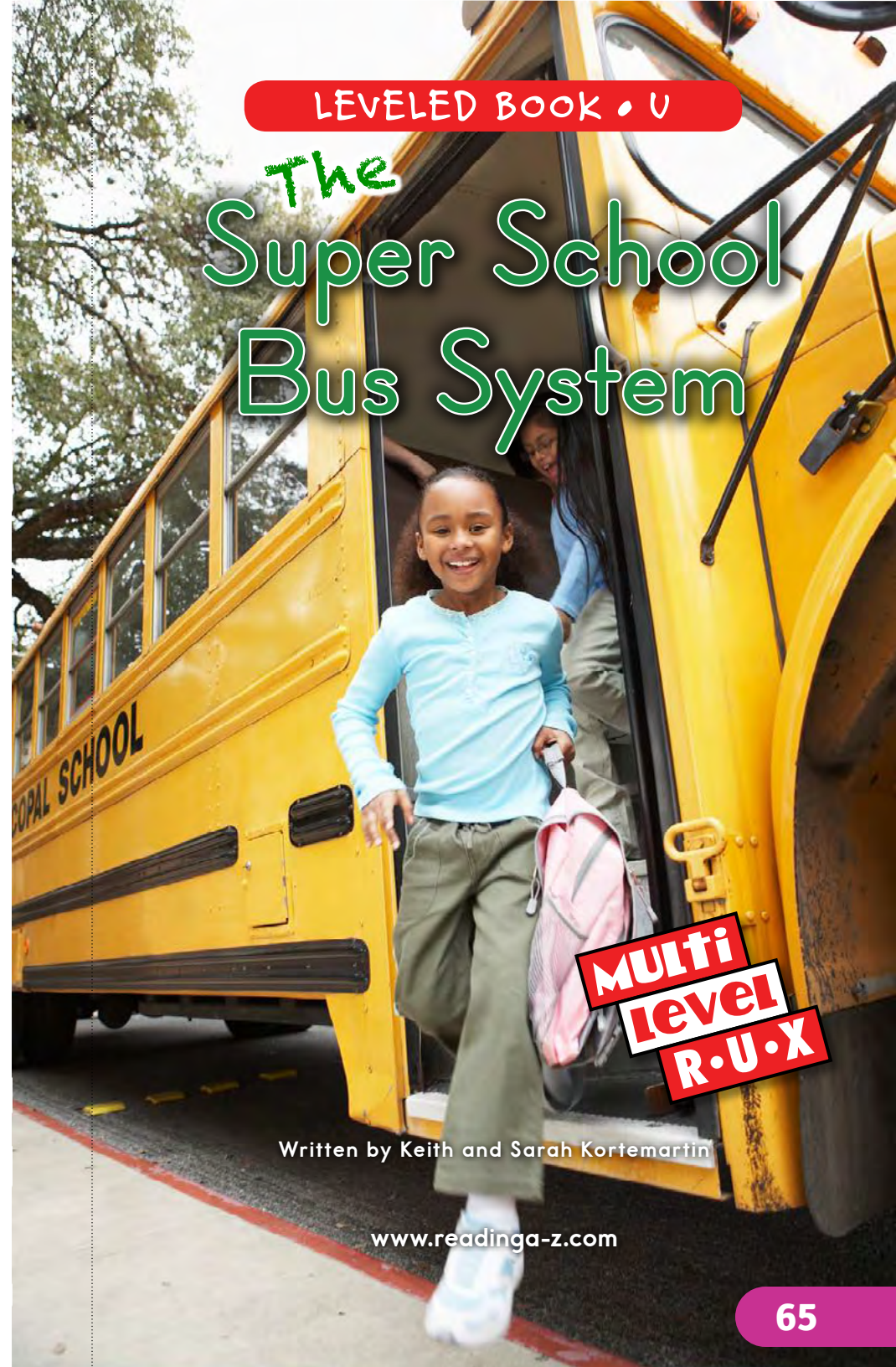
Research a system that another country uses to get students to school. Use a Venn diagram to compare that system with the U.S. system. Then, write a paragraph about how they are the same and different.

Social Studies

Create a timeline about the history of the school bus in the United States that includes facts and pictures. Use the book and outside resources.

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The Super School Bus System

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The Super School Bus System



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Focus Question

What are the benefits
of a school bus system?

Words to Know

discriminated	rural
entitled	school districts
fleet	segregated
integration	sparsely
mass transit	Supreme Court
principle	transportation

Page 3: Children at an army base in New York ride a horse-drawn “bus” to school in 1943. Old-fashioned transportation helped conserve gasoline and tires during World War II.

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Correlation

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The Trusty Bus

Sarah walks outside on a freezing winter day. She shivers on her way to the school bus stop a block from her apartment. As cold as it is, though, she's not worried about standing outside. She knows she won't have to wait for long.

The bus pulls up right on time, and she greets the driver as she boards. She barely notices, though, as the bus pulls out of the stop and rumbles down the road, taking her to school. It's a part of her day she simply takes for granted.

Taxes to Transportation

The yellow school bus is part of the landscape for Sarah and many American students who depend on bus service to get to school. Few people ever stop to think about how that bus system works. Yet the school bus system is one of the most important and complex **mass transit** systems in the country. Busing students to school requires the efforts of a small army of people. School buses travel on all kinds of roadways, from interstate highways to unpaved **rural** lanes.

The vehicles, drivers, mechanics, and fuel that make the school bus system work are controlled by individual **school districts**. School buses are paid for with taxpayer money that often comes from local property taxes. Businesses and homeowners are taxed on the value of their property. They pay that tax to local governments, which use it to pay for services such as police departments, fire departments, and schools. In addition, states sometimes give schools transportation funds that are used for busing. Buses support the American public school system, which is based on the **principle** that everybody is **entitled** to an education.

Mass Transit on a Massive Scale

Planning the system of buses that move students to and from school is an enormous job. The **fleet** of public school buses in the United States employs more vehicles and moves more people than any other form of mass transit in the country. In 2013, about 480,000 buses carried students to school each day. Slightly more than half of public school students, about twenty-six million of them, used school buses daily. In fact, the American school bus fleet has more than twice as many vehicles as all the other mass transit systems in the country combined.

The American school bus system is so enormous for several reasons. The country's large size, its large population, and its lack of other public transit options for students in many places make school buses necessary. This is especially true in rural areas, which often have no public transit options at all outside the school bus system. Rural American school buses tend to have very complex and wide-ranging routes. The rural school bus system in Kingman, Arizona, for example, covers an area larger than the entire state of Delaware.

Math Minute

At 1,954 square miles (5,060 sq km), Delaware is the second smallest of the fifty states. In Arizona, the Kingman Unified School District (KUSD) is more than 3,000 square miles (7,779 sq km). If KUSD is 3,000 square miles, how much larger is it than the state of Delaware?

Answer: 1,046 square miles (2,709 sq km)

In order to make these wide-ranging bus routes work efficiently, school **transportation** planners must examine a number of factors. They must try to ensure that students don't spend too much time traveling back and forth every day. They must establish bus stops that aren't too far away from students' homes so students can walk to their stop. Many districts offer bus service to any student who lives more than 2 miles (3.2 km) from school. Students who might be placed in dangerous situations by walking to school (such as crossing a highway) are often offered bus service, too.



Sometimes kids make less-than-safe crossings to get to school.



A horse-drawn stagecoach school bus waits in front of a Colorado high school around 1910.

History

American public schools began organizing mass transportation for their students long before the modern school bus existed. In the 1800s, many students attended one-room schoolhouses in **sparsely** populated rural school districts. In these situations, some students walked. Others might use horse-drawn wagons or sleds to get to school. Over time, school districts discovered that it was efficient to use a system of horse-drawn wagons. The wagons would pick up students and take them to school.

As populations expanded and technology advanced, horse-drawn wagons gave way to motor vehicles. The basic idea of public transportation for students, however, remained the same. Using large passenger vehicles, school districts set up routes and lined up vehicles. The vehicles picked up students before school and delivered them near home at the end of the day.

Yes to Yellow

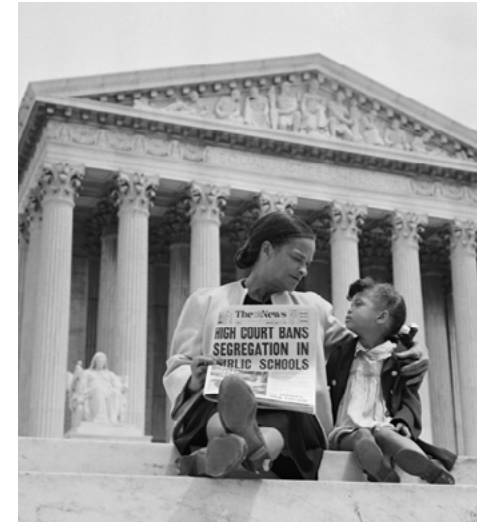
The big yellow school bus familiar to today's American school students developed over time. The first vehicles that carried students didn't look much like modern buses. A school bus from the 1920s, for example, resembled a long car. Buses gradually grew larger to hold more and more students. The yellow color of modern school buses was chosen because it was highly visible. Educators and parents wanted the school buses to stand out on the road. That way, drivers could easily see the buses and stop in time to allow students to board safely. Today, American school buses are required by law to be painted a color called "National School Bus Glossy Yellow." This helps drivers recognize school buses in an instant.



a school bus in 1925

Then came a new goal: school **integration**. This was the process of bringing African American and white children together in schools. Prior to 1954, many American schools were **segregated**, meaning that black students and white students were sent to separate schools. These segregated schools were not equal. White students usually received better educational opportunities and more resources than black students did. In 1954, the U.S. **Supreme Court** declared that school segregation **discriminated** against African American students, and the process of integration began.

For a time, school buses were an important part of that process. In the 1970s and 1980s, schools worked together to bus black students to white schools and vice versa. By the 1990s, however, most school districts had stopped using busing to desegregate schools.



A woman explains the Supreme Court decision to end school segregation to her daughter in 1954. They sit on the steps of the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.



As part of integration, white children are bused in North Carolina in 1973 (left). Black children are bused in Ohio in 1979 (right).

In recent years, closing schools has presented a new challenge. *Consolidation* is a process in which several smaller schools combine in one larger building. Consolidating schools can cut education costs since many students can share resources in a larger school. However, consolidation also requires some students to travel much farther to school. This makes the bus system extremely important in these districts, and it makes bus routes larger and more complex. One school bus route in rural Texas took some students roughly 100 miles (160 km) each way in the mid-1990s. These students spent more time on the bus than they did in school!

Safety

The American public school bus system is the safest transportation option for students. According to the National Safety Council, school buses are forty times safer than private cars. School districts require bus drivers to undergo strict safety training. In addition, school buses have a number of built-in safety features, such as emergency exits, reinforced roof structures, and a seat layout that helps keep students safe in the event of a crash. Seats are spaced closely together, and seat backs are made to absorb an impact. This structure places passengers in a type of protective box. Interestingly, in most states, safety belts are not required on school buses, though a few states have passed bus safety belt laws.

Other bus safety features may include flashing stop signs—to alert drivers that students are getting off or on the bus—and cameras that help drivers see what's happening inside the bus and outside. We can expect to see more safety upgrades in the future.



When a school bus puts out its stop sign, traffic in both directions is required to stop.

Do You Know?

Though seat belts make passengers in private cars much safer, there is some debate about whether this holds true for school buses. For one thing, buses are designed with much tougher safety standards. For another, buses often hold more than fifty students at a time. It's hard, then, for the school bus driver to make sure all those students are even wearing their safety belts.

Yellow Buses Go "Green"

Some school districts are also beginning to make changes to buses that help the environment. For instance, one school bus in New York has



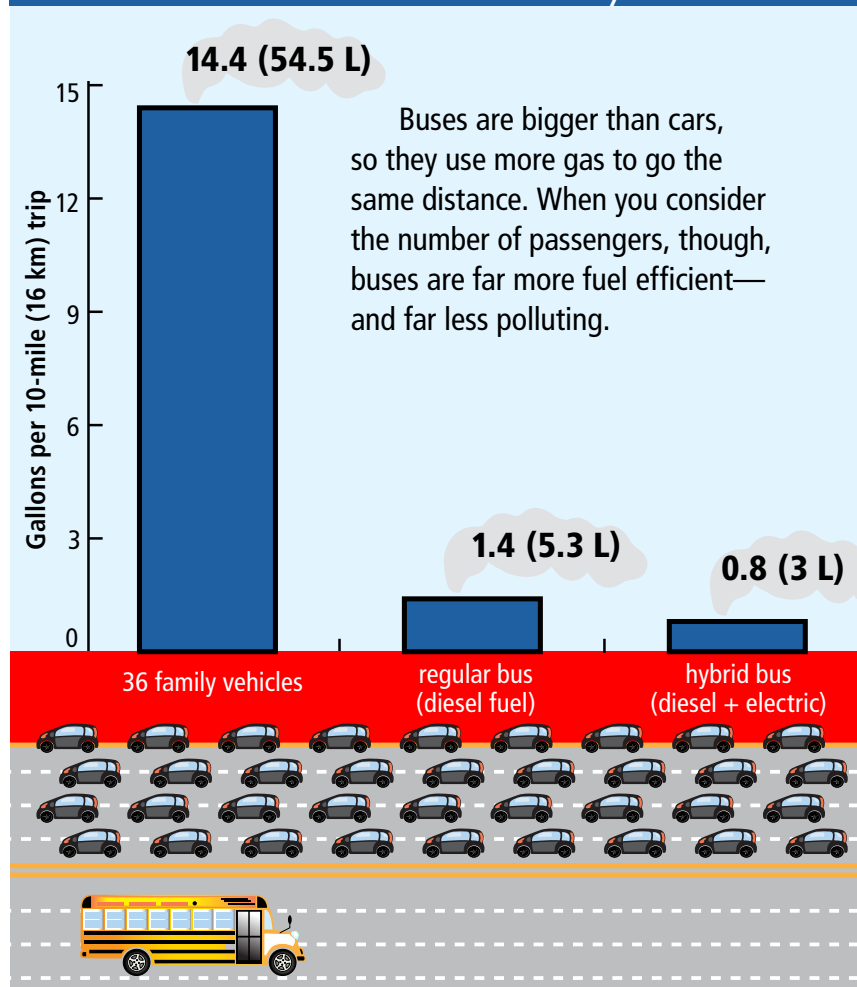
Hybrid buses like this one use both electric power and diesel fuel. In 2007, drivers of hybrid buses reported better mileage—almost twice the mileage of regular school buses.

an electric engine that doesn't pollute the air. The bus can travel for about 120 miles (190 km) before it needs to be recharged.

Another "green" trend in school bus technology is the use of propane fuel. Propane is much less expensive than traditional bus fuel and less polluting, too.

School buses can also reduce pollution by replacing private vehicles on the road. The average school bus can drive fifty-four students. That eliminates about thirty-six private vehicles that would otherwise be used to drive students to school. This fact, along with newer, greener technology, can help keep the air cleaner.

