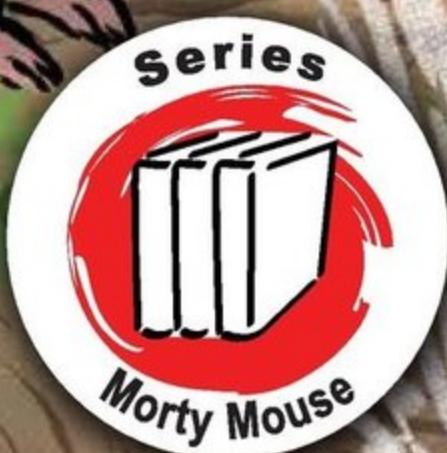
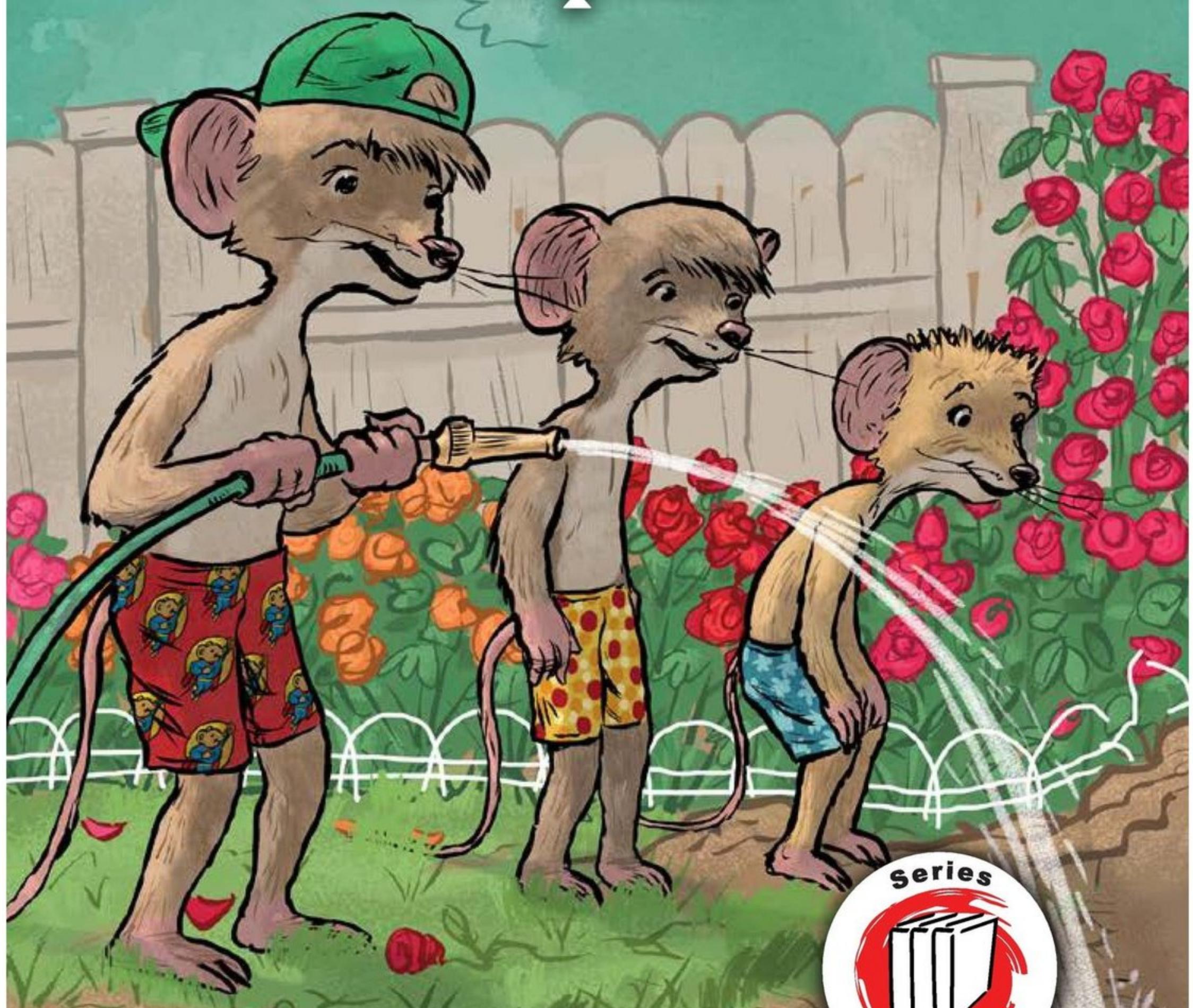


LEVELED BOOK • Q

# Morty's Swim Surprise



Written by Kathy Hoggan  
Illustrated by David Opie

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

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## Focus Question

What is the effect of Morty wishing he could join the country club like the other mice?

