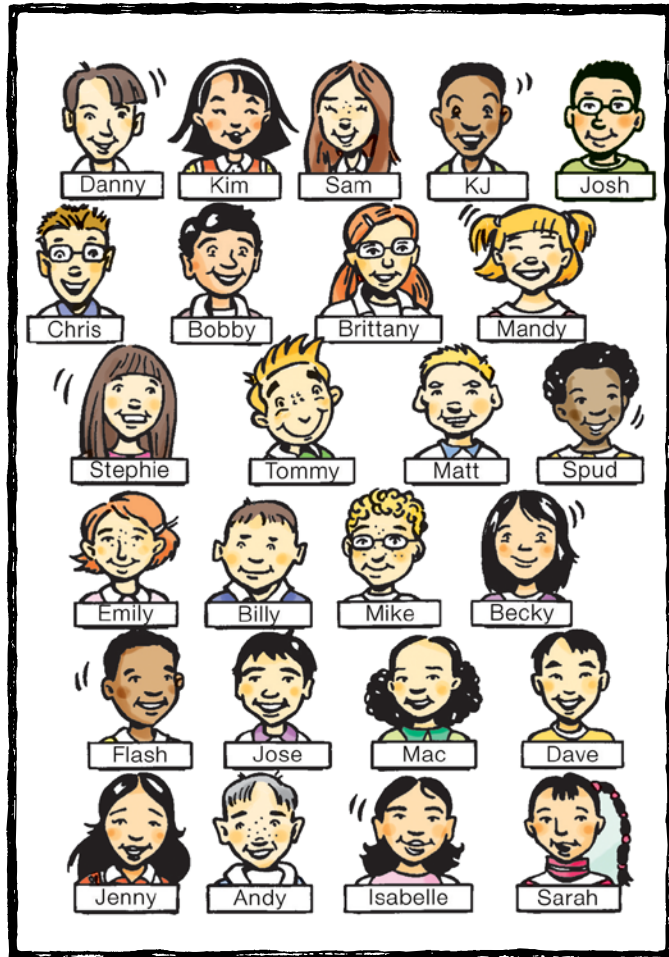


# What's in a Name?

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book  
Word Count: 1,554



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# What's in a Name?



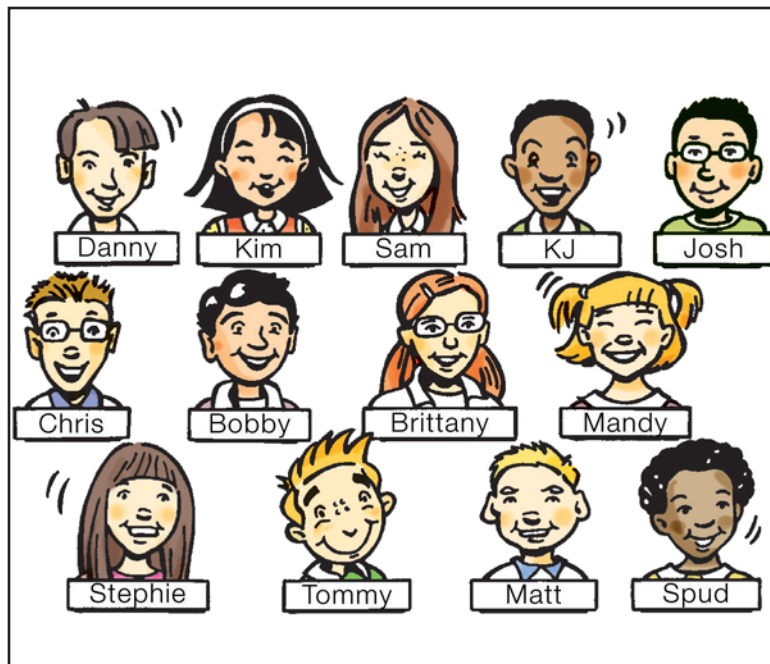
Written by Francis Morgan • Illustrated by Nora Voutas

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# What's in a Name?

