

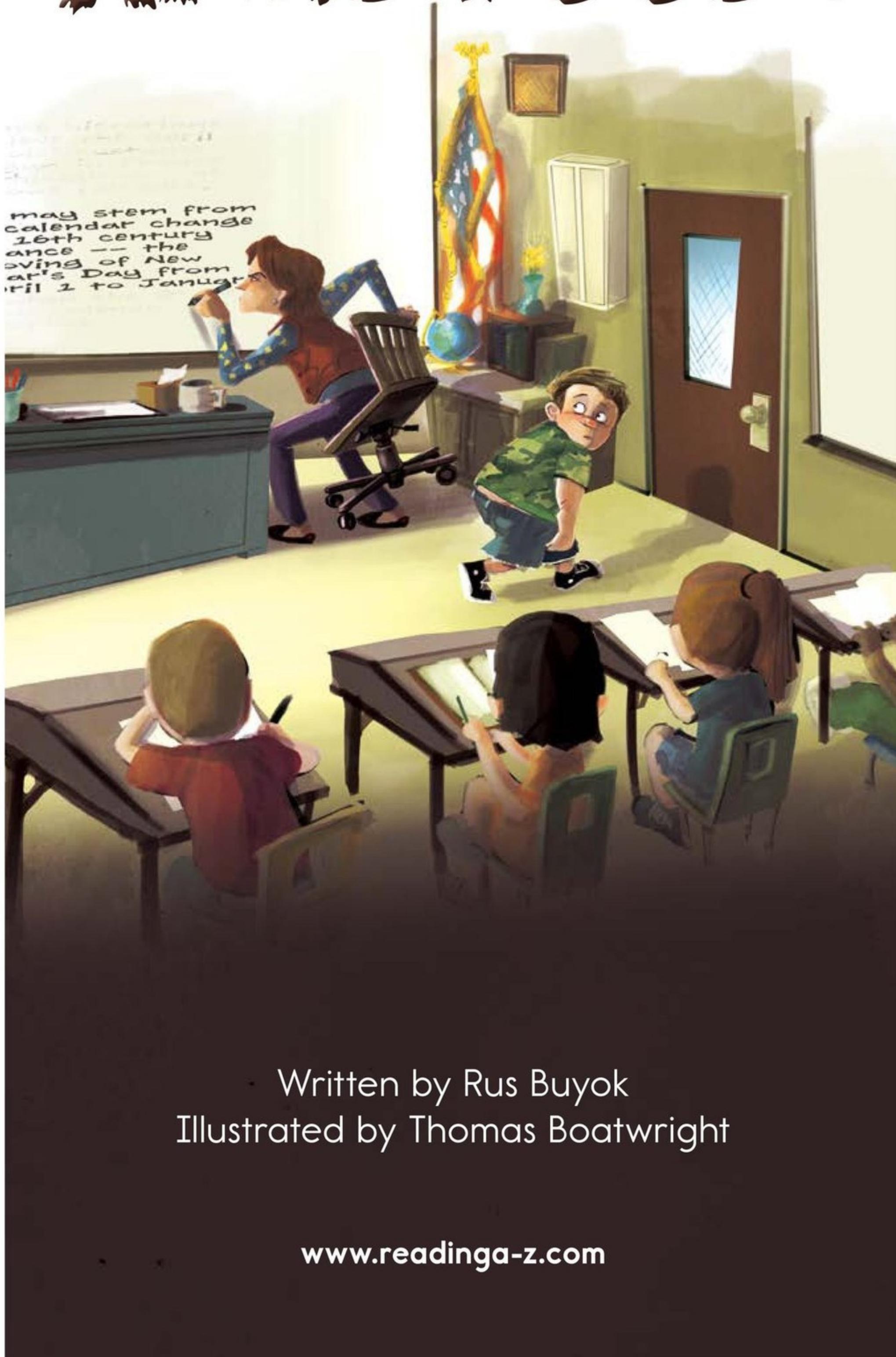
LEVELED Book • R

# APRIL FOOL'S



Written by Rus Buyok  
Illustrated by Thomas Boatwright

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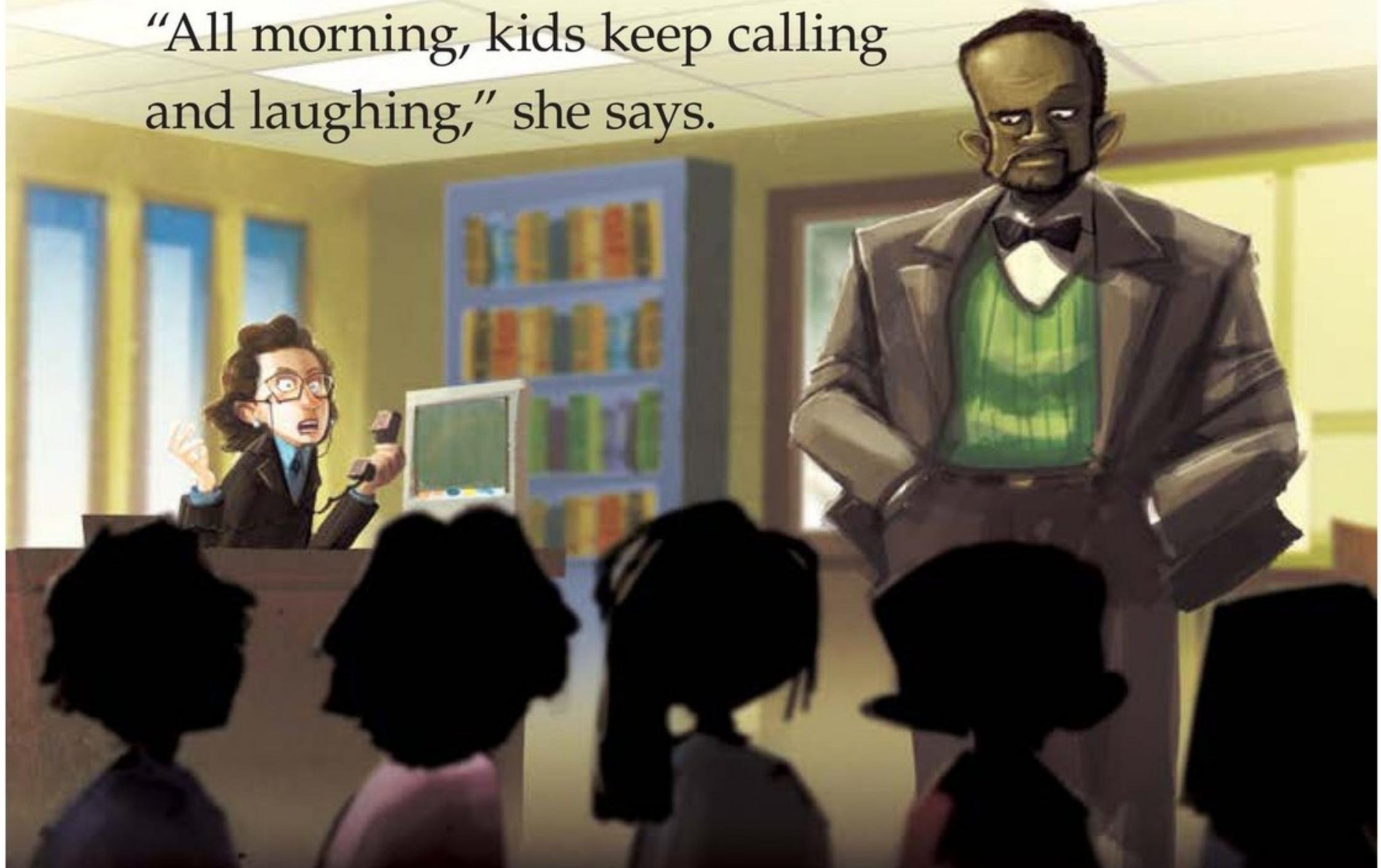
As I walk into Principal Taylor's office, I wonder who glued Mrs. Shoemaker to her chair. It would have been a hilarious April Fool's **prank** if the old, faded glue bottle hadn't been hidden in my desk.

My best friend, Sarah, sits on a bench in the office with other students, crying like a baby. "I didn't write those things," she moans, tears streaming down her face. "I was practicing my tuba all morning!"

She explains how someone wrote nasty messages about Mr. Kendall on the board in her handwriting. Each of the other students is in trouble for some prank they claim they didn't commit.

Someone covered the gym floor with vegetable oil and blocked the toilets in the bathrooms with handfuls of dead leaves. Someone also stuck old **bologna** under the cafeteria tables, so the whole place stinks like a garbage dump.

The phone rings, and Ms. Nathan, the secretary, answers it and swiftly hangs up. “All morning, kids keep calling and laughing,” she says.



After a while, Principal Taylor comes out of his office. “You’ve all been very busy,” he begins.

Sarah starts denying everything, and the rest of us follow suit.

Principal Taylor waves his hands to silence us, but as he's about to speak, the phone rings. Ms. Nathan answers it with an abrupt "Hello!" She points to Sarah and says, "It's for you."

Sarah takes the phone and says, "Hello? I can barely hear you. Jake, is that you?"

When my little brother's name is mentioned, I go to the phone, and Sarah cradles it between us so I can listen.

"Basement ... find ... are ... tee ..." It's a young boy's voice, but I can't tell if it's Jake's. "Basement ... find ... the ... are ... tee," he repeats before the phone suddenly floods with laughing children and then goes dead.





