



Clarifying

Level 5

A Collection of Readings

**Reading
Wings** 4th
Edition

The **Savvy
Reader**

This project was developed at the Success for All Foundation under the direction of Robert E. Slavin and Nancy A. Madden to utilize the power of cooperative learning, frequent assessment and feedback, and schoolwide collaboration proven in decades of research to increase student learning.

The Savvy Reader—Clarifying, A Collection of Readings

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LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Most Egyptians lived in dwellings built of sun-baked mud bricks. Mud was readily available along the Nile River, which made mud-brick houses cheap and easy to replace when necessary. Wealthier citizens adorned their houses with pieces of stone, but stone was rarely used to build an entire house because it was expensive and heavy. Stone construction was reserved for tombs, monuments, and palaces.

Egyptians enjoyed a healthy diet. Because people lived near their fields, they had ready access to fresh food. The river provided fish and waterfowl. Wealthy families had a more varied selection of food, especially meat.

Despite a healthy diet, many Egyptians had health problems. Most people worked very hard from the time they were young children. Mummies reveal evidence of arthritis, as well as broken bones, viruses, and life-threatening diseases like smallpox. Childhood diseases claimed the lives of many infants and young children. Adults universally suffered from bad teeth: the desert sand got into everything that people ate and gradually wore down their teeth.

Mummies

A mummy is a dead body that has been well preserved so it will not decay over time. Some mummies have been preserved naturally. Cold, dry wind, and freezing temperatures can preserve a body. Also conditions that are acidic, dry, have little oxygen, or are very salty can produce mummies. Examples of naturally preserved mummies are ice mummies, mummies found buried in sand, and bog mummies.

Some mummies have been man-made by a method of embalming. The ancient Egyptians had a special way of preparing mummies. After death, the person's internal organs were removed and washed with wine. The organs were placed in jars. The brain was removed through the nose and thrown away. The body was washed with wine and the cavities packed with natron, a natural salt, and left for forty days. After forty days, when the body was dried out, it was treated with oils, perfumes, and spices. The body was then wrapped in yards of linen cloth, placed in a decorated coffin, and buried in a tomb.



Tyler Bradford Is the New Kid in School

Story by Sam R. McColl Illustration by Jeremy Tugeau

Chapter 1

The day started just like every day in Texas used to start. Tyler woke up to the unending beeping of his alarm clock at 6:45 in the morning. He reached out from under the covers and slammed his hand down on the snooze button. Tyler liked those nine extra minutes before his mom would yell upstairs, telling him it was time to “move it or lose it,” like she always said.

After those nine minutes passed, Tyler remembered that his mom wouldn't be yelling upstairs to him in the mornings anymore. He lay in bed, and for a second he forgot where he was. What wallpaper was this? Why was the window on the other side of the room? Then he remembered. He was in a new house, in a new town, in a new state.

Tyler looked around his new room. After the move he and his father had made sure to fill Tyler's room with all of his toys, models, sports gear, and posters. His father had wanted Tyler to feel as much at home as he could in this strange house before Tyler started attending his new school. Tyler felt strange in his new room, but his poster of Darrin Jackson, the famous Texas football player, on the wall above his bed made him feel better. Darrin Jackson was Tyler's favorite player. The poster of Tyler's favorite racecar driver on the wall across the room made him feel a little better as well.

Tyler was still nervous. The first day of school is always cause for anxiety, but today was especially unusual. He and his father had just moved from Dallas, Texas, to the small town of Ames, Iowa. It had been a rough move, both emotionally and physically. They were tired after driving the moving van more than twelve hours from Texas and then unpacking once they reached their new home. Tyler was emotionally tired too, because he missed his friends from Dallas. He missed Jack, Sally, Monica, Tara, Julio, and Sun-Li.

But most of all, Tyler missed his mother. During the last year Tyler had watched his parents go through a painful divorce. Tyler had watched his dad cry. Tyler had watched his mother cry. Tyler had even cried himself. Sometimes

he blamed the divorce on himself, although his parents would both tell him he shouldn't. His mom and his dad had told him how much they both loved him. But still, it didn't make Tyler any happier.

When Tyler's dad had landed a new job teaching at Franklin University in Ames, Tyler's mom and dad had thought it best that Tyler go with his dad. Tyler hadn't understood why, exactly, but here he was, in a new home, and the school year was about to start. Tyler worried about making friends. He worried about being the "new kid." He knew how groups of friends often treated new kids in school. He'd mistreated new kids at his old school himself. Tyler remembered something his mother used to say whenever Tyler mistreated kids at school. She would say, "Tyler, someday the shoe might be on the other foot." Back then Tyler hadn't understood what that meant. But now he did. The shoe really was on the other foot.

Tyler lay in bed for a few more minutes, looking at his unfamiliar surroundings. He looked at the poster of Darrin Jackson. "What do you think, DJ?" Tyler asked the poster. Tyler imagined how Darrin might respond.

"You've got to get up and at 'em, Tyler," he imagined Darrin saying. "When my team's losing near the end of the game, and it's my turn to run with the ball, I just concentrate. I go out there and rush through the line as hard as I can. Sometimes I score a touchdown, and sometimes I get tackled. But no matter what, I give it my best. That's what you have to do."

"OK, DJ," Tyler thought to himself, "you've got it. That's what I'll do." Tyler crawled out of bed and pulled back the curtains. He was surprised by what he saw outside. When he used to look out his bedroom window from his family's apartment in downtown Dallas, Tyler would see nothing but smog. In the spring, summer, and early fall, the heat and humidity would mix with the smog to create a soupy mixture you couldn't see through. He might have sometimes seen a few rays of morning sun peeking through the dense clouds of smog, but not very often.

The light in Ames, Iowa, was different. It seemed like the brightest morning light Tyler had ever seen. He couldn't see a speck of smog anywhere.

Tyler said to himself, "With a day like this, maybe things won't be so bad after all." Tyler dressed in his favorite outfit, jeans and his Darrin Jackson #8 jersey. He laced up his favorite sneakers and walked down the unfamiliar steps to the unfamiliar kitchen. His dad was standing by the kitchen mirror, adjusting his tie.

"Hey Dad," Tyler said, "g'morning."

"Hey sport, good morning to you too! How'd you sleep? Was ol' DJ keeping an eye on you while you slept?" his dad joked.

"I guess so," Tyler said, and smiled.

"Hey, look at that! A smile! I haven't seen one of those in a while," his dad exclaimed.

"C'mon Dad," Tyler protested, "I've done my best, you know."

"I know you have, son," his dad said, "and I know these past few months have been really hard on you. But I'm proud of you, I hope you know."

"I know," Tyler mumbled.

Tyler and his dad sat down to breakfast. They shared the morning paper. Tyler's dad read the front page, while Tyler read the sports section. The football season was about to start, and Tyler enjoyed reading about his favorite players in training camp. Tyler and his dad read and ate. Tyler drank orange juice, and his dad drank coffee.

When they were finished, Tyler's dad said, "C'mon son. I'll drive you to school today, it being the first day and all. You ready?"

"I guess so, Dad. Hey, it's your first day of school too. You know that?" Tyler said, knowing that his dad started teaching classes at Franklin University today.

"I guess it is. Well, what do you know? The Bradford Boys' first day of school. Let's go get 'em," his dad said.

Chapter 2

The first day of school didn't begin as Tyler had hoped it would. When he had seen the beautiful sunny weather outside his bedroom window, Tyler had hoped that things might be okay. But as soon as his dad took him to school, things turned sour for Tyler.

First, his dad parked the car and walked Tyler into the main administration office at the school. Tyler's dad said to the secretary, "I'm Conrad Bradford, and this is my son Tyler. He'll be starting fifth grade this year at Ames Elementary."

The secretary looked up from his computer and said, "Ah yes, Mr. Bradford. Hello Tyler. Principal Wilkins is expecting you."

"Hello," Tyler said quietly.

The secretary pressed a button on the speaker at his desk and spoke into it. "Dr. Wilkins, a Mr. Bradford and his son Tyler are here to see you."

A soft voice came from the speaker. "Wonderful. Please send them in."

The secretary beckoned Tyler and his dad toward a glass door with the words Principal Renée Wilkins, Ph.D. stenciled in black about halfway up the door. Tyler's dad knocked on the door softly. The same voice from the speaker came from the other side, "Please come in."

Tyler and his father walked through the door into a brightly lit office. As they walked in, Principal Wilkins stood up and walked around to the front of her desk. She offered her hand to Tyler's father. "Mr. Bradford," she said, "I'm Renée Wilkins, the principal at Ames Elementary. It's very nice to meet you."

"Hello, I'm Conrad Bradford, and this is my son Tyler," he responded.

"Hello Tyler. It's nice to meet you," Dr. Wilkins said as she motioned for Tyler and his dad to sit down in the chairs by her desk.

"Um, hello," Tyler said as he and his father sat down.

Dr. Wilkins began to speak. "Tyler, I'd like to welcome you to Ames Elementary School. We like to think we have a very special school here. Our students are very

happy to be here, as are our faculty members. I think you'll be very happy here, as well." She opened a file on her desk and continued speaking. "I want you to know, Tyler, that we have an excellent support staff here to help you if you ever need to, well, discuss your, uh, *situation*."

Tyler was confused. His *situation*? What was this woman talking about? "I don't understand, ma'am," Tyler whispered. Then it hit him. She was talking about his parents' divorce. Tyler grew annoyed. He didn't want some woman he didn't know talking about something personal like this. Tyler didn't know what to say.

"Um, uh, okay," he stuttered, "thanks."

Dr. Wilkins continued. "If you need anything, feel free to set up an appointment with me. We're here to help you face the past, and prepare for your future. Welcome, once again. Now, Mr. Bradford, it's time for Tyler to go to class, but you and I have a few details to discuss. Tyler, I'll have Paul take you to your classroom. Mrs. Yarborough awaits you."

Dr. Wilkins pressed a button on the speaker on her desk. "Paul, please come and take Tyler to Mrs. Yarborough's class. Thanks."

Paul opened the door and motioned for Tyler to follow. Tyler stood up, glad to be leaving the principal's office. When he stood up his father stood up too and stuck out his hand. Tyler was glad that his dad preferred to give Tyler a handshake instead of a hug, although Tyler assumed the handshake was for his sake, not his dad's.

Tyler shook his dad's hand. "Good luck, Ty," his dad said, "and I'll see you at home this afternoon." His dad only called Tyler "Ty" on special occasions. Tyler held back tears. He wasn't afraid to face the school alone; he was just overwhelmed by the conversation with Dr. Wilkins.

"Thanks Dad. I'll take the bus home and see you this afternoon."

Paul led Tyler out of the office as Tyler’s dad sat down with Dr. Wilkins. As the door closed behind Tyler, he heard Dr. Wilkins say to his father, “Now, about Tyler’s behavior....” But that was all Tyler heard. He was not happy. Tyler had hoped that his poor behavior during the divorce would be left behind him in Texas, along with his friends and his old life. But here he was, in this new school for 10 minutes, and the principal was already assuming that Tyler was a troublemaker? Tyler didn’t think it was fair.

Glumly, Tyler followed Paul down the empty hallway. Tyler listened to their footsteps echo off the painted brick walls. Tyler looked at all the banners hanging on the walls. Welcome Back, Wildcats! read one. Ames Elementary Rules read another. Tyler didn’t feel very welcome. And if the students were like the principal, he didn’t think Ames Elementary would rule. He didn’t think it would rule at all.

Tyler and Paul stopped at a classroom door. Room 111. Paul knocked. A pleasant voice called from the other side, “Please come in!” Paul opened the door and ushered Tyler inside.

Paul spoke, “Mrs. Yarborough, this is Tyler Bradford. He’ll be joining your class this year. I’d like you and your class to say hello.”

“Well then we shall, class,” Mrs. Yarborough spoke. She appeared to be about thirty-five, her hair tight in a ponytail and her clothes completely black. “Class, say hello to our new *compadre*, Tyler Bradford.”

The class seemed bored and uninterested as they murmured, “Hello Tyler.” Tyler felt his face redden. He was very uncomfortable. “This is what the new kid feels like,” he thought to himself. Mrs. Yarborough pointed to an empty desk toward the back of the room. “Tyler, take a seat at that desk, *por favor*. You will find all the materials you need inside, including your textbooks. We’re studying Spanish right now. *¿Habla español?*”



Tyler knew some Spanish. “*Sí, Señorita,*” he whispered. The class giggled. Tyler’s face grew even redder as he sat down at his new desk.

Mrs. Yarborough sternly admonished the class. “Class, Tyler has only made a small mistake. Giggling will not make him feel welcome. Apologize to him, all of you.”

The class once again murmured. “Sorry,” they all said, although Tyler didn’t think they meant it.

Mrs. Yarborough continued. “You speak Spanish very well, Tyler. But because I am *Mrs.* Yarborough, a married woman, you should call me *Señora*, not *Señorita*. In any case, welcome.” Tyler felt the strange gazes of the students around him. He didn’t feel so welcome.

Chapter 3

The day wore on. Through the rest of Spanish instruction, and through mathematics and reading, Tyler sat quietly at his desk. He could feel the curious stares of the other students, who would look at him and then look away when he caught them staring. Tyler thought to himself, “This is what it’s like to be the new kid.” He thought about all the times he had picked on new kids in his school in Dallas and wished he could take them all back.

When Mrs. Yarborough let the students go to the cafeteria for lunch, Tyler somberly walked by himself down the halls of the school. He found a seat at a table far from the bustling noise of the crowded cafeteria. Tyler sat by himself, munching on his ham and cheese sandwich, and trying to ignore the noise around him by reading his latest issue of *Sports Weekly*. Tyler was about halfway through an article on football training camp when he sensed somebody standing over him.

“Hey pal,” he heard a deep voice say. Tyler looked up and saw a student that he had seen in class, sitting on the far side of the room. The student was dressed in black jeans, torn at the left knee, and a plain black tee shirt. The boy’s hair was in long, thick locks that hung down around his neck. The student offered his hand and said, “Name’s Jerome Simpson.”

Tyler shook Jerome’s hand without getting up, murmured, “Nice to meet you,” without really meaning it, and went back to reading his magazine.

“Mind if I sit here?” Jerome asked, motioning toward the empty chair across the table from Tyler.

“Suit yourself,” Tyler said without raising his head.

Jerome sat down and pulled a brown paper bag out of his black backpack. He unwrapped a sandwich, took a bite, and said, “Ain’t no fun being the new kid, is it?”

Tyler put down his magazine, and looked at Jerome. “What would you know?” he asked Jerome.

“I was in the same boat about six weeks ago. My mom and I moved here from Boston after my parents got divorced.”

In an instant Tyler had a hope that he might have met somebody he could talk to, somebody who might know how Tyler felt, somebody he could relate to. His voice quivering, Tyler asked, “Your parents got divorced? When?”

“It was final about two months ago, although it took a long time. Worst year of my life,” Jerome said, then took another bite of his sandwich.

