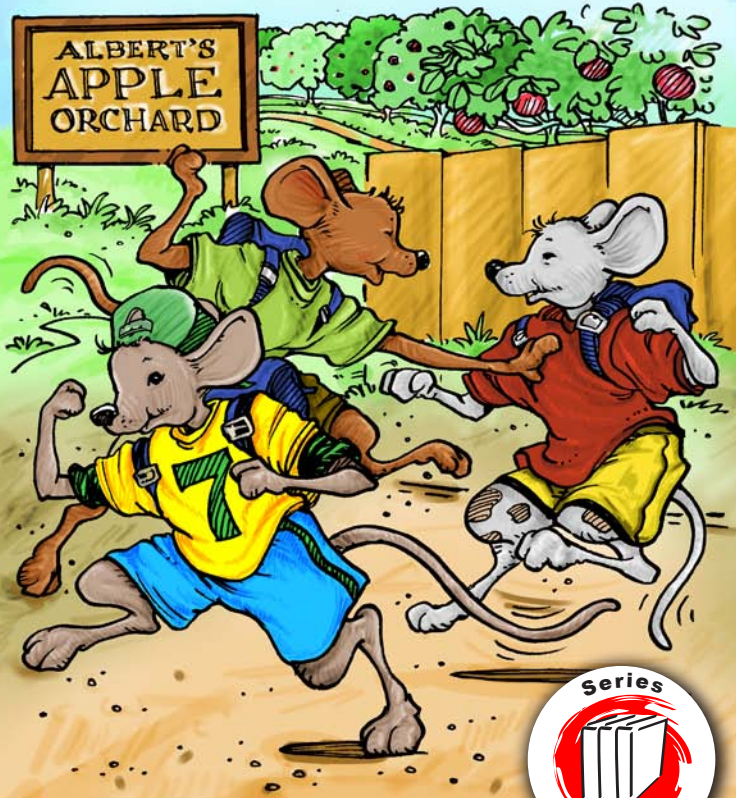


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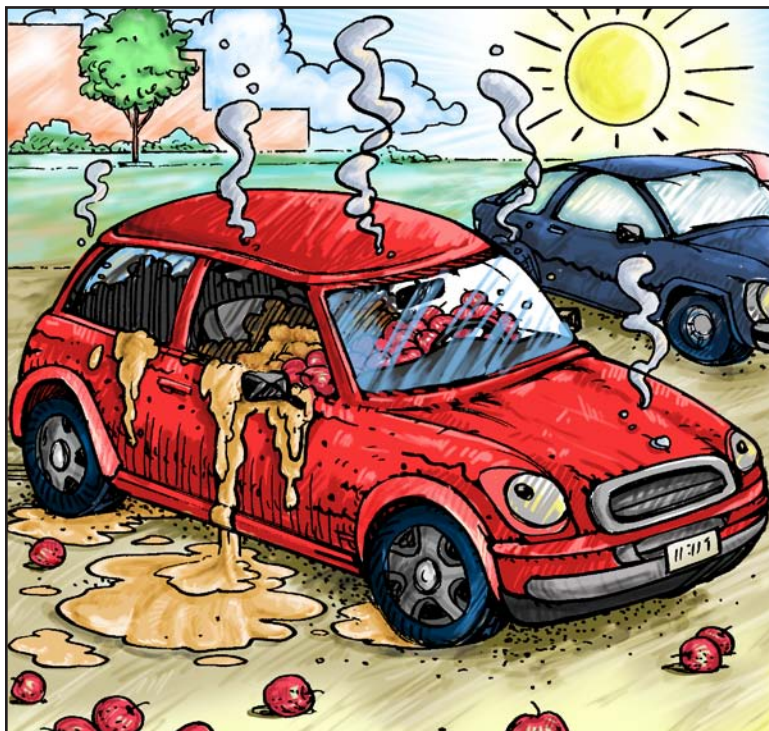
Morty and the Teacher's Apples



Written by Kathy Hoggan
Illustrated by Joel Snyder



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Morty is a very mischievous mouse who always does very mischievous things.

Morty was scampering to school with Ben and Fred, his best buddies. Backpacks bouncing, they chased around trying to jump on each other's swinging tails. They slowly made progress toward the playground.



“Hey!” Morty stopped short and was staring at Albert’s Apple Orchard. Apple harvest was almost over and the smell of apples, sight of fresh dew on the grass, and fallen apples gave Morty a very mischievous idea.

