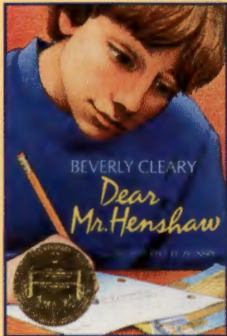


Dear Mr. Henshaw

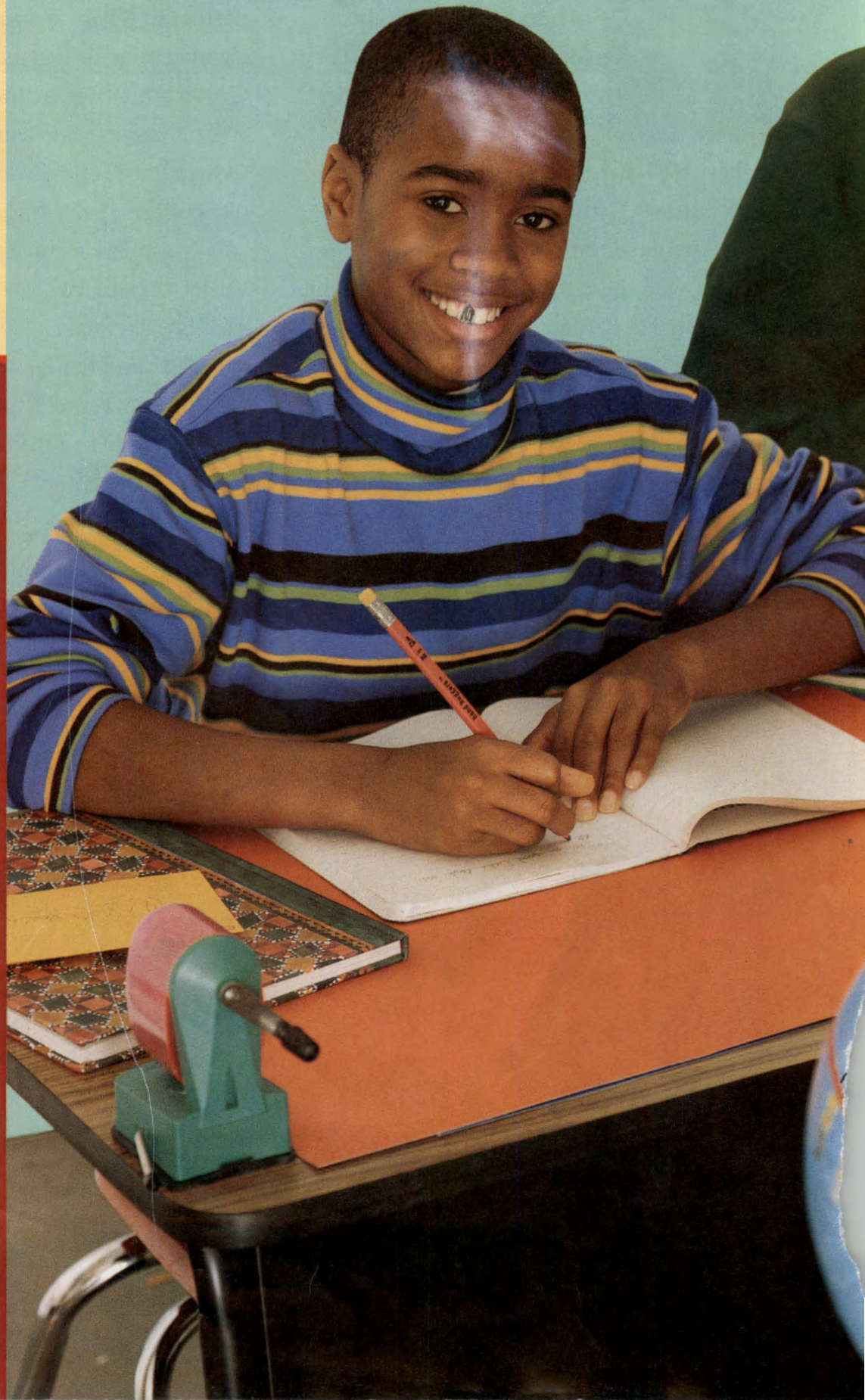



California
Standards

Standards to Achieve

Reading

- Use roots and affixes (R1.4)
- Inferences/ generalizations (R2.4)



A photograph of a child's desk. On the left, a wooden chair has a green and white soccer ball resting on it. In the foreground, a wooden desk holds a green spiral notebook, a few colorful markers, and a large globe showing the Americas. The background is a light green wall.