Tyler couldn’t believe this. “Wow. My parents just got divorced too. My dad and I just moved here from Dallas,” he said.

Jerome answered, “Yeah, I know. About the Dallas part, I mean. Mrs. Yarborough told us you’d be joining the class. Didn’t know about the divorce, though. Can I ask you something?”

Tyler thought that right now, Jerome could ask just about anything he wanted, “Go ahead, man, shoot.”

Jerome lowered his voice to a whisper. “During the divorce, when your parents were splitting up, did you ever, you know, cry?”

Tyler whispered too. “I did.”

Jerome smiled. “Wow. Me too. Felt like a big baby.”

“Yeah,” Tyler said.

“Well, anyway,” Jerome continued, “it isn’t so bad here in Ames. There’s some stuff to do, like after school. If you want, I’ll show you around.”

Tyler was beginning to think he couldn’t believe his luck. “That’d be great,” he said. “Let me ask you something. Why’d you and your mom move here?”

“She got some job teaching at the university. She’s a math professor.”

“Wow!” Tyler exclaimed, “My dad teaches at the university too! Today’s his first day!”

“I wonder if they’ll meet each other,” Jerome thought out loud, then took another bite of his sandwich. “What’re you reading?”

Tyler held up his *Sports Weekly*. “Football training camp,” he said.

“Cool. Who’s your favorite team?” Jerome asked.

“The Dallas Rough Riders,” Tyler answered, pointing at his jersey.

“Duh, should’ve figured that,” Jerome said. “They’re not bad. I like the Chicago Scorpions, myself,” he continued.

“Yeah, they’re not bad,” Tyler said.

Then Jerome’s face lit up. “Do you play?” he asked.

“Do you mean football?” Tyler responded.

“Course I mean football,” Jerome answered, pulling a football out of his black backpack. “We’ve got about fifteen minutes before we have to go back to class. Do you want to pass the ball around a bit outside?”

Tyler couldn’t believe his luck. He’d just met a friend who was going through the same things he was, and it turns out this same guy likes football! “You bet! Let’s go!” Tyler said, bunching up his paper bag and putting it in the trash.

“You got it,” Jerome said, doing the same thing with his bag.

Jerome and Tyler walked outside, Jerome spinning the ball between his fingers. When they walked through the big metal doors on the playground, Jerome said, “Go out for a long one.”

Tyler dropped his backpack and ran out onto the playground about forty feet away. He turned around as Jerome launched a beautiful spiral. The football arced through the blue sky, and Tyler almost lost it in the sun. Jogging a few steps to his left, Tyler caught the ball in his hands. He felt the rough pigskin of the ball and traced the white laces with his fingers. Winding back his arm, Tyler threw the ball back to Jerome, a spiral almost as good as Jerome’s. Jerome jogged right and caught the ball.

Tyler and Jerome played catch for about ten minutes, neither one saying a word. They just threw the ball back and forth, back and forth. Tyler was very happy. When they were finished, Tyler and Jerome walked back in through the big metal doors together. Down the hall they walked, toward Mrs. Yarborough’s classroom.

Chapter 4

T Tyler was in higher spirits during the second half of the class. Some of the kids still stared at him because he was the new kid, but Tyler didn't care as much as he had in the morning. Tyler had made a friend, a friend very much like him, who liked football. Tyler paid attention during science and art, and read from his *Sports Weekly* during Free Reading at the end of the day. At one point during Free Reading, Tyler glanced over at Jerome, who was reading some hardcover book, his brow wrinkled as though he were trying to understand something difficult. Jerome noticed that Tyler was looking at him. Jerome looked up, smiled, and made the motion of throwing an invisible football across the room to Tyler. Tyler grinned, pretended to catch the invisible football, and then threw his arms in the air, signaling an imaginary touchdown. Jerome gave him the thumbs-up sign and then went back to reading. So did Tyler.

At the end of the day, Tyler met Jerome by the classroom's coat racks. Jerome asked Tyler where he lived. Tyler responded, "I think I live on Gittings Avenue."

"Sweet!" said Jerome. "We're on the same bus. I live on Struck Street, which isn't far from Gittings." Jerome and Tyler noticed Mrs. Yarborough approaching them.

Mrs. Yarborough said, "Tyler, I'm here to make sure you know what bus you're supposed to be on this afternoon."

Before Tyler had a chance to respond, Jerome said, "It's cool, Mrs. Y. Tyler lives on Gittings Street, so he's on the same bus I am. I'll make sure he knows where he's going."

"Thank you, Jerome. That's very welcoming of you. Tyler, I hope you had a pleasant first day at Ames Elementary. It seems you've made a friend. That's good."

"Yeah, it's okay so far," Tyler murmured, as he noticed Jerome rolling his eyes behind Mrs. Yarborough's back. Tyler tried not to laugh.

"Well, gentlemen," Mrs. Yarborough said, "I shall see you in the morning."

Tyler said, “*Adiós, Señora* Yarborough.” Mrs. Yarborough smiled.

“*Adiós, Señor* Bradford,” Mrs. Yarborough answered.

As Mrs. Yarborough walked back to the front of the classroom, Jerome whispered jokingly under his breath, “*Adiós, adiós, Señora*” as he mimicked Tyler. “You’ll be the teacher’s pet, soon,” he said laughing.

Tyler laughed as he punched Jerome in the arm. “Knock it off, man.”

Jerome grinned and said, “Race you to the bus stop!” as he sprinted out the door. Tyler ran after him in hot pursuit.

On the bus Jerome and Tyler sat toward the back. They talked about football all the way home. Jerome said that he had heard a rumor that Tyler’s favorite player, Darrin Jackson, might be traded to Jerome’s favorite team, the Chicago Scorpions.

“No way, dude,” Tyler said, “DJ loves it in Dallas.

“But think about it, man,” Jerome protested. “Chicago’s not even a day’s drive away. We could convince our parents to take us to a Scorpion’s game this fall!”

“True,” said Tyler. “But I can’t imagine DJ not playing in Dallas!”

“Well, we’ll see,” said Jerome.

The two boys spent the rest of the ride talking about the first football games they each had gone to. Tyler’s had been a game in Dallas last year with his father. Jerome’s had been a game two years ago in Boston with his father and his uncle. With each conversation, it seemed that Tyler and Jerome had more and more in common. They both loved football, and they both thought that quarterback was the best position on the field. They talked until Tyler saw his new house down the street and knew it was his turn to get off the bus.

“Gotta go,” he said, “See you tomorrow?”

“Right, see you tomorrow,” Jerome answered.

At his stop Tyler hopped off the bus and jogged up to his front door. He saw that the sedan wasn’t in the driveway, so Tyler knew his dad wasn’t at home. Tyler lifted up the welcome mat and saw the key underneath. He let himself in the house.



Tyler made himself a snack of celery and peanut butter and sat down at the kitchen table. He retrieved his copy of *Sports Weekly* from his backpack and opened it. As he sat there eating his snack and reading his magazine, Tyler realized he was smiling. Although his day hadn't started out the way he'd hoped it would, it had certainly taken a turn for the better when he had met Jerome.

After about an hour of reading his magazine, Tyler thought he should probably start on his homework. He decided to work on his Spanish homework first. He sat at the kitchen table, translating English words and phrases into Spanish. As he was working the phone rang. He picked it up.

"Hello?" he said.

"Hey Tyler, it's Dad."

"Hey Dad!"

Tyler's father must have heard the excitement in Tyler's voice. He asked, "Did you have a good day at school, or something? You seem more chipper than usual."

"Dad, I had a great day!" Tyler exclaimed.

“Great son. Tell you what. I’ve got to finish up a few more things here at the university. Then I’ll come home. We’ll get a pizza, and you can tell me all about it!” his dad said.

“Okay Dad,” Tyler said and then hung up. He sat back down to his homework and studied until his dad came home.

His dad opened the door carrying an extremely hot and very enticing pizza. “Hey Dad,” Tyler said, as his dad put the pizza on the counter and threw his car keys in a bowl.

“Hey Sport, what’s shaking?” his dad asked.

As Tyler and his dad ate dinner, Tyler told his dad all about his day. He told his dad about meeting Jerome and about playing catch. Then Tyler actually heard himself say that he was pretty excited.

Tyler’s dad’s eyes glistened. He began, “I told you this morning I was proud of you, Tiger, and I meant it. You really did a good job today, Sport.”

Chapter 5

When Tyler awoke the next morning, he felt incredibly refreshed. He had slept very well the night before. It had been one of the best night’s sleep he’d had since his parents had started going through the painful divorce process. As he woke up he didn’t even need to press the snooze button on his alarm clock. When the alarm went off, he threw off the covers and sat up, swinging his feet over onto the floor.

He sat and stretched, feeling the warm morning sun peek through his window. Tyler crossed to the window and threw open the curtains. It was yet another beautiful, sunny morning in Iowa. Tyler turned around and faced his poster of Darrin Jackson.

“Not so bad, hey DJ?” he said to the poster.

“Knock ’em dead again, Tyler,” he imagined Jackson saying.

Tyler showered, dressed, and sprang down the steps to where his father was reading the newspaper. Just like yesterday morning.

“Morning Dad,” Tyler said. “How’d you sleep?”

“Just fine, Tiger,” his dad said, and Tyler was in such a good mood that he didn’t even mind his dad calling him “Tiger.” His dad continued, “I’ve got an early meeting for new faculty this morning. Any chance you can take the bus to school today, Tyler?”

Tyler thought about Jerome, who would be on the bus. “No problem, Dad. I can ride the bus.”

Tyler read the sports pages while his dad got ready to go to the university. Tyler’s dad left, and Tyler rinsed off his cereal bowl and put it in the dishwasher. He then grabbed his backpack. In it he put his lunch that his dad had prepared before he left, his dog-eared copy of *Sports Weekly*, and his schoolbooks. When it was time Tyler went outside and walked down to the bus stop.

The bus finally came, rumbling up Gittings Avenue and belching black, smoky exhaust into the air. The driver opened the door, and Tyler climbed aboard. Tyler looked down the aisle, searching for Jerome. He looked at all the unfamiliar faces, and Jerome’s wasn’t one of them. Tyler then realized that Jerome wasn’t on the bus. “I wonder why?” Tyler thought to himself as he grabbed an empty seat next to a young girl in a pink dress and pigtails. Tyler rode all the way to school in silence, while all the other kids laughed with their friends and talked about the upcoming day.

Many of the kids spoke about a pep rally that would be held the next day in the gymnasium. From what Tyler could tell by the conversations, the Ames Elementary football team was going to be introduced. Most of the team consisted of sixth graders, Tyler supposed, so he didn’t recognize any of the names from his

class. But still, Tyler was mildly excited about seeing his school's football team. Tyler figured he might not know the players, but football was football.

When Tyler got to school, he ambled down the hallway toward Mrs. Yarborough's class, not really looking forward to being there. "Where is Jerome?" Tyler thought to himself. He wondered if something bad had happened to him. When the morning bell rang Tyler sat down at his desk. He absentmindedly took out his math textbook, not really paying attention.

At morning recess Tyler approached Mrs. Yarborough. "Hi, Mrs. Yarborough," he murmured.

Mrs. Yarborough looked up from her desk. "Oh, hello Tyler. Can I help you?" she asked.

Tyler said, "I was just wondering. Do you know where Jerome is today?"

Mrs. Yarborough said, "Oh, yes. His mother called the principal's office this morning. Jerome is sick today. Apparently, he has some sort of stomach problem. But he should be better tomorrow."

"Oh, okay," said Tyler. He went back to his desk, and took out his copy of *Sports Weekly*. He started to leaf through the pages, looking for articles he hadn't read yet.

"Tyler?" he heard Mrs. Yarborough call from across the room. Tyler looked up from his magazine. "Why aren't you outside playing with the other students?" she asked.

"Well, uh, I don't know," Tyler stammered, feeling embarrassed.

"Tyler, I want to make sure you fit in here at Ames Elementary," Mrs. Yarborough continued. "Is there anything I can do to help? I know how hard it can be to be the new kid in school."

"Uh, well, I'll be okay," Tyler said. "I'm sure I'll make lots of friends," although he didn't really believe that he would.

"Okay, Tyler. Just let me know what I can do to help," Mrs. Yarborough said.

"Thanks," Tyler said, and then continued leafing through his magazine.

He didn't read for long, however, because the bell rang, ending recess. All the other students filed back into the classroom, laughing with each other and having a good time. Tyler felt lonely, and he also felt jealous. Tyler tried to pay attention as Mrs. Yarborough said, "*Es hora para Español,*" and the students took out their Spanish books.

At lunchtime Tyler found the same empty seat far from the crowds of laughing students that he had found the day before. He took his lunch and his copy of *Sports Weekly* out of his backpack. He found the last article he hadn't read yet and started reading. About halfway through the article he heard someone say, "Hey, new kid." Tyler looked up from his reading.

There were five students that Tyler recognized from class, although he didn't know their names. They didn't look very friendly. Tyler said, "My name's Tyler, *not* new kid. What do you want?"

The biggest kid in the group said, "Whatever. We just want to know, why do you talk so funny? I mean, you *tawlk lahk this.*" The big kid imitated Tyler's Texas accent.

Tyler stood up angrily. "That's how people talk in Texas," he said, clenching his fists. "Do you want to make something of it?" As Tyler glared at the kid who had made fun of his accent, he thought about all the times he had gotten into trouble at his old school. Tyler was worried. He knew that he had a temper, and that his temper sometimes got him into trouble. He had been at Ames Elementary for only a day, and here he was about to get into a fight. But still, Tyler knew he couldn't let someone make fun of the way he talked.

The big kid must have seen the look in Tyler's eyes. Suddenly the big kid started backing away. "Whatever, dude. Chill out," he said as he took steps backward. The kids in the group all looked at each other and then turned around and walked away.

His fists still clenched and his jaw quivering, Tyler sat back down and opened his magazine, but he couldn't concentrate. Things weren't looking so good.

Chapter 6

Fortunately, the rest of the school day continued uneventfully. Nothing much happened. Tyler noticed that none of the kids were staring at him, as they had been the day before. Tyler thought that perhaps he had frightened them. Tyler tried to forget about what had happened at lunch. He concentrated on Mrs. Yarborough's lectures.

At the end of the day before Tyler walked to the bus stop he approached Mrs. Yarborough. "Mrs. Yarborough?" he whispered.

She looked up from the papers she was grading, "Yes Tyler?" she said.

Tyler said, "I was just wondering. Do you have Jerome's phone number? I want to call him and make sure he's okay."

Mrs. Yarborough smiled and said, "I think that's a wonderful idea, Tyler!" She opened a desk drawer and took out an Ames Elementary notebook. Below the name of the school were the words "Student Directory." She flipped through the pages until she came to the last names that started with S. "S." "Simpson, Simpson," she whispered as her finger scanned the list of student names and numbers. "Ah, here it is. Jerome Simpson." Mrs. Yarborough jotted a telephone number down on a sticky note. Tyler looked at the number, folded it up, and put it into his back pocket.