On the Road: Fuel Efficiency





Conclusion

As the school bus slows to a stop, Sarah opens her eyes, startled to find that she's dozed off. She gathers her things and follows the other students off the bus.

The bus pulls away from the curb, its job done for now. At the end of the day, it'll be waiting for them, ready to start the whole journey again in reverse.

Glossary

discriminated (<i>v.</i>)	treated a person or group unfairly because of gender, race, age, religion, or other differences (p. 10)
entitled (<i>adj.</i>)	deserving of or having a right to something (p. 5)
fleet (<i>n.</i>)	a group of ships or other vehicles operating under one commander or owner (p. 6)
integration (<i>n.</i>)	a process that allows all races to have equal access to facilities, schools, and all parts of society; the end of segregation (p. 10)
mass transit (<i>n.</i>)	a public transportation system that moves large numbers of people on buses, subways, or trains (p. 5)
principle (<i>n.</i>)	a basic value or ideal that guides an action or decision (p. 5)
rural (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to the country rather than the city (p. 5)
school districts (<i>n.</i>)	areas or regions containing all the schools managed by local school administrations (p. 5)
segregated (<i>adj.</i>)	kept apart based on group differences, such as race (p. 10)
sparsely (<i>adv.</i>)	in small numbers or amount; thinly spread out (p. 8)
Supreme Court (<i>n.</i>)	the highest court of law in the judicial system of the United States (p. 10)
transportation (<i>n.</i>)	the act of moving things or people from one place to another (p. 7)

Discussion Cards

Back to School Around the World

Overall Discussion Question:

How does your school experience compare to those you read about?

Unschooling (Grade 4)

How does unschooling compare to your school experience?

Should all students have the same school experience? Why or why not?

What types of school environments have you experienced?

What is important in a school experience?

The Super School Bus System (Grade 4)

What information surprised you most about this book?

How have school buses changed over time? Why are those changes important?

How do you get to school? How long does it take? How does your trip compare to Sarah's from the book, or others in your class?

Takehito's Tango

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book
Word Count: 2,028



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Takehito's Tango



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Illustrated by Linda Pierce

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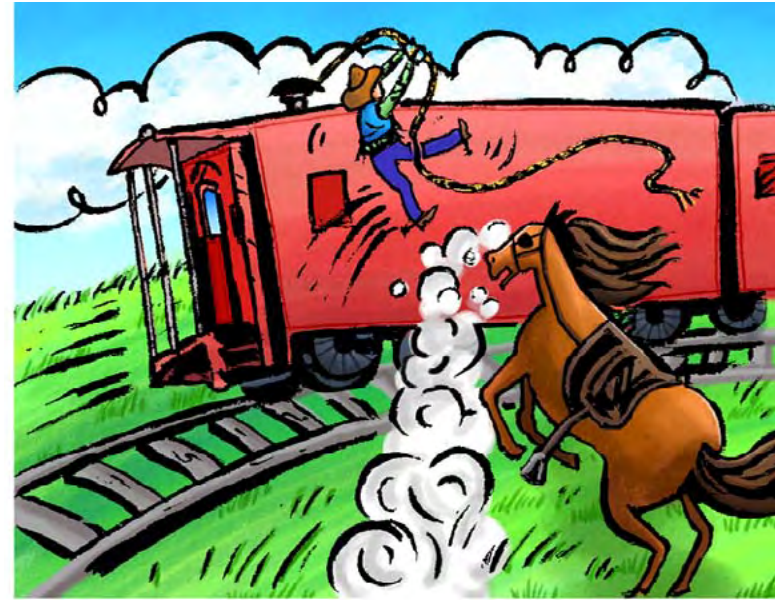
Correlation

LEVEL X	
Fountas & Pinnell	S
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Takehito's Talent

The train gained speed and began to pull away from Takehito (tah-kay-HE-toe). His trusty steed's stride faltered from exhaustion after chasing the clanging monster down its tracks. Fearing he wouldn't catch the train, the Japanese cowboy reached for his lasso. The horse huffed. The gap widened. Takehito tossed his rope. Success. The lasso tightened around a spire atop the caboose. Holding his breath, Takehito kicked his boots out from the stirrups and set sailing off his horse and into the air—nearly flying toward the train. But then, just moments before he kicked through the train's back door, he heard a voice.

“And what **performance** will you present at the talent show, Takehito?”

It was as though his rope had come loose and he had crashed on the track. The young cowboy jerked his head up from his daydream. Takehito’s fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Klein, had spoken and was glaring down at him now. Takehito had been staring out the window from his desk while Mrs. Klein paced up and down the rows of desks to ask each student what talent he or she would perform for the show. The rest of the class and Takehito’s teacher were now staring and waiting for his answer.



“Mrs. Klein,” Brent interrupted, “is daydreaming a talent?”

Several students giggled. Brent was the most popular boy in the class.

“No, Brent, daydreaming is not a talent, but neither is interrupting your teacher, and you seem to do that as often as Takehito daydreams,” Mrs. Klein snapped.

Takehito’s face popped beet-red. He didn’t know what to say. Luckily for him, the bell rang, signaling the end of the school day. Takehito quickly gathered his books and got up to leave, but Mrs. Klein stopped him.



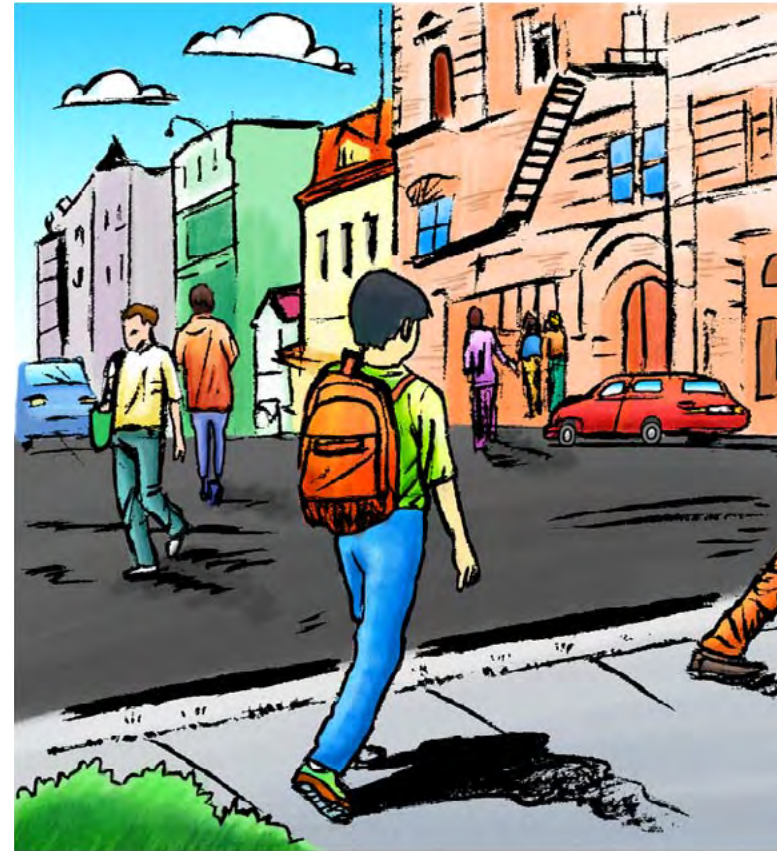
“Don’t even think about having your mother call in sick for you this year. Understood?”

He slowly nodded.

Mrs. Klein stepped aside to let Takehito pass. As he walked out of the classroom, the last cars of the elevated commuter train rushed by the school’s windows.

Mrs. Klein worried about Takehito. Last year, he and his mother emigrated from Japan to Chicago. He had not made friends easily. Some of the students in his old class made fun of the way he looked and the way he spoke. When it came time for the end-of-year talent show, everyone had teamed up with friends, except Takehito. So he pretended to be sick and convinced his mom that he needed to stay home from school that day.

When Mrs. Klein heard about this from the fourth-grade teacher, she was deeply troubled. She saw the talent show as an opportunity for everyone in the class to learn about each other. Therefore, as his teacher this year, Mrs. Klein was determined to get Takehito to perform in the talent show, knowing that if he did, he would establish some friendships before entering junior high.



Takehito didn’t know what to do. As he walked home through the busy city streets, he debated. On the one hand, he didn’t want to disappoint Mrs. Klein since she was his favorite teacher. On the other hand, he didn’t want to be a laughingstock—to do or say anything that his classmates would laugh at. So, he decided to talk things over with Manny, the friendly street vendor he always passed on his route home.

How to Show Off

“*Hola, Takehito,*” cried Manny, a middle-aged Mexican man. “*¿Cómo estás?*”

“Hey, Manny,” Takehito answered. “One *elote*, please,” he continued, placing a one-dollar bill onto the small wooden counter of Manny’s cart.

Takehito loved watching Manny make *elotes* because he made them so fast. First, he’d tong an ear of corn from the boiling water and then stab it through the bottom with a small wooden stick. Next, while spinning the corn, he’d slather on butter and mayonnaise, sprinkle on Parmesan cheese, and finally dash on cayenne pepper—all in a matter of seconds.



“Here you go, greatness on a stick,” Manny said as he handed over the *elote*. “How are things at school?”

“Not good,” Takehito replied after taking his first bite, which caked the sides of his mouth in red powdery pepper. “I want to do something for the talent show this Friday, but I don’t know what to do.”

“What are you good at?”

Takehito thought for a moment as he chomped through the *elote*. Manny held out a napkin, but Takehito didn’t take it.

“I don’t know.”

“What do you mean?” Manny asked. “Can you draw? Can you play a sport? Can you play a musical instrument? Can you sing?”

Manny continued listing talents, but Takehito stopped listening as his gaze wandered to three birds twittering around each other in a puddle in the street. As they flew away, a bus came barreling down the road. Takehito noticed that on the side of the bus was a poster for an upcoming movie. The poster showed two people dancing.

Suddenly **entranced**, Takehito was in a ballroom, dancing with a girl. She was in a blue country dress, and he was in his usual cowboy attire. The chandeliers, which hung from the ceiling, created a shimmering effect. As he twirled with his partner, wafts of her cherry-blossom perfume attacked his nose. As he looked into the crowd to avoid sneezing, he saw Manny.

“Have you ever thought about—”

“Dancing?” Takehito interrupted.

“Yes, dancing. Do you know how to dance?” Manny asked.

Takehito took his final bite of the *elote* and then shook his head back and forth.

“I don’t know either,” Manny continued, “but I should. In Mexico, when I was your age, I refused to learn, but my brother learned. A few years later, he was the most popular boy in school. He was so good. He made a bunch of friends.”

“Really?”

“This past year, I had him teach my daughter the tango. She could teach you for your show.”

Takehito raced home. He hoped his mother would be there, but before he reached the top of the stairs, he knew she was home—he could smell the tempura cooking.

As Takehito set the table, he explained that the talent show was on Friday, that he wanted to dance, that he wanted to take lessons every day after school from Manny’s daughter, and that he would make friends.

“Takehito,” his mother said, “I can see that you’re excited, but are you sure you want to do this? You don’t have to perform a stunt like this to make friends.”

“Mom,” Takehito pleaded, “this is not a stunt. This is my opportunity to be somebody, to be recognized for something I’m good at, something my classmates will think is cool.”

“But you don’t even know how to dance.”

“That’s why I need to take lessons.”

“Oh, Takehito,” his mother muttered. Then, after a long sigh, she smiled. “Be careful.”



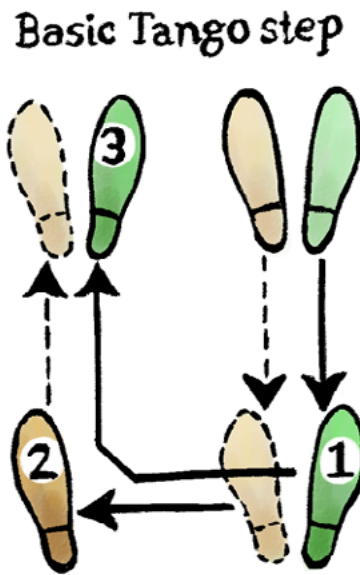
Let's Dance

After school the next day, with his mother's permission, Takehito met Manny's daughter, Melinda, at the *elote* cart. She was in eighth grade and planned to help her father with the cart after school anyway, but when he suggested she help Takehito learn the tango, she was thrilled. She loved to dance.

The two shook hands.

"We'll begin with the **footwork**." She stood in front of him and pointed to her right foot.

"Every step you take is **deliberate**, exaggerated. When you walk forward, strike your heel first, then your toe—heel, toe, heel, toe, heel, toe." Melinda demonstrated this vertical movement to Takehito, keeping her left foot stationary while moving her right foot up and down. "Got it?"



"I think so," Takehito replied.

"Then, let's walk."

Melinda and Takehito walked arm-in-arm, up and down the sidewalk, forward and backward.

"The goal here, Takehito, is to walk like a cat. Stalk and pounce—sometimes slow, sometimes quick, sometimes slithery, sometimes sharp."

They began to fall into a **rhythm** as Melinda continued. "My uncle said that the tango is over a hundred years old. Lots of people from different cultures—African, Indian, French, Spanish, Italian—created what we're doing right now. As the story goes, in the late 1800s, European and African immigrants danced with the locals in Buenos Aires. The result was a hodgepodge of movements, and the tango was born."

Takehito was working up a sweat. They moved faster and faster, slowing down and then speeding up again. He liked the changes of pace because they made him move like what he figured it would be like to ride a horse.

Manny pointed out to the two of them that several people across the street had stopped to watch them dance. Manny smiled and waved.

Tango Lessons

On Thursday, a small **audience** gathered around Manny's cart. A few of the neighborhood locals heard of the young couple's dancing and wanted to watch, yet before they did, they enjoyed Manny's *elotes*. Finally, Melinda stepped forward.

"Today, we dance." She turned on the music. The song was *Tango en el Parque*. "But first, we must get into the proper tango position."



She took Takehito's right arm and positioned it around her back, so that the fingers of his right hand lay across her spine. Then Melinda hooked her forearm underneath his elbow and upper arm with her wrist positioned directly underneath his arm, her palm facing inward, and her fingers just reaching his torso. Next, she grabbed his left hand with her right hand and held it at her eye level, which raised their elbows.

Feeling rather **awkward**, Takehito crinkled his brow.

"Are you sure about this? I feel uncomfortable, like at school pictures."

"It will feel better once we start moving."

Melinda explained that **traditionally**, Takehito would lead the dance because of his gender; however, because she knew the tango and he didn't, she would lead and he would follow. Right before they began, though, she offered one last bit of advice.

"Anytime we move forward, we'll gradually curve to the left, and if we decide to walk backward, we'll also curve to the left."

"What?" questioned Takehito, looking perplexed.

"Trust me. On three."

And so they began, **clumsily** at first, shuffling and stumbling, but eventually getting the hang of it. A small crowd of onlookers, many more than before, began to form. Manny pointed them out to the dancers again. They laughed. A few people who walked past them on the sidewalk applauded or cheered; others even began dancing with them.

Takehito became distracted. He would watch the **spectators** rather than where and how he was dancing. Then, suddenly, he slipped off the curb.