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Illustrated by Nora Voutas

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Level S Leveled Book  
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## Correlation

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Reading Recovery	34
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Kong-Sang Chan  
changed his name  
to Jackie Chan.

## Introduction

In this book, we are going to study names. We will use the names of a third grade class to find out where names come from.

Your last name is your family name. Your first name is your given name. It's called "given name" because your parents give it to you. Often your parents will pick two names for you, a first name and a middle name.

You have your name all your life. However, many women change their family name when they marry. They take the family name of their husband. Their children have this family name as their last name.



This is Tommy Tomkins. There are twenty-four other children in Tommy's class. Twelve are boys and twelve are girls.

Every morning, at school, Mrs. Zimmerman, the teacher, calls out the names of the children. The children shout "present" after they hear their names.

She starts with the boys' names, then she continues with the girls' names:





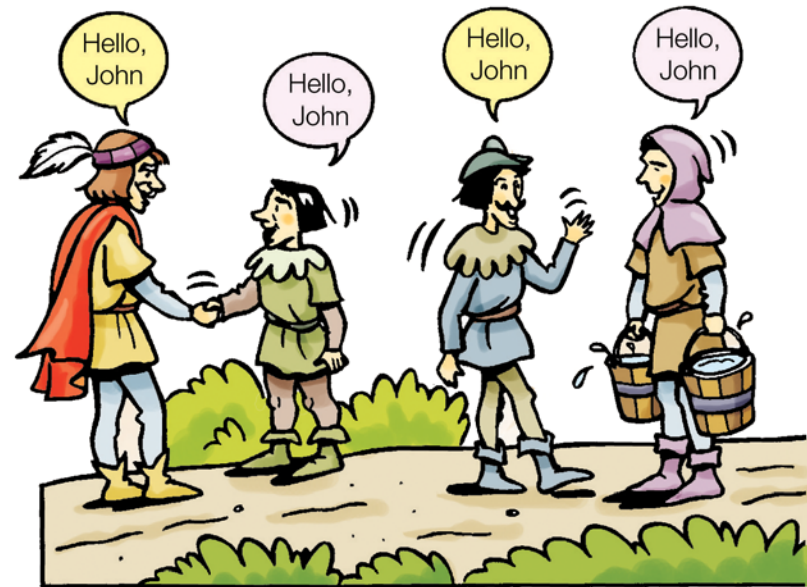
Daniel Armstrong  
Robert Figueroa  
Andrew Fitzgerald  
Joshua Fox  
Jason Freeman  
José Garcia  
William Gardener  
Kareem Johnson  
Matthew Longfellow  
Michael O'Brian  
Thomas Tomkins  
Christopher Wood  
David Yamamura

Samantha Baker  
Kim Chan  
Jennifer Clark  
Emily Fisher  
Rebecca Goldschmitt  
Amanda Hill  
Stephanie Jackson  
Kawanna Macdonald  
Isabelle Rodriguez  
Brittany Schumacher  
Ashley Taylor  
Sarah White

## Family Names

Your family name has probably been in your family for hundreds of years. At one time many years ago, people had only one name, a given name. At that time, there were very few names for parents to choose from.

People lived in small villages where everyone knew each other. Over the years, the population increased. Villages grew larger. Towns were formed. In the towns and villages many people had the same name, and it started to get confusing. In one village there may have been eight men called John.