“Remember when Mr. Albert yelled at us for picking his apples?”

Ben and Fred remembered that day well, and how Mr. Albert’s whiskers twitched with anger as he screamed at them.

“He said, ‘You can have any that fall to the ground, but picking my apples is stealing!’” Morty continued.

“I know just what to do with those rotten apples . . . we’ll make applesauce for Miss Snickerwiser.”



Soon Ben, Fred, and Morty were scrambling around the orchard, picking up overripe and worm-eaten apples—lots and lots of apples. They filled their backpacks until they were nearly too heavy to carry.

“C’mon, let’s hurry!” Morty called over his shoulder as he led the way to the teacher parking lot.





Just as he knew she would, Miss Snickerwiser had left the door unlocked on her slick, red, two-seater Mouse Mini.

Discreetly, the three third-grade mice—Morty, Ben, and Fred—began filling the car with apples.

“We’re going to need lots more apples,” Ben said as he pulled the last mushy apple from his backpack.

“Right,” Morty agreed. “Let’s get more before the bell rings.”

“We’ve got to hurry!” Fred exclaimed. “I already have a tardy for this week.”

Racing back to the orchard, they loaded their backpacks again.

At the car, they closed the Mouse Mini's door and cracked a window, shoving apples through the opening.

By the time they settled into their desks, the car was full with fragrant, decaying apples. The sun was getting high in the sky, warming up the car and cooking the apples.



“Miss Snickerwiser knows so much stuff that she may just be the smartest mouse in the world,” Morty once told his mother. He loved Miss Snickerwiser’s big smile and how she laughed easily at his silly tricks. Sometimes she gave cheesy chews for correct answers, and she always explained things well.

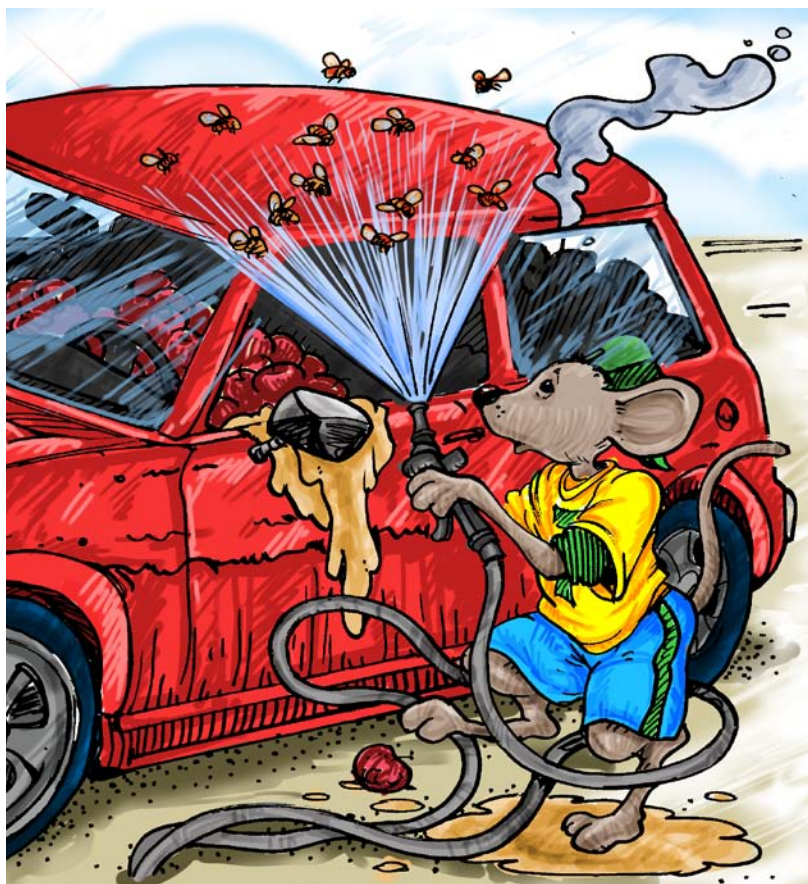
But Miss Snickerwiser had been crabby lately. Last week, she got angry when Morty didn’t finish his assignments on time, and there was an edge to her voice when she told Morty to pay attention. She even called his mother when Morty smashed catsup packets on the playground.