“Are you okay?” Melinda gasped. “You were dancing so well.”

Takehito was down on the street, clutching his ankle, which was swelling up fast. Manny flipped open his cooler and scooped some ice into a small bag. He gave it to Melinda, who handed it to Takehito. He pressed the bag of ice onto his swollen ankle and winced.

“I think that’s all for today,” said Manny, worried. Melinda turned off the music.



The Talent Show

Takehito stood behind the curtain backstage, nervously wringing out his hands and feeling as though birds were twittering around in his stomach. Melinda seemed to be feeling just the opposite as she walked around, laughing and saying hello to her former teachers. Then Mrs. Klein came by to inform the couple that they were to perform next. Takehito lifted up his pant leg to see that his ankle was still a bit swollen. He imagined his ankle returning to its normal size, the curtains opening, and the entire student body staring at him, pointing and laughing. He stepped to the center of the stage, slowly and deliberately, his spurs pinging with each step, his hat covering his face. All went still. Then he shot up his head as the spotlight flashed on him and the music fired. Melinda came running toward him, and suddenly they were in rhythm, stride-for-stride, in synch, banging out a fierce tango. The crowd screamed wildly . . . then the curtains opened.



"Now Takehito will perform the tango with his partner, Melinda," said Mrs. Klein over the microphone.

The two got into position. The music began and they waited for the right beat.

"Are you ready, cowboy?"

Takehito smiled, knowing that he had made at least one friend.

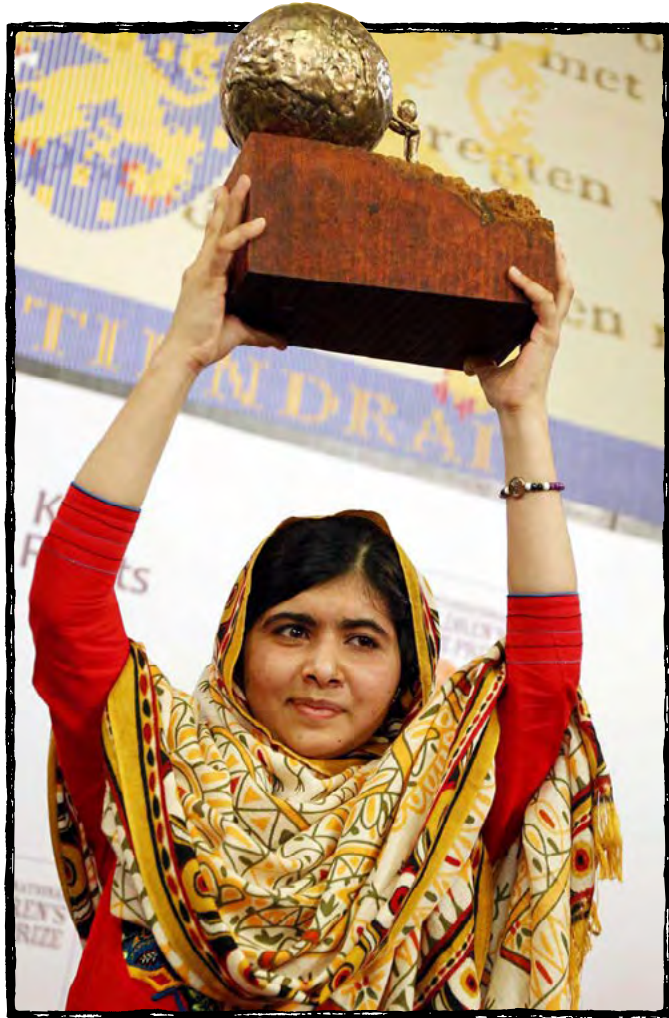


Glossary

audience (<i>n.</i>)	a group of people gathered to see and hear a performance or concert (p. 15)
awkward (<i>adj.</i>)	difficult or uncomfortable, especially as related to body position (p. 16)
clumsily (<i>adv.</i>)	in a way that lacks physical grace or coordination (p. 17)
deliberate (<i>adj.</i>)	slow or careful movement or action (p. 13)
entranced (<i>adj.</i>)	filled with wonder (p. 11)
footwork (<i>n.</i>)	the movement of feet in dancing (p. 13)
performance (<i>n.</i>)	a show, such as a play, a piece of music, or another kind of entertainment in front of an audience (p. 5)
rhythm (<i>n.</i>)	a regular pattern of sound, with accents at fixed times (p. 14)
spectators (<i>n.</i>)	people who watch an event without taking part (p. 17)
traditionally (<i>adv.</i>)	according to ritual or action that is passed down from year to year and generation to generation (p. 16)

Malala the Brave

A Reading A-Z Level X Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,387



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Malala the Brave



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Malala the Brave



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Back cover: Malala Yousafzai raises her International Children's Peace Prize above her head in the Hague, Netherlands, on September 6, 2013.

Title page: Members of the Peshawar Civil Society hold a banner in support of girls' education on Malala Day in Pakistan, November 10, 2012. The United Nations declared the holiday one month after Malala was injured by a Taliban gunman for supporting the same cause.

Malala the Brave
Level X Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL X

Fountas & Pinnell	S
Reading Recovery	40
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Malala studies in Pakistan before the events that made her famous.

Introduction

Can you imagine living in a country where some children aren't allowed to attend school? Where a child's highest hope is to be able to get an education, and that hope is denied? This is the world in which a brave girl named Malala grew up.

Malala's Name

Malala was named for a courageous poet and warrior woman who lived in Afghanistan long ago. She led Afghan fighters to victory in a battle against invading British soldiers in 1880.



Malala stands with her parents and brothers, Khushal (left) and Atal.

Malala's World

Malala Yousafzai (YOO-suf-zy) was born on July 12, 1997, in Mingora, a city in Pakistan's Swat Valley. Her family includes two younger brothers.

Malala's father, Ziauddin (zee-OW-deen), is a champion of **human rights**, which are basic rights that everyone in the world should have. Malala's father worked to make sure every child in Pakistan could receive an education. Since 1994, he has helped to open many schools in Pakistan's Swat District that now teach over one thousand students. For many years, Malala attended one of the schools founded by her father.

Malala's father has always encouraged her to ask questions and think for herself since she was very young. He taught her to speak up for human rights, equality, and education.

Malala's mother, Tor Pekai, is a homemaker who follows **Muslim** traditions by living a private life out of view of others. Malala says that she admires her mother but knows that her own path in life is different.

The Swat District is an area of northern Pakistan with high mountains and lush green valleys. Many people consider the region beautiful, and it used to attract tourists. However, not many people visit the area anymore because of the **Taliban**, a political group based in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Taliban follow an extreme and **fundamentalist** version of the Islamic religion that is very different from the version followed by most Muslims. As part of their beliefs, the Taliban severely limit the rights of women.

Most residents of areas controlled by the Taliban are forced to follow strict religious rules. For example, music, movies, and television are not allowed. The rules for women and girls are especially strict. Women and girls may not work outside the home, attend school, or wear makeup or bright clothing. They are not permitted to laugh out loud. After a certain age, girls cannot be outside the home without a male relative. The Taliban use violence, including acts of **terrorism**, to enforce their laws.

Malala's family is deeply religious—but their religious practices didn't align with the Taliban's. When asked about her religion, Malala is quick to point out that the Islamic religion does not oppose education for girls. In her words, "Islam says that it is not only each child's right to get [an] education, rather it is their duty and responsibility."

The Taliban started trying to take control of the Swat Valley in 2007. Pakistan's government and army were unable to stop them. The Taliban attacked police officers and blew up religious and government buildings. Their many acts of violence included destroying girls' schools in the area.

By the end of 2008, the Taliban had blown up roughly 400 schools in Swat and over 1,500 schools in total. The Taliban announced that as of January 15, 2009, girls would no longer be allowed to attend school in the areas under their control.



Local people gather outside the rubble of a girls' high school in the Swat Valley that was destroyed by the Taliban in 2009.

Throughout this period, Malala's father kept his schools open, even though it was dangerous. Over half of Malala's classmates were pulled out of school because their parents feared the Taliban. Malala stopped wearing her school uniform to avoid being targeted.

Why Is Education Important?

Education is much more than learning how to read and write. Education provides people with the tools they need to care for themselves and their families and to be active in their communities. Think about the following questions:

- How can education affect the kind of job a person might have?
- How might an education help people care for their families better? Consider things like food, medical care, educational opportunities for children, and other goods and services.
- How might education and the prevention of child labor be connected?
- How does education help make a community healthier?
- How might education about certain issues affect the choices that people make when they vote?
- How does education promote peace in communities and countries?
- How might science education affect people's attitudes about the environment?
- How else does education make a difference in people's lives?

Malala's Work

Malala's father encouraged his students to speak out against losing their right to an education. Malala and several friends gave an interview on a TV show in Pakistan in 2008.

Malala then volunteered to appear on a talk show. She was nervous, but she knew she had to speak her mind. While on the talk show, she asked, "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" Malala's courage in speaking out against the Taliban impressed many people.

"One child, one teacher, one pen, and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution."

—Malala

Malala started **blogging** on the Internet for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 2009 at age eleven. She blogged about her dreams for her life and about what it was like to live under the rule of the Taliban. She used a pseudonym, or fake name, to hide her identity and keep from being targeted for her writing. After her blog was translated into English, people around the world read it. They were shocked about the situation in Swat and the Taliban's efforts to prevent girls from attending school. Although Malala hoped to keep her identity private, her secret got out in December 2009.

As Malala continued to speak out about education as a basic human right, her fame grew. She gave many interviews on television and in print. In 2010, the *New York Times* made a movie about her life. In 2011, Desmond Tutu, a world-famous **activist** and religious leader from South Africa, **nominated** Malala for the International



Malala's courageous stand for the rights of girls made her famous around the world.

Children's Peace Prize. That same year, Pakistan's **prime minister** awarded her Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize. In her own country and around the world, she was a voice of hope and **empowerment**.

As Malala spoke out more and more, she and her father were both seen as threats to the Taliban's goals. When she was fourteen, her family learned that the Taliban had called for her to die. Malala was afraid for her father's safety since he was an anti-Taliban activist. However, neither she nor her family thought at first that she was in danger because she was a child.



Malala suffered terrible wounds as a result of being attacked by the Taliban in 2012. She recovered from the attack in a hospital in England.

The Attack

Malala paid careful attention to her family's safety as well as her own. She locked doors and avoided walking home from school. Instead, she took the bus. On October 9, 2012, she rode the bus home from school with several friends. A man got on the bus and asked which girl was Malala. Even though no one answered with words, her friends looked at her, so the man knew. He pulled out a gun and fired three shots, one of which struck Malala and injured her very badly. Two other girls were hit, too, though neither one had serious injuries.

Malala nearly died after the attack. She was flown to a military hospital in a city a few hours away, where she received life-saving treatment. Malala was then transferred to a hospital in Birmingham, England. Many people made sure she received the best possible care. Malala was fortunate to recover from most of her wounds, although she will have some challenges for the rest of her life.

The Taliban took credit for the attack. They said that other girls should pay attention to what happens when a girl speaks out.

"When someone takes away your pens, you realize quite how important education is."
—Malala

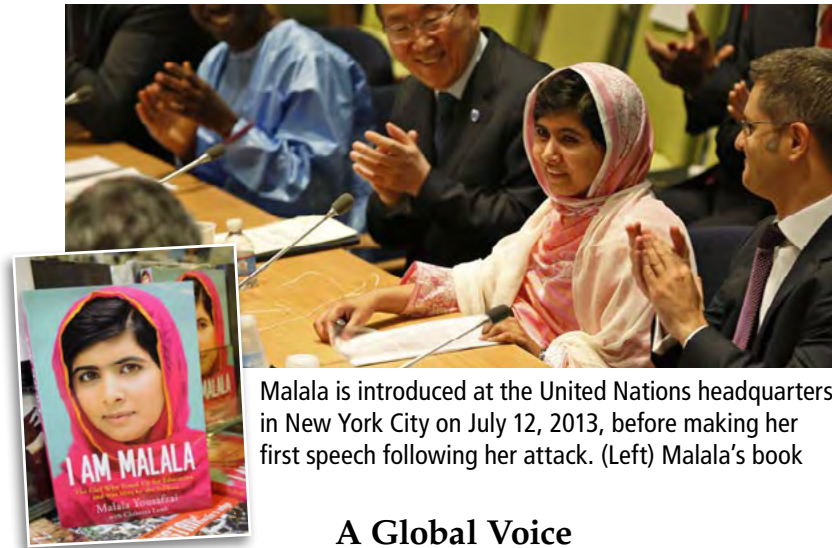
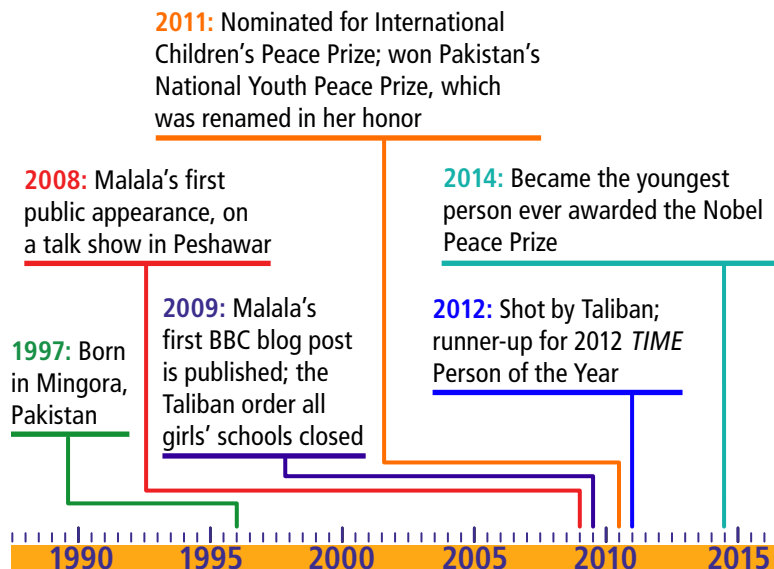
While Malala was in the hospital, she received cards, gifts, and flowers from thousands of people, including world leaders and movie stars. People around the world held candlelight gatherings to show their support.

After she was far along in her recovery, Malala started attending school in Birmingham in March 2013. She and her family stayed in the United States, and she graduated from high school in 2017. Malala wasn't happy to be away from the Swat Valley or her friends. In 2018, she visited Pakistan for the first time since the attack.



Students, parents, and teachers in Karachi, Pakistan, show their support for Malala one month after she was attacked.

MALALA TIME LINE



Malala is introduced at the United Nations headquarters in New York City on July 12, 2013, before making her first speech following her attack. (Left) Malala's book

A Global Voice

In July 2013, Malala gave a speech at the **United Nations**, less than one year after the attack. She called for children around the world to be permitted to get an education. Later that year, Malala received Europe's top human rights award for her **dedication** to freedom of thought and human rights. She has met with President Obama, Queen Elizabeth II, and other world figures.

Focus on Girls' Education

In 2012, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon asked governments, organizations, businesses, religious leaders, and other people and groups around the globe to support education for girls. That same year, the United Nations and Pakistan established the Malala Fund for Girls' Education. President Zardari of Pakistan donated the first \$10 million.