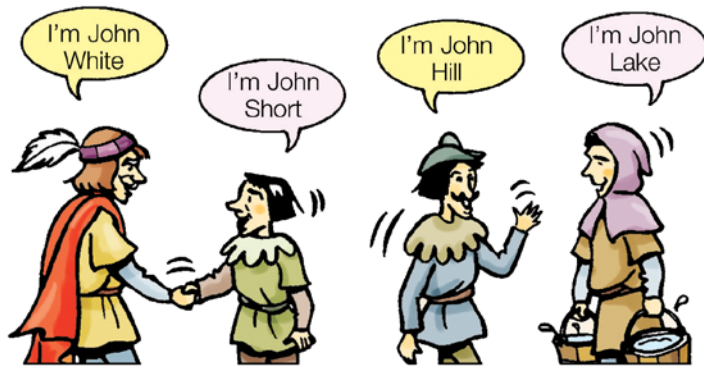


The villagers had to add words to the different Johns' names to understand which John they were talking about. Some of the Johns were known by adding their father's name. (For example, John, David's son; or John, Jack's son.) Others were known by where they lived. (For example, John from the hill, or John from the lake.) Others were known by the job they did. (For example, John the carpenter or John the gardener.) Still others were known by some personal feature. (For example, John the short, or John with white hair.)



In the Middle Ages, the rulers of many countries wanted to know who everyone was in their country. They wanted to make sure everyone was paying taxes, so they needed to count everyone. These rulers didn't want to get mixed up with eight different Johns, nine different Henrys, and ten different Williams in one village. So they passed laws that said everyone had to have a last name.





In our example village, with the eight Johns, John, David's son became John *Davidson*. John, Jack's son became John *Jackson*, John from the lake became John *Lake*, John from the hill became John *Hill*. John the carpenter became John *Carpenter*, and John the gardener became John *Gardener*. John the short became John *Short*. John with white hair became John *White*.

Our last names are usually based on one of the four groups:

1. father's name
2. place where they lived
3. job or trade
4. person's appearance

Let's look at all the children in Tommy's class from page 7 and divide their names into the four groups.

### 1. Names from a Father

- *Fitz* means "son of" and came from France. *Fitzgerald* meant "son of Gerald."
- *Johnson* started off as "John's son," and *Jackson* as "Jack's son."
- *Mac* and *Mc* mean "son of" and occur in Scottish and Irish names. *Macdonald* meant "son of Donald."
- *O'* means "son of" and is used in Irish names. *O'Brian* meant "son of Brian."
- *-kins* at the end of a name formed a nickname meaning "little." *Tomkins* meant "little Tom," or "Tom's little one."
- *-ez* at the end of a name meant "son of" in Spanish. *Rodriguez* meant "son of Roderick."

### Common Names from Father's First Name

Last Name	Son of . . .	Last Name	Son of ...
Williams Williamson	William	Richards Richardson Prichard	Richard
Wilkins Wilson	Will	Robertson Roberts Probert	Robert
Watson Watkins	Watt	Ericson	Eric
Jones	John	Adams McAdam	Adam
Harrison Harris Parry	Harry	Peterson Peters	Peter
Robinson Robbins	Robin	Evans Bevan Evanson	Evan

### 2. Names from a Place

*Figueroa* means “where the fig trees grow” in Spanish. So Robert Figueroa’s ancestors came from a place where fig trees grew in Spain. *Garcia* is the name of a place in Spain, so Jose’s ancestors came from this town. *Yamamura* is Japanese. *Yama* means “mountain,” and *mura* means “village.” David’s ancestors came from a village in the mountains of Japan.

### Common Names from Places

Last Name	Place
Moore	from a moor
Hall	from near a hall
Green	from near a village green
Mills	from near a mill
Barnes	from near a barn
Ford	from near a ford (river crossing)
Lake	from near a lake
Brooks	from near a brook
Marsh	from near a marsh
Lane	from near a lane
Holland	from the country of Holland

### 3. Names from a Job

The ancestors of the children in the class with “job” names were bakers, clerks, fishermen, gardeners, goldsmiths, and tailors. *Schumacher* means “shoemaker” in German, so Brittany had an ancestor who made shoes. Jason Freeman’s ancestors were slaves. They were captured in Africa and brought, against their will, to America to work in the fields. When slavery was abolished, they were able to choose their own names. As most didn’t know what their African names were, they



chose American names. Many picked the names of their former masters. Some, like Jason's ancestors, wanted to show they had become free so they chose the name *Freeman*.