## Words to Know

antic  
dismay  
envisioned  
exhaustion  
mature

misshapen  
oozing  
reluctantly  
secrecy

Morty's Swim Surprise  
Level Q Leveled Book  
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### Correlation

LEVEL Q	
Fountas & Pinnell	N
Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30



Morty stared out his window as mice in flip-flops scampered to the country club pool in the bright morning sun. When Ben and Fred scurried past, Morty felt more down than ever.

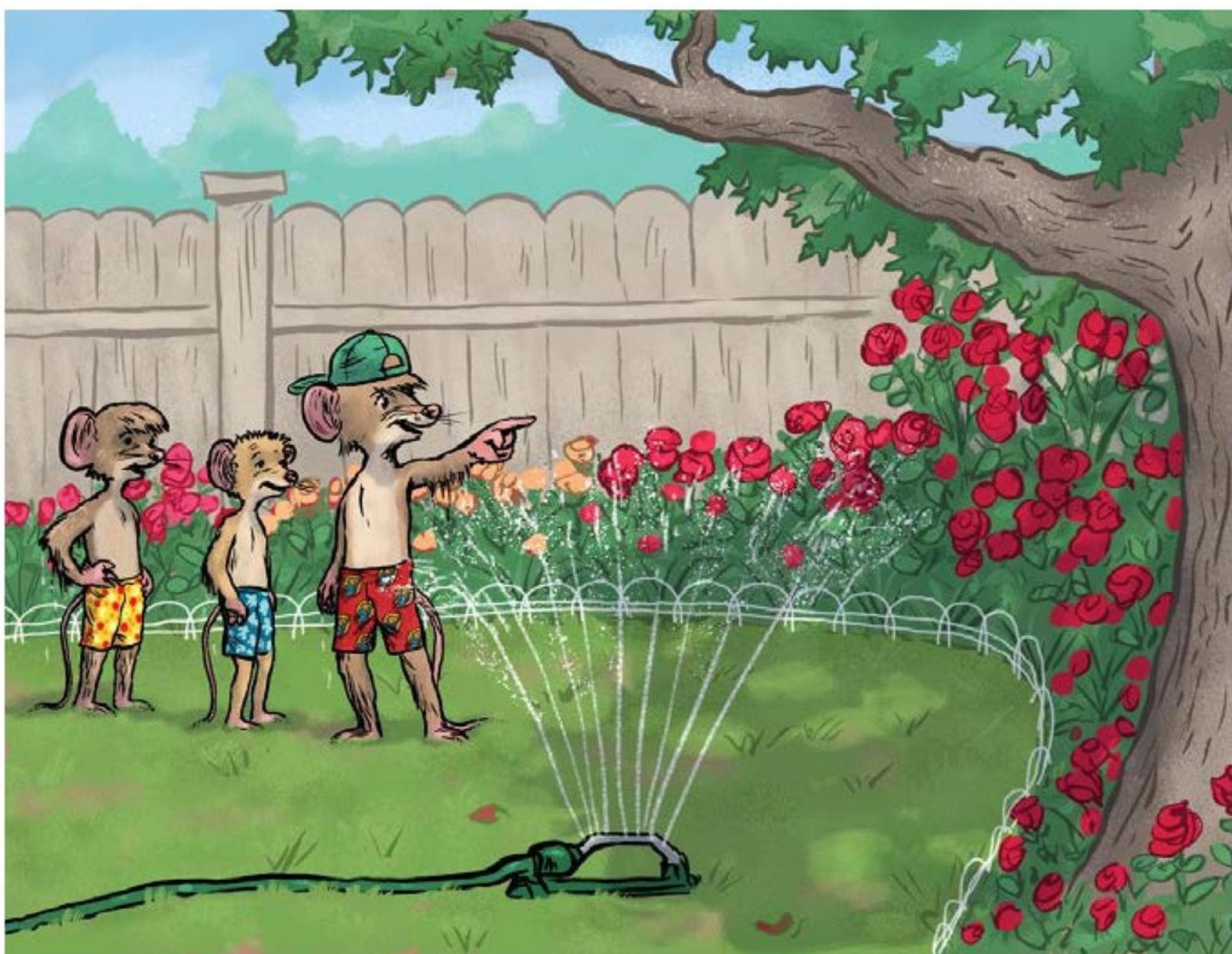
The night before, Father had announced that they wouldn't be joining the country club that summer in order to save money. He said that they could stay cool by scampering in the sprinkler instead.