"*Gracias, Señora Yarborough,*" Tyler said.

Mrs. Yarborough smiled. "You're very welcome, Tyler. See you tomorrow."

Tyler walked out of the classroom toward the buses. He found the bus he had gotten on yesterday and climbed aboard. He found an empty seat near the front of the bus, and rode home in silence. He could hear some of the kids behind him whispering.

"That's the kid that almost fought Charlie Baker," one kid whispered.

Tyler knew they were talking about him.

"Is it really?" another kid whispered.

"Yeah. Apparently Charlie made fun of the way he talked."

Tyler tried to ignore what the kids were saying, but it was difficult. When the bus arrived at his stop, Tyler stood up. The kids immediately stopped whispering when Tyler stood up and turned around. Tyler glared at the kids in the back of the bus, but just for a moment. Tyler was trying to get his point across without saying a word: Don't whisper about me! Then he turned around and disembarked.

Tyler jogged toward his front door, noting that his dad's sedan was in the driveway. That meant his dad was home. Tyler opened the front door, walked inside, and threw down his backpack.

"That you, Tyler?" his dad called from the den.

Tyler realized he was shaking. He tried to stop his voice from quivering as he called, "Yeah, Dad. It's me."

"How was school?" his dad called.

"Fine," Tyler answered, trying to sound upbeat, although the day certainly hadn't been fine.

It apparently worked, because his dad called, "Good! Make yourself a snack and I'll finish grading these papers."

Tyler didn't feel like a snack. He felt like talking to somebody friendly about what had happened at school and on the bus. Tyler didn't want to bother his dad. He knew his dad had been going through some hard times, and he assumed his dad needed time to adjust to *his* new school, just like Tyler did. Tyler remembered the sticky note in his back pocket. He pulled it out and looked at the number. Tyler walked over to the phone. He dialed Jerome's number.

Jerome answered the phone. "Hello?"

"Hey Jerome, it's Tyler," Tyler said.

"Hey Tyler, what's up?"

"Nothing much, man, how are you feeling?" Tyler asked.

Jerome answered, "Oh, better, thanks. I had a nasty stomachache this morning, but I feel better now. How was your second day at school?"

Tyler told Jerome all about the kids at lunch. He told Jerome all about how he'd felt when the kids were whispering behind him on the bus ride home. Jerome listened as Tyler told the story. Tyler thought it was nice to have somebody who understood. Jerome had been the new kid before, and Tyler had every reason to assume that Jerome had gone through the same sort of problems. When Tyler was finished, Jerome started to speak.

"That's lousy, man. That kid at lunchtime. Was he tall with spiky, blond hair?" Jerome asked.

Tyler thought about it and answered, "Yeah, he was."

"That's Charlie Baker," Jerome said. "Let's just say he's not my best friend. Don't pay any attention to him, okay?"

"Okay," Tyler said, although he wasn't sure he felt much better.

Jerome continued, "Anyway, we'll toss the pigskin around a little bit at lunch tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay," Tyler answered, "See you tomorrow." Jerome said goodbye and hung up the phone. When Tyler hung up the phone, he turned and saw his father standing in the kitchen doorway.

His dad said, "I couldn't help but overhear what you said to Jerome, Tyler. Do you want to talk about it?"

Tyler shook his head. "Not really, Dad. I'm doing my best not to think about it," he said.

His dad seemed a little hurt. "Well, okay," his dad said, "but you know where to find me if you change your mind. It's good you've already made at least one friend already, though, isn't it?"

"I guess so," Tyler said.

Chapter 7

The next morning, Tyler woke up hoping that the day would be better than the last. He looked up at his poster of Darrin Jackson. “What do you think, DJ? Will today be any better than yesterday?” he asked the poster.

Tyler imagined Darrin Jackson saying, “It’s got to be, Tyler. Just do what I do when times get rough. I just focus, put my head down, and carry the ball to the end zone. That’s what you’ve got to do.”

Tyler agreed. Like he did most mornings, Tyler got dressed and had breakfast with his dad. He packed his lunch in his backpack, and when the time came he went out to the bus stop. This morning when he climbed aboard the bus, he was happy to see Jerome sitting in a seat toward the middle of the bus.

“Hey, over here! I saved you a seat” Jerome called. Tyler smiled and sat down next to Jerome. Jerome asked, “How’d you do on your Spanish homework from a couple of days ago?”

Tyler said, “Mrs. Yarborough didn’t grade them yet, but I think I did okay. I could translate most of the words and phrases pretty well, I think. You?”

Jerome said, “Well, let’s just say I’m relieved I had an extra day to work on it. I was having some trouble with it, but I think I figured out most of it.” Jerome and Tyler discussed Jerome’s homework as they rode the rest of the way to school.

When they got to school, Jerome and Tyler walked into the busy classroom and sat down. The two boys paid attention to Mrs. Yarborough as the morning wore on. When the morning recess bell rang, Tyler walked over to Jerome. He said, “Hey Jerome, do you want to pass the football around a bit?”

Jerome answered, “Yeah, okay, but I have to take care of something first. I’ll meet you out there.” Jerome reached into his backpack under his desk and handed Tyler the football.

“Okay,” Tyler said, taking the football. He walked out the door to the playground outside. He lingered around in the sunshine, waiting for Jerome. Tyler surveyed the playground and imagined that some of the kids running around were members of a football team during training camp.

As he looked around he noticed Jerome talking to Charlie Baker, the kid Tyler had had problems with yesterday. “I wonder what they’re talking about?” Tyler thought to himself. “Are Jerome and Charlie friends?” Tyler certainly hoped they weren’t. Tyler wasn’t certain he could be friends with someone who was, in turn, friends with someone like Charlie Baker. Tyler stared at Jerome and Charlie. Then he noticed something odd. Although Tyler couldn’t hear what Jerome and Charlie were saying, Tyler noticed that Jerome started shaking his fist at Charlie. Jerome definitely had a menacing look about him as he shook his fist.

Tyler walked a little closer to try to overhear what they were saying. As he got closer, he overheard Charlie say, “Whatever, dude,” as he threw up his hands and walked away. Jerome turned around and walked over toward Tyler.

“Hey, throw me the ball Tyler!” Jerome called.

Tyler called back, “What was that all about?”

Jerome said, “Oh, nothing much, really. Let’s just say that Charlie shouldn’t bother you much anymore.”

Tyler was a bit upset. He didn’t want to be known as the kid who couldn’t stand up for himself and needed others to protect him. He said, “I can fight my own battles, Jerome.”

Jerome looked hurt. “What do you mean? Man, we’re both new kids in this school. The way I see it, we’ve got to stick together,” he said.

Tyler supposed that he could see Jerome’s point. Also, Tyler didn’t want to make his only friend in this school mad. So he said, “Okay, thanks. All right, go out for a long pass.”

Jerome winked as he backpedaled to a spot about 50 feet away from Tyler. Tyler launched the football into the air toward Jerome. Jerome, with his long legs, loped toward where the ball would come down and timed it perfectly. He got there right as the ball fell into his arms. “Nice pass!” Jerome called.

“Thanks!” Tyler said as Jerome threw the ball back toward him. Tyler imagined that he was a wide receiver going out for a pass in the last seconds of the championship game. Tyler ran toward where he thought the ball would fall and imagined hearing the crowd roar as he leapt into the air to catch the spiraling ball.

“Nice catch!” Jerome shouted, and Tyler threw it back to him. The two boys threw the ball back and forth for about five minutes. Each throw was longer than the one before it, and soon Tyler and Jerome were standing about 70 feet apart. Tyler’s arm was beginning to ache from throwing the ball so hard. Tyler thought to himself, “I wish that we had a locker room, instead of a classroom, to go into. I could sure use some ice for my shoulder.”

Finally the bell sounded, ending recess. Jerome jogged over to Tyler, and the two of them walked into class together. As they walked through the door, neither of them noticed that Coach Sanders, the coach of the school’s football team, had been watching them from behind his dark sunglasses and scratching his thick, gray beard.

Chapter 8

The day of the football team’s pep rally had come. It was scheduled to be held between morning recess and lunch. So when Jerome, Tyler, and the rest of the class came back from recess, Mrs. Yarborough made the announcement. All classes would line up alphabetically and march to the gymnasium. Mrs. Yarborough had all of her students line up, and she walked ahead of them as they paraded from Room 111 down to the gymnasium. Since Jerome and Tyler’s last names started with different letters, they couldn’t sit next to each other.

When all the Ames Elementary students arrived at the assembly and were seated, Principal Wilkins stood up at the podium and addressed the crowd. “Quiet down, students, quiet down,” she said, holding her hands out with her palms down. The students eventually quieted down, although it took a while. Principal Wilkins continued, “Students, I would like to introduce you to our Ames Elementary football coach, Harold Sanders. He has a special announcement for you all, so please welcome him. Mr. Sanders, please come up to the podium.”

She offered the microphone to Coach Sanders, a tall, middle-aged man with a thick, gray beard and a baseball hat. Coach Sanders took the microphone and cleared his throat. He began speaking, and his loud voice boomed through the gymnasium.

“Students of Ames Elementary, I have a special announcement to make. In previous years, only sixth graders were allowed to try out for our school’s football team. This year, however, we have decided to make a change. Starting next Monday, we will hold tryouts for any and all fifth graders who want to try out for the team. In order to try out, you will need to take home a permission slip for your parents to sign and bring it back with you on Monday. Your teachers have copies of the permission slips in your classrooms.”

The boys in Mrs. Yarborough’s fifth grade class erupted into cheers and applause, as did the boys in Mr. Miller’s fifth grade class. Tyler couldn’t believe what he had heard. Could he really try out for the football team? Tyler looked

down the row of students in his class toward Jerome. Jerome leaned forward to look at Tyler. Jerome's eyes were wide open, and he was grinning broadly. Jerome gave Tyler a thumbs-up sign.

Then Coach Sanders started speaking again. "So," his voice boomed, "we look forward to a great season. Come out and join us! Go Ames Elementary!" he shouted. Many of the students, especially the fifth grade boys, shouted back, "Go Ames Elementary!" Students were cheering, laughing, giving each other high fives, and generally horsing around.

Principal Wilkins returned to the podium and took the microphone from Coach Sanders. She spoke to the students. "Okay, students. Quiet down. It's time for lunch, so please walk with your classes to your classrooms and then to the cafeteria. For you fifth graders, you can obtain your permission slips from Mrs. Yarborough or Mr. Miller after lunch. But now it's time to eat."

The students filed out of the gymnasium and returned to their classrooms. Jerome met Tyler by the cubbies in Mrs. Yarborough's classroom. Jerome said, "Yo, T. Is that great news or what?" Tyler could tell that Jerome was excited. "I'm totally going to try out. What about you?"

Tyler was as excited as Jerome appeared to be. "Oh, yeah," Tyler said, "I'll totally try out too. I hope I can make it."

Jerome asked, "When you were in school in Dallas, did you play for any teams?" Tyler remembered all the fun football games he used to play on Saturday mornings at White Rock Lake Park. For a moment Tyler felt a pang of sadness as he realized how much he missed his friends. But he tried to avoid thinking sad thoughts. "Not really," he answered, "I just played on Saturday mornings with my friends. What about you?"

Jerome said, "Oh, yeah, I played in a city league in Boston last year and the year before. I was pretty sad to learn that I couldn't play here. But now I can!" Jerome found his backpack, opened it, and pulled out his brown bag lunch.

Tyler did the same thing. Jerome continued, "Let's swing by my desk and grab my football. Then we can play catch after we eat."

Jerome and Tyler walked down the hallway to the cafeteria. As they walked Tyler asked, "What position do you want to try out for, Jerome?"

Jerome looked lost in thought and then said, "Quarterback. I think I throw the ball pretty well, so I'll probably try out for that."

"That sounds good," said Tyler. "I think I'll go for wide receiver. I can catch the ball a little better than I can throw."

"That'll be good too," said Jerome. "Just think. If I make it as quarterback and you make it as receiver, we can play together! Just don't drop any of my passes when the game's on the line," Jerome joked, punching Tyler in the arm.

Tyler joked back, "Well, if it's a good pass, I'll catch it. Don't worry. Hey look, there are some empty seats over there. Let's grab them." Tyler pointed to a few empty seats toward the back of the cafeteria. The boys sat down and opened their lunches. As they ate, each one thought about the football tryouts. Both Tyler and Jerome ate fast to get more time out on the playground. For Tyler the few minutes throwing the ball back and forth were more like practice. Both boys realized they had to get serious if they were going to play against the sixth graders.

Tyler finished his lunch about the same time Jerome did. Tyler grabbed the football from Jerome and ran toward the door, shouting, "Last one to the playground's a rotten egg!"

Jerome laughed and sprinted after him.

Chapter 9

Before Tyler got off the bus that afternoon, he and Jerome made plans to meet after dinner for some more football practice. Tyler got off the bus and noticed that his dad's sedan was parked in the driveway. Tyler raced up the sidewalk and threw open the front door.

"Dad! Dad!" Tyler called. "Where are you?"

"I'm in my study, Tiger. What's up?"

Tyler hadn't even taken off his backpack yet. He ran into his dad's study and trembled as he tried to unzip the pack. "I have the best news, Dad."

His dad said, "Let me guess. You did well on your Spanish translations, ¿sí?"

Tyler stopped. "Well, yes, I did. But that's not my good news," he said as he pulled the folded permission slip from his backpack. When he had asked Mrs. Yarborough for a permission slip, Mrs. Yarborough had smiled. She had told Tyler that she thought trying out for the team was a wonderful way for Tyler to meet more people.

Tyler continued, "So they're letting fifth graders try out for the football team at school" he said as he handed the permission slip to his dad. "But you have to sign this form saying it's okay if I play football. Can I? Can I? Please?"

Tyler's dad took the slip from Tyler and pulled his reading glasses from the pocket of his shirt. Tyler's dad perused the permission slip carefully. Every now and then he would say, "Hmm, interesting," or "Is that so?" as he read the slip slowly, word after word. When he finished he looked over the rims of his glasses at Tyler. "Is this something you want to do, Tyler?" he asked.

"Yeah, it is!" Tyler could barely contain himself.

“Well then,” his dad continued as he took a pen from his desk, “I shall sign this very important document with my best pen.” As Tyler’s dad signed the document, he said in his best academic voice, “From this day forward, it shall be known that Tyler Bradford, the new kid in school, has gained the privilege from me, his father, of playing football with the students at Ames Elementary School.”

Tyler jumped up and down. “Thanks Dad! That’s awesome!” Then Tyler raced to the phone and called Jerome, reading Jerome’s number from the sticky note Tyler had taped to the refrigerator. When Jerome answered the phone, Tyler asked him if his mother had signed his football permission slip.

“Yeah, she did,” Jerome exclaimed. “Pretty awesome, huh?”

