

LEVELED BOOK • P

Dictionary Dave



Written by Rus Buyok • Illustrated by Nicholas Jackson

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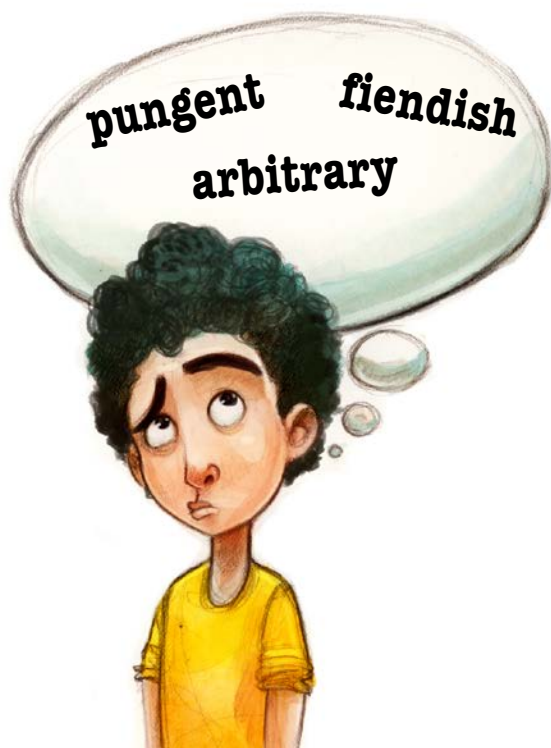


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The First Day

It was Ben's first day at his new school, and he was worried that he wouldn't make any friends. He was small for his age, and everyone here sounded funny.

"It's because we're from Mississippi," his dad explained when Ben asked why. "We sound just as funny to them."

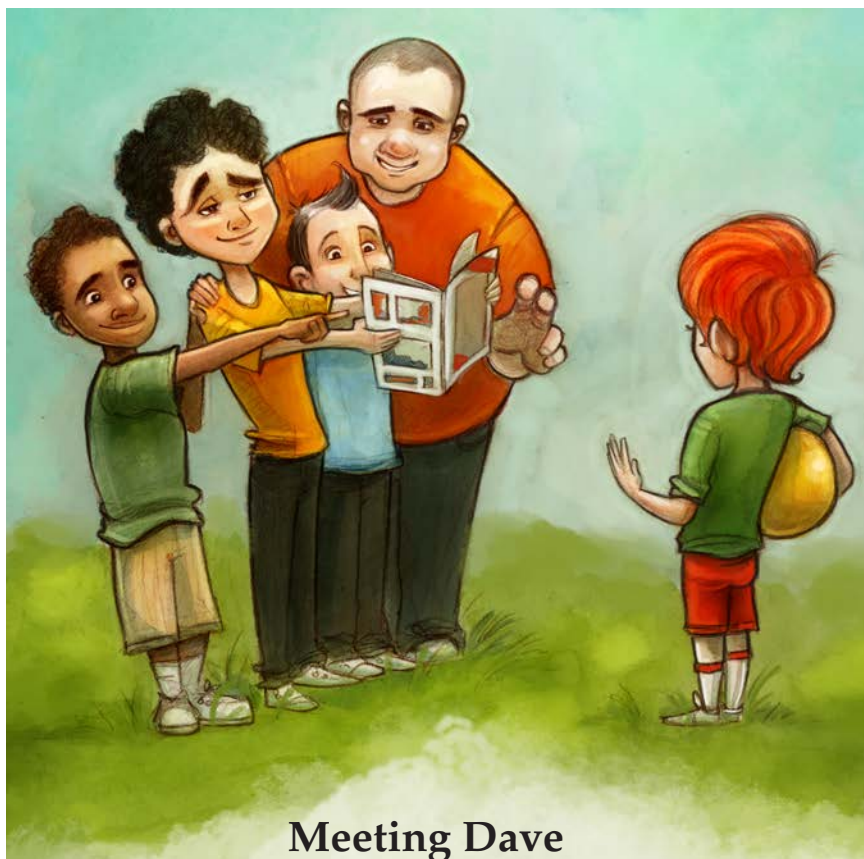
"You should walk up to someone and introduce yourself," his mom said. "You'll make friends in no time."



Ben did just that on the bus. He shared a seat with Cindy, and they got to talking. “What’s your favorite subject?” Cindy asked him.

“Language arts, because I love words more than anything,” Ben replied.

“Then you should talk to Dictionary Dave,” she said. “He knows all sorts of big words. He uses them all the time.”



Meeting Dave

During recess, Ben found Dave with a bunch of other boys.

“Hi, I’m Ben,” he said. “What are y’all doing?”

The boys looked Ben over. Dave raised an eyebrow and in his proudest voice stated, “We’re looking at a very pungent comic book.”



“May I see it?” Ben asked. Dave paused, then handed the comic book to Ben.

Ben sniffed it and said, “I don’t smell anything. You said it was pungent.”

“It is,” Dave snapped and grabbed back the book. “Look at these adamant drawings.”

Ben tilted his head and looked confused. "Wait . . ." he said. "You know that *pungent* means it has a strong smell, and *adamant* means it's unchanging or stubborn, right?"

Dave looked panicky for a moment, then started to laugh. It was a nervous laugh that became more **confident** as the other boys joined in.

Ben felt his face grow hot as he walked away. He knew he had the **definitions** right, but people talked strangely up here. Maybe words meant different things, too.

As he did whenever he was unsure of a word's meaning, Ben went to the dictionary. He looked up *pungent* and *adamant*. The definitions matched the ones he remembered from his dictionary at home. Something else had to be going on here.