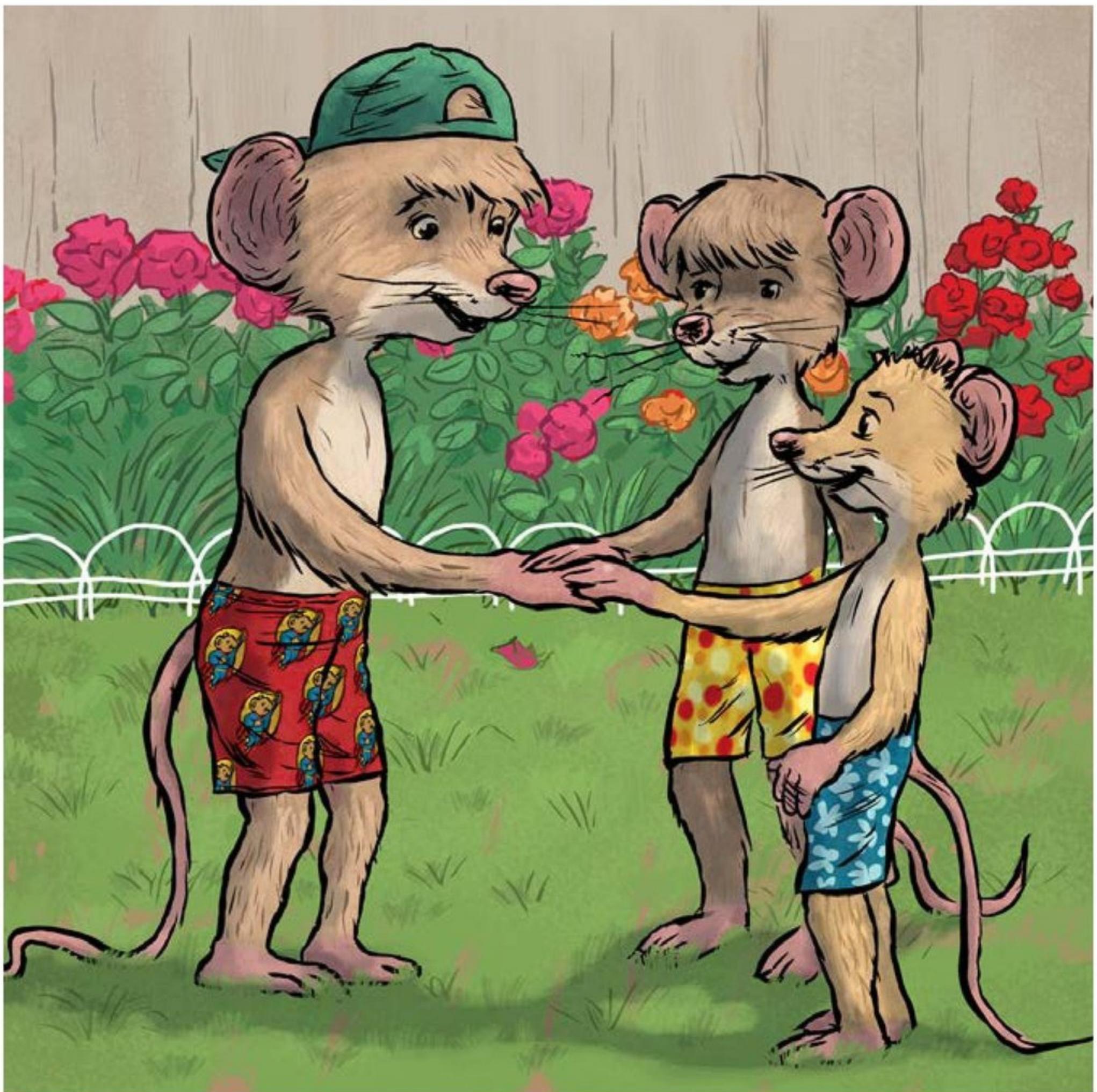
*The cool mice all go to the pool,* Morty thought. He reluctantly scuttled outside to join his younger brothers, Mack and Arnie, in the backyard.

After five boring minutes of standing in the sprinkler, Morty had a brilliant idea. "Let's dig our own pool!" he suggested. "We can even make a slide and a diving board. It will be way cooler than the pool at the country club."

Mack and Arnie were excited about the idea. "How about a swing, too?" Arnie squeaked.

"Sure!" Morty replied. "That tree in Mom's flower garden is perfect for a rope swing that would fling us right into the water."





"Will Mom be mad about her flower bushes?" Mack asked.