Some of the jobs that people did in the Middle Ages, when last names first started, no longer exist. The names, however, still live on. Some of these are:

*Cooper*: A cooper made wooden barrels.

*Hooper*: A hooper made hoops for barrels.

*Archer* and *Bowman*: Archers and bowmen were soldiers who used a bow and arrows.

*Fletcher*: A fletcher made arrows.

*Carter*: A carter made or drove carts.

*Wheeler*: A wheeler made wheels for the carts.

*Tanner*: A tanner worked with leather.

**Common Names from Jobs**

Last Name	Job or Trade
Smith	blacksmith
Farmer	farmworker
Miller	worked in a flour mill
Shepherd	took care of sheep
Cook	cooked food
Potter	made pots

#### 4. Names from a Description

The first ancestor of Daniel *Armstrong* with a last name was known as a strong man.

*Chan* is Chinese and means "old," so the first person to have a last name in Kim's family was old.

Some people have animal names as last names. This usually means that their ancestor acted like the animal in some way. Joshua *Fox*'s ancestor was probably cunning, like a fox.

*Longfellow* was a tall person and *White* had white hair.

**Common Names from Descriptions**

Last Name	Description
Brown	brown skin or hair
Young	young person
Gray	gray hair
Bird	timid, like a bird
Long	tall person
Peacock	proud or showy, like a peacock
Lamb	meek, like a lamb
Whitehead	with white hair
Bull	wild and dangerous, like a bull
Short	a short person

### Types of Names in Tommy's Grade 3 Class

Father	Place	Job	Description
Fitzgerald	Figueroa	Baker	Armstrong
Johnson	Garcia	Clark	Chan
Jackson	Hill	Fisher	Fox
Macdonald	Wood	Freeman	Longfellow
O'Brian	Yamamura	Gardener	White
Tomkins		Goldschmitt	
Rodriguez		Schumacher	
		Taylor	

### Changing Names

Sometimes family names were changed for different reasons. Many of the people going to America from Europe had difficult names to pronounce and spell. To make things less difficult, they changed their names.

Sometimes people arrived in the country and an official would change their name for them. This was because the official couldn't understand them when he asked them their name, or he couldn't spell it properly.



Someone called *Jan Micsza* would have become *John McShea*. Someone with the last name of *Mlynar* would become *Miller*.

*Hildergart  
Zimmerman*  
(German for  
"carpenter")  
would become  
*Hilda Carpenter*.



Caryn Johnson  
changed her name  
to Whoopi Goldberg.

Sometimes actors and singers change their names so that people will remember them more easily. Here are some examples.

<i>Babyface</i> Singer	Kenneth Brian Edmonds
<i>Jackie Chan</i> Actor	Kong-Sang Chan
<i>Cher</i> Singer	Cherilyn Sarkisian
<i>Tom Cruise</i> Actor	Thomas Cruise Mapother IV
<i>Eminem</i> Rapper	Marshall Mathers III
<i>Gloria Estefan</i> Singer	Gloria Maria Fajardo
<i>Whoopi Goldberg</i> Actor	Caryn Johnson
<i>Hulk Hogan</i> Wrestler	Terry Jean Bollea
<i>Ice Cube</i> Rap singer	O'Shea Jackson
<i>Ice-T</i> Rap singer	Tracey Marrow
<i>Elton John</i> Singer	Reginald Kenneth Dwight
<i>Courtney Love</i> Singer	Love Michelle Harrison
<i>Madonna</i> Singer	Madonna Louise Ciccone
<i>Prince</i> Rock star	Prince Rogers Nelson
<i>P. Diddy</i> Singer	Sean Combs
<i>Ringo Starr</i> Drummer	Richard Starkey
<i>Sting</i> Singer	Gordon Matthew Sumner
<i>Kid Rock</i> Rapper	Robert James Ritchie
<i>Tiger Woods</i> Golfer	Eldrick Woods

## First Names

Now that you know about family names, let's look at given names or first names. There are many different reasons why parents choose a particular name for their child. Maybe they name a son after his grandfather. They could name a daughter after someone they admire, like a writer, actor, or athlete. Or they could just choose a name they like the sound of.