“Yeah,” Tyler said, barely able to contain himself. “So I’ll see you at my house after dinner?”

“Sure thing,” Jerome answered and then hung up the phone.

Tyler knew he’d better finish his homework before dinner, since Jerome was coming over later. Tyler bounded up the steps to his room. He opened the door and imagined that Darrin Jackson winked at him from his poster and said, “Good luck, Tyler.”

“Thanks, DJ” Tyler said and then got down to work.

Chapter 10

For the rest of the week, Tyler did nothing but get his homework done and think about football. He even borrowed a book about football basics from the school library. When he wasn't studying or practicing with Jerome, he was reading that book. He stayed up too late at night reading that book by the dim light of his small bedside lamp. He even dreamed about football. He and Jerome gave each other tips about how to throw better, how to catch better, and how to hike the ball faster.

On Friday morning, at recess, Jerome and Tyler were throwing the ball back and forth, practicing their methods. They had gotten so good that they could throw the ball almost 100 feet. As they were practicing Coach Sanders approached them.

"Hey, throw me the ball!" Coach Sanders called to Jerome. Jerome threw the ball in a perfect spiral to the coach. Coach Sanders caught the ball and shouted, "Nice pass!" Then he called Jerome and Tyler over to him. The two boys jogged over.

"Boys, my name is Coach Sanders." The two boys introduced themselves. Coach Sanders continued, "I've been watching you boys play for the last few days. I think you'd make great additions to the team. I sure hope you two are planning on attending the tryouts on Monday. If I had to guess, I'd say both of you would make the team."

"Really?" Tyler said. "That'd be spectacular!"

Coach said, "Jerome, you've got quite an arm. You can throw better than most kids your age I've seen."

"Well, thanks," Jerome said, his face turning red as he grinned.

"And you," the coach continued, looking at Tyler, "you've got great speed. You really seem to be able to know where the ball's going to land. Keep up the good work, and I'll see you boys on Monday after school."

"Thanks Coach!" Tyler called. Tyler then realized he liked the sound of that. He liked calling somebody "Coach." It made him feel like he was part of a team.

When Coach Sanders was inside, Tyler turned to Jerome. “How about that, huh? That’s pretty exciting, isn’t it?”

“It sure is,” Jerome answered. The bell sounded and recess was over. “You know, though, we’ve got to keep practicing. We can only get better.”

Tyler agreed. “Yeah, let’s practice all weekend. What time do you want to get together on Saturday morning?” he asked Jerome.

Jerome answered, “Oh, Saturday’s not good. I’ve got something I have to do with my mom. We’re going to visit some family in Illinois. We’re actually leaving right after school today.”

“Oh, okay,” Tyler said. “Sunday’s good enough. But we better get back inside, or *Señora* Yarborough will wonder where we are.”

“Don’t you mean *Señorita* Yarborough?” Jerome joked.

“Knock it off, man,” Tyler said, grinning, as the two boys walked back into school.

At lunch Tyler and Jerome kept practicing their throws and catches. Tyler was about to throw the football when he saw Charlie Baker, with his spiky, blond hair, walking over to Jerome. Tyler remembered what he had seen the last time those two boys met up, so he ran over to meet them.

Tyler heard Charlie begin to speak. “Listen Jerome. I don’t know who you think you are, but I saw you talking to Coach Sanders. You’d better not be thinking about trying out for the quarterback position. It’s mine. I’m a sixth grader, and I’ve waited a long time for this chance. You fifth graders don’t even belong on the team. It’s for us, the sixth graders.”

Tyler saw that Jerome and Charlie were standing very close, face to face. Tyler didn’t like the looks of this. Before he had a chance to say something, Jerome started shouting at Charlie.

He shouted, “Listen buddy! There’s a reason there are tryouts. It’s so the best player can play, which will help the team win. If it turns out that I’m the best player, then I’m going to play. I don’t care how long you’ve had to wait. I don’t care what grade you’re in. You got a problem with that?”

Charlie stood silently for a moment, as though he was thinking of something to say. Tyler stood silently too, not knowing what he should do. Jerome also stood silently, as though he had said his piece and needed to say no more. Eventually, after what seemed like an eternity, Charlie said, “Whatever. Just remember what I said,” and threw up his hands and walked away.

Tyler asked, “Are you okay, Jerome?” Tyler could tell that Jerome was visibly upset. He was shaking and staring at the ground.

Jerome murmured, “Yeah, I’m alright. I just don’t think that bully should be able to boss people around like that. It makes me mad.”

“Yeah, I hear you,” Tyler said. Tyler didn’t know what else to say.

Then Jerome shook his head, shrugged, and said, “Well, whatever. Let’s keep practicing.” Tyler stood there staring at Jerome for a few moments and then jogged out for a catch.

As he jogged Tyler thought about how impressive it was that Jerome could just shake off things like that and then make it seem like he wasn’t bothered. Tyler knew that was something that he himself was never good at. In fact, Tyler knew that that was one of the many reasons he had been in so much trouble at school back in Dallas. Tyler remembered how upset he had been on Monday when he first met Charlie Baker.

Tyler knew that the only reason he wasn’t still upset was football. He enjoyed playing football with Jerome more than anything else, and he didn’t want to lose that.

Chapter 11

Jerome's mother picked up Jerome from school that day to drive to the train station, so Tyler rode the bus home alone. As he rode he thought about the run-in that Jerome and Tyler had had earlier that day. Tyler tried to be fair and see what had happened from both sides.

Tyler could see how Charlie Baker might be upset because last year he hadn't had a chance to play on the football team, and he might lose his chance this year because of Jerome. But Tyler could also see Jerome's point: may the best man win. On the bus Tyler decided that he'd ask his dad for some advice. He'd see what his dad's two cents were.

Tyler's dad wasn't home when Tyler got home, so Tyler made himself a snack and sat down in front of the television. Tyler was tired from his first week at the new school, so he felt that he deserved a break from his studies and from his unofficial football practices. Tyler put his feet up and turned the television to some silly cartoon. Soon he heard his dad pull into the driveway.

His dad entered the front door and saw Tyler sitting on the couch. "Hey Sport, no football with Jerome, today?" his dad asked.

"Nah, Jerome's out of town tonight. I'm taking a break," Tyler said, "but I do have something I want to talk to you about, Dad."

Tyler's dad took off his sports jacket and loosened his tie. "Okay, shoot," his dad said.

Tyler explained what had happened on the playground earlier. He explained what Charlie had said to Jerome and how Jerome had responded. Tyler explained that he thought he could see the whole thing from both sides. When he finished Tyler asked his dad, "What do you think, Dad?"

His dad sat down on the couch and exhaled. He had listened intently to everything Tyler had said. Now he began to talk. "Well, Sport, let me tell you a story. You know this new job at the university that I just got? Well, I found out today that the faculty at the university had been forced to choose between me and another, much younger, professor. The other professor had just graduated

from school with her degree. She was looking for her very first job. Now, you remember that I already had a job at the university in Dallas. So in a way, the situation is the same. Should the university here have tried to help the younger professor who was just starting her career? They obviously thought I was a better professor, so they gave me the job. And I took it and here we are. Things are turning out okay for us. I guess I mean that sometimes, you can't judge people for the decisions that they make. If Jerome thinks that he should try out anyway, then he's doing what's best for him. At least, that's what he thinks. Does that make sense?"

Tyler thought about it and realized that it did make sense. Tyler also realized that he was glad he had spoken to his father. Tyler saw that his dad had good insight into things. Tyler said, "It does make sense, Dad. Thanks for that. I'll think about it some more and decide what I think. But your advice helps."

Tyler's dad smiled. He joked, "See, there are still some things that you young kids can learn from old codgers like me." Tyler laughed and so did his dad. Then Tyler's dad's face lit up. He jumped up from the couch. He said, "Oh, I just remembered something. I've got a surprise for you. It's something to celebrate both of us completing our first week of school!" His dad walked over to his briefcase and opened it. He pulled out an envelope.

"What's in there, Dad?" Tyler asked.

His dad said, "I've got us two tickets for the Motorcycle Show tonight. I thought it might be fun. We'll get a burger somewhere before the show, and then we'll go and watch some fancy bikes. How's that sound?"

Tyler had been to a few motorcycle shows with his dad before and he loved them. Not as much as football, of course, but they were fun. "That's awesome, Dad!" Tyler shouted. "Thanks! When are we going?"

His dad said, “Go get changed and we’ll go really soon.” Tyler bounded up the steps to his room, excited about the upcoming evening with his dad.

Tyler and his dad drove down to the hamburger restaurant near their house and had burgers and milkshakes. Tyler and his dad talked about a bunch of fun things like football, Spanish, and the students in his dad’s classes. Then they went to the motorcycle show. Tyler and his dad watched the motorcycle races. They walked around and looked at the fancy bikes. Just for a while Tyler didn’t think about the divorce, or Jerome, or Charlie Baker, or even football, and he was glad.

Chapter 12

All day Saturday Tyler and his dad worked around the house. There were still many boxes that needed to be unpacked. There was also some yard work that needed to be done: leaves needed raking, the rain gutters needed cleaning, and the car needed washing. Tyler asked his dad if he could climb up on the roof to help with the gutter cleaning.

“I don’t think so, Sport,” his dad said. “Too dangerous. You can help me wash the car, though.” That was fine with Tyler. When Tyler had been in Dallas, many of his friends had teased Tyler because Tyler enjoyed working in the yard. But when Tyler was raking leaves, mowing lawns, or washing the car, he didn’t think it was work. He thought it was fun. When Tyler washed the car, his dad would let him tune in the sports talk radio station on the car’s dashboard radio, and Tyler would listen to the people on the radio talk about the nation’s most recent sports news.

So that Saturday as Tyler’s dad climbed around on the roof, cleaning out the gutters, Tyler sprayed the car with the hose. When Tyler finished that, he filled a bucket with soapy water and scrubbed the car down. As he scrubbed

Tyler listened to sports talk radio from the car. While Tyler was wiping down the car's right-front fender, he heard something from the radio that made him stop in his tracks.

The local sports jockey announced that a group of professional football players would be visiting elementary football programs all through Iowa and other midwestern states. When Tyler heard that they would be visiting schools in Iowa, he stopped to listen. The announcer listed the schools that would be on the tour. Tyler waited with bated breath. About halfway through the list, Tyler heard the announcer say, "Ames Elementary in Ames."

Tyler couldn't believe his ears! Professional football players were coming to his school? This was amazing! Tyler put down his rag and listened for more details. The radio announcer began to list the players who would be part of the tour. Tyler listened very carefully now. Would he hear what he wanted to hear?

Yes! Tyler heard the announcer say that Darrin Jackson, a running back for the Dallas Rough Riders, would be part of the tour. Tyler jumped up and down and started shouting with glee. Tyler couldn't believe it. Darrin Jackson was going to be visiting his school! Tyler listened for more details. He discovered that the tour was going to be going through his school on Monday afternoon. Tyler supposed that the players would probably be there to watch the tryouts.

Tyler imagined doing his best at the tryouts. He imagined catching one of Jerome's long passes and running for a touchdown. He imagined running right past Darrin Jackson on the sidelines, and looking up at him as he ran by. Tyler knew exactly what he would do. As he ran past DJ, he would give him a thumbs-up sign. DJ would smile, or maybe wink, and give him a thumbs-up sign in return. This was going to be great.

Tyler was jumping around and whooping it up so loudly that his dad called down from the roof, "Hey Sport! What's with all the racket?!"

Tyler called up, “Dad! Dad! Guess what?! Darrin Jackson’s going to be at my school on Monday afternoon! A bunch of pro players are traveling through Iowa visiting football programs! Isn’t that great!”

Tyler’s dad laughed. “That’s pretty cool, Tyler! You’d better make sure you can show him what you can do! You might get drafted to play for the Rough Riders next year,” he joked.

“Very funny, Dad,” Tyler called up, grinning.

Tyler could not wait for Jerome to return from his vacation that night so he could tell Jerome all the good news. Tyler ran inside and called Jerome’s house, leaving a message. “Hey Jerome, it’s Tyler,” he said into the phone. “Call me as soon as you get home.”

After Tyler finished his chores, he paced around the house all afternoon waiting for Jerome to call. As Tyler’s dad prepared dinner, the telephone rang. Tyler ran to the phone and said hello.

“Hey T, it’s Jerome,” Tyler heard Jerome say over the line. “What’s this good news you want to tell me?”

Speaking a mile a minute, Tyler told Jerome all about the pro football player tour and Darrin Jackson. Jerome was super excited too. “That’s good news, man!” Jerome exclaimed. “We better practice a lot tomorrow so us new kids can show those pro players what we’ve got!”

“You know it,” Tyler said, “How about I see you tomorrow at 10:00 a.m.?”

“Sounds good,” Jerome said, “See you then.” Jerome hung up the phone.

Tyler could barely sit still during dinner. He could barely pay attention to the baseball game that he and his dad watched after dinner. He could barely sleep that night. When he did fall asleep, Tyler dreamed football dreams.

Chapter 13

T Tyler and Jerome met at the park at 10:00 Sunday morning. They practiced all morning. Then they took a brief break for lunch at Tyler’s house. Then they practiced all afternoon until dinnertime. Tyler and Jerome threw short passes. They threw long passes. They each threw passes that the other had to run to catch. They even practiced kicking the ball, although neither of them enjoyed that as much as throwing or catching.

Jerome laughed and said, “It’s a good thing we aren’t trying out for the kicking squad, isn’t it?”

“That’s right,” Tyler said, laughing.

When they finished practicing for the evening, they started walking home. Tyler remembered that there was one thing he still wanted to discuss with Jerome, recalling the conversation he’d had with his father on Friday.

Tyler told Jerome the story his dad had told him about the young professor and the position at the university. Jerome listened, looking at the ground as they walked. When Tyler finished, Jerome began to speak.

“Well, that makes me think. Like I said, I’m not friends with Charlie Baker, and I really want to try out for the team. But on the other hand, I know Charlie’s been waiting to be on the football team as long as anyone else has. Maybe there’s room for both of us on the team. I mean, I’m still going to do my best, and I hope it works out for me, but part of me hopes that it works out for Charlie, too, you know?”

Tyler was surprised. He said, “Wow, Jerome. I didn’t think you’d care what happened to Charlie.”

Jerome chuckled. “Well, I thought about it on vacation. I like to try to see things from both sides of a story. And I guess I can see where Charlie’s coming from. I wish he wasn’t so mean to people, especially to my friends, but sometimes you can’t change people.”

Tyler thought that Jerome was pretty smart, and a really nice guy. He knew that Jerome would always make the right decision, and that Jerome would do what was best for himself, Tyler, and even the team. As they walked home, Tyler thought to himself, “I’m not sure I’ve ever had a friend like Jerome. Sure, I still miss my friends from Dallas, but I’m glad I met Jerome. I forget about my problems when I’m around him. I even forget that I’m the new kid in school when I’m around him. That’s pretty cool.”