During recess, Morty was thinking of the trick that he, Fred, and Ben had pulled with the apples when he saw the janitor washing garbage cans behind the school with a long hose.

When the janitor was finished, Morty grabbed the hose and scampered to the teacher parking lot to stick the running hose in the window of the Mini. Adding water to the warm apples made the smell even stronger. *I sure hope Miss Snickerwiser likes applesauce as much as flies do*, Morty thought as he tried to spray the gathering swarm of flies with water.





Back in class, Morty noticed that Miss Snickerwiser looked sad and tired.

“There will be no chess club after school today,” she announced. “I need to leave right away to sit with my mother who is in the hospital.”

“Also, I am a little behind correcting science projects. My mother has been very sick.”

Morty noticed that tears pooled in her eyes.



Morty felt sick in his stomach. Not the kind of sick you get from munching on a few overripe apples on the way to school, the kind of sick you get when you really regret something you've done. He looked over at Ben and Fred. Ben was white as a ghost mouse, and Fred was staring at the floor.

Luckily, Miss Snickerwiser dismissed the class for a free exercise period before school ended for the day. With only 45 minutes, Morty had to act fast. On his way outside, Morty scampered to the janitor's closet to get soap, a bucket, and a sponge.

The hose was still where Morty had left it. Morty grabbed the nozzle and raced to his teacher's Mouse Mini. There was no time to waste. Opening the door, sticky applesauce spilled out into the parking lot—gobs and gobs of applesauce and flies, seeds, apple skins, and even a few worms. What a mess.

Morty turned on the hose and started scrubbing. He rolled down all the windows just hoping the sun was still warm enough to dry out the inside of the car.





Morty scrubbed like his hero Mega Mouse — 1,000 times faster and stronger than a normal mouse. He even washed the outside of the car. As he scampered around cleaning, Morty's mind raced. How would he explain to Miss Snickerwiser that he had filled her car with rotting apples? How would he tell her that he had been angry at her for being tough on him? Now that he thought about it, she wasn't any harder on him than any other mouse in the class. How was Morty to know that Miss Snickerwiser's mom was sick?

Deep inside, Morty knew his prank was just as rotten as the apples, and Miss Snickerwiser did not deserve it, even if she really had been tough on him.

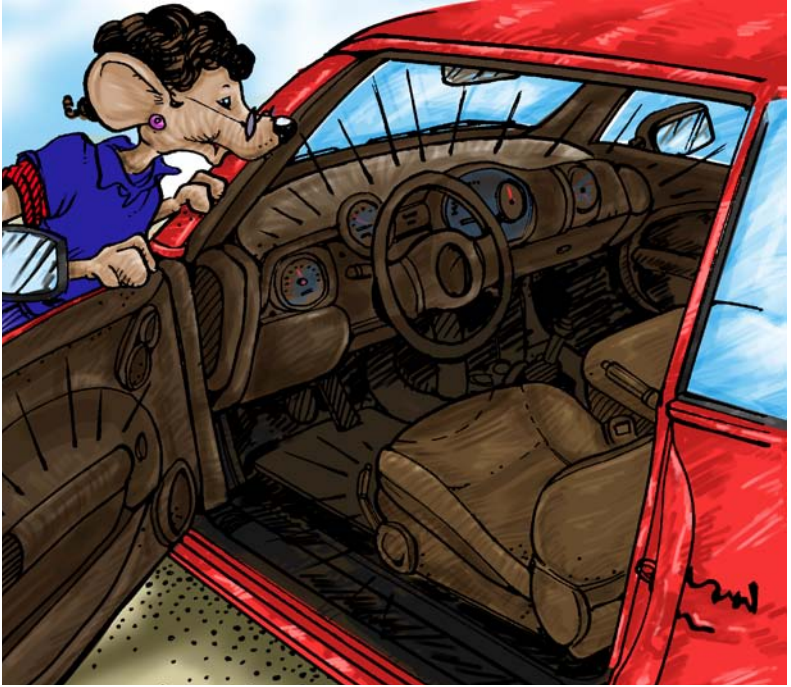


There was sweat trickling down Morty's back when the school bell rang. Morty gathered up the hose and cleaning supplies and started toward the janitor's closet.

Miss Snickerwiser was approaching her car. Morty smiled when she said, "Morty, my car looks so clean and nice! Did you leave the playground to wash my car?"