Most first names have meanings, which are very old. Most of these meanings are now forgotten, although some parents will look up the meanings of first names in a book or on the Internet.

### Meanings of Some Common First Names

Name	Meaning	Language
Ashley	from the ash tree	Old English
Brittany	a woman from Britain	Irish
Stephanie	crown	Greek
Amanda	lovable	Latin
Michael	who is like God	Hebrew
Andrew	courageous	Greek
Robert	bright fame	English
David	friend	Hebrew

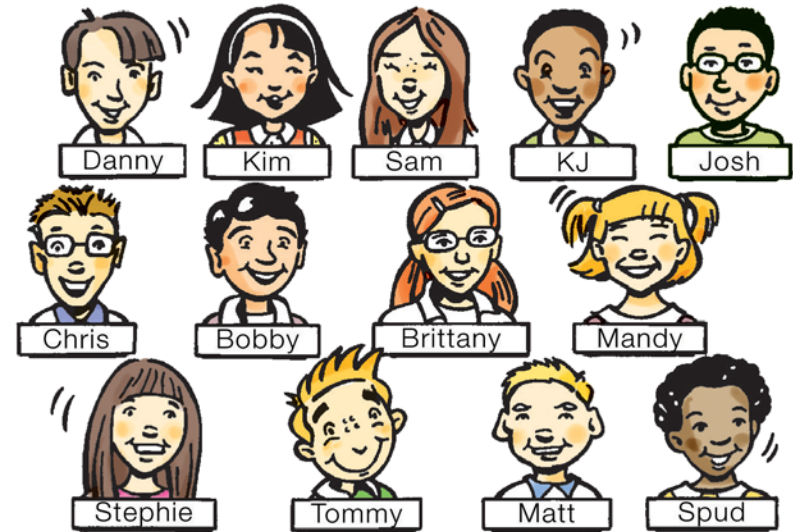


### Family Names as First Names

In the past few years, it has become popular to use family names as first names. Some examples are: Tyler (originally a family name from someone who put tiles on roofs), Hunter (English, a hunter), Logan (Irish, from a cove), Mason (a stone mason), Blake (Old English, white), Tanner (English, leather-worker), Morgan (Welsh, sea dweller), Haley (English, hay meadow), and Brooke (lived near a brook).

### Nicknames

Very often, first names are shortened or changed. These names are called nicknames. Let's look at Tommy's class and see how many nicknames there are.



Daniel Armstrong is called *Danny*.

Robert Figueroa is called *Bobby*.

Andrew Fitzgerald is called *Andy*.

Joshua Fox is called *Josh*.

Jason Freeman is called *Flash*, but that's not because of his name. It's because he runs fast.

José Garcia doesn't have a nickname.

William Gardener is called *Billy*.

Kareem Johnson is called *KJ*.

Matthew Longfellow is called *Matt*.

Michael O'Brian is called *Mike*.

Thomas Tomkins is called *Tommy*.

Christopher Wood is called *Chris*.

David Yamamura is called *Dave*.





Girls also have nicknames.

Samantha Baker is called *Sam*.

Kim Chan doesn't have a nickname.

Jennifer Clark is called *Jenny*.

Emily Fisher is called *Em*.

Rebecca Goldschmitt is called *Becky*.

Amanda Hill is called *Mandy*.

Stephanie Jackson is called *Stephie*.

Kawanna Macdonald is called *Mac*.

Isabelle Rodriguez is called *Bella*.

Brittany Schumacher is called *Britt*.

Ashley Taylor is called *Spud* because she eats a lot of potatoes.

Sarah White doesn't have a nickname.

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