When they reached Tyler’s house Jerome said, “Hey T, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Tyler responded, “Yeah, I’ll see you tomorrow bright and early, and it’s going to be a big day.”

When Tyler went inside for dinner, he found his dad in the kitchen cooking. “What’s for dinner, Dad?” Tyler asked.

Tyler’s dad smiled. “Well, I figured spaghetti and meatballs is the perfect meal for my star football player on the night before his big tryout!” he said as he stood over a giant steaming pot. Tyler could smell the meatballs as they cooked. He realized that he was almost famished from his long day of football practice.

“That sounds pretty good, Dad,” Tyler said as he licked his lips.

“Set the table for me, would you, Sport?” his dad asked. So Tyler set the table, and he and his dad sat down to dinner.

As he served Tyler a gigantic plate of pasta, Tyler’s dad asked, “So are you ready for football tryouts tomorrow?”

Tyler responded. “I think so, Dad. But tomorrow’s going to be a football-filled day, and I think I need a break from thinking about it. Plus my muscles ache. Can we talk about something else?”

“Sure thing, Tyler,” his dad said. As they ate, they talked about the motorcycles they had seen on Friday night. They talked about a lot of things. They discussed the classes that Tyler’s dad was teaching at the university.

As they finished eating, Tyler's dad said, "I want to talk to you about something, Tyler. I just wanted to say that I'm really proud of you for the things you've done this week. I know it's rough being the new kid, but I think you're doing a great job. And I'll bet your second week at school will be even better than your first."

Tyler choked up a little bit. "Thanks dad," he said. "I owe a lot to Jerome. I feel at home here because of him. He's a great friend."

His dad said, "He sure is. And that's what friends are for."

Tyler agreed.

Chapter 14

T Tyler was so tired from his full Sunday of football practice that he slept like a rock all Sunday night. When his alarm clock went off on Monday morning, Tyler awoke refreshed and alert. He felt ready to start his day. As he sat up in bed and stretched, he looked at his poster of Darrin Jackson. "Today's the day, DJ," Tyler said.

Tyler imagined DJ saying, "Show them what you've got, Tyler, and I'll see you later this afternoon."

Tyler said, "You certainly will." Tyler was in good spirits as he dressed, went downstairs for breakfast, and got ready for school. He sat next to Jerome on the bus, like he did every morning. The two boys made plans to go outside at recess. They walked down the halls of the school to Room 111, as they did every morning. Tyler sat at his desk, and got ready for class, like he did every morning.

But this morning turned out to be different. Mrs. Yarborough had an announcement to make. She stood in front of the class and started speaking. “*Buenos dias*, class,” she said. Some of the students responded in Spanish, and some just said good morning in plain English. Mrs. Yarborough continued, “I have finished grading your Spanish translations from last week. You all did very well. For the rest of our Spanish unit, I think it would be best if we all worked in teams on our translations. Working together is a different, but still valuable, way to learn.”

She walked up and down the class, handing out a packet of paper to each student. As she did so she said, “You’ll notice that each packet has a number at the top. This is the number of your team. I would like Team 1 to meet by the blackboard. I would like Team 2 to meet by the coatroom. I would like Team 3 to meet in the center of the room. And let’s have Team 4 meet by my desk.” Tyler received his packet of paper and saw a 4 at the top of it.

As she had instructed, Tyler and the rest of the students broke into groups. Tyler and his group pulled their desks in front of Mrs. Yarborough’s desk. Tyler realized that he didn’t really know any of the students in his group. He knew their names, but that was about it. Jerome was over with Team 1.

Mrs. Yarborough continued. “The packets I handed you are full of some difficult Spanish phrases. I would like you to work in teams to discuss the best ways to translate these words. Work as a team, because teamwork is very important. Remember to listen to each other, respect each other’s ideas, and share your knowledge with each other. You have an hour. Please begin.”

The students in Tyler’s group didn’t know where to begin. They looked at their packets, and they looked around at each other. Tyler could tell that nobody wanted to be the first person to speak.

Tyler decided to take the plunge. He cleared his throat and said, “Okay, let’s take these phrases one by one. Let’s open our packets and start with the first one.” The group opened their packets. “Does anyone have any ideas about the first one?”

Julie, a girl in pigtails, suggested a translation for the first phrase. Sung also made a suggestion. Before Tyler knew it, the whole group was working together, translating the phrases from Spanish to English. Tyler found himself as sort of a leader of the group. He would offer suggestions, and listen to other’s suggestions. He assisted the others when they were struggling. By the time the hour was up, the group had successfully figured out all the phrases. When they finished, Julie said, “Thanks Tyler. We couldn’t have done this without you.” Vladimir agreed, as did Thomas and Sandra.

Tyler’s face grew red, but he couldn’t help smiling. He said, “Well, I’m just glad I could help. I think we make a pretty good team.”

Vladimir jokingly punched Tyler on the shoulder. He said, “You’re okay for a new kid, Tyler.”

Tyler smiled and said, “Thanks a lot.”

Thomas asked if Tyler were trying out for the football team that afternoon. When Tyler said that he was, the other students in the group said they’d be there to support him.

“You don’t have to do that,” Tyler protested.

Sandra said, “Hey, that’s what friends are for.”

Tyler looked around at his group. Then he looked over at Mrs. Yarborough, who was sitting behind her desk. She tried to hide it, but Tyler could tell that she was smiling.

CHAPTER 15

At lunch Tyler and Jerome passed the football back and forth. Tyler tried to pay attention to his game of catch, but he kept thinking about what had happened during Spanish instruction. Tyler realized that things weren't so bad at Ames Elementary. In just over a week Tyler had made himself more than half a dozen new friends. As he passed the football with Jerome, he saw Vladimir and Sandra approach.

Sandra called out, "Hey Jerome, pass me the ball, would you?" Jerome looked over at Tyler. Tyler gave him the thumbs-up sign. Jerome smiled and said, "Okay, Sandra, go out for a long one!"

Sandra jogged back a few steps, and Jerome threw the ball into the air. The ball arched through the sky. Sandra jogged to the left, and as the ball approached, she leapt into the air to catch it. It was an amazing catch.

"Nice catch, Sandra!" Tyler called.

"Thanks Tyler!" Sandra shouted. "Now Vladimir, it's your turn! Here you go!" She took a few steps back, and held the ball in front of her. She then swung her leg back, and then forward again. Her foot connected with the ball with what almost sounded like a bang. The ball sailed through the air. Higher and higher it went as it drifted toward the space above where Vladimir was standing. Vladimir peered into the sun, searching for the ball. When he found it he reached out his arms and caught it.

Vladimir started running toward Jerome. Jerome prepared to tap Vladimir on the shoulder as he passed, which would mean that Vladimir was tackled. But right before Jerome reached out to the left to tap Vladimir, Vladimir instantly changed directions. Jerome fell onto the ground.

Vladimir ran a few more steps and then threw the ball on the ground. He raised his arms in a V and shouted, "TOUCHDOWN!"



From the ground Jerome was laughing. “You sure faked me out, Vladimir!” Vladimir trotted over and offered his hand to Jerome to help him up. “That was awesome Vladimir!” Jerome said as he dusted himself off.

For the rest of the lunch hour, the four kids played a makeshift game of tag football. Jerome was the quarterback, and he would throw the ball to Tyler or Vladimir. Sometimes Sandra would kick the ball, and whoever caught it would try to run by the other kids to score a touchdown. Tyler realized that this game was just as fun as any of the Saturday games he had once played with his friends in Dallas. He was having a great time, and he couldn’t wait to tell his dad.

When the lunch bell rang, Tyler and his friends walked back toward the building. As they walked Tyler had an idea. “Hey gang. Jerome and I are going to try out for the football team this afternoon. Why don’t both of you do the same?”

Sandra asked, “Do they let girls on the team?”

Jerome said, “I don’t see why they wouldn’t. You kick the ball like nobody’s business, boy or girl. You’ve got to try out. And Vladimir, you’ve got incredible speed. I can imagine you catching the ball after Sandra kicked it and scoring plenty of touchdowns!”

Vladimir and Sandra both said they would try out. But then Vladimir realized there was a problem. Neither he nor Sandra would be able to try out because they hadn't had their parents sign permission slips. Then Tyler had another idea. As they walked into the classroom, Tyler told them all to follow him. He led them up to Mrs. Yarborough's desk. Tyler began to speak.

"Mrs. Yarborough?" he said.

"Mrs. Yarborough looked up from her desk. "Why, hello children. What can I do for you?" she asked.

Tyler continued. "Well, we all have a problem. Vladimir and Sandra have decided they would like to try out for the football team, but they didn't have permission slips signed. Do you think you could send them to Principal Wilkins office? Maybe she could call their parents at work or something and get permission over the phone."

Mrs. Yarborough said, "I think that's a wonderful idea. I'll write a note for Paul in Principal Wilkins' office. He should be able to work that out."

"Thanks Mrs. Yarborough!" the four kids said in unison.

"*De nada,*" Mrs. Yarborough said, smiling. She scribbled a note on her note pad, gave it to Sandra, and sent Sandra and Vladimir down the hall.

Later during Free Reading, Vladimir and Sandra came back into the classroom as the students were reading. Tyler was reading the classroom copy of *Charlotte's Web*. When he noticed the two come back into the room, he looked up from his reading. Both Vladimir and Sandra smiled and gave the thumbs-up sign. Tyler looked over at Jerome, who was also looking at Vladimir and Sandra and smiling. Tyler was so excited. This was going to be the best afternoon ever. Not only was he going to meet his favorite player, but there was a chance that three of his new friends would make the team.

Tyler couldn't wait.

Chapter 16

The time for the tryouts finally arrived. Tyler was giddy with excitement. As Tyler and his friends watched all the other kids leave on buses for the day, Tyler told them all about how his favorite football player was going to be at the tryouts.

Sandra and Vladimir both said that they didn't know who Darrin Jackson was. But then Vladimir said that it sounded pretty cool anyway. When 3:30 came around, the four kids walked out to the football field, which was also the school's soccer field. Coach Sanders was out there, as were a bunch of sixth graders. When Coach Sanders saw Tyler and his friends, he trotted over to them.

Coach Sanders said, "Tyler and Jerome. Glad you came out."

Tyler said, "Thanks Coach. This is Vladimir, and this is Sandra. Vladimir is really fast, and Sandra is an amazing kicker. They're both going to try out too."

Coach Sanders said, "Well, the more the merrier, I think. Of course, it looks like you four are the only fifth graders. Okay, here's how this works. Kickers are trying out in about five minutes, and then running backs after that, and then receivers, and then quarterbacks. But first I have an announcement to make for the whole group. So why don't you kids follow me over to the rest of the group?"

Tyler, Sandra, Vladimir, and Jerome all followed the coach to where all the sixth graders were sitting on the field of grass. Coach Sanders picked up his bullhorn and started speaking into it. His booming voice floated across the crowd. He said, "Okay team, I have some bad news. You all might have heard that some professional football players were going to pay us a visit this afternoon. Well, I heard from the tour manager that their plane was delayed, so, unfortunately, they won't be joining us today. For anybody who had their hopes up, I apologize. But now let's get it started. Anybody who wants to try out for a kicking position, please follow me.

Tyler was heartbroken. He had been so eager to meet Darrin Jackson, and now he wasn't going to? Tyler didn't think it was fair. "Stupid flight getting canceled," he thought to himself. He was about to say something to Jerome about it when Sandra grabbed his shoulder. She whispered into his ear, "Suddenly, I'm a little nervous. What if I don't do well?"

Tyler patted her hand. He knew that right now he had to help Sandra. Reassuringly, he said, "I've seen how well you can kick the ball. Just do your best. That's all that matters. Focus on the ball, concentrate, and you'll do fine. Now go get 'em!" he said and realized that he sort of sounded like Darrin Jackson.

Sandra thanked Tyler and followed the rest of the kickers over to Coach Sanders. Tyler heard Jerome say, "Sorry about the whole Darrin Jackson thing, T."

Tyler surprised himself when he heard himself say, "Yeah, but what's important right now is that we support Sandra. Go Sandra!" Tyler yelled.

Jerome said, "You're right." Then he yelled, "Go Sandra!" too. Vladimir followed suit, and Sandra looked back at her friends. She gave them the thumbs-up sign right as Coach Sanders called her name. Sandra took the ball from the coach and kicked it as hard and as far as she could. The ball traveled farther through the air than it had at any point during lunch.

"Wow," Jerome said under his breath. "That's no joke." Then he yelled, "Way to go, Sandra!" Sandra kicked the ball a few more times, and every kick was almost perfect. When she finished, Sandra jogged back to her friends. Everybody congratulated her, even some of the sixth graders.

After a while it was Vladimir's turn to try out with the other running backs. Sandra, Tyler, and Jerome all shouted encouragement to Vladimir as it was his turn to run up and down the field with the ball. Vladimir ran pretty fast. He didn't run quite as fast as some of the sixth graders, but Tyler could tell Vladimir was giving it his all. "Way to go, Vladimir!" Tyler yelled, as did Sandra and Jerome.

When he was done, Vladimir rejoined the group. “Some of those sixth graders are fast,” Vladimir said, trying to catch his breath. “I don’t know if I’m fast enough. But trying out was fun. Thanks for the advice, Tyler!”

“Hey, you did your best, and I’m glad you had a good time,” Tyler said. The four kids discussed how the tryouts were going until they heard Coach Sanders announce that it was time for the receivers to try out. Tyler’s heart began to pound. It was his turn.

Chapter 17

T Tyler followed all the sixth graders who were trying out for spots as receivers on the team. As Tyler jogged over to the coach, he could feel his heart pounding in his ears. For the first time he actually felt nervous. Dozens of questions ran through his mind. Would he be fast enough? Would he drop the ball? Would he trip? Would the other kids, the sixth graders, be better than him? Did he even belong here?

Tyler tried to ignore those questions as he reached the coach. The coach said, “Tyler, since you’re a fifth grader, we’ll give you the first try. I’m going to have the assistant coach, Miss Fulbright, throw the ball to you. It’ll be a long throw. Catch it as best you can, and then sprint toward me after you catch the ball. I’ll judge you on whether you can catch the ball, and on how fast you can run.”

Tyler said, “Okay Coach,” and ran toward the far side of the field. He watched Coach Sanders hand the ball to Assistant Coach Fulbright, a young woman whom Tyler assumed was fresh out of college.

Tyler heard Miss Fulbright shout, “Okay Tyler, here we go.” Tyler prepared to catch the ball. As Miss Fulbright threw the ball, Tyler pretended he was at lunch, tossing the ball back and forth with Jerome. Mrs. Fulbright threw the ball into the air. It spiraled toward Tyler but a little to his left. For an instant Tyler lost the ball in the glare of the sun. Tyler jogged left, trying to figure out where the ball would land.

