Coding Camp
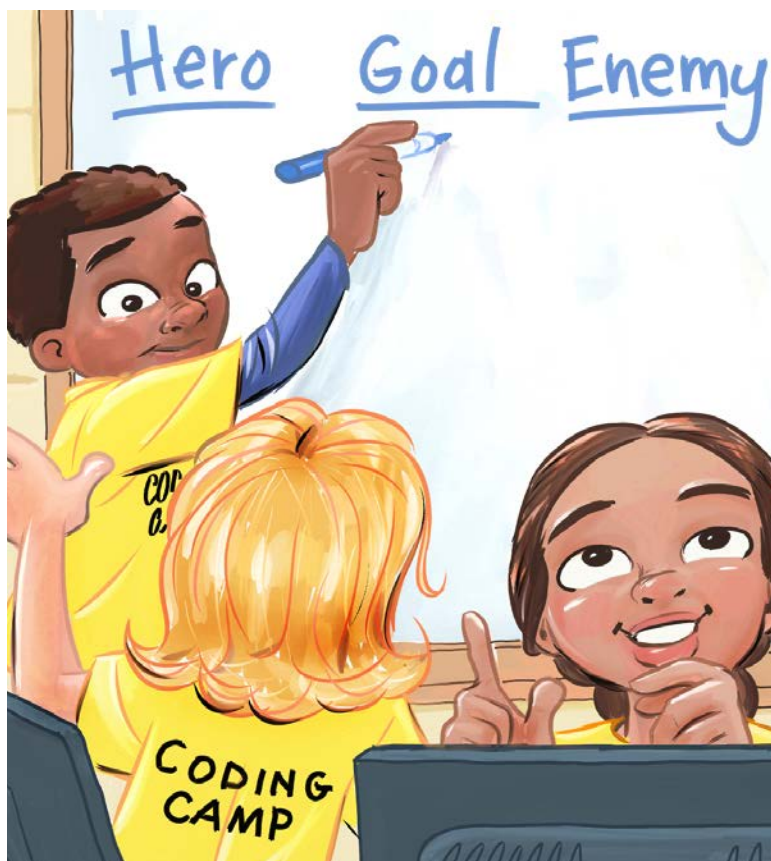
Written by Keith and Sarah Kortemartin
Illustrated by Ted Dawson

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Nina, Jody, and Matt sat down to try out the game they had been working on all week. The end of **Coding** Camp was just two days away. They all wanted their team to win this year's computer game **design** contest. When Jody hit "Start," though, they saw that something was very wrong. The screen filled with strange blocks of color. *How could this happen?* Nina thought. *It's my first year at camp! I really want to do a good job!*

Jody tried to get their game to run
a few times, but nothing happened.
They had to face the truth. The
computer must have **crashed** while
backing up their work. Most of their
files were unusable. The only things
left were Nina's computer drawings
of some items from the first room.
I'm glad I saved those on my laptop,
Nina thought.

"We don't have time to make a whole new game," Jody said. "We're going to have to use what we have."

"How are we going to make a game using a toaster, a toy unicorn, and a few houseplants?" Nina wondered.

They were going to need help.

They ran to the camp office and asked their **counselor**, Tom, to help them. He had some great ideas. Over the next few hours, Jody, Nina, and Matt worked on a new idea for their game.

"What about an **arcade game**?" asked Nina. "That way, we could use the same background over and over."

"We'll need a hero. Maybe we could use the unicorn!" said Jody.

"Yeah! The unicorn could fight her way through the house to escape to her forest home," exclaimed Matt.

"The unicorn will need an enemy," Matt said.

"How about the houseplants?" Nina asked, laughing.

"Well," said Jody, "what if the houseplants were attacking the unicorn? She could spear them with her horn."

"Great!" Matt said.

They all burst out laughing.

"This looks good," Tom said when they showed him their plan. "That last level looks tough to beat, though. If players think the game is too hard, it won't be fun for them to play. What can you do to help your players out?"

"That's how we can use the toaster!"
Jody exclaimed. "If the unicorn gets
in trouble, the toaster can come in
and burn up all the plants."

"Great, but players only get one
toaster per game," said Nina.