This was Morty's big chance. He could simply answer yes and come out smelling like a rose, as his mother would say. But Morty smelled like overly ripe apples, and HE ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH.





Before Morty could answer, Miss Snickerwiser opened the door and looked inside.

“It just sparkles!” she said. “And it smells like you used a Fresh Apple Air Freshener. I love that smell.”

Morty was staring at an apple seed stuck to his paw when he spoke up.

“Miss Snickerwiser, before I washed your car, I played a pretty mean trick on you.”

Miss Snickerwiser was looking at Morty now, raising one eyebrow in a puzzled expression that prodded Morty to continue.

"I filled your car with old apples from Mr. Albert's orchard. I added water, and the sun cooked up a nasty batch of applesauce in your Mouse Mini."

Morty looked in her eyes, "I'm really sorry."

Miss Snickerwiser's face showed no emotion. She looked in her car again and ran her paw over the dashboard. It wasn't even sticky.





Miss Snickerwiser smiled at Morty and patted his head. "I love my clean car," she said. "I accept your apology."

"But next time you decide to leave the playground, you really need to tell me."

Then she asked, "Morty, will you do me one little favor?"

"When you get home, will you tell your mother 'Thank you'?"

Now Morty's face looked puzzled. Miss Snickerwiser smiled one of her big twinkling smiles and explained, "Your mom has done a fine job of teaching you to wash the dishes after you cook."

Morty laughed as Miss Snickerwiser drove off in her immaculate Mouse Mini. Then he returned the cleaning supplies and found Ben and Fred to walk home. He had to hold his nose when they passed Albert's Apple Orchard. He realized that he did not like the smell of warm rotten apple. In fact, Morty thought he wouldn't mind it if he never smelled apples again.



Morty Mouse's stories began with author Kathy Hoggan telling her children about the adventures of a mischievous mouse, inspired by her grandmother's tales of Suzette Scamper. Now, more than a decade after she shared the first Morty Mouse stories with students, you too can enjoy the exciting adventures of mischievous Morty Mouse in this series from ReadingA-Z.com.

Morty and the Teacher's Apples
A Morty Mouse Story
Level Q Leveled Book
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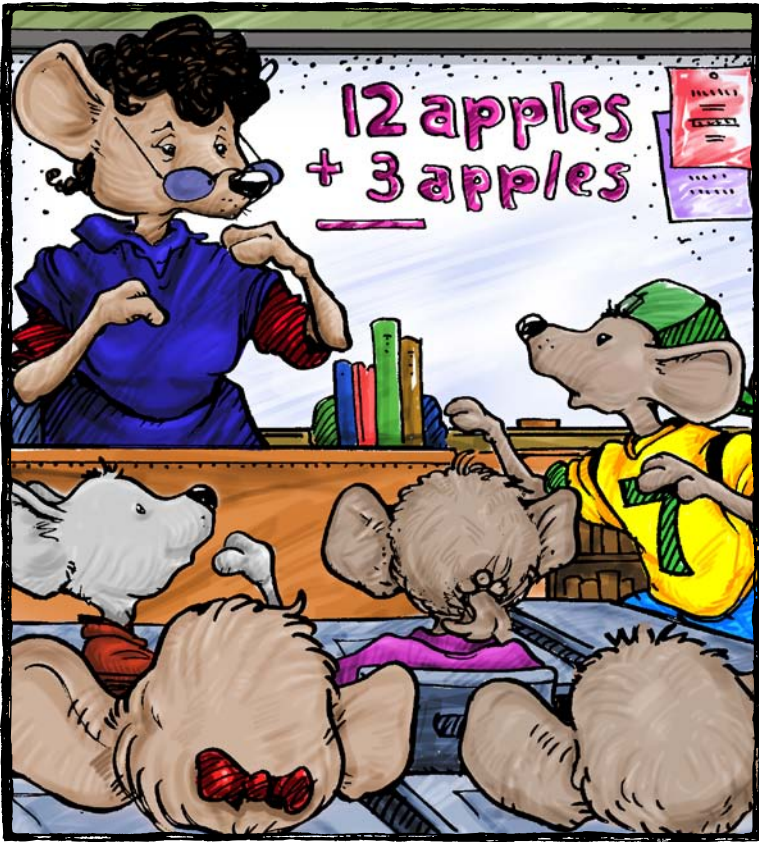
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