"I've spoken with your teachers, and they have some pretty compelling **evidence**," Mr. Taylor continues. "As **punishment**, you will stay after school until all these pranks are cleaned up."

We all groan, and a few of us offer more **protests** of our **innocence**.

"I'll call all your parents to inform them you'll be remaining late on school grounds today and why. Now, return to class."

As Sarah and I shuffle down the hallway, she groans, "I'm in so much trouble."

"What was with that phone call?" I ask.  
"We've heard that creepy laughter before."

"I was trying not to think about it," Sarah whispers.

"It seems to follow us. The voice said we need to look around the basement."

"No way I'm going down there!" Sarah hisses.

"The principal thinks we're in class, and our teachers think we're in the office, so now's the perfect time."



Sarah whimpers, but she follows me as we sneak to the basement doors.

"We have to be quiet in case the janitors are down there," I say. Surprisingly, the doors are open.

Sarah and I squeeze inside, listening to the water rush through the old pipes around us and fluorescent lights buzz overhead.



We quickly descend the stairs. The basement is huge, with many walls hidden in darkness. Sarah points to the other side of the room, and we split up to start looking around.

I walk slowly past shelves filled with old textbooks and sporting equipment but find nothing. Looking over, I see Sarah stop, eyes widening as she covers her mouth to stifle a scream.

I sprint to the opposite side of the basement. Sarah points in front of her and whispers, “I saw someone over there.”

“A janitor?” I ask.

She shakes her head, and that’s when I hear the footsteps, as if someone is rushing past us.

Sarah grabs my arm, and we take a few steps forward, then a few more. Something moves in the shadows in front of us, and I move to follow it.

My foot hits something soft, and I reach down and feel lumps under thick cloth. I think I hear laughter, but it could just be the furnaces or something. Grabbing onto the cloth, I pull a large bag into the light.

Somewhere behind us, a little girl laughs, and then another off to our right.

“Hey, is someone down there? No kids allowed in the basement,” a janitor’s voice calls.



I grab the bag. The janitor walks the room, shining a flashlight back and forth. When he shines his light away from us, Sarah and I sneak quickly and quietly behind the shelves and up the stairs.

“That was close,” I say when we reach the safety of the hallway. I drop the duffel bag and unzip it.

“This is Rob Turtle’s duffel bag; his initials RT are on the straps,” I say. Inside are old cans that say “cooking oil” on the side and a paper wrapper glued to the side of the bag that smells really awful. A rough burlap sack holds dirt, leaves, and sticks, and half buried, I find an ancient-looking pair of scissors.





"I think I've seen those scissors before," Sarah says, staring at them.

I hand the scissors to Sarah. "This doesn't tell us who the laughing kids are, but it looks as if Rob Turtle framed us all."

"He said he lost his gym bag the other day," Sarah replies, "in the Hollow."

"He also said that this would be the best April Fool's Day ever," I say.

"What do we do now? If we give the bag to Principal Taylor, he'll think we're trying to make Rob look bad," Sarah says.

"Let's leave it in the cafeteria," I suggest. "Someone will turn it in to the lost and found."

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It may stem from  
a calendar change  
in 16th century  
France -- the  
moving of New  
Year's Day from  
April 1 to January 1.



We leave the bag in the stinky cafeteria and return to class. After lunch, Rob Turtle is called to the office, and as the day progresses, more students are found with evidence of pranks.

Someone put dirt in the coffee in the teacher's lounge and made all the lights flicker in the east wing.

At the end of the day, Principal Taylor has corralled a surprising number of students into clean-up duty. Rob, Sarah, and I are assigned to the cafeteria.

"How did you arrange all these pranks?" I ask Rob. "You must have been in school all night."

"I didn't, and I don't know where the stuff came from. I accidentally left my bag in the Hollow a few days ago," he replies. "I had some pretty amazing pranks planned, though."

Sarah and I share a look—neither of us believe him, but it's also true that he couldn't have done this alone.





When we finish, we wait for our parents.  
In the office, we hear Ms. Nathan answer the phone.

“Those laughing kids again!” she yells. “I’ll be so happy when this day is over.”

## Glossary

<b>bologna</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a type of large sausage that is often sliced and used in sandwiches (p. 4)
<b>corralled</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	gathered and put into an enclosed space (p. 14)
<b>evidence</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	something that supports a theory or claim (p. 6)
<b>fluorescent</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having the ability to give off light when electricity passes through a gas (p. 8)
<b>innocence</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the state of not having done something wrong; purity (p. 6)
<b>prank</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a trick or practical joke (p. 3)
<b>protests</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	actions to express strong disagreement or disapproval (p. 6)
<b>punishment</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a negative consequence for breaking a law or doing something wrong (p. 6)
<b>stifle</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to stop oneself or another from doing something (p. 8)

The editor would like to thank Nathan M.  
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Level R Leveled Book  
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