Gym Class

During gym class, the teacher told the students they would be running a mile as part of a fitness test.

“I’d rather be arbitrary than run a mile,” Dave **quipped**. The other kids laughed.



“Do you mean *stationary*?” Ben asked quietly. “*Arbitrary* means done for no reason. *Stationary* means not moving.”

“I meant what I said,” Dave hissed. “Stop being a **know-it-all**.”

Ben was about to get mad until he saw Dave blush. He realized that Dave was **embarrassed** and that maybe he shouldn’t have corrected Dave in front of everyone. Ben felt awful and wanted to apologize—but how?

The Paper

Ben found his chance in language arts class. The teacher had the students write a page about what they'd done over the summer. Then she had them exchange their paper with someone else to review. The teacher paired Dave with Ben.

Ben read: *My summer began with a fiendish trip. My family traveled to my aunt's abolish . . .*

It was strange. Although Dave used the wrong words, he spelled them correctly.

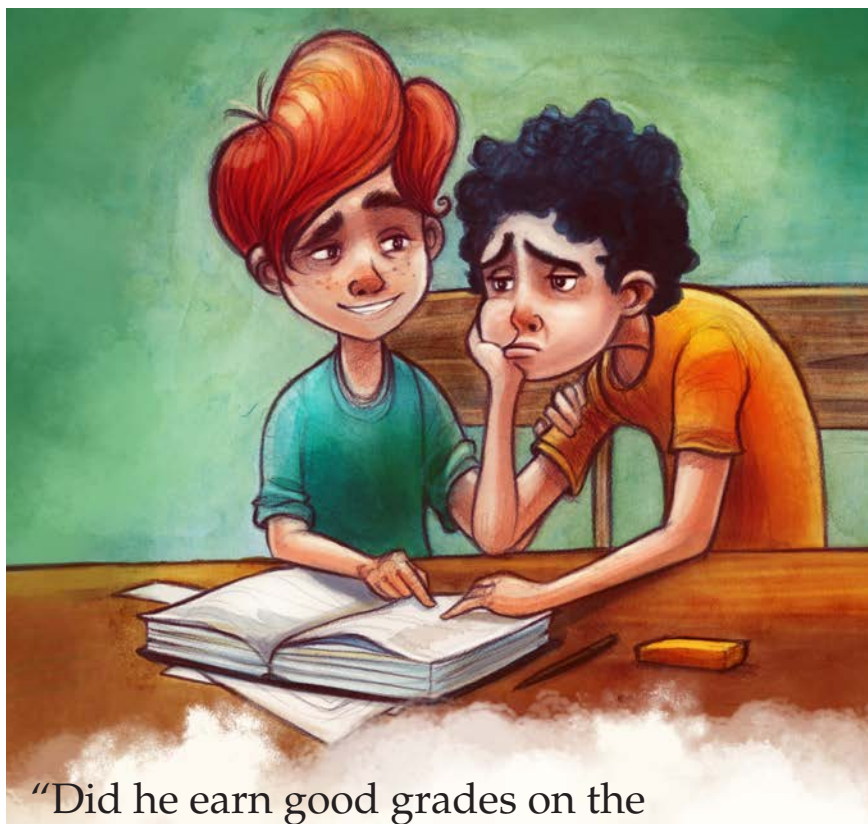
When it was time to talk about each other's papers, Ben began by apologizing. "First, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to embarrass you," he said. "You seem to like words as much as I do."

Dave looked at him **suspiciously**. "I love words," he said.



"I can tell. You're an amazing speller. Where did you learn to spell like this?" Ben asked.

"My brother gives me all his old **vocabulary** quizzes," Dave said proudly. "I study the words and their definitions every night."



“Did he earn good grades on the quizzes?” Ben asked.

Dave thought about it for a moment.

“I’ve never seen a grade on any of them,” he mumbled. Ben watched as it sank in that Dave’s brother had played a **prank** on him.

“Don’t worry. You’re going to get a good grade on this, and I’m going to help,” Ben said.

Becoming Friends

“See, *fiendish* means evil or cruel—like that prank your brother played on you. You had a great summer, right?” Ben asked.

Dave nodded.

Ben flipped to another page and said, “I marked *terrific* as a replacement. What do you think?”

Dave looked at the dictionary entry. At the end was a list of synonyms. “How about *outstanding*?” he asked.

“That’ll work. Now, *abolish* means to get rid of something,” Ben said, but Dave was ahead of him. He looked up *house*, found the definition, then found a synonym. He wrote down *abode*.

Ben and Dave worked through both papers. Finally, Ben set his pencil on his desk. “I **reckon** we’re done here,” he said.



Dave smiled at him. "I reckon so," he agreed. "Maybe sometime you could teach me how to speak Mississippi?"

"I'll teach you during lunch," Ben said.

They turned in their papers and walked down the hall together, laughing. In the end, they both earned good grades, but more importantly, they both found a good friend.

Glossary

- confident** (*adj.*) sure of oneself; certain (p. 8)
- definitions** (*n.*) statements that explain what words, phrases, or symbols mean; statements that describe what things are (p. 8)
- embarrassed** (*adj.*) feeling awkward, uneasy, or self-conscious (p. 10)
- know-it-all** (*n.*) a person who acts as if he or she knows everything (p. 10)
- prank** (*n.*) a trick or practical joke (p. 13)
- quipped** (*v.*) quickly made a funny, clever, or witty comment (p. 9)
- reckon** (*v.*) to think or suppose; to consider (p. 14)
- suspiciously** (*adv.*) in a cautious and distrustful manner (p. 11)
- vocabulary** (*n.*) all the words in a language; the words a person knows (p. 12)

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Correlation

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