He searched the sky for any sign of the ball and eventually made out a brown dot against the sun. Tyler leapt into the air and brought the ball down with his hands. He tucked the ball under his arm and started running. He ran as fast as his legs would carry him. He could hear his footsteps against the short blades of grass on the field. He could hear his heart pounding in his chest. As he ran he imagined that he could hear Darrin Jackson shouting, “Go Tyler, Go!” Tyler could also hear his friends on the far sideline, cheering him on.

Tyler blasted past Coach Sanders. He heard the coach and some of the other students say, “Wow, that’s fast” as Tyler sprinted down the field. When he reached the far end Tyler threw down the ball. He shot his arms into the air and shouted, “Touchdown!” The coach and some of the other students started laughing.

“Good work, Tyler,” he heard Coach Sanders call.

“Thanks Coach!” Tyler said, beaming from ear to ear. In his head he heard Darrin Jackson say, “Nice work, Sport.” Tyler grinned.

As Tyler jogged back to his friends, he felt so good that he didn’t care that Darrin Jackson and the other pro players couldn’t be there. Tyler had followed DJ’s advice. He had focused on the task at hand. He had concentrated, and he had done his best. That was all that mattered.

Tyler reached his friends just as the coach called, “Alright, anybody who wants to try out for quarterback, come over here.”

Jerome said, “I guess it’s my turn.” Tyler could tell that Jerome was still thinking about Charlie Baker. Then Tyler noted that Charlie and Jerome were the only students who were walking toward the coach. Tyler wondered what that meant.

“Go get ’em, Jerome!” Tyler and the others shouted.

It was Jerome’s turn first. He had to throw the ball as far as he could toward Miss Fulbright. Coach Sanders handed the ball to Jerome. Jerome looked at Charlie Baker, who stood staring back at him. Jerome then threw the ball.

It was unlike any throw that Tyler had seen Jerome throw before. The ball didn’t fly nearly as far as it usually did. Miss Fulbright had to run forward just to catch the ball.

Jerome hung his head down. “Good work, Jerome,” Tyler heard the coach say, although Tyler didn’t think the coach believed what he said.

Jerome decided to stay and watch Charlie Baker’s throw. Charlie took the ball from Coach Sanders. He reached his arm back and threw it. The ball sailed through the air. It was a beautiful pass, but not nearly as beautiful, or as far, as some of the passes that Tyler had seen Jerome throw.

At that point Tyler knew that Jerome had decided to let Charlie Baker be the starting quarterback on the team. Tyler had conflicting feelings. Should he be proud of Jerome for making such a sacrifice? Should he be sad for Jerome for giving up something that he knew Jerome really wanted?

As Tyler was pondering these feelings, he watched Jerome walk over to Charlie Baker. As Jerome approached Charlie he stuck out his hand. Charlie stood there for a moment, as though he didn’t know what to do. Then, hesitantly, he took Jerome’s hand and shook it. Tyler heard Jerome say, “Good work, Charlie.”

Chapter 18

That night, Tyler told his dad all about what had happened that day. As Tyler spoke he realized that he wasn't so upset that he didn't get to see Darrin Jackson after all. Tyler realized that a lot of better things had happened on Monday, things that far outweighed not seeing Darrin Jackson. Tyler had come to learn that you have to take the good with the bad sometimes, and sometimes the good things make the bad things seem less important.

Tyler realized that a lot of bad things had happened to him over the last few months. He still missed his mom, and he still missed his old friends in Dallas. But Tyler also discovered that he was happy in Ames. He'd met a group of friends that were as nice as his old friends. He had been brave enough to try out for the football team, and he had encouraged his friends to do the same. Tyler also realized that he had watched his new best friend Jerome make a difficult but important decision. Tyler told all this to his dad. As his dad listened tears welled up in his eyes. When Tyler finished his dad said, "That's my boy. Way to go, Tyler. I'm proud of you, and I'd bet Darrin Jackson would be too." Tyler thought his dad was right. Tyler went to bed happy that night.

Overnight Coach Sanders had posted the results of the football tryouts. When Tyler and Jerome got to school, there was a crowd of students hanging around the wall outside Principal Wilkins' office. Tyler and Jerome saw Vladimir and Sandra in the crowd. Vladimir and Sandra ran over to them.

"Guess what, Tyler! Guess what, Jerome!" Sandra said excitedly. "Vladimir and I both made the team! I'm the starting kicker, and Vladimir is the second-string running back!"

Vladimir said, "Second string means I won't play every game, but I'll be able to fill in every now and then. That's good enough for me."



Tyler and Jerome congratulated their friends as they all walked toward the piece of paper. Tyler and Jerome each searched the paper for their names. Tyler found his first. “Tyler Bradford: First-String Wide Receiver.” Tyler couldn’t believe it. He was on the football team!

Then Tyler and Jerome found Jerome’s name. “Jerome Simpson: Second-String Quarterback.” Tyler looked over at Jerome. Tyler didn’t know what to say. Then he saw Jerome smile. Tyler knew why Jerome was smiling.

Jerome said, “Hey, that’s not bad. And I’ll be in sixth grade next year.” As Jerome said that Tyler saw Charlie Baker approach them. Charlie tapped Jerome on the shoulder. Jerome turned around to find Charlie holding out his hand.

Charlie said, “It’s good to have you on the team, teammate,” to Jerome. Tyler felt that Charlie seemed to believe in what he was saying.

Jerome said to Charlie, “I look forward to practicing with you—with all of you, actually.” Jerome motioned to Tyler, Sandra, Vladimir, and Charlie.

Tyler looked at Jerome. He looked at Sandra. He looked at Vladimir. Then he looked at Charlie. Everybody was congratulating everybody else. Everybody was happy. Tyler was happy too.

Tyler thought to himself, “Things aren’t so bad, being the new kid in school.”



Big Fun in the Big Easy:

A Sensory Tour of New Orleans

by Adrian Mathenia



Introduction: A Rich Historical Culture

I stood on a street that looked like it belonged in a movie. A streetcar rattled by, and I wondered if I were in the right century. A colorful dragon danced around the corner as a man in a mask welcomed me. I caught the aroma of something spicy, which made my mouth



water. While all this happened, I noticed my foot tapping to the sound of a pipe organ...a pipe organ that floated on the river! I thought about pinching myself. It all seemed like a dream. But it was no dream. I was in the city of New Orleans, and my day had only just begun.

New Orleans has been shaped by the blending of vibrant cultures: French, Spanish, Cajun, Caribbean, African, Native American, and more. Over time, this blend has created an atmosphere that is rich in history and tradition. There is much to see and do in New Orleans, so let's get ready to explore. But first, we need to learn a little history to appreciate the people and places we will discover.

Sieur de Bienville founded New Orleans in 1718. New Orleans became part of the Louisiana Territory, which was much larger than the current state of Louisiana. It included 828,000 square miles of land surrounding the Mississippi River. France owned the Louisiana Territory, including New Orleans. In 1803, the United States bought the territory in the Louisiana Purchase because they wanted to control the busy port in New Orleans and benefit from the international trading that took place there. People from all around the world came to that port seeking out the vast open land available for settlement in North America. These new residents from Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean helped create the varied mix of cultures we still see in New Orleans today.

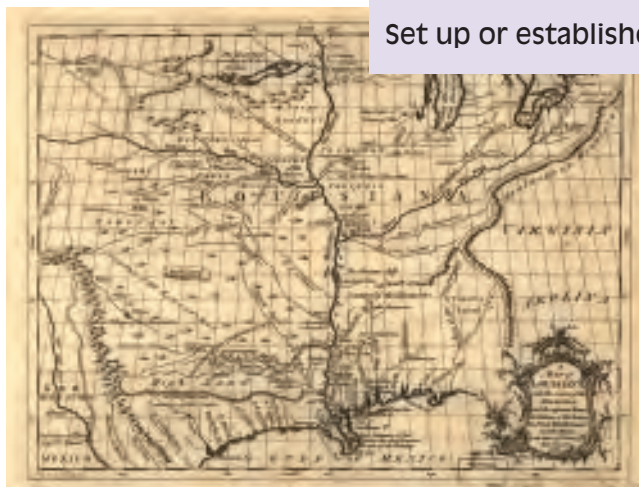


Cajun? Creole?

Cajun people are descendants of French settlers of Canada called Acadians. They were exiled in the 1750s and moved to the New Orleans area because of the heavy French influences. The word *creole* can describe a number of things, but is largely considered to be a group of people who are a blend of cultures such as French, Spanish, Native American, and African.

founded:

Set up or established.



Louisiana Territory

The Musical Landscape

For my first ride around New Orleans, I hopped into a taxi with my family. When we stopped at a red light, I rolled down my window to hear the commotion outside. People gathered around a man playing the trumpet. But he didn't just play the trumpet; he made it sing. The rapid-fire notes flew out of the horn in joyful bursts. Two



streets away, a group of men dressed alike danced down the street twirling bright umbrellas to the music of a marching band behind them. It didn't take long for me to realize that New Orleans is a very musical city.

People from many continents brought their musical styles to New Orleans. The styles combined over time to create unique new sounds. One style that stands out is called zydeco. The three essential instruments in a zydeco band are an accordion, a fiddle, and a frottoir. The rhythm of zydeco sounds like a fast train coming down the tracks. The notes of the accordion bounce up and down almost like they're telling you how to move when you listen. The melodies are joyous, and the words are sung loudly and passionately, often in French.

New Orleans is also considered the birthplace of jazz. In the 1890s, a musician named Charles "Buddy" Bolden fell in love with the African rhythms he heard performed in Congo Square. African slaves would gather in the square on Sunday afternoons to sing and perform traditional African dances. Bolden combined those rhythms with European brass instruments and African-American spirituals, and gave birth to jazz. New Orleans and jazz have been inseparable ever since. Jazz is as much a part



of the city as the people who perform it. It is characterized by fast, playful melodies. In most styles of music, the melody flows from note to note in a logical order. But in jazz, the melody often bounces all over the place in an unpredictable but controlled way. Many famous jazz musicians came from New Orleans, such as Louis Armstrong, Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, and Wynton Marsalis. Other famous New Orleans artists include rhythm-and-blues musician Fats Domino; actor, singer, and pianist Harry Connick, Jr.; and gospel singer Mahalia Jackson.

The frottoir rests across the chest. Musicians drag metal picks called scratchers down the ribs of the frottoir to make sound.



Have you heard of scat?

Scatting is an improvised vocal jazz technique in which the singer sings nonsense words and sounds to the rhythm of the song. They scat things like "boppa shoo bow wow, ba doo be doo" to mimic the sounds of the instruments.



Much of jazz is
improvised.

This means the
musicians make it up
as they go along!

Also important in New Orleans music are jazz funerals and second-line parades. Both are organized by groups called social aid and pleasure clubs. Jazz funerals are unique ways to celebrate

the life of a loved one. When a member of the club passes away, the band plays slow, sad songs on the way to the cemetery. After the funeral, the band parades out of the cemetery playing upbeat, lively jazz. The happier music commemorates the life of the lost member. Jazz

funerals still occur once in a while when a prominent musician or important town figure dies. It creates a lively celebration of life that encourages the loved ones of those who passed away.

Social aid and pleasure clubs are most famous for their second-line parades. The name of the parade comes from the tradition of the crowds, called the second-liners, forming a line and following the club members and brass section, or first-liners, who dress in bright matching suits. If someone in the first-line doesn't play an instrument, he twirls an umbrella that matches his suit. The second-liners make the parade special because they are friends, family, and complete strangers who join this classic New Orleans tradition. You can see them parading in New Orleans nearly every Sunday, except during the summer months because the weather is too hot.

Courtesy: Louisiana Office of Tourism



Spicy Southern Appetite

I could tell right away that the food in New Orleans is locally loved and respected, and integral to the city's culture. Everywhere I went, I saw another lovely restaurant with an enticing menu of local specialties. I knew I had to try some gumbo, so I slid into a booth at Gumbo Shop in the French Quarter. When the waitress sat my bowl in front of me, my nose tingled as I breathed in the cayenne, black



pepper, and sweet basil. Okra, rice, and chunks of sausage bounced around in the dark brown broth as I stirred it with my spoon. With the first spoonful, I knew I would want a second bowl.



New Orleans serves food of all varieties and tastes, but there are a few local specialties that shouldn't be missed. Gumbo is one of the many dishes that draw people into this town's many restaurants. It is served thick like a stew, and usually includes seafood and other meats such as ham or sausage. Gumbo also has plenty of vegetables. Each cook prepares gumbo a little differently by using his or her favorite ingredients. Gumbo cooks in a large pot over a fire, sometimes for hours, filling the room with the aroma of the flavors I couldn't wait to taste.

Jambalaya is another famous New Orleans dish. Jambalaya contains a meat, peppers and other vegetables, and cooked rice. As with gumbo, the specific ingredients in jambalaya change depending on the cook. For the local favorite sandwich, visitors seek out a po-boy vendor. A po-boy is a sandwich made with long French bread and fried shrimp. People eat them plain or dressed with lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise. Another beloved Cajun favorite is crawfish. Some people call them crawdads or crayfish. They're freshwater crustaceans that look like miniature lobsters. When they are boiled, they turn a dark red color. They're served all over New Orleans and are a taste of the city that shouldn't be missed.

For a sweeter treat, try the New Orleans spin on the donut: the beignet [ben-yay]. Beignets are delicious pastries that are deep fried for a crispy shell with a sweet, soft center. They don't have holes in the center like other donuts, and they are commonly rectangular instead of circular. Beignets are served hot and sprinkled with powdered sugar. Café Du Monde is the place to go in New Orleans for beignets. If you try one, you'll know right away why the beignet is the state donut of Louisiana.

Did you know?

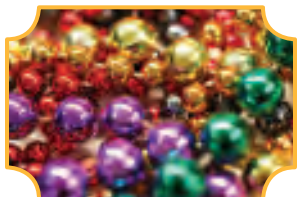
The name **gumbo** has origins in an African word that means okra. Okra is one of the vegetables commonly used in the dish.



beignet [ben-yay]:
New Orleans
donut.

Mardi Gras: A Neighborly Celebration

With my appetite thoroughly satisfied, I walked into the street where people were gathering. A bright yellow feather fan touched my face as it brushed past me. Someone handed me a plush jester hat as I felt the ground shake from the dancing all around me. Giant floats decorated as dragons, jesters, kings, and queens passed by. A girl



wearing a purple butterfly mask danced in a circle with a boy masked as an orange lion. I couldn't help but join in. After all, it was Mardi Gras in New Orleans, so I slid on the jester hat and began moving to the beat.

Mardi Gras celebrations are as connected to New Orleans as jazz music and Cajun spices. The tradition traces back to ancient Rome where men danced in the streets wearing colorful masks. The French brought the



modern celebration to New Orleans before it became an American city. In the 1700s, the French began hosting balls that were designed to be a time of celebration and feasting before the observance of the Catholic Lenten season of fasting. Mardi Gras means Fat Tuesday, and gets its name from the desire to eat as much as possible before the period when people were expected to fast.