In October 2014, Malala was chosen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. At age seventeen, she was the youngest person ever given that honor. Malala said the award made her feel “more powerful and courageous.” She dedicated her award to “all those children who are voiceless,” saying, “My message to children around the world is [to] stand up for your rights.”

The Taliban tried to silence Malala, but instead they made her voice carry even more loudly. She continues to support every child’s right to an education and refuses to be silenced by fear.

Malala’s goal is to someday be Pakistan’s prime minister. Her father became a Special Advisor on Global Education for the United Nations. Malala and her father continue to work together, guided by their vision of a peaceful world and an education for every child.



Malala meets U.S. President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Malia Obama at the White House on October 11, 2013.

Glossary

activist (<i>n.</i>)	a person who works to bring about social or political change (p. 10)
blogging (<i>v.</i>)	writing about one’s thoughts, opinions, or experiences on a website meant to be read by others (p. 9)
dedication (<i>n.</i>)	commitment to a cause or activity, often involving hard work or loyalty (p. 14)
empowerment (<i>n.</i>)	the act of helping someone gain power over his or her situation (p. 10)
fundamentalist (<i>adj.</i>)	marked by a strict following of a set of beliefs, often relating to religion (p. 6)
human rights (<i>n.</i>)	the rights that are considered by most societies to belong automatically to all people, including the rights to justice, freedom, and equality (p. 5)
Muslim (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to people who follow the religion of Islam (p. 6)
nominated (<i>v.</i>)	named someone for a job, award, or position (p. 10)
prime minister (<i>n.</i>)	the leader of a government in most countries that have a parliament (p. 10)
Taliban (<i>n.</i>)	a fundamentalist Islamic group based in Afghanistan and Pakistan (p. 6)
terrorism (<i>n.</i>)	the use or threat of violence to try to change a government or system (p. 6)
United Nations (<i>n.</i>)	an international organization that works to promote peace (p. 14)

Discussion Cards

Back to School Around the World

Overall Discussion Question:

How does your school experience compare to those you read about?

Takehito's Tango (Grade 5)

What did Takehito experience in this story? Who would you say helped Takehito in the story? Do you think anyone was not helpful, or even unkind, to Takehito?

How do you feel when you try something new? Has trying something new led to positive results?

Have there been any situations when you tried something new but you wish you wouldn't have?

Malala the Brave (Grade 5)

How does Malala's home and school experience compare to yours? Do you consider Malala to be brave?

What does bravery mean to you?
When is a time you have been brave?
Does bravery only come from big, and visible, acts?

Malala's message to children is to stand up to their rights. She risked her life, and fought for every child's right to an education. Why is this so important?

We Make Good Choices

A Reading A-Z Level C Leveled Book
Word Count: 50

Connections

Writing and Art

What is one good choice you made today?

Draw a picture and write about it.

Social Studies

Create a poster that shows how to make good choices.
Hang the poster in your school.

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Focus Question

What makes something
a good choice?

Words to Know

choices	helpful
fair	quiet
healthy	try

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LEVEL C

Fountas & Pinnell	C
Reading Recovery	3-4
DRA	3-4



We try to make good choices every day.



Being kind is a good choice.



Being helpful is
a good choice.



Being quiet is
a good choice.



Being healthy is
a good choice.



Being fair is
a good choice.



Being safe is
a good choice.



The best choices
are good choices.

Wet Wally

A Reading A-Z Level B Leveled Book
Word Count: 41



Connections

Writing and Art

What else could Wally get wet?

Draw a picture and write this sentence.
Wally got his _____ wet.

Math

Sort the wet things in this story into groups.
Share your ideas with a partner.

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Wet Wally



Written by Nigel Pepperhouse
Illustrated by Hugh Jamieson

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Wet Wally



Written by Nigel Pepperhouse
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Focus Question

How would you describe
Wally's day? Why?

Words to Know

lunch	swimming
phone	tie
shoes	wet

Wet Wally
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Correlation

LEVEL B

Fountas & Pinnell	B
Reading Recovery	2
DRA	2



Wally got his tie wet.



Wally got his pants wet.



Wally got his work wet.



Wally got his lunch wet.



Wally got his face wet.



Wally got his phone wet.



Wally got his shoes wet.



Wally gave up
and went swimming.

Discussion Cards

Moral of the Story / Lessons Learned Through Text

Overall Discussion Question: What is the author of each text trying to help readers understand? How might this relate to you or your experiences each day?

We Make Good Choices (Grade K)

The first sentence includes the word “try”. Do you try to make good choices?

How do you know which choices are good?

What can you do after you make a bad choice?

Wet Wally (Grade K)

Have you ever had a day like Wally?

How do you think Wally felt during the story? How did that change at the end? How did Wally change how he felt at the end of the day?

If you could go back and change one thing to be more like Wally’s ending, what would you do?

Doing the Right Thing

A Reading A-Z Level G Leveled Book
Word Count: 145

Connections

Writing and Art

Draw a picture and write about what you think Lily should do at the end of the book.

Share your work with a partner.

Social Studies

How does it feel

to do the right thing?

Share your ideas with your class.

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Doing the Right Thing



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Doing the Right Thing



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Illustrated by Karl West

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Focus Question

Why is it important
to do the right thing?

Words to Know

cheating	fair
decide	right
explains	stealing

Doing the Right Thing
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Correlation

LEVEL G

Fountas & Pinnell	G
Reading Recovery	11-12
DRA	12



Sometimes you see someone
do something wrong.
Then you have to decide
what to do.



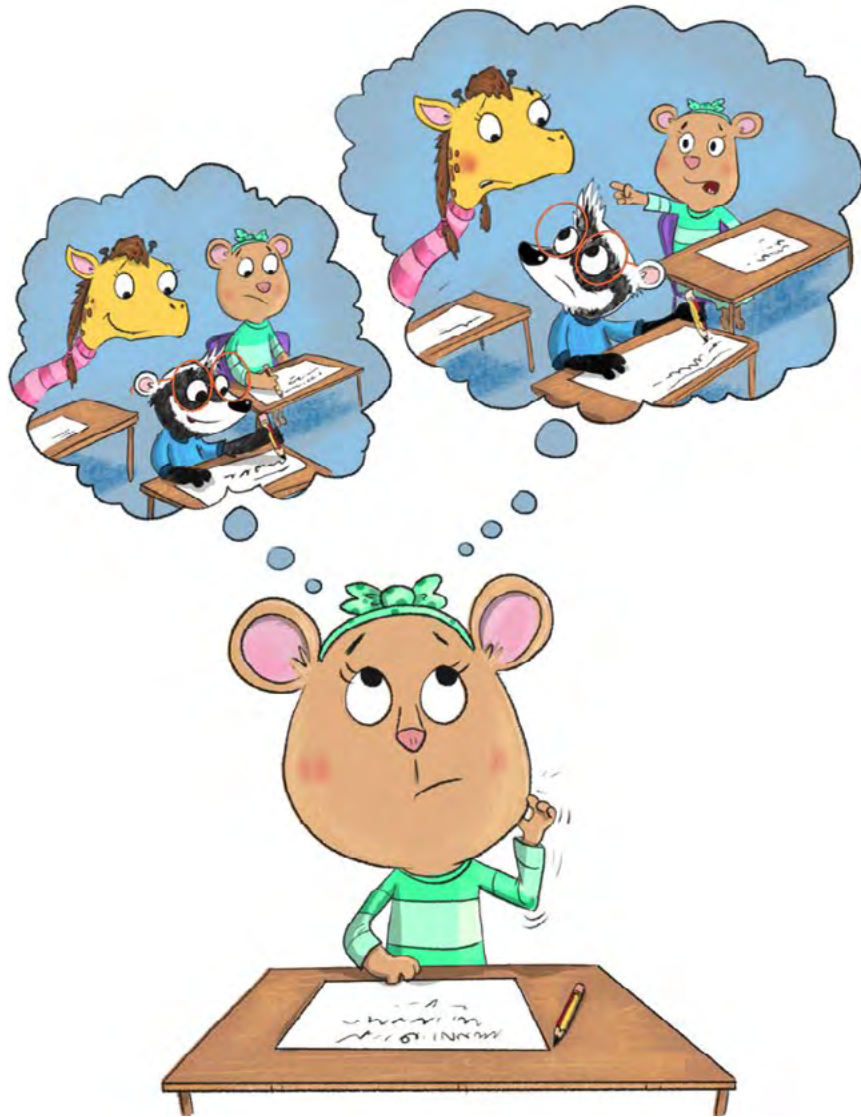
What is the right thing to do?
It isn't always easy to know.
Doing the right thing isn't
always easy, either.



Ms. Jones's class is taking a test.
Maria sees Lily looking
at Sam's answers.



Lily is cheating, and cheating
isn't fair to others.
What should Maria do?



She might decide
to do nothing.
She might decide to tell Sam.



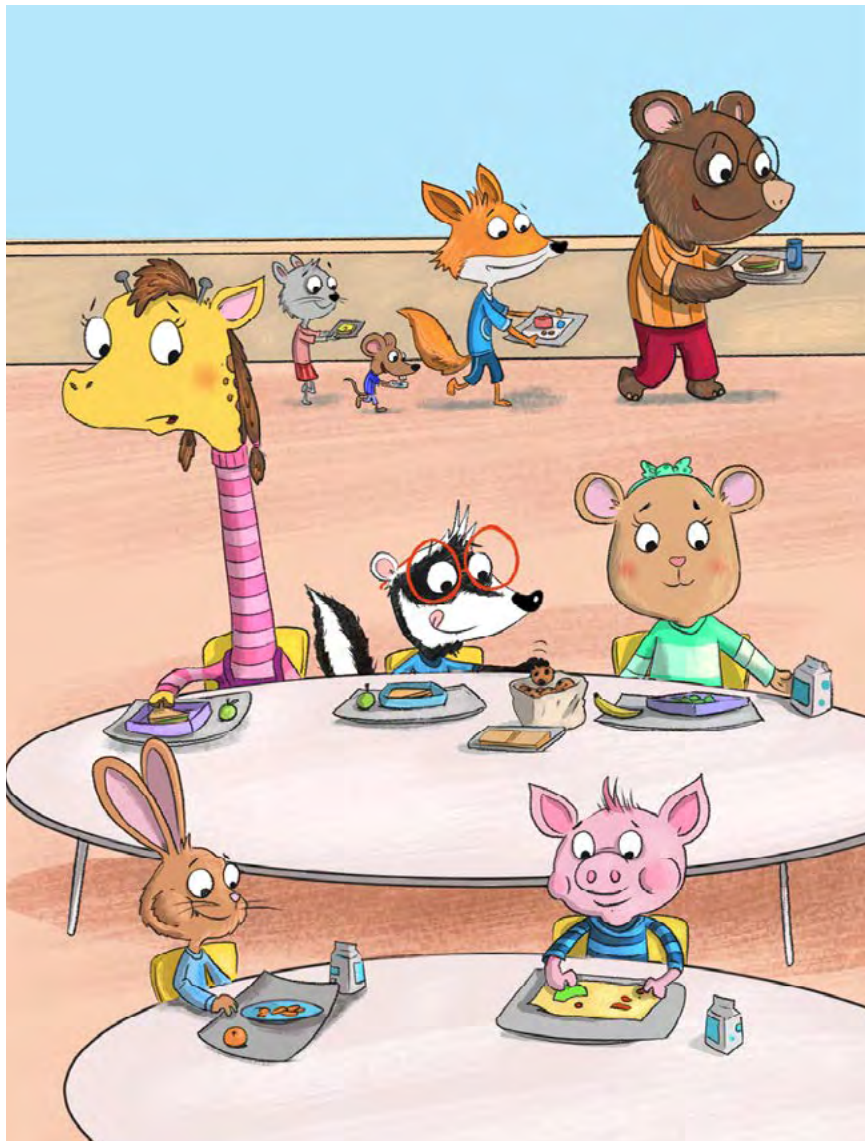
She might decide to tell
Ms. Jones.
Lily is Maria's friend.
She doesn't want Lily
to get in trouble.



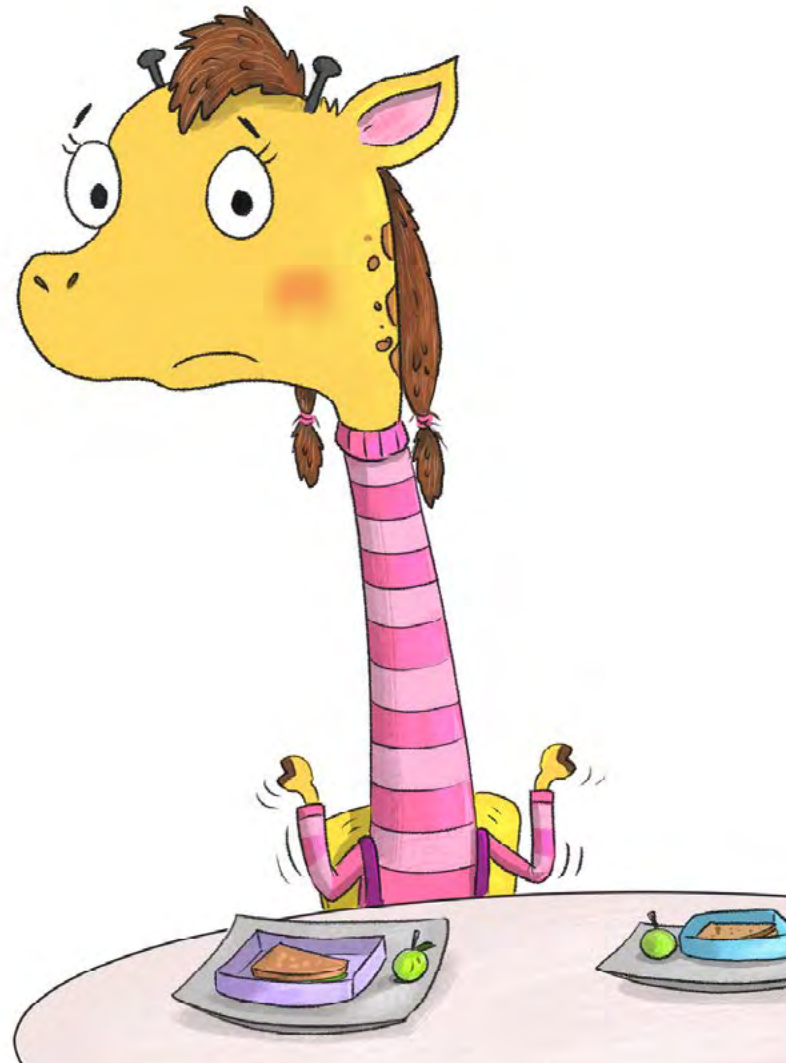
Maria knows cheating
isn't fair, though.
She decides to tell Ms. Jones.



Ms. Jones talks with Lily.
She explains to Lily why
cheating isn't fair.



Then it's time for lunch.
Lily sees Sam take a cookie
from Maria's bag.



He is stealing, and stealing isn't
fair to others.
What should Lily do?