"Not when she sees how great our new pool is," Morty assured them. "Let's take an oath of **secrecy**. No one tells Mom or Dad until the pool is finished." The brothers put their paws together and nodded in agreement. They scurried to the garage for shovels and began digging.



The soil began to pile up as Morty and his brothers dug and dug. The hole was **misshapen**, not perfectly square as Morty had imagined. It wasn't level, either, because he was digging faster than Mack and much faster than Arnie. Worst of all, after hours of work, the hole wasn't even knee deep.

"Can I quit?" Arnie whined. "I'm tired."

"This is a lot harder than I thought," Morty admitted.

"Now I know why bulldozers were invented," Mack groaned.

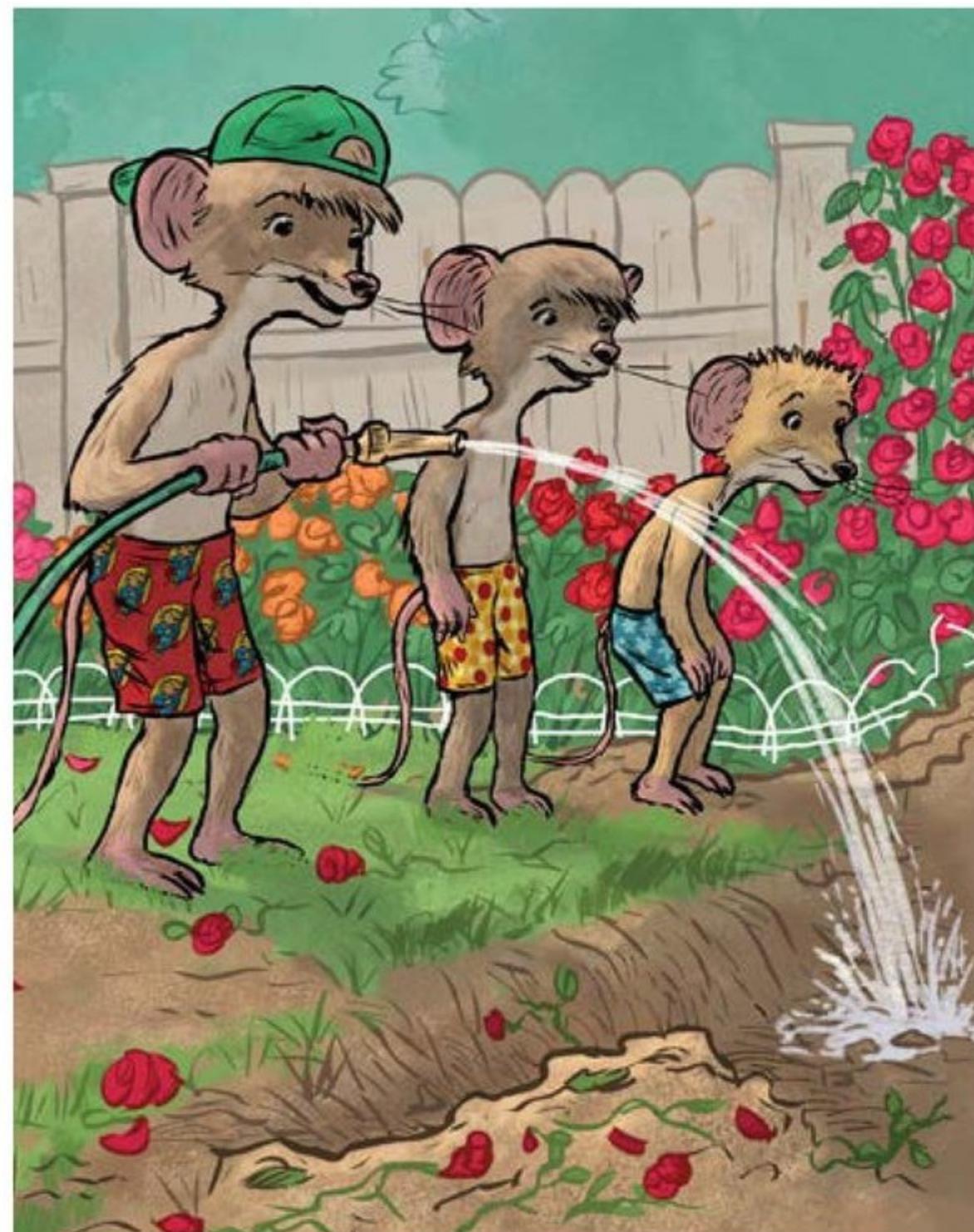
Morty dropped his shovel in **exhaustion**. “Let’s just fill the pool now,” he said. “It won’t be deep, but it’s getting harder to dig through this packed soil.”