They divided up the work. Matt started on the story while Nina took charge of the design. Jody worked to get the **programming** done quickly.

Nina had just enough time to add little touches to her drawings. She was especially proud of her houseplants. She added frowns to their faces to make them look mean and funny at the same time.

"Those plants are great," Jody said when Nina showed them to her. "We're almost out of time, and I could use some help. Do you think you could add the houseplants yourself? I'll show you how to do the **animation**." They worked together for the rest of the day.
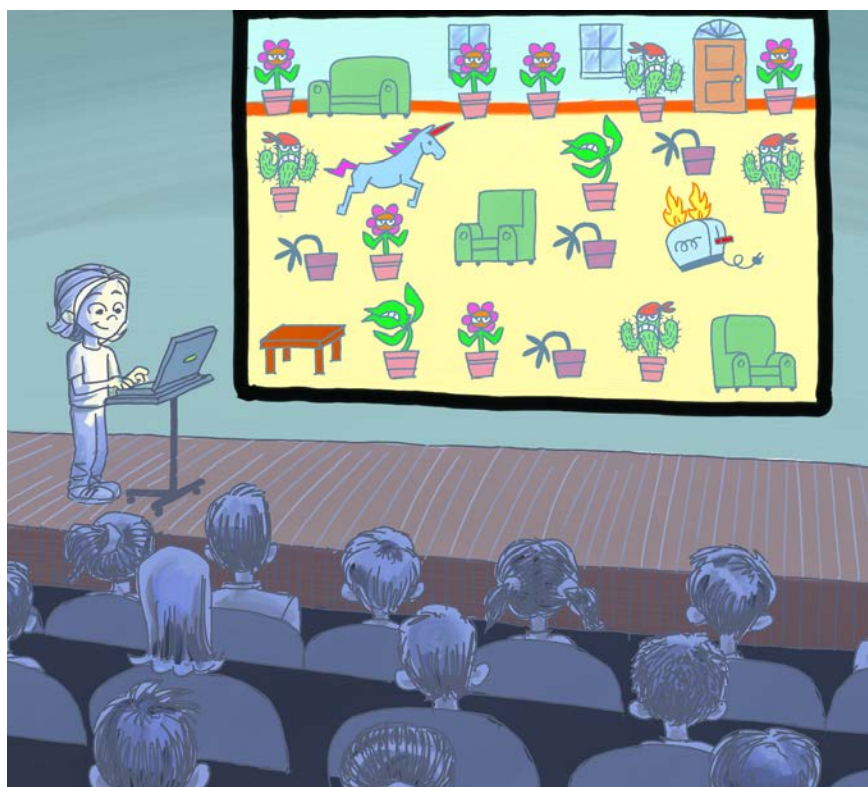
On the last day of camp, they showed their game to the whole group in the big hall. As the unicorn fought through the rooms, the houseplants got bigger and meaner. Just when things looked scariest for the unicorn, Jody called up the toaster to save the day. The whole camp clapped and cheered.

Before the winners were announced, Tom came up to them.

"Your game's a lot of fun. I really like how it looks and plays," he said.

"Thanks," the team said, all at the same time.

From the front of the room, a counselor said, "We are about to announce this year's winning game!"

Nina, Jody, and Matt grinned at each other. *I never would have believed that I could do this,* Nina thought. *I can't wait to come back next year.*

Glossary

animation *(n.)*   the process of creating animated images using film or computers (p. 12)

arcade game *(n.)*   a computer game with simple controls and short levels that become harder as the game goes on (p. 7)

backing up *(v.)*   making a copy of computer data to protect it from harm or loss (p. 4)

coding *(n.)*   the act of writing instructions for a computer in a special language; programming (p. 3)

counselor *(n.)*   a person who gives advice and guidance (p. 6)

crashed *(v.)*   stopped working suddenly (p. 4)

design *(n.)*   the appearance or style of something built or made (p. 3)

files *(n.)*   sets of computer data (p. 4)

programming *(n.)*   the act of creating instructions for a computer or other machine that enable it to complete an action (p. 11)

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Correlation

LEVEL N	
Fountas & Pinnell	M
Reading Recovery	20
DRA	28

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A Reading A–Z Level N Leveled Book
Word Count: 640