

Trick or Treat?

A Reading A-Z Level R Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,124

LEVELED BOOK • R

Trick or Treat?

Connections

Writing

How would you continue this story?
Write a scene that shows what happens next between Mike and Derek. Include a conversation between them.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about UNICEF.
Make a poster explaining the mission of the organization and give examples of how it helps children.

Reading A-Z

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Written by Karen Mockler
Illustrated by Nicholas Jackson

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Glossary

charity (<i>n.</i>)	an organization that accepts donations of money, goods, or services and uses them to help those in need (p. 4)
conflicting (<i>adj.</i>)	being in conflict, opposition, or disagreement (p. 12)
donations (<i>n.</i>)	gifts or contributions made to help others (p. 14)
immunization (<i>n.</i>)	the act or process of gaining protection against infection, often by use of a needle (p. 14)
intercept (<i>v.</i>)	to stop or take someone or something while that person or thing is traveling from one place to another (p. 7)
obligation (<i>n.</i>)	something that must be done, especially because of laws or moral values; a duty (p. 5)
ruthless (<i>adj.</i>)	pitiless and unkind; completely lacking morals (p. 9)
steely (<i>adj.</i>)	very strong, cold, or determined; similar to steel in color or hardness (p. 6)
threaten (<i>v.</i>)	to say that one will harm or trouble someone, often in order to make that person do what one wants; to be likely to cause harm (p. 7)

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Focus Question

What lesson does Mike learn in this story?

Words to Know

charity	obligation
conflicting	ruthless
donations	steely
immunization	threaten
intercept	

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Correlation	
LEVEL R	
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Reading Recovery	30
DRA	30

"Shots?" Mike said. "We're forcing some kid to get a bunch of shots?"

"Maybe," Mrs. McCarthy said quietly, "and maybe those shots will save that kid's life."

"You think?" asked Mike.

His parents nodded.

"Weird," said Mike.

"Wonderful," said Mrs. McCarthy.

"Wow," said Mike. Then, for what felt like the first time in days, he smiled.



"I think I was the only one who did it," Aster said, then turned to Mike. "My teacher said UNICEF doesn't take food **donations**. She likes saltwater taffy and *loves* nougat, though, so she took your candy and donated an extra five dollars. I forget the exact total."

Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy had been beaming at their daughter. Now their beaming gazes shifted to their son.

Mike cleared his throat. "Twenty-five dollars," he said weakly, "and fifteen cents."

"Yes!" Aster cried. "She said it was the most money any of her students had ever collected."

"Fantastic," said Mr. McCarthy. "Nice work, you two."

Aster pulled a crumpled piece of paper from her pocket and handed it to her dad. "Twenty-five dollars," he read aloud, "can provide **immunization** to protect a child for life against the six leading childhood diseases: measles, polio, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, and tuberculosis."



Three nights before Halloween, Mike McCarthy noticed a small orange box sitting on the kitchen counter.

"What's that?" Mike asked at dinner.

"It's for trick-or-treating," replied Aster, his little sister.

"It's tiny," Mike said. "You can fit, like, three candy bars in that thing."

Mike always used a pillowcase himself. He used to dream of filling it, but for the past six months he had mainly dreamed of buying a Super Spy kit. Mike's friend Derek had offered to sell his kit to Mike for twenty-five dollars. All Mike had to do now—all he'd been trying to do for the past six months—was gather that sum.

"It's not for candy," Aster explained. "It's for money."

Mike almost spat out his chicken sandwich. "You can't go door-to-door asking for money!" he spluttered, turning to his parents. "Can you?"

"It's not for me," Aster said. "It's for UNICEF."

"What's UNICEF?" asked Mike.

"It's a **charity** that helps poor kids around the world," Aster said.

"I could use some help," said Mike.

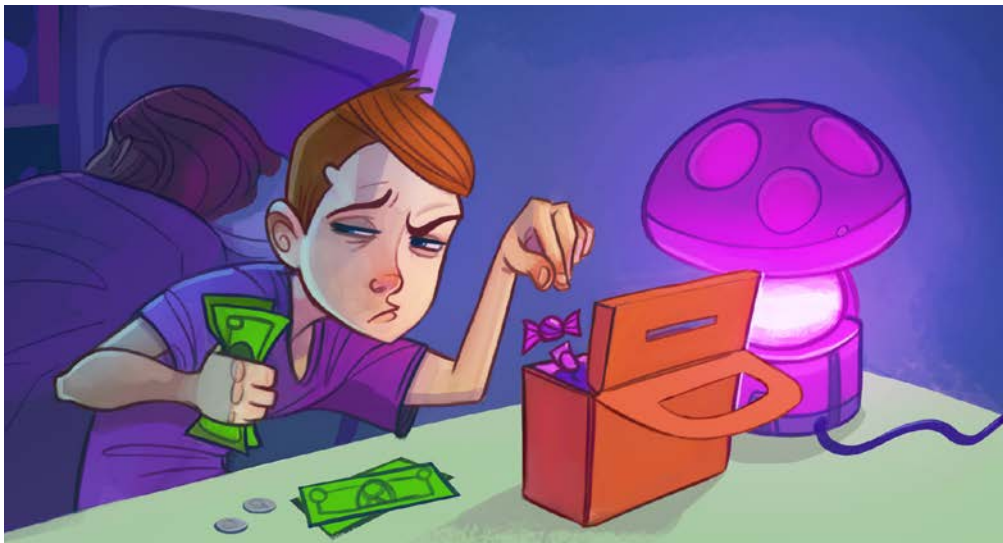
Mrs. McCarthy rolled her eyes. "Not like these kids," she said.