I'm Kind to Me

A Reading A-Z Level J Leveled Book
Word Count: 317

Connections

Writing and Art

Think of a time when you were worried about doing something. Draw a picture and write about it.

Social Studies

How can you be kind to yourself? Write a note to yourself about all the things that make you great.

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I'm Kind to Me



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Focus Question

What does Cody learn about kindness?

Words to Know

musical
nervous
shook

solo
stage
steps

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Correlation

LEVEL J

Fountas & Pinnell	J
Reading Recovery	17
DRA	18

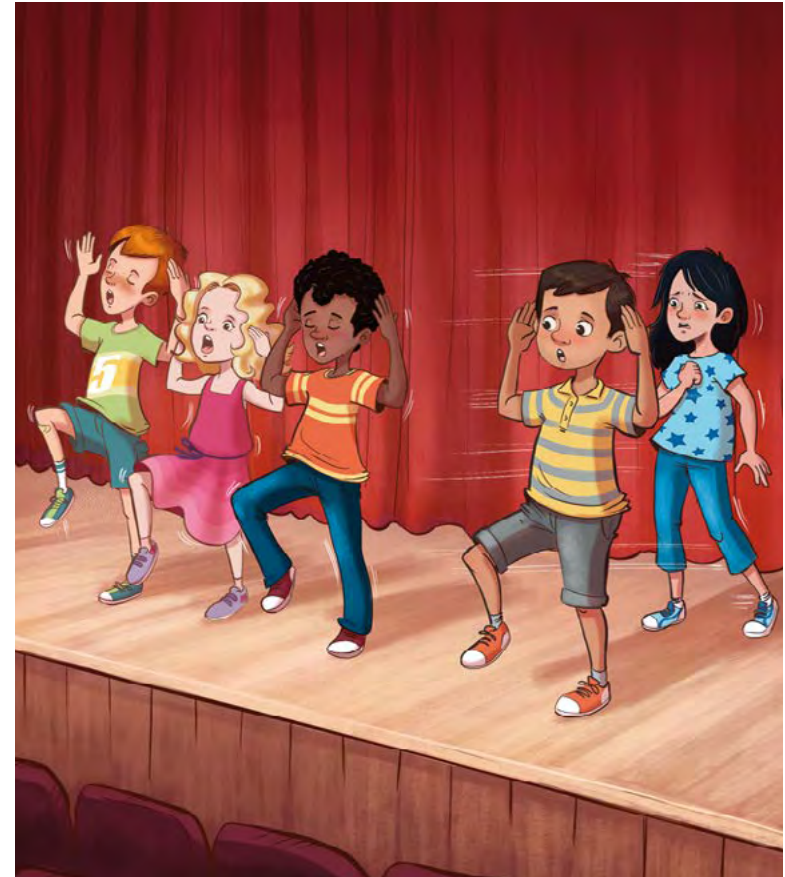


Cody was worried.
The school **musical** was just
a few days away!

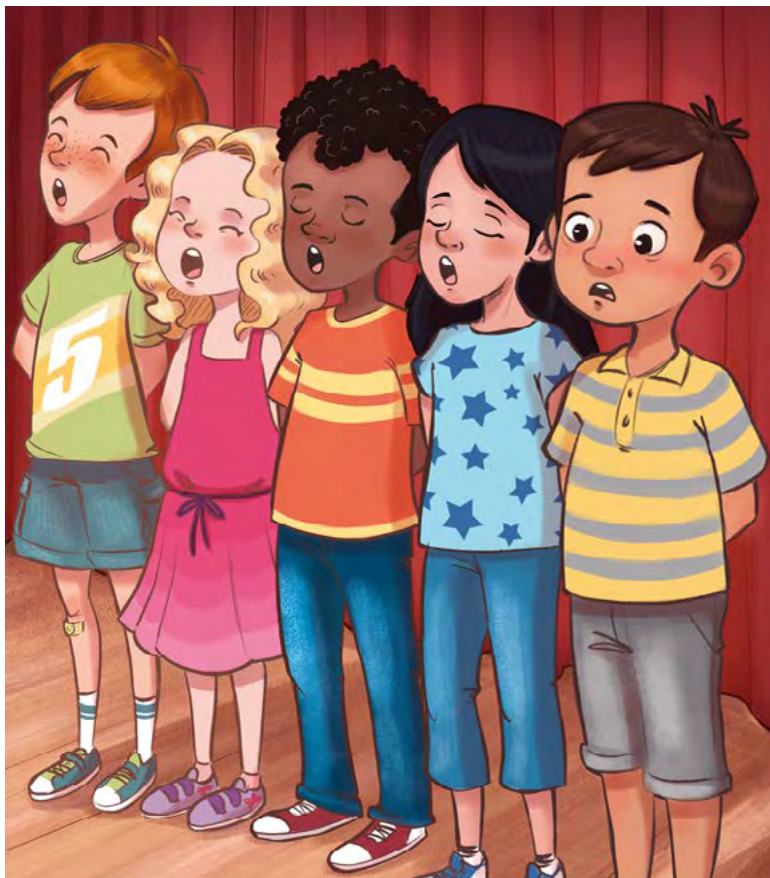


Cody loved to dance and sing.
There was only one problem:
Cody kept making mistakes in
his **solo**.

After school, Cody practiced with Mr. Jackson, the music teacher. Cody's voice **shook**. He sang some wrong notes. "Don't worry. That's why we practice," Mr. Jackson said. Cody didn't think he would ever get the song right.

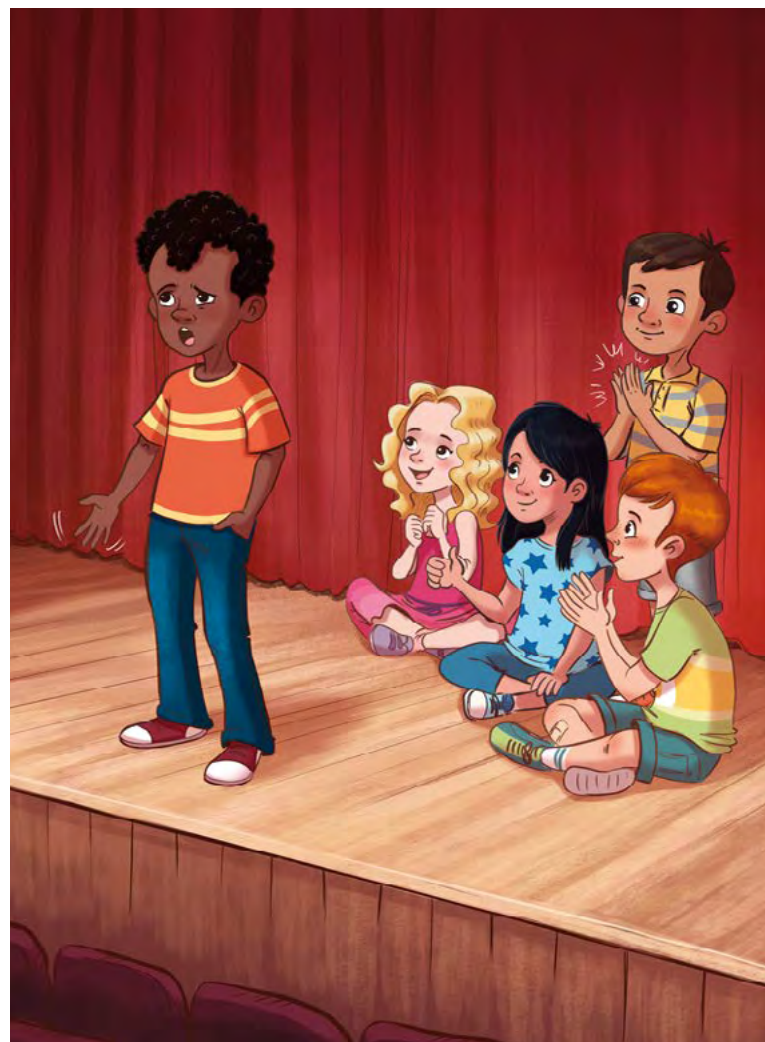


The next day, everyone practiced the dance moves. Lily kept getting the **steps** wrong. "Don't worry. That's why we practice," said Cody. He knew Lily could do the steps.



Then everyone practiced the songs.
Marco kept forgetting the words.
“Don’t worry. That’s why we
practice,” said Cody.
He knew Marco could remember
the words.

Next, Cody tried his solo again.
“Great job, Cody!” Lily said.
“You can do it!” said Marco.
Cody thought he sounded terrible.



At the last practice, everyone gathered on the **stage**.
“Just do your best and have fun,” said Mr. Jackson.
“I know you will all be great,” he told them.
Cody wasn’t so sure.



On the night of the show, Cody was **nervous**.
Lily and Marco looked nervous, too.
“Don’t worry. You’ll be great,” Cody told them.
“Thanks, Cody,” said Marco.
“You’re always so kind to others,” said Lily.



It was almost time to start.
Cody felt sick.
He just knew he was going
to mess up.



Then he remembered what Lily
had said.
Maybe he could try being kind
to himself, too.
Cody took a deep breath.
You can do this, he told himself.

He ran onto the stage.
Everyone sang and danced.
They all did their best.



Then, it was time for Cody's song.
His voice shook at first.
It's okay, he thought.
He closed his eyes and sang.



At the end of the show,
everyone clapped.
Cody smiled and took a bow.
It feels good to be kind to me,
he thought.

Glossary

- musical** (n.) a play or film whose action and dialogue includes singing and dancing (p. 3)
- nervous** (adj.) edgy or tense; afraid (p. 10)
- shook** (v.) moved in short, quick, uncontrolled motions, often because of a strong emotion (p. 5)
- solo** (n.) a piece of music that is sung or played by one person (p. 4)
- stage** (n.) a platform used for plays and other performances (p. 9)
- steps** (n.) the movements learned for a dance (p. 6)

Discussion Cards

Moral of the Story / Lessons Learned Through Text

Overall Discussion Question: What is the author of each text trying to help readers understand? How might this relate to you or your experiences each day?

Doing the Right Thing (Grade 1)

How do you know what is right and what is wrong?

Why is doing the right thing important?

How do you feel when you do the right thing? How about the wrong thing?

How do you feel when you see someone else is doing the right thing? How about the wrong thing?

I'm Kind to Me (Grade 1)

What did Cody learn about kindness? Why is this so important?

Are you kind to yourself? What is one change you can make today to be more kind to yourself?

Birthday Blues

A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book
Word Count: 667

Connections

Writing

Elena's sister shares some ideas to help Elena feel better. What would you tell Elena to help her feel better? Write a letter to Elena sharing your thoughts.

Math

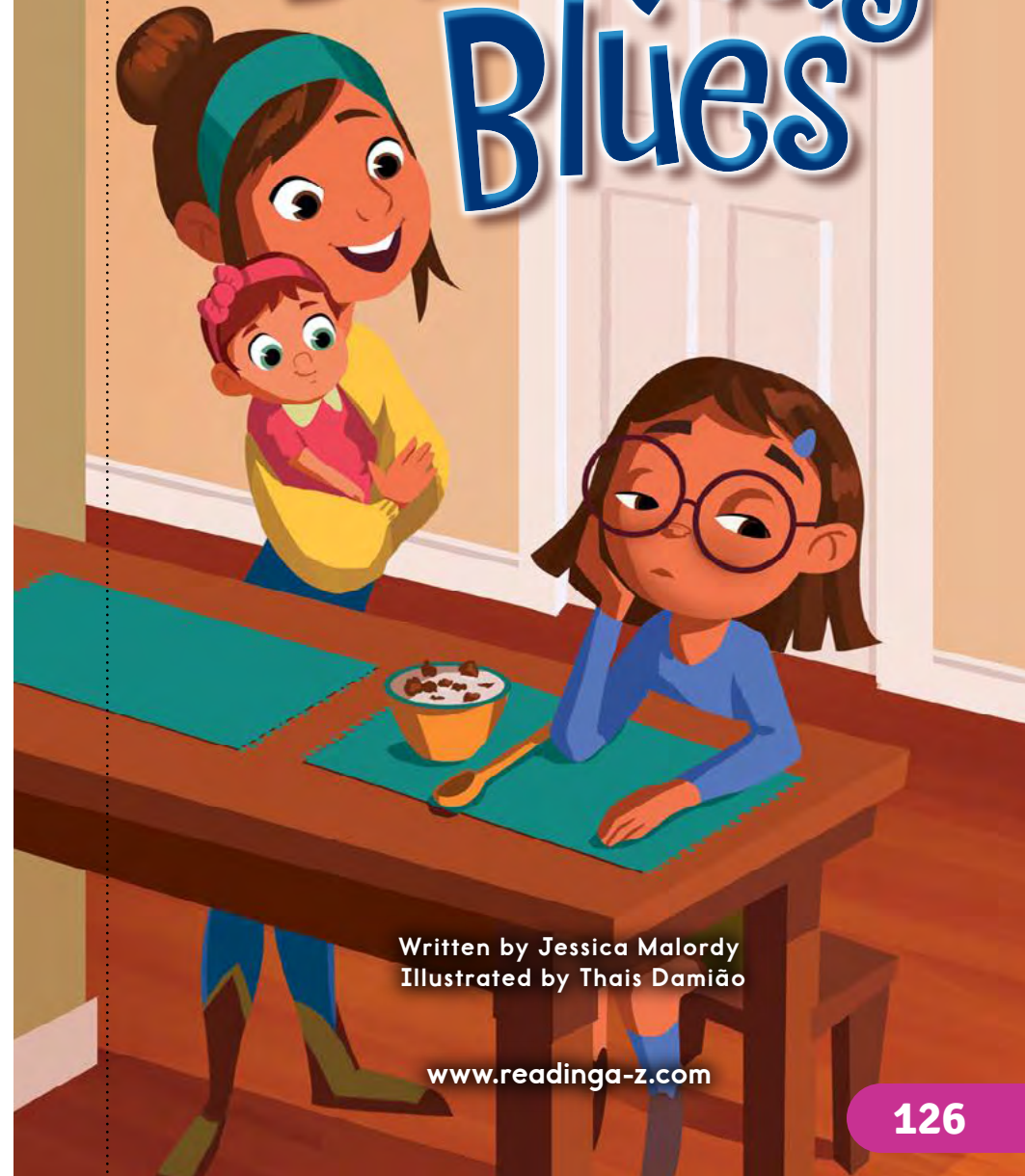
Make a tally chart showing each of your classmates' birthday month. Use the information to make a bar graph. Then write two math problems that can be solved using the bar graph.

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Birthday Blues



Written by Jessica Malordy
Illustrated by Thais Damião

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Illustrated by Thais Damião

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Focus Question

What does Elena learn in the story?