Mardi Gras is the New Orleans celebration of community, camaraderie,

and encouragement. The most famous parade occurs in the area known as the French Quarter, but there are parades in smaller neighborhood celebrations across the city on Fat Tuesday. Neighbors come out to the streets with their children to watch the parades. Kids wait anxiously to fill up their empty bags with candy thrown from the floats. Throughout the area, barbecues turn backyards into kitchens, and lawn chairs turn front yards into living rooms. Friends and family gather to celebrate history and lasting community bonds of neighborhood, friendship, and regional pride. Many obstacles challenged New Orleans throughout the years, such as



Mardi Gras is French for Fat Tuesday.

fasting:

Refraining from eating all food or certain types of food.



Photo by Infogramation

devastating fires, battles, and most recently Hurricane Katrina, but Mardi Gras continually reunites the people of New Orleans in the face of their trials.

New Orleans has been in the business of making elaborate costumes for a long time. Even people watching the parades often wear colorful, beautiful, fun costumes. Parade watchers buy masks from one of New Orleans’s many famous mask-makers. Masks come in a wide array of colors and designs. Some look like animals, such as cats or birds, while others resemble medieval jesters. Mardi Gras costumes often include accessories like feather fans, wild hats, and colorful umbrellas. If you visit New Orleans with your family during Mardi Gras, pick up a few masks and head to one of the neighborhood parades to join in the festivities.



Photo by Infrogmation

The Must-See of the Big Easy

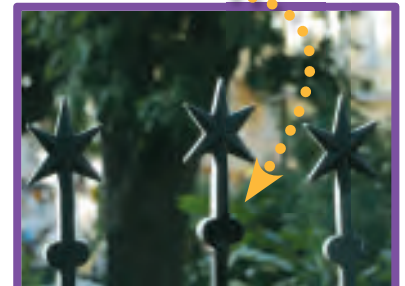
I started my next leg of the trip by hopping a ride on the St. Charles Avenue street-car line. As the historic old car clacked down the line, I saw French-inspired townhouses that boasted decorative



Photo: TonyTheTiger at en.wikipedia

wrought-iron balconies across which I imagined running my fingers. The iron twisted into elaborate designs forming arches and pillars that supported the balconies. A resident watered her potted plants that hung from the balcony. The water dripped onto the porch below, where it was quickly lapped up by her thirsty dog. The house teemed with life, which complemented the lively design.

Many mansions in New Orleans are adorned with ornate wrought-iron railings and spindle work.



St. Charles Avenue is the key street for architecture of New Orleans because it passes through Uptown. This area of New Orleans is rich with history; most of its buildings were built before 1935. This section of the city is famous for its historic mansions built with a strong European influence. Nearly all the mansions have beautiful porches on the first and second floors adorned with intricate railings and spindle work. Many of the mansions are painted white or a light tan. These colors reflect the summer sun onto the overhanging palm trees, resulting in picturesque scenes throughout the neighborhood. Remember that floating pipe organ our traveler mentioned in his first glimpse of New Orleans? That organ, called a calliope, is another must-see piece of New Orleans history. It is a steam-powered pipe organ that floats down the Mississippi River on the Steamboat *Natchez*. The organ was built in 1975, but it is an exact replica of those built more than one hundred years ago. As the organist plays, steam shoots from the pipes, producing the sound. Each pipe has a colored light that shines brightly when the pipe is played. With all the lights and steam, the calliope looks like it is breathing fire. You can hear the calliope every day at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., except on Sundays.



Conclusion

As I settled in for the night, I decide to have a beignet with a glass of milk before bed. I bit into my new favorite treat as the faint sounds of jazz drifted into my bedroom window from the porch. As I closed my eyes, I remembered the day and realized that New Orleans offered a one-of-a-kind experience. I remembered holding on to the rail in the streetcar as it bumped down the track. I could still taste all the Cajun



spices of the gumbo. My legs ached a little and reminded me that I had walked in a Mardi Gras parade with friendly dragons and jesters. All the traditions, flavors, and songs of the people of New Orleans will stay with me for a long time. This city begs to be explored, and it left me begging to stay.

New Orleans remains important and exciting through the fruits of its many cultures. It draws from its history as a diverse community and blossoms into something unique, whether it's a bowl of gumbo or a jazz legend. Now that you've taken a sensory tour of New Orleans, you can get a feel for the Big Easy and its myriad of exciting experiences. ♡



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Canada: A Visit to the Great White North

By Ryan Murphy

Canada: An Introduction

Canada borders the United States to the north.

From the Atlantic coast to Alaska, Canada spans millions of square miles. In fact, Canada is the second-largest country in the world.

It's second in size only to Russia. Canada has deserts, mountains, forests, and tundra.

Compared to the nations of Europe, Canada is a rather young nation. It's like the United States in this way. Canada is just over one hundred years old. In that time, Canada has grown to become a fascinating nation. It is full of interesting people. It has interesting legends. It has many important industries.

Canada has been involved in discussions about important world issues. As such a close neighbor, Canada is also an important ally and friend of the United States. Let's explore Canada, our interesting and fascinating neighbor to the north.



Did you know?

The name *Canada* comes from the native Inuit word *kanata*. That means village, or settlement! The Inuit are a native people in Canada.



A Quick Overview



The Maple Leaf

Canada's national emblem is the maple leaf. The maple leaf is seen on Canada's national red and white flag.



Canada has ten provinces and four territories.



Central business district of Toronto, the capital city of Ontario

Canada: Part of the Commonwealth of Nations

Let's learn some fast facts about Canada. A nation of more than 30 million people, Canada is part of the Commonwealth of Nations. England, Scotland, Australia, and New Zealand are all part of the Commonwealth. That means all these countries are under the rule of the king or queen of England. Have you heard of the queen of England? Her name is Queen Elizabeth II. Since Canada is part of the Commonwealth, Queen Elizabeth of England is also the queen of Canada.

Canada also has its own government. Canada's government works in tandem with that of England. The two governments work together to ensure that the people of Canada are cared for. But we'll learn more about the government of Canada in a later section of this text.

Canada's Capital, Provinces, and Territories

Every nation has a capital city, and Canada's capital is Ottawa (AH-tuh-wah). Canada also has ten provinces. Provinces are similar to our states. They have their own leaders. They work together. Each province also has a capital. Ottawa is in the province of Ontario (on-TARE-ee-oh). But Ottawa is not the capital of Ontario. Toronto (tuh-RAWN-toe) is the capital city of Ontario.

Canada also has four territories. These territories are like provinces, only the territories are much larger. Their governments also operate a little differently than the provincial governments do. We'll learn about these provinces and territories more in depth later.

Early Canada—the Vikings

People have lived in the part of the world that is now known as Canada for a long time. Experts believe native people have lived there for more than 10,000 years. Native people of Canada still flourish in many parts of the country today. We will learn about the native people of Canada in a later chapter.

Have you heard of Vikings? Vikings were voyagers from the northern parts of Europe. They came from the areas now known as Sweden and Norway. They were a seafaring people. That means they explored the world in sailing ships. The Vikings were the first Europeans to visit Canada. They settled on a large island just off the northeastern tip of mainland Canada. They settled there around 1,000 CE. This island, now called Newfoundland, is in the North Atlantic Ocean. The Vikings didn't stay there very long. They were there about five years before moving on. The Vikings left behind clay pots, weapons, boats, and buildings. Scientists have learned much about the Vikings and early Canada from this settlement. For hundreds of years after the Vikings, there were no European settlements in Canada. But eventually that would change forever.

Later History—the French

In the sixteenth century, the French settled in eastern Canada, also called Atlantic Canada. They settled in places very near where the Vikings had settled hundreds of years before. The French established fur trading routes throughout eastern Canada. The French used the St. Lawrence River, an important river that runs from the Atlantic Ocean, to travel deep into the unknown parts of Canada. These parts were unknown to people in Europe, if not to the natives. These fur trading routes led to the building of communities. Soon, Canada was known as New France.

Canada's History



Vikings in Canada

The Viking settlement in Canada is the only settlement in North America that actually proves Vikings visited. The Vikings left much evidence that proves they were there.



Woodcut of fur traders in the 1650s by Arthur Herring, National Archives of Canada

Canada's History *continued*



Alberta fur trader, 1890s

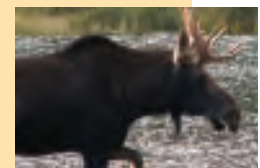
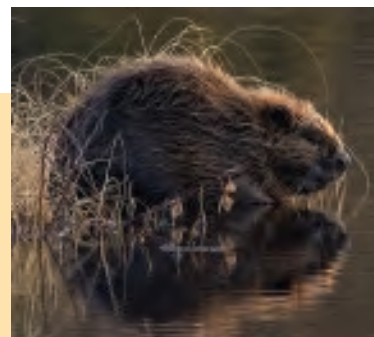
• Around the same time, England was involved in its own quest to explore and map out North America. England had also set up fur trading routes and communities in Canada. The Hudson's Bay Company, perhaps the largest fur trading company the world has ever known, did much business in Atlantic Canada.

• Unfortunately, both England and France felt that their communities could not coexist in Canada. As a result, many skirmishes and conflicts between French and British troops broke out. To end the conflict in 1763, France finally surrendered its territory in Canada to the British. This happened with the Treaty of Paris. The treaty effectively turned all of eastern Canada into British territory. To this day, however, much of the French influence is both seen and heard. In fact, Canada has two official languages, English and French.

• After the Treaty of Paris, the English took over. They slowly and steadily moved westward over the years. They explored new places and built cities across the wide expanse that is now modern-day Canada. Canada officially became the country it is today on July 1, 1867.

Fur Trading in Early Canada

In early Canada, people hunted muskrat, musk ox, caribou, moose, elk, and wolf. People wanted the furs of these animals.



Canada's Role in the Commonwealth of Nations

So we learned how Canada came to be part of the Commonwealth of Nations, or part of the British Empire. Queen Elizabeth II is Canada's official head of state.

Queen Elizabeth has an official representative in Canada. This person is called the governor general. The governor general has two major purposes. First, he or she is responsible for speaking for the queen about matters important to Canada. The governor general is authorized to make decisions for the queen. Second, the governor general is responsible for notifying the queen about important decisions and crucial things that happen in Canada. This is important because the queen lives far away, so she cannot oversee Canada all the time. Nor can she oversee all the other nations in her empire. In fact, each of the nations in the Commonwealth of Nations has its own governor general.

In 2005, Queen Elizabeth appointed a woman named Michaëlle Jean as governor general of Canada. Ms. Jean is the third woman and first person of Caribbean origin to hold this office. Her family moved to Canada from Haiti when she was eleven years old. The queen picked her on the advice of Canada's prime minister. There is no time limit on how long a governor general serves. A governor general typically serves five years, but the queen may appoint a new governor general at any time.

Politics in Canada



Queen Elizabeth II is Canada's official head of state.



Politics in Canada *continued*



Canada's Parliament building in Ottawa



Did you know?

The president of the United States can serve only two terms. The prime minister of Canada can serve as long as he or she would like to serve. One prime minister served for nearly thirty years!

The Parliament and the Prime Minister

The queen of England rules Canada, but she does not run the country. Canada also has its own government. The United States has its Congress. Canada has something similar. It's called Parliament. The United States has a president. Canada also has someone similar, a prime minister. Let's learn more about Parliament and the prime minister.

Canada's Parliament is a group of legislators (leh-ji-slay-tors), or people who make laws. There are three parts of the Parliament. First, there's the governor general. Then, there's the Senate. The governor general appoints the one hundred people in the Senate. Finally, there is the House of Commons. The people of Canada elect these 300 people. These groups work together to create and enact, or put on the books, laws that will affect all of Canada.

The prime minister is sort of like the president of Canada. Usually the prime minister is a member of Parliament, but not always. As with the House of Commons members, the people elect the prime minister. He or she works with the Parliament to pass laws. The prime minister can veto, or strike down, laws written in Parliament. The prime minister is very powerful. As of the writing of this book, the current prime minister is a man named Stephan Harper. He was elected in 2006.

Differences Between Provinces and Territories

Canada is divided into fourteen different regions. There are four territories and ten provinces. They are similar in some ways and different in others. For example, the constitution of Canada, written long ago, gives the provinces their rights and privileges. But territories are created by Parliament. This means that the provinces can govern themselves, more or less. But Parliament has much control over what happens in the territories. Let's explore the territories and then the provinces.

The Territories

The four territories are the Northwest, Yukon (YOU-con), Nunavut (NEW-nah-vut), and Nunatsiavut (NEW-nut-see-AH-vut) territories. These four territories make up most of northern Canada. The Yukon is the far northwest of Canada. It borders Alaska. The vast Northwest Territories are to the Yukon's east. Next is Nunavut, followed by Nunatsiavut. Nunavut and Nunatsiavut reach as far north as the Arctic Circle. Each territory has a capital city although all four territories are sparsely populated. Nunavut and Nunatsiavut were established to give rights and privileges to the Canadian Inuit (IN-you-it). The Inuit are a native people of Canada. We'll learn about them later. Nunatsiavut is a very new territory, established only in 2003. Each territory also elects a commissioner. A commissioner represents the people of his or her territory. He or she is elected by the people.

Canadian Place Names

Nunavut is Inuit for "our land."

Nunatsiavut is Inuit for "our beautiful land."



Nunatsiavut flag

Provinces and Territories in Canada



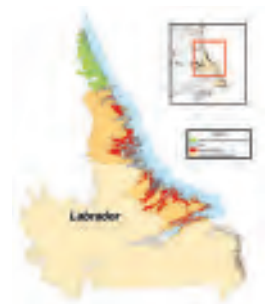
Yukon Territory



Northwest Territories



Nunavut Territory



Nunatsiavut Territory

Provinces and Territories in Canada *continued*



The Hopewell Rocks are in the Bay of Fundy, which is part of the Province of New Brunswick.

The Ten Provinces

Alberta
British Columbia
Manitoba
New Brunswick
Newfoundland/Labrador
Nova Scotia
Ontario
Prince Edward Island
Quebec
Saskatchewan

The Provinces

The ten provinces are dispersed throughout the rest of Canada. British Columbia is in the west. Nova Scotia (NO-vah SKO-shah) and Newfoundland are in the east. The others are somewhere in between. Each province has a capital city, which is usually the most populous city. All of Canada's vibrant and thriving cities are in the provinces, not in the territories. You may have heard of Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, and Calgary. They are all in provinces. The province with the most people is Ontario. Ontario is the most populated because it has Canada's biggest city, Toronto. It also has Canada's capital city, Ottawa. Each province has a lieutenant governor. These are the leaders of the province. These officers also relay information between the governor general and the people of the province. The people of the province do not, however, elect their lieutenant governors. Usually, the prime minister appoints the lieutenant governors. He or she works with the governor general to do so. The people of Canada have their voices heard when they vote for the members of the House of Commons, the most powerful part of the Parliament.