When Mike woke in a sweaty panic, he knew it still. He leapt out of bed, tiptoed back down the hallway to Aster's room, and replaced the stolen money in the box. In his haste, he left the candy.



The next night at dinner, Mrs. McCarthy asked Aster how her class's UNICEF collection went.



After Aster fell asleep, Mike snuck into her room and found the UNICEF box. Once he removed the money, he used all his saltwater taffy, two gobstoppers, and a nougat cluster to replace the weight of the coins. Then Mike crept back to his room.

Sleep was a long time coming, though, and when he finally managed it, Mike's dreams were troubled. A devil perched on his left shoulder, an angel on his right, and they whispered **conflicting** advice into his ears. Mike had seen this happen on TV before, but in his dream, Derek was the devil and Aster was the angel. Mike knew this, even though his sister wore the horns.



The next day at lunch, Mike complained to Derek. "Can you believe it?" he cried. "Maybe I should collect the money and keep it myself."

"Maybe you should," Derek said.

"After all," Mike continued, "I don't know these kids. I'm under no **obligation** to them."

"None at all," Derek agreed.

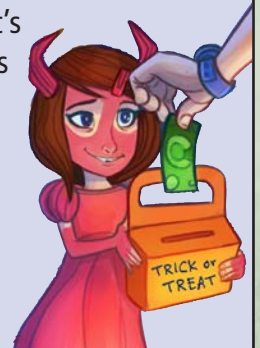
"It's not like I'd be doing them any actual harm," Mike said. "They'd be no worse off than they were already."

"Right," Derek said, "and you'd be a whole lot better off."

Loose Change = Positive Change

Some kids need more than candy. That's why each Halloween, some trick-or-treaters in the United States help UNICEF help kids around the world. These volunteers go door-to-door collecting donations. From 1950 to 2015, they raised \$175 million.

If you'd like to collect for UNICEF, ask your parents to help you find out more.



Mike sighed.

"Stop sighing," Derek said, "and seize this golden opportunity. You got your cute little sister, right?"

"You think my sister's cute?" Mike croaked.

"I don't," Derek said, "but the grown-ups are gonna give her tons of money."

"Sure," Mike agreed.

"Then you make her give it to you," Derek said.

It was one thing to talk about stealing but quite another to do it. Mike stared at Derek; Derek stared calmly back.

"How?" asked Mike.

"You let her know that you can make life very uncomfortable for her," Derek said.

"I can?" Mike asked.

Derek nodded, a **steely** glint in his dark eyes.

"Why would I do that?" asked Mike.

Math Minute

Add \$11.40 and \$8.75. If Aster collected money from 40 houses, what is the *average* amount of money she collected from each house?

Answer: \$0.50 (or 50 cents)

Back at the McCarthy house, Mike watched the devil trade two chocolate crunches for one of Genghis Khan's peanut butter cups. Genghis winked at Mike behind the devil's back.

When the trading was done, Derek and Emma headed home. On his way out the door, Derek whispered, "Don't forget" and winked at Mike again.





Derek's lips curled into the slightest smile. "Yes, you are," he said.

Outside, Mike took in the smell of fallen leaves and the sound of them crunching underfoot. A thrilling chill was in the air, and free candy was just around the corner. It should have felt good to be alive, but instead Mike felt slightly sick. He found himself wishing no one would give his little sister any money, but as Derek had predicted, Aster's UNICEF collection went very well. In the first hour, she collected \$11.40. In the second hour, she collected \$8.75.



"You don't have to do it," Derek said. "You just have to **threaten** to do it."

"I'm not gonna threaten my sister," Mike muttered. *And I'm not going to steal from poor kids, either,* he thought.

Derek sighed this time. "You disappoint me," he said. "So just **intercept** the money before she delivers it to school."

Mike was silent.

"Otherwise," Derek continued, "I might just have to sell my bargain-priced Super Spy kit to someone else."

"Don't do that!" Mike cried.

"I won't," Derek said, "if you get me that UNICEF money."

Mike knew it was wrong, but he agreed anyway. "I'll do it," he said.



The evening of Halloween, Aster and her friend Emma giggled together in the McCarthy kitchen. Emma was dressed as an angel, while Aster sported a red dress, red tights, a shiny red tail, and horns. Her skin was bright red, too.

"You look evil," Mike said.

"Thanks," Aster replied.

Derek showed up in a fur-trimmed hat, a droopy mustache, and a pointy little beard. He carried a curved and creepy-looking sword.



"You look like a kung fu master," Mike said, "crossed with a chicken."

"Close," Derek said drily. "I'm Genghis Khan."

"Who's Genghis Khan?" Mike asked.

"The **ruthless** Mongolian warrior who created the largest empire in the world by destroying his enemies," Derek said. "Are you a cloud?"

"I'm a marshmallow," Mike said.