Words to Know

attention	frustration
congratulations	muttered
distracted	point

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Correlation

LEVEL N

Fountas & Pinnell	L
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28



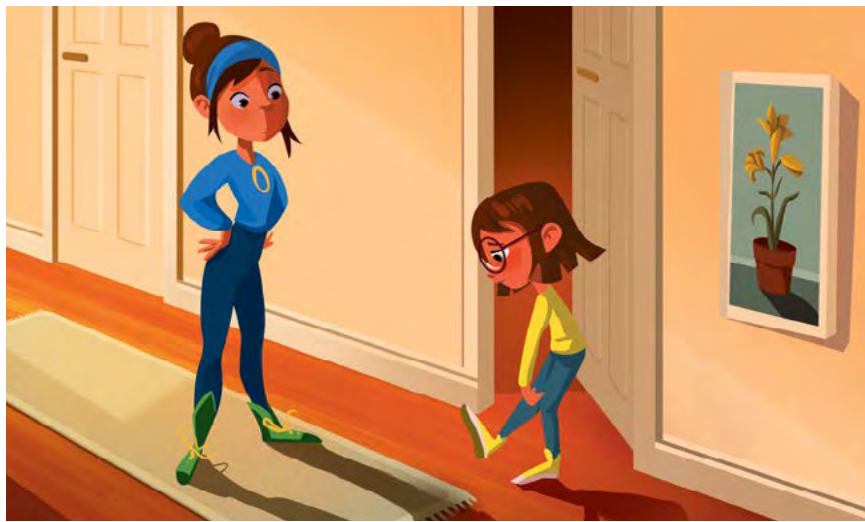
Elena had been counting down to her birthday all month. Every morning, she crossed another day off the calendar.

“Guess what, Mom?” she exclaimed. “Just two more days until I turn eight!”

“That’s wonderful,” her mother replied, but she sounded **distracted**. “Elena, honey, can you hand me that dish towel? Isabella just spit up,” she said.

Elena sighed. Her new sister was just one week old, and she was already a pest. It seemed to Elena as though she was always in need of **attention**.





“Why the long face, squirt?”
asked Nina, Elena’s big sister.

“Oh, no reason,” Elena replied.

She didn’t know how to explain how forgotten she felt. All week, friends and family had stopped by to meet Isabella. Everybody seemed to think she was adorable. They wanted to hold her, and coo over her, and kiss her. Nobody seemed to notice that Elena was even in the room!

The next day, as soon as the mail arrived, Elena ran to get it. There were three colorful cards inside the mailbox.

“Birthday cards!” Elena cheered. Then she took a second look and frowned. None of the cards were addressed to her.





“They’re **congratulations** cards in honor of the new baby,” her dad explained.

Elena rolled her eyes. “What about my birthday?” she asked.

“Are we going to have a party this weekend? Mom promised we could!”

Elena’s father didn’t have a chance to answer. He heard Isabella crying, and he rushed off to help.



The next morning, Elena woke up and crossed the last day off the calendar. She wondered if anybody would remember that today was her birthday.

“Hey there, squirt,” said Nina.

“Want to come take Isabella for a walk?”

“Not really,” Elena **muttered**, but she put on her sneakers anyway.

Together, the sisters pushed the stroller around a nearby park.

“So, how does it feel to be a big sister?” Nina asked.

“I hate it!” Elena exploded, her **frustration** pouring out like a flood. “All anybody does is pay attention to the baby! She’s not even that interesting. I wish she had never been born at all!”



“Want to know a secret?” Nina asked. “When you were born, I felt the exact same way.”

“Really?” Elena asked. Nina was such a kind and loving big sister. It was hard to imagine her wishing Elena had never been born.

“Of course!” Nina said. “I even asked Mom if we could send you back to the hospital! I’ve got another secret for you, though.”

“What’s that?” Elena asked.

“Being a big sister is awesome!”
Nina exclaimed. “You’ll watch
Isabella grow, and you’ll teach
her all sorts of things. Remember
how I taught you to ride a bike?”

“I can’t teach a baby how to ride
a bike,” Elena pointed out.

“Not yet, silly,” Nina said. “When
she’s older, you’ll have as much
fun together as we do.”



In the stroller, Isabella gave a little
kick as if to prove Nina’s **point**.

“Most importantly, there’s nobody
who loves you like a sister,” Nina
added. She gave Elena a big hug.
“And you’re the only one who gets
to be a big sister and a little sister!
How cool is that?”

They were almost back home. Elena felt a lot better already . . . but she did have one last worry.

“What if Mom and Dad don’t have time for all three of us?” she burst out. “What if I’m the one who gets forgotten?”

“No one is going to forget you,” Nina promised as they approached the house. “That’s not how love works.”



When Elena opened the door, she heard voices shout, “SURPRISE!”

Her parents, family, and friends were all standing around wearing party hats. There was a pile of presents on the table.

“Happy Birthday, Elena!” her mother said, kissing her on the cheek.



“Eight years old! You’re growing up so fast!” her father said, giving her a hug.

“See?” said Nina, with a smile. “I told you they wouldn’t forget you! Happy birthday, squirt.”

Glossary

- attention** (*n.*) special care or notice given to someone or something (p. 4)
- congratulations** (*n.*) an expression of praise or good wishes for an achievement or on a special occasion (p. 7)
- distracted** (*adj.*) unfocused or unable to pay attention to something (p. 4)
- frustration** (*n.*) a feeling of disappointment or distress, particularly about being unable to change something (p. 9)
- muttered** (*v.*) said quietly under one’s breath (p. 8)
- point** (*n.*) an important idea or argument (p. 12)

The Empty Pot

A Reading A-Z Level N Leveled Book

Word Count: 679



Connections

Writing

Pretend you are a child other than Chen from the story. Write a journal entry telling what you gave to the emperor and why.

Social Studies

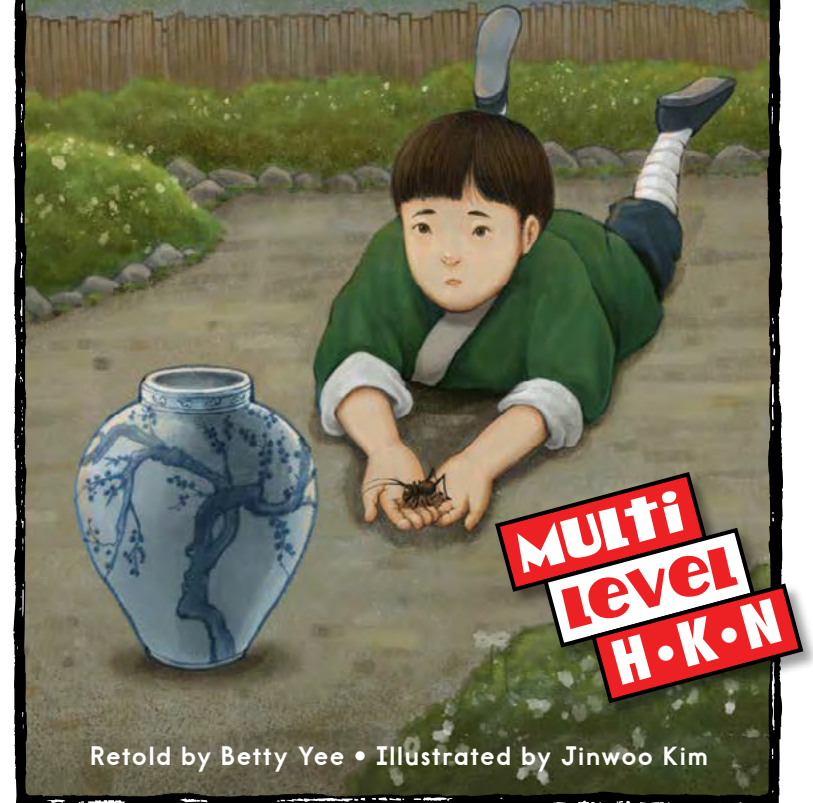
Draw a map of China. Label the capital city and five important landmarks.

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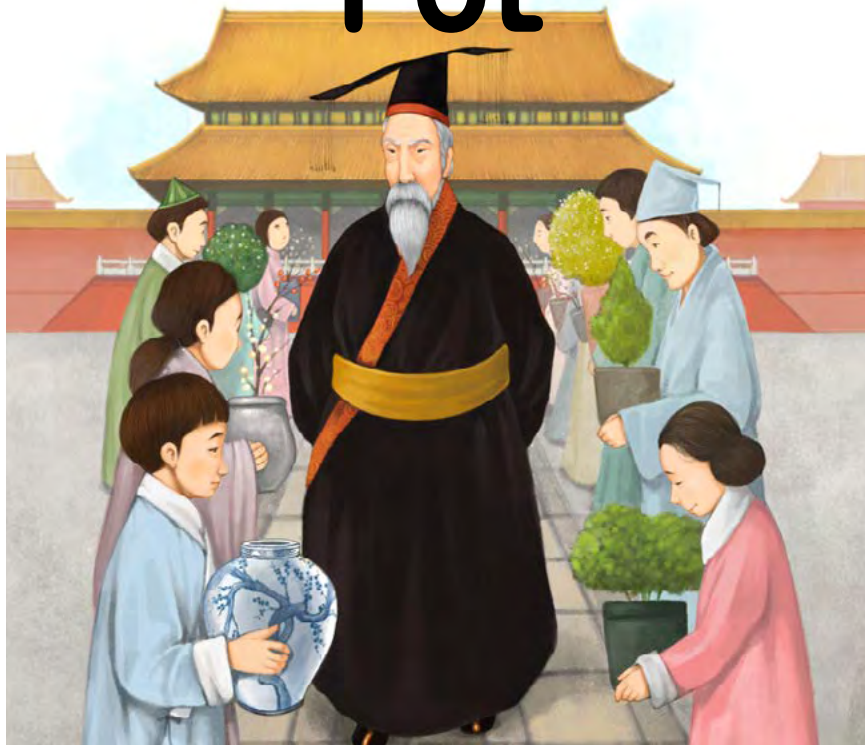
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The Empty Pot



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The Empty Pot



Retold by Betty Yee
Illustrated by Jinwoo Kim

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Focus Question

What lesson does Chen learn?

Words to Know

boiled	qualities
emperor	shame
encouragement	sprout
glum	weeping
honest	

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Correlation

LEVEL N

Fountas & Pinnell	L
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28



A long time ago in China, there was a boy named Chen. He lived with his mother in a wooden house in a countryside village.

Their house was very small, but their garden was always full of beautiful flowers and other plants. Chen's mother had planted the garden before Chen was born. She taught him everything she knew about gardening.

The **emperor** of China was a very old man who had no children of his own. He worried about who would become the next emperor and what would happen to his country.



He decided to choose the next emperor from among the children of his empire. One day, the emperor announced that the people of China should bring their children to his palace.



The emperor revealed his plan to the crowd that had gathered.

He declared, "I will provide a flower seed to any child who wants one.

Take your seed home and plant it in a pot. In a year's time, come back to the palace with your pot, and I will select the next emperor."

Chen lined up with the other children to get a seed. He could hardly contain his excitement.



Chen treated his seed with great care. He carried it home in a silk pouch. He planted the seed in a little clay pot in his garden, covered it with soil, and gave it water.

Days passed, but the little seed didn't **sprout**.

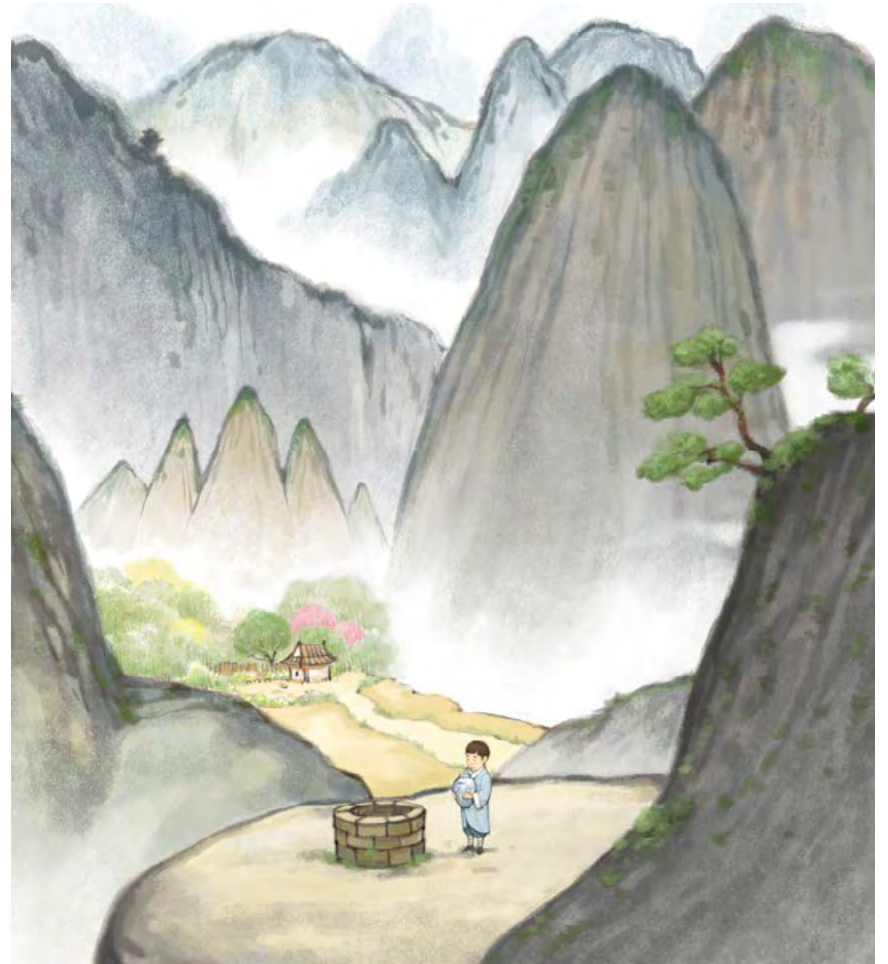


Chen put the seed in a bigger pot made of fine china. He moved the pot to the sunniest corner of the garden.

Weeks passed, but the little seed didn't sprout.

Chen carried his pot five miles to a well that was famous for having sweet, fresh water.

Months passed, but the little seed didn't sprout.





He kept his pet cricket next to the pot so the seed could hear its sweet nighttime chirps.

Seasons passed, but the little seed still didn't sprout.

A year went by.

It was time to bring the pot back to the emperor's palace. Chen felt downcast and **glum**. His seed hadn't sprouted at all.



His wise mother found him **weeping** in the garden.

"You did your best," she said to Chen with **encouragement**. "I am very proud of you. Bring your pot to the emperor and tell him what happened."



Children arrived at the emperor's palace with their pots full of flowers. Each pot seemed to hold flowers more beautiful than the last. Chen looked down at his own empty pot and wanted to run back home. He calmed himself down, remembering his mother's words. He decided to stay where he was.

The emperor walked slowly through the crowd of children and flowers, studying each child and pot as he went.