“Yeah, we can have a wading pool,” Mack agreed.

“But it’s too shallow for a diving board, a swing, or a slide—we’ll bruise our tails!” Arnie chimed in.

“That’s okay,” Morty said as he turned on the hose. “Even a wading pool is better than the sprinkler!”

It was late, and the boys headed inside for dinner. After their bellies were full, they promptly fell asleep, weary from an afternoon of digging.



Morty awoke with a groan and stretched his aching muscles. As he headed downstairs, he overheard his parents talking in the kitchen.

"It's such a beautiful day," Father said.  
"Let's have coffee in the garden."

Morty felt his stomach flip with excitement. He raced back upstairs to Mack and Arnie's room and shook them awake. "Mom and Dad are going into the backyard. They're going to see the pool!" he whispered.



Morty, Mack, and Arnie rushed downstairs and scampered to the back door, eager to see the pool for themselves.

As Morty stepped into the yard, his toes sank into mud, and his heart sank just as quickly. Arnie followed, and as soon as his feet were out the door, he slipped and fell to the ground with a splat.





"Our pool wasn't this big, was it?" Mack asked in confusion.

"I must have left the hose running all night by mistake," Morty admitted. They sloshed through the mud toward the big **oozing** hole where their parents stood, staring at the yard in **dismay**.

The clear, sparkling pool Morty had **envisioned** was a mud pit strewn with Mother's dead shrubs.



"Turn off the hose and go inside," Morty whispered to Mack and Arnie. "I'll deal with Mom and Dad."

Mack and Arnie turned, their tails dragging through the muck as they headed toward the house.

"Ahem." Morty cleared his throat, and his parents spun around to look at him, their faces full of shock. "I see you found my latest project," he said, suddenly feeling foolish.

"Morty . . ." Father started. "How did this happen?"

Morty ran through excuses in his head, but he knew he needed to tell the truth.

"I wanted to make a swimming pool," he began. "Arnie and Mack helped me dig, but it was my idea." His parents looked at him silently. "I told them not to tell you. I thought you wouldn't mind once you saw how well it turned out."





"We could've told you that there's more to building a pool than digging a hole," Father said, shaking his head.

"You must have known that we would not have given you permission to destroy the garden," Mother added. "All my hard work is ruined," she said, picking up a wilted rosebush.

After what felt like ages, Father said, "Morty, after this **antic**, you'd better rethink your summer plans. It isn't easy to level the ground and seed grass. You'll also have to work hard to water the lawn and keep everyone off of it until it grows in. It will take years for new shrubs to **mature** and flower the way your mother's did."



"Years?" Morty said with a gulp.

"Yes," Father replied. "It takes time, money, and hard work to nurture plants."

Morty looked at his mother and saw how upset she was about her garden. He remembered seeing her outside each morning, whistling while she tended to her plants.

"Mom, I'm really sorry about your garden," Morty said, hanging his head. "I didn't think, and I destroyed everything. I promise I'll work hard and make it look even better than it did before."

Mother continued to scan the ruined yard. "We'll see, Morty," she sighed. "It's going to be a big job."

“I’m up to the task,” Morty said, and he meant it. He hadn’t predicted that his pool plans could go so horribly wrong. He’d imagined he would make the summer better for everyone, including his parents. Instead, he’d made everything worse.

“Well, all gardeners have to start somewhere,” Mother said as she handed him a shovel.

Morty stared at the muddy swamp in front of him and wished he had thought things through before he acted. He took a deep breath and began to clean up his mess.



## Glossary

<b>antic</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	playful, silly, outrageous, or foolish behavior (p. 13)
<b>dismay</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a feeling of disappointment, worry, despair, or sadness (p. 10)
<b>envisioned</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	pictured or imagined something as a possibility (p. 10)
<b>exhaustion</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	extreme tiredness (p. 7)
<b>mature</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to become grown or fully developed (p. 13)
<b>misshapen</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having an unnatural or deformed shape (p. 6)
<b>oozing</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having a thick fluid slowly flowing out (p. 10)
<b>reluctantly</b> ( <i>adv.</i> )	unwillingly or hesitantly (p. 3)
<b>secrecy</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the act of keeping something hidden or secret; the condition of being kept hidden or secret (p. 5)

# Morty's Swim Surprise

A Reading A-Z Level Q Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,041

## Connections

### Writing

Write an apology letter from Morty to his parents explaining why he tried to make a swimming pool in the backyard and what he will do to fix the situation.

### Math

Draw a diagram of your dream pool. Then label the pool's depth and perimeter or circumference with realistic dimensions.



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