The Capital: Ottawa

Ottawa, as we've learned, is the capital of Canada. It is in southeastern Ontario just north of the border of New York state. Just over 1 million people live in Ottawa. That makes it the fourth-largest city in Canada. Because Ottawa is the capital, it's also where Parliament meets. It's also where the governor general lives. Most lieutenant governors also have residences there.

The Biggest City: Toronto

Toronto is the biggest city in Canada, with a population of well over 2 million. Toronto is just west of Ottawa. It's also just an hour north of the U.S. border and just north of Niagara Falls. Toronto has people of many different cultures, races, and ethnic backgrounds. Toronto also boasts the CN Tower, which is the tallest tower in the world. Imagine what you could see from 1,800 feet in the air!

Other Major Cities

In western Canada, Vancouver and Victoria are important cities. They're both in sunny British Columbia. Tourists flock to these places. The province of Alberta has Edmonton and Calgary. Calgary hosted the 1988 Winter Olympics. Winnipeg, Halifax, and Montreal are also important Canadian cities.



On the Web

To learn more about Canada's cities, log on to www.canada-city.ca.

Major Cities in Canada



The Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa

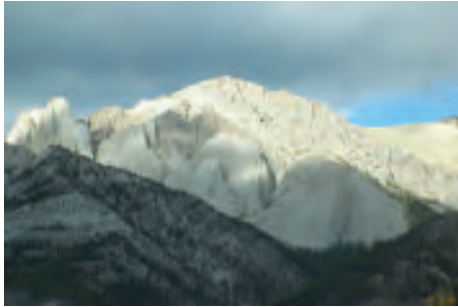


Toronto

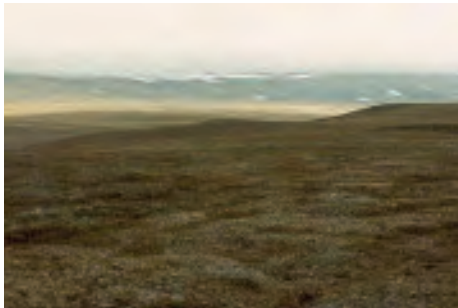


Montreal

Geography and Weather



The Canadian Rockies



The Canadian tundra



The Teslin River, Yukon Territory

Geography

As the second-largest country on planet Earth and one that spans an entire continent, Canada has many different kinds of geography. From mountains to plains, from frozen tundra to arctic icecaps, Canada has it all. Let's explore the geography of Canada.

Like the United States, Canada has the Rocky Mountains running down its western side. The Canadian Rockies are some of the highest mountains in North America. They run from the northern tip of the Yukon all the way down through British Columbia and Alberta. It is a very long range of mountains. Some of the best skiing in the world is in the Canadian Rockies.

A vast strip of tundra runs from the Arctic Circle to the tops of the border provinces (those that share borders with the United States). Tundra is flat, frozen plains. Tundra is usually quite treeless, and the soil beneath the surface never thaws out, even in the summertime. This soil is called permafrost. The Canadian tundra is sparsely populated by people although some Inuit live there. The tundra is full of wildlife. Caribou, musk ox, and wolves run wild in the tundra.

Just below the tundra are the Canadian plains and forest, which are also full of wildlife. Hunting and fishing are popular in these parts of Canada. To the east are the Maritime Provinces. The Maritime Provinces are called that because they are very close to the water. The Maritime Provinces span from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.

High Point

Canada's highest mountain, the 19,550 feet tall Mt. Logan, is part of the Canadian Rockies in the Yukon.

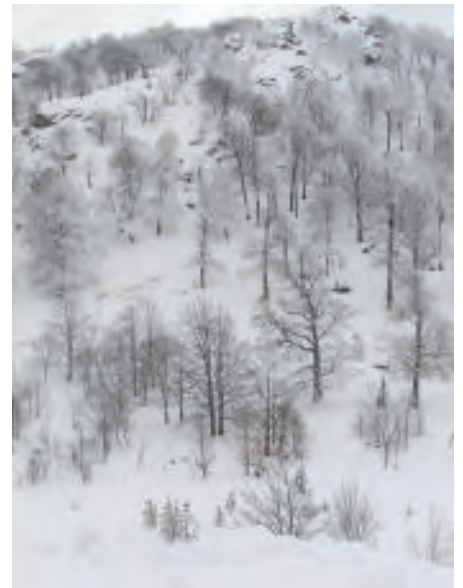
Weather

Canada also has changing climates throughout the country. This is a consequence of the country's vast size. Canada is known for cold and snow, and indeed, much of Canada often experiences severe cold. In fact, in the far northern parts of the Canadian tundra, temperatures can drop as low as -75 degrees Fahrenheit. Heavy blizzards are common across the tundra and in the Canadian Rockies, dumping several feet of snow on some places. In the freezing temperatures near the Arctic Circle, things are so cold that you shouldn't be surprised to see polar bears! Also, the Arctic Circle is so cold that in the winter, there are only two ways to send supplies to communities of the far north. You can fly in, or you can drive a truck over the frozen rivers to get there! Imagine that!

But Canada isn't all cold and snow. The southwest corner of Canada experiences hot summers. Temperatures in Vancouver in the summer can reach over 90 degrees Fahrenheit! The southeastern parts of Canada, including Toronto and Montreal, experience mild springs and falls. It's never too hot, nor too cold. So the climate in this huge country varies from place to place.

Reputation for Cold

Canada certainly has a reputation for cold and snow. In fact, Canada gets so much snow that many people call Canada "the Great White North."



Snow



High Park, Toronto

It's metric!

Canada uses the metric system to measure distances, weights, volumes, and temperatures. Figure out how cold and hot it gets in Canada in degrees Celsius, the metric measure of temperature, using the following equation:
 $\text{temperature Celsius} = (5/9) * (\text{temperature Fahrenheit} - 32)$.

Native Canadians



Inuit woman

Books about Canada

Farley Mowat, a white Canadian, wrote a series of popular books about living among the Inuit people and learning their ways. Check out his book *Never Cry Wolf* to learn about these fascinating people.

We learned earlier that the Vikings were the first Europeans to settle in Canada. We also learned that centuries later the French and English arrived and fought over the land. But we should not forget the native people that have lived in Canada for thousands of years. The indigenous, or native, people of Canada are an important part of the Canadian identity even though only 4% of Canadians claim to have native ancestry. Let's learn about these interesting peoples.

The Inuit

The Inuit are probably the most important group of native Canadians. The Inuit populate the vast open expanses of the tundra and plains of northern Canada. The Inuit are a people who depend greatly on the land for survival. Hunting and fishing are crucial to Inuit survival. The Inuit rely on animals, such as the polar bear, the seal, and the walrus, for food, clothing, and even watercraft! That's right! Animal skins are used to cover Inuit kayaks, which the Inuit use to hunt and fish.

We briefly learned about Nunavut and Nunatsiavut. These territories were created for the Inuit people. The Inuit are so important to Canadians that in these territories, one must be Inuit to hold public office. And don't forget that the words *nunavut* and *nunatsiavut* are Inuit words.

The First Nations

The First Nations are the other large group of indigenous people in Canada. They are not just one group of people, but many tribes recognized by the Canadian government. They live further south than the Inuit, with tribes living from coast to coast. Europeans came into contact with various First Nations people when they started exploring North America. The First Nations and Europeans began a very successful fur trade in the 1500s. You might recognize the names of some First Nations. The Iroquois, Algonquian, Crow, and Blackfoot tribes also live in the United States.

In Canada, there is not just an admiration for the native culture. Other aspects of Canadian culture are interesting and fascinating in many ways as well. This is a result of the French and English influences. This is also because of Canada's southern neighbor, the United States. Canadians take in a lot of American movies and television. They listen to a lot of American music too. In recent years, however, Canada has seen an increase in Canadian entertainment. Canadian television, popular music, and movies are growing in popularity. Many Canadian stars have become popular all over the world. Singers Shania Twain and Sarah McLachlan are Canadian. Actors Michael J. Fox and William Shatner were born in Canada. Actress Rachel McAdams is Canadian. Canadians are growing prouder and prouder of their country and their culture. Part of this is a result of what happened in 1967. That year, Canada celebrated its first one hundred years as a country. People all over the country began to celebrate and take even more pride in being Canadian.

Important Canadian Symbols

The maple leaf is not the only important Canadian symbol. Because of Canada's wildlife, beavers and grizzly bears are considered important symbols. They represent Canada's wilderness. The beaver is one of Canada's important symbols just as the bald eagle is one of America's national symbols. And perhaps one of the most important symbols of Canada is the Mountie. The Mountie is a red-coated member of Canada's national police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP. The RCMP is one of the most famous police forces in the world. The Mountie is its symbol. He or she is strong, proud, kind, and brave, like most Canadians.

Canadian Culture and Activities



Grizzly bears and beavers are important parts of Canada's wildlife.



The Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Canadian Culture and Activities
continued



Bilingual (English/French) stop sign on
Parliament Hill in Ottawa

French in Canada

We learned that French is one of the two official languages in Canada. As such, French is very important to Canada. Almost everywhere in Canada, everything is written in both French and English. Cereal boxes have a French side and an English side. So do milk cartons. Road signs are in French and English. At Canadian airports and train stations, you'll hear people speak in both English and French over the loudspeakers.

In Quebec (KAY-beck), an eastern province, French is the official language. In some places in Quebec, you won't find English anywhere. Road signs, milk cartons, and cereal boxes are all in French. The capital city of Quebec is Quebec City. But its official name is Cité de Québec, which is French. Also, the other major city in Quebec is Montreal, and that, too, is a French word.

In fact, French is so important in Quebec that some people in Quebec have tried to secede from the country. They want Quebec to be its own country, separate from the rest of Canada. This hasn't happened yet.



On the Web

To learn more about the French language as it's spoken in Canada, log on to www.c-l-c.ca.

Ice Hockey

Sports and recreation are important to Canada. Perhaps no sport is as important to Canadians as the sport of ice hockey. In 1994, the government declared that hockey was the official winter sport of Canada. Lacrosse, a sport originally played by the native people of Canada and the United States, is the official summer sport in Canada.

Ice hockey is played just about everywhere in Canada. In the colder parts, it's played outdoors on frozen ponds and rivers. In warmer areas, it's played indoors on imitation ponds called rinks. Hockey is played between two teams. Each team has six players. Each team has a center and two wings, who play on the left and right of the center. There are three other players who defend the goal. The point of hockey is to skate on the ice and pass a puck with a stick until you can shoot it into the opponent's goal to score.

The most famous ice hockey league in the world started with a few Canadian teams. Today there are hundreds of ice hockey teams in Canada. Small towns have teams. Big cities have teams. The teams in Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, and Ottawa even play other teams in the United States. Many kids start playing at young ages, and many dream of playing ice hockey professionally. During the Olympics, the Canadian national team often does well.



The Calgary Hitmen vs. the Lethbridge Hurricanes, junior ice hockey teams

Sports and Recreation in Canada

Go for the Gold

In the 2010 Winter Olympics, Team Canada won the gold medal in men's and women's ice hockey.



Jarome Iginla of the Calgary Flames, an NHL team

Sports and Recreation in Canada
continued



Montreal Alouettes during the ninety-third Grey Cup game at BC Place



Canadians enjoy skiing in Canada's magnificent national parks.

Canadian Football

Football is a popular sport in the United States. But few people know that football is also popular in Canada. Many people turn out every week to watch the nine professional teams in Canada's premier football league. British Columbia, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatchewan, Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa all have professional teams. Each year, these teams compete for the football championship trophy, also known as the Grey Cup. In the 1990s, these Canadian teams also played teams in the United States.

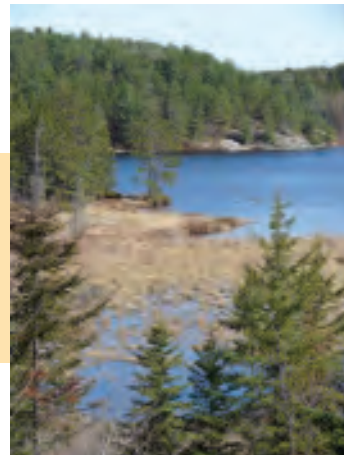
Canadian football is both similar to and different from American football. The rules are almost the same, but the field is slightly larger. Also, there are a few different ways to score. It's a fascinating game, and Canadians love it.

Outdoor Sports

Because of the wonderful outdoors in Canada, outdoor sports are also very popular. Canadians enjoy skiing, hiking, backpacking, and camping. Some of Canada's national parks offer the best skiing and camping in the world. In the Canadian Rockies, for example, the town of Banff is one of the most famous ski resorts in the whole world. There's plenty to do in Canada!

The Great Outdoors

You can learn about Canada's outdoors and its national parks at www.pc.gc.ca.



Canadian Shield, Ontario

In the United States, there are two kinds of universities. There are private schools. They are usually more costly than other schools. The public universities are somewhat less expensive. These public schools are usually run by states. In Canada, all universities are run by the government. All universities are considered public universities. They all cost the same. Compared to American private universities, Canadian universities are quite inexpensive.

Some of the best schools in the world are in Canada. In Montreal, you'll find McGill University. The University of Toronto is also a fabulous place to study. The same goes for the University of Western Ontario, the University of British Columbia, and King's University.

The universities in Canada train young Canadians to be doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. All residents of Canada can attend these schools. As a result, Canada is considered a very educated and successful country. In fact, Canada is one of the most highly educated nations in the entire world. Education and professional opportunities are yet two more reasons why Canada is such an interesting place to live.



A math lecture

Education in Canada



McGill University Arts Building

Canada's Universities

You can learn about
Canada's universities
at www.aucc.ca.

Visiting Canada



The international boundary markers (the two columns at each side of the road) at Peace Arch Park, Surrey, BC, Canada/Blaine, WA, USA.



• Finally, one of the best things about Canada is how
• easy it is to visit! Canada and the United States share
• a border, so people can travel between the two
• countries. There are several official checkpoints along
• the border between the United States and Canada.
• There are checkpoints in Washington, Maine, Vermont,
• Michigan, New York, Minnesota, and North Dakota.

• Here's what happens at these checkpoints: You
• stop your car and explain to the agent which country
• you call home. He or she will then ask you for a
• passport or another official form of identification.
• Don't worry though! Children under sixteen only need
• a copy of their birth certificate to travel to and from
• Canada. Make sure you plan ahead, and have the right
• identification before you travel!

• Then he or she may ask you why you are visiting
• Canada. After you explain why, the agent might ask if
• you are carrying any fruits or vegetables because there
• are certain foods you can't take across the border.
• After you answer the questions, you're free to enter
• Canada! Canada, our neighbor to the north, is waiting
• to welcome you. So go explore the Great White North.
• Welcome to Canada!

Niagara Falls

The most widely used border crossings between the United States and Canada are in Niagara Falls, NY, and Niagara, Ontario. Millions of people travel across these borders each year.