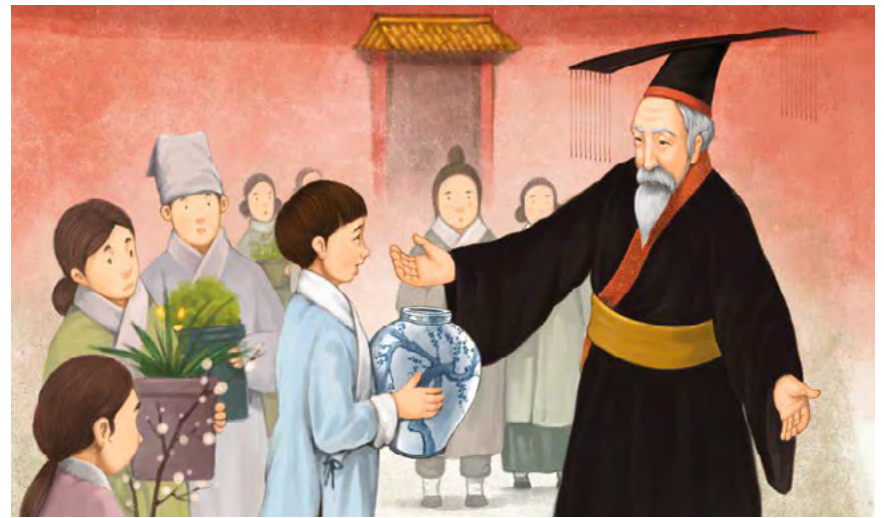
Something was wrong. The emperor didn't look pleased. In fact, it seemed as though the prettier the flower, the angrier he became. At last he came to Chen and his empty pot.



“What’s this?” the emperor demanded. “Why is your pot empty?”

Chen hung his head in **shame**.

“I’m sorry. I put the seed in a pot, but it didn’t grow. I put it in a bigger, fancier pot, but it still didn’t grow. I made sure it had plenty of sunlight. I gave it the freshest water. I even let my cricket keep it company at night! Still, it would not grow. I tried my best.”



Suddenly, to his surprise, Chen heard the emperor shout, “I’ve found him! I’ve discovered the child worthy of becoming the next emperor! I don’t know how the rest of you grew your flowers. The seeds I gave everyone were **boiled**. They could never have sprouted. But this **honest**, brave child told me the simple truth. He used his best effort to try to grow the seed. These are the **qualities** I want to see in the next emperor.”

Chen and his mother went to live in the palace. Every day, the emperor and Chen worked in the palace garden together. When Chen became emperor, he cared for China just as he had always cared for his own garden.



Glossary

boiled (<i>v.</i>)	heated in a liquid that has become hot enough to bubble (p. 14)
emperor (<i>n.</i>)	a man who rules a group of countries (p. 4)
encouragement (<i>n.</i>)	helpful support (p. 10)
glum (<i>adj.</i>)	sad or gloomy (p. 10)
honest (<i>adj.</i>)	truthful (p. 14)
qualities (<i>n.</i>)	features that help identify something or someone (p. 14)
shame (<i>n.</i>)	a strong feeling of sadness or guilt caused by believing one has done something wrong (p. 13)
sprout (<i>v.</i>)	come out of a seed and begin to grow (p. 6)
weeping (<i>v.</i>)	crying, often because of a feeling of deep sadness (p. 10)

Discussion Cards

Moral of the Story / Lessons Learned Through Text

Overall Discussion Question: What is the author of each text trying to help readers understand? How might this relate to you or your experiences each day?

Birthday Blues (Grade 2)

How might you feel if you were Elena at the beginning of the story? Have you ever experienced feelings similar to what Elena experiences in this story?

When Nina shared how she felt when Elena was born, and how she is now able to enjoy the good things about being a big sister, Elena's feelings changed. Why is this? Why is understanding what others have experienced important?

The Empty Pot (Grade 2)

Why is honesty so important?

Is it easier for you to be honest in some situations as compared to others? Why might this be?

How was Chen feeling throughout the story? How do you think he felt at the end of the story? How might Chen's feelings throughout the story have compared to the other children?

Like Night and Day

A Reading A-Z Level T Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,237

Connections

Writing

Write a letter to Simon explaining how he can calm his nerves about giving a speech in front of his classmates.

Social Studies and Art

Imagine that you are running for president of the Space Club. Create a campaign poster showing why you would be an ideal leader.

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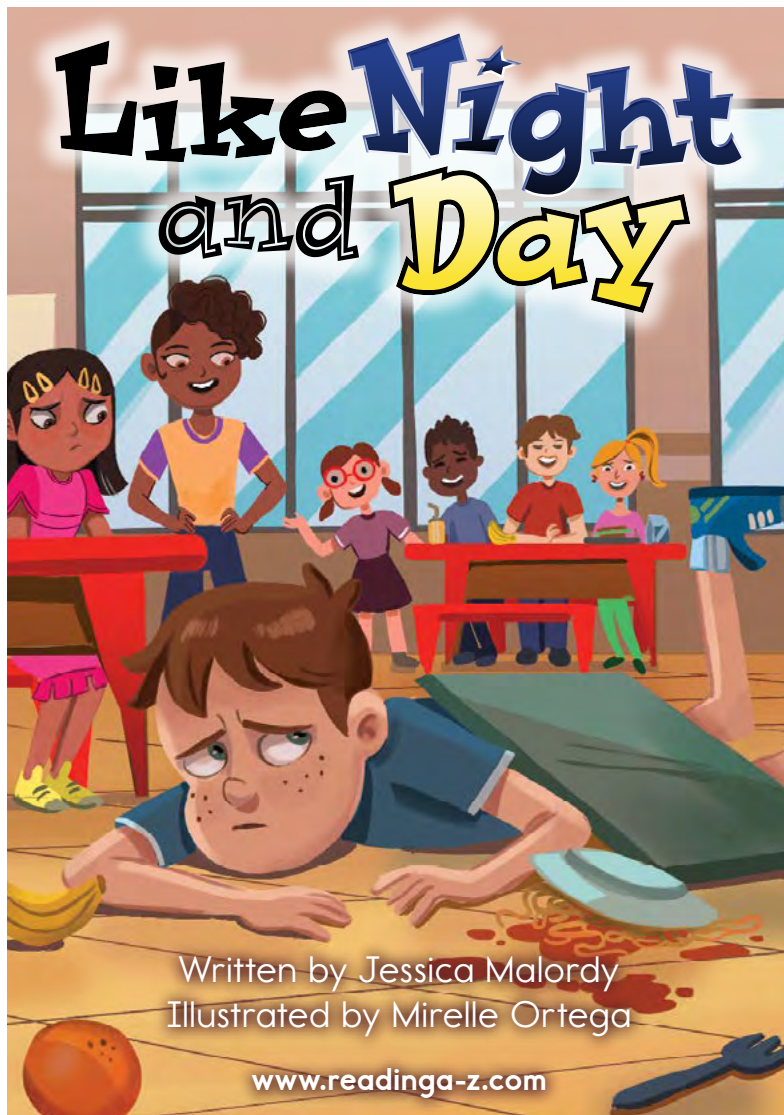
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Like Night and Day



Written by Jessica Malordy
Illustrated by Mirelle Ortega

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Focus Question

How do Rae's and Simon's differences and similarities help build their friendship?

Words to Know

anxious
audience
constellation
fascination
humiliation

nominate
overwhelming
persuaded
spectacularly

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Correlation

LEVEL T

Fountas & Pinnell	P
Reading Recovery	38
DRA	38



It was the end of July—the longest, hottest, most boring stretch of the summer. Simon had gone to the beach, watched the fireworks on the Fourth of July, and spent a week at space camp. Now, he had nothing to do.

“I’m so bored,” Simon moaned as he flopped dramatically onto the couch.

“Why don’t you go meet the new neighbors?” his mom suggested. “A family moved in while you were away at camp. They have a daughter your age.”

Simon sighed but put on his sneakers anyway. Meeting new people always made him a little **anxious**, and his mom knew that. All summer, she had been pushing him to make new friends. He knew she wouldn’t take no for an answer.

As soon as Simon knocked, the door swung open with a bang. “Hi!” exclaimed the bright-eyed girl in the doorway. “My name is Rae. You must be Simon! Your mom told me all about you. We’re both starting sixth grade this fall. It’s great to finally meet you!”





Rae wore sparkly earrings that jingled as she spoke. She was also covered from head to toe in vibrant paint and glitter, as though an art classroom had exploded all around her.

“Sorry, I would give you a hug, but I’ve been crafting! Do you want to see my new room? It’s taken me all week to decorate, but I think I’m almost there. I’m going for sort of an interstellar theme: planets and glow-in-the-dark stars and asteroids and spaceships—you know?”

Simon grinned. Ordinarily, he would have found Rae and her mile-a-minute chatter **overwhelming**, but if there was one thing he loved to talk about, it was outer space.

“Do you have a favorite **constellation**?” he asked as he followed Rae inside. “Mine is Orion!”



From that moment on, summer flew by. Simon and Rae became inseparable, spending hours together at the library, the pool, and each other’s houses. They could not have been less alike. Rae was bubbly and outgoing, while Simon was quiet and shy. What drew them together was their shared **fascination** with space.



The week before school started, they decided to stargaze in Simon's backyard. His mom helped them set up their telescope and chuckled as the two friends bickered about where to point it. Rae wanted to spot a meteor shower. Simon wanted to find Mercury, one of the trickiest planets to detect.

"You two really are as different as night and day," Simon's mom said.

"What does that mean?" Rae asked, hands on her hips.



Simon's mom pointed at the sky, which was shifting from light to dark. "It's an expression," she said. "Daytime and nighttime are opposites, just like the two of you."

"It *is* just like you, Rae, to want to see the flashiest thing in the sky ..." Simon began.

"While you, of course, are more interested in the mysterious planet Mercury!" Rae concluded, and they both laughed.



The following week, Simon and Rae started sixth grade. For Simon, middle school was overwhelming. The hallways were crowded, noisy, and full of strange faces.

Rae, on the other hand, was excited to start at a new school. Everyone seemed eager to get to know her. Within the first week, she **persuaded** the principal to let her form a space club, and she convinced Simon to become the first member.

As the weeks went by, Rae grew more and more popular, and Space Club meetings had to move to a larger classroom. Their lunch table got so crowded that Simon sometimes ate in the library, where it was quieter.

Simon understood why so many kids liked Rae. She was outgoing, hilarious, and confident. She attracted friends like moths to a flame, but as far as Simon was concerned, middle school was hard enough without always being in the limelight.



The last straw came when Rae decided to **nominate** Simon for president of Space Club. She made the announcement in front of everyone without asking Simon first.

“We’ll nominate a few candidates, they’ll make a speech, and then we’ll vote,” Rae explained excitedly. “I nominate Simon! I think he would be an amazing president.”

Simon felt his hands immediately begin to sweat. “I have to make a speech?” he whispered to Rae. The thought of speaking in front of everybody made his heart pound.

“That’s right!”

Simon could feel every eyeball in the room looking at him, and his face grew hot. “No,” he muttered. “I don’t want to do that.”





“Why not? It’s just a short speech.”

“I don’t care,” Simon responded, painfully aware of their **audience**. “I don’t want to make a speech. Just because you like to be the center of attention doesn’t mean everybody else does.”

Rae stared at him in confusion. “I thought you’d want to be president.”

“Well . . . I don’t!” Simon blurted out.

“Fine!” Rae exclaimed. “I’ll nominate someone who isn’t afraid of a little speech!”

“Fine!” Simon stormed out of the classroom. He heard gasps before the door slammed shut behind him.



The rest of the week went by in a miserable blur. Simon skipped the next Space Club meeting, but he heard that Rae was elected president. Whenever she passed him in the hallway, she glanced at him sadly, then looked the other way. He avoided her at lunch, too, eating alone in the library instead. Unfortunately, he still had to go to the cafeteria to buy food.

On Friday, he spotted Rae at their usual table, chatting merrily with her friends as though nothing were wrong. Crushed, Simon wondered if their friendship hadn’t been as important to her as it was to him. She had so many friends, after all. Simon missed Rae, but maybe they really were like night and day. Maybe they were just too different to be friends.

Distracted by his thoughts, Simon tripped over a stray backpack. His tray went flying as he sprawled across the cafeteria floor. A hot wave of **humiliation** rushed through his body as everybody in the cafeteria erupted in laughter. Everybody, that is, except Rae. For a brief moment, their eyes met, and then Simon looked away, blinking back tears.



As Simon got to his feet, he heard another crash. Rae had gotten up to throw away her trash and tripped **spectacularly** as well, arms and legs flailing as she tumbled. The laughter grew even louder, but she didn't seem embarrassed. She bounced right back up and took a dramatic, sweeping bow.



Everybody whistled and clapped as if she'd just finished an incredible performance. Then the excitement died down, and they returned to their lunches.

Rae came over to help Simon gather up his lunch, and they headed toward the library together.

"I'm sorry about our fight, Simon," Rae said. "I really thought you'd want to be president. I thought I was being a good friend."

"I'm sorry, too," Simon said. "You *are* a good friend." He smiled. "Thanks for taking the attention off me back there."

"Anytime," Rae replied, waggling her eyebrows. "I don't always understand you, but I've always got your back." She threw her arm around his shoulders. "Can we be friends again? I've missed you."

"Sure," Simon said, grinning. "I've missed you, too."

As they settled down at a table in the library, Simon said, "By the way, congratulations on being elected! You'll be a great president."

"Thanks!" Rae replied. "You know, I could really use a great vice president . . ."



Glossary

anxious (<i>adj.</i>)	worried or nervous (p. 4)
audience (<i>n.</i>)	a group of people gathered to see and hear a performance or presentation (p. 11)
constellation (<i>n.</i>)	a group of stars that form a shape and are named (p. 6)
fascination (<i>n.</i>)	serious interest (p. 6)
humiliation (<i>n.</i>)	the act of making someone feel completely embarrassed, uneasy, or self-conscious; the state of being completely embarrassed, uneasy, or self-conscious (p. 13)
nominate (<i>v.</i>)	to name someone as a candidate for a job, award, or position (p. 10)
overwhelming (<i>adj.</i>)	causing someone to be overcome with feelings or thoughts (p. 6)
persuaded (<i>v.</i>)	to convince someone to believe or do something (p. 9)
spectacularly (<i>adv.</i>)	in an impressive or showy manner (p. 13)



I Didn't Do It!

So here I am, alone in my room, grounded for more days than I can count because of Darren. It doesn't matter what I say, though—Mom is never going to believe me. Here's what really happened.

It was hot today, so Darren said we should play in the sprinkler. It's not my fault the yard is dirt right now. It's also not my fault that water and dirt make mud.

I don't care what nosy Mrs. Jenkins next door says she saw. Darren was the first one to see how far he could throw the mud wads. I told him not to throw them toward the house, but he didn't listen. If I threw any mud at the house, it was by accident.

Mrs. Jenkins also said she saw me bringing the sprinkler into the house. It was Darren who said we shouldn't be outside without sunscreen, just like Mom always tells me. He dragged the sprinkler into the kitchen, even though I told him not to. We didn't get sunburned, but Mom didn't think that was a good enough reason.

Mom says I need to be responsible for my own actions and stop blaming Darren. It's not my fault she and nosy Mrs. Jenkins can't see him. Imaginary friends can be such a pain.



Discussion Cards

Moral of the Story / Lessons Learned Through Text

Overall Discussion Question: What is the author of each text trying to help readers understand? How might this relate to you or your experiences each day?

Like Night and Day (Grade 3)

How do you make new friends?

What makes a good friend?

Because of their common interest in space, Rae and Simon became friends, and they started a space club in school. Have you experienced an interest of yours leading to something new?

I Didn't Do It (Grade 3)

Why is it important to be responsible for your own actions?

Is it easier to blame others or admit your mistakes? Why? Is the answer different in some situations compared to others?



The Growth Mindset



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One teacher praises a student by saying “You’re so smart!” Another teacher says, “You must have worked really hard at this!” Which student does better in school? Studies show that students who hear the words of the second teacher will do better. Those students are learning that their effort is important.

Psychologists looked at what grade school students did after they were given different types of verbal praise. Some students were told that they were good at a task. They didn’t try very hard the next time. Other students were told that they had worked hard at a task. They worked even harder the next time. The first group of students was learning that they had a set amount of skill. They didn’t think they could do any better. This is called a *fixed mindset*. The second group was learning that they could do better if they kept trying. This is called a *growth mindset*. People who have a growth mindset believe that the brain can grow; people can do better and learn new skills. If they work hard, they can be successful.



A mindset is a person’s set of feelings or beliefs about something.

A Mindset Pioneer

Carol Dweck is a psychologist and the first person to use the term *growth mindset*. She has been studying young students for more than forty years. She believes that when teachers and parents praise a student’s learning strategies, it becomes a pathway to success.

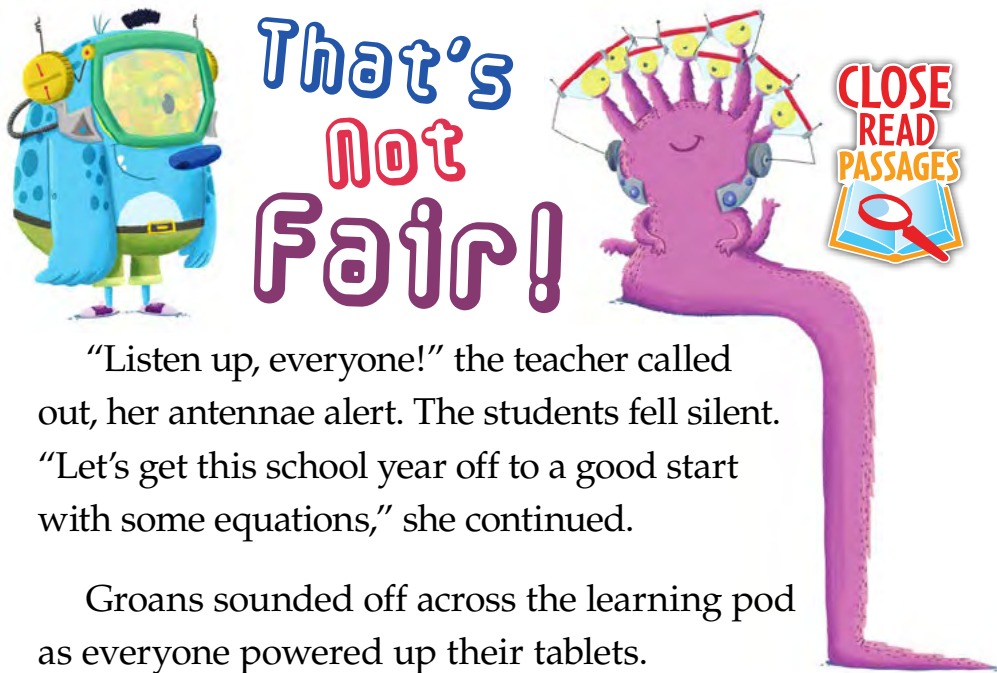


How can teachers and parents help students succeed? They can focus primarily on effort and not simply on ability. When students succeed, teachers and parents should praise the actual work put forth rather than intelligence or talent. When students fail, they should be told how they can do better. Teachers, parents, and students need to value effort, not intelligence.

Beliefs of Fixed and Growth Mindsets

	Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
SKILLS	Things you are born with that cannot change	Things you can grow and improve with hard work
EFFORT	Something to avoid—could show lack of skill	Something important—leads to success
CHALLENGES	Things to avoid—in case you aren’t good enough	Things that help you learn
FEEDBACK	Something negative	Something to learn from
SETBACKS	Discouraging things that happen out of your control	Helpful things you can learn from

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"Listen up, everyone!" the teacher called out, her antennae alert. The students fell silent. "Let's get this school year off to a good start with some equations," she continued.

Groans sounded off across the learning pod as everyone powered up their tablets.

Octavia's eyes swirled at the tops of their stems like slippery marbles. Eight dizzy eyeballs moved in all directions. She removed a flashy octa-goggle from her backpack and pulled it over her head, snapping her eyes into place. They began to flick from left to right all at once as she studied the numbers on the screen. Suddenly, Octavia's eyes were working together.

Atlas sat at his desk staring into space—literally. His mouth hung open, his large eye clouded over with faint images of stars in distant galaxies. "Stop galagazing, Atlas," the teacher said without turning from her lesson. Atlas smiled, blushing as he pulled a glittering eye shade down from his headband. In the blink of an eye, Atlas was brought back to the planet.

Hawk hovered in the back of the room. He scribbled out the numbers from the screen, shooting glances at his classmates between equations. *What sorts of gadgets do I ever get?* he thought. He just had a boring tablet like the rest of them. Fed up, he raised his hand.

"Excuse me! I have a question, or I guess it's more of a complaint," Hawk said. The teacher turned and nodded for him to continue.

"It's not fair that some of us get special treatment in class," he said. "They get cool tech and all that, and the rest of us don't."

The teacher stopped for a moment. "We allow students the special things they need to help them learn just as easily as everyone else," she replied. "That seems fair to me, wouldn't you say?"



Discussion Cards

Moral of the Story / Lessons Learned Through Text

Overall Discussion Question: What is the author of each text trying to help readers understand? How might this relate to you or your experiences each day?

The Growth Mindset (Grade 4)

Do you believe you have a growth mindset? If yes, how can you continue? If no, what can you change?

Why is a growth mindset so important?

That's Not Fair! (Grade 4)

What did the characters learn about fairness?

Think about the last time you, or someone you know, said “that’s not fair!” Did it feel unfair because it was not equal, or not the same?

Do you agree that fairness is about each person getting what they need as compared to getting the same thing? Is it the same answer in all situations? Why?

Shorty and String Bean



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Shorty

Javier is my real name,
but call me Shorty—it's the same.

Don't let that fool you. I'm not tame,
and listen up—I've got mad game.

I may be only five feet tall,
but I can still play basketball.

I was born to play the point,
to shake and bake this hardwood joint.
Don't think that I won't be seen
just because I'm small and lean.



I lead the team with my
assists and rebound
with mad, crazy twists.

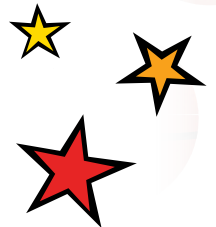
Now no one even cares I'm
short because I'm so good
on the court.

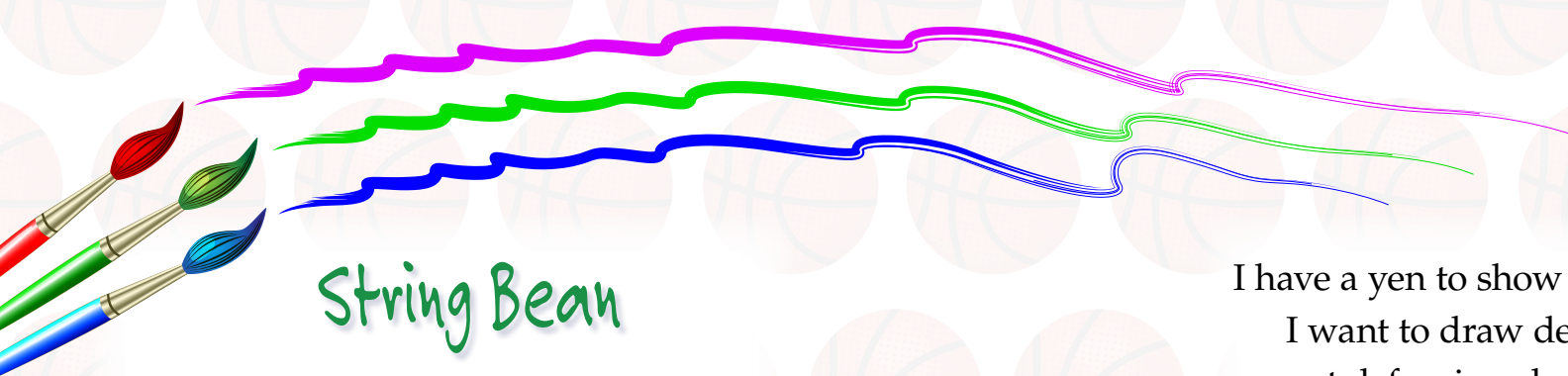
Watch me fly high off the ground
to grab another long rebound.
I am not big, I am not tall,
but I can still play basketball.

I dish and swish around the hoop.
I jump and leap and alley-oop.
You haven't seen a thing at all,
'til Shorty plays some basketball.

I'm never, ever in a funk.
I'm just like Jordan—BAM! Slam-dunk!
If Muggsy did it, so can I.
My hardwood wings will make me fly.

I may be only five feet tall,
but I can still play basketball.





String Bean

Back in the day when I was a shorty,
I'd draw on the sidewalk
with colored chalk.

My brother would pass on his way
to the court— jumping high
where pigeons fly and
slam-dunking the orange prize.

Now I'm older, my reflection
bolder, with shoulders
where tree limbs aspire to be.
I woke up one day
and was six foot three.
Did that really
happen to me?

Give me a canvas and some paint.
Give me a brush, give me a pen.



I have a yen to show you my world.

I want to draw defensive moats—
not defensive plays.

I want to pick paints and palettes—
not pick and roll.

I want solitude and time to think—
not stadiums of masses
and only twenty-four seconds
to make passes.

I have a yen to show you my world,
and not some fantasy
about the one-in-a-million who
get to play for the NBA.





He Said, She Said

Jackson was walking home from school one afternoon when he tripped over his untied shoelaces. He set down his backpack and knelt down on the sidewalk to tie them.

Eva and Elijah were riding their bikes down the other side of the street. Suddenly, Elijah skidded to a stop and pointed.

“Whoa! Did you see that?” he asked. “Jackson just totally wiped out over there!”

“Oh no! Is he okay?” asked Eva.

“It looks like he skinned his knee.”

A few minutes later, they were still talking about what Elijah had seen when Eva’s friend Elena caught up with them. “What are you guys talking about?” she asked.

“Jackson just fell and wrecked his knee,” said Eva.

“Was he bleeding?” asked Elena.

Elena told her brother Felix about Jackson, and the story began to spread to all their classmates. Within an hour, Kevin heard the whole story from Alex: “Jackson fell in the street on his way home from school. There was blood everywhere, and he had to go to the emergency room.”

“Oh, man, that sounds awful! Did he break anything?” asked Kevin.

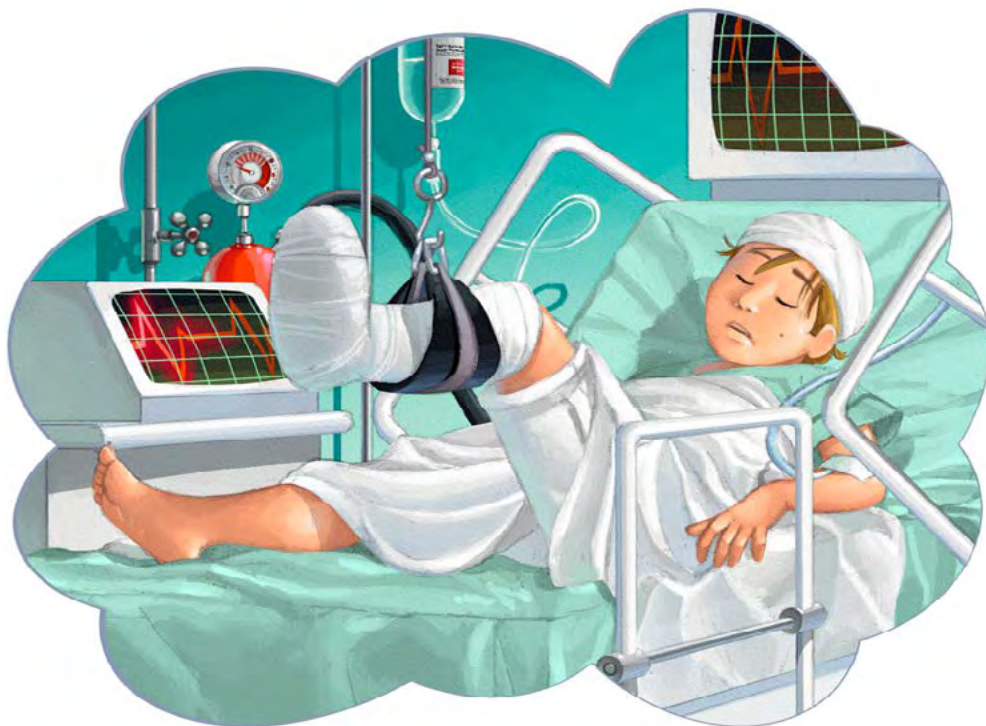


Later, Mandi told Sophia what she had heard. “Jackson got hit by a car! His backpack went flying, he broke his leg, and he had to be rushed to the hospital in an ambulance,” she said.

Sophia gasped. “I hope he doesn’t have to stay in the hospital too long,” she said.

That night, Oliver got more details about Jackson’s injuries from Sydney. “Jackson won’t be at school for at least three weeks because he cracked six ribs and broke his left leg. He has a huge gash on his forehead, too, and he doesn’t even remember anything about the accident!”

Oliver was stunned. Jackson was his best friend—what if Jackson didn’t recover?



The next morning, everybody at school was discussing the incident.

“Lucky Jackson,” Benjamin said. “He gets to miss so much school!”

“The poor guy can’t even move, and you think he’s lucky?” scolded Katherine.

Miguel shook his head sadly. “He was so good at soccer—what if he can never play again?”

“Maybe we should send him a card or go visit him in the hospital,” suggested Maya.

“Will he even remember us?” asked Joey.

“I can’t believe he lost his memory!” Jade cried.

Just then, Jackson came around the corner and walked over to Joey and Jade. “Hey guys, what’s going on?” he asked.

Everyone stopped talking and stared.



Discussion Cards

Moral of the Story / Lessons Learned Through Text

Overall Discussion Question: What is the author of each text trying to help readers understand? How might this relate to you or your experiences each day?

Shorty and String Bean (Grade 5)

How do you feel about this passage?
Can you relate to either narrator? Why or why not?

Should people decide what they like based on their physical attributes?

What ways are there to learn more about someone, other than by looking at them? Why is this important?

He Said, She Said (Grade 5)

How did Jackson's skinned knee turn into him losing his memory? Could this have been avoided? How?

Have you ever experienced a situation similar to this? How did it turn out?

Why is it important to check you have the right information before you tell a story to someone else? How can you find the right information?



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