A World of Writing



Writing plays a big part in the life of Leigh Botts, the main character in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*.

Consider the kinds of writing you do, at home or at school. Then ask yourself how writing makes a **difference** in your life.

Do you keep a **diary** or journal? If so, how is it valuable to you? Maybe you use it to record your deepest thoughts and feelings. Maybe you use a journal to keep a record of your travels or other **experiences**. Writers also jot down ideas in journals and notebooks, and develop those ideas later. Does that sound like you?

Letter writing can be a good way to appreciate the events of your life. Writing a **description** of something you did or saw can make old memories and feelings fresh again. The person who receives your letter will enjoy reading it, too.

Have you written a story, or some other kind of creative **prose** or poetry? Leigh Botts tries writing different stories — first a fantasy, then a mystery — before he finds a kind of writing that he feels comfortable with. Think about the stories *you* have to tell.

*S*ince the second grade, Leigh Botts has been writing to Boyd Henshaw, a children's book author. First in those letters, and now in his diary, Leigh has been describing his life in a house beside a gas station in Pacific Grove, California, a town known mainly for the monarch butterflies who spend the winter there. Leigh's parents are divorced and he seldom sees his dad, a long-distance truck driver. When they spoke on the phone recently, his dad was about to go out for pizza with a lady and her son, and Leigh is worried that his dad might get married again. At school, Leigh has had to cope with an unknown thief who was stealing from his lunchbox. But he has made his first friend, Barry. And there's a writing contest Leigh is thinking about entering: the winners get to have lunch with a famous children's book author.







Saturday, March 17

Today is Saturday, so this morning I walked to the butterfly trees again. The grove was quiet and peaceful, and because the sun was shining, I stood there a long time, looking at the orange butterflies floating through the gray and green leaves and listening to the sound of the ocean on the rocks. There aren't as many butterflies now. Maybe they are starting to go north for the summer. I thought I might write about them in prose instead of poetry, but on the way home I got to thinking about Dad and one time when he took me along when he was hauling grapes and what a great day it had been.

Tuesday, March 20

Yesterday Miss Neely, the librarian, asked if I had written anything for the Young Writers' Yearbook, because all writing had to be turned in by tomorrow. When I told her I hadn't, she said I still had twenty-four hours and why didn't I get busy? So I did, because I really would like to meet a Famous Author. My story about the ten-foot wax man went into the wastebasket. Next I tried to start a story called *The Great Lunchbox Mystery*, but I couldn't seem to turn my lunchbox experience into a story because I don't know who the thief (thieves) was (were), and I don't want to know.

Finally I dashed off a description of the time I rode with my father when he was trucking the load of grapes down Highway 152 through Pacheco Pass. I put in things like the signs that said STEEP GRADE, TRUCKS USE LOW GEAR and how Dad down-shifted and how skillful he was handling a long, heavy load on the curves. I put in about the hawks on the telephone wires and about that high peak where Black Bart's lookout used to watch for travelers coming through the pass so he could signal to Black Bart to rob them, and how the leaves on the trees along the stream at the bottom of the pass were turning yellow and how good tons of grapes smelled in the sun. Then I copied the whole thing over in case neatness counts and gave it to Miss Neely.

Saturday, March 24

Mom said I had to invite Barry over to our house for supper because I have been going to his house after school so often. We had been working on a burglar alarm for his room which we finally got to work with some help from a library book.

I wasn't sure Barry would like to come to our house which is so small compared to his, but he accepted when I invited him.

Mom cooked a casserole full of good things like ground beef, chilies, tortillas, tomatoes and cheese. Barry said he really liked eating at our house because he got tired of eating with a bunch of little sisters waving spoons and drumsticks. That made me happy. It helps to have a friend.



Barry says his burglar alarm still works. The trouble is, his little sisters think it's fun to open his door to set it off. Then they giggle and hide. This was driving his mother crazy, so he finally had to disconnect it. We all laughed about this. Barry and I felt good about making something that worked even if he can't use it.

Barry saw the sign on my door that said **KEEP OUT MOM THAT MEANS YOU**. He asked if my Mom really stays out of my room. I said, "Sure, if I keep things picked up." Mom is not a snoop.

Barry said he wished he could have a room nobody ever went into. I was glad Barry didn't ask to use the bathroom. Maybe I'll start scrubbing off the mildew after all.

Sunday, March 25

I keep thinking about Dad and how lonely he sounded and wondering what happened to the pizza boy. I don't like to think about Dad being lonesome, but I don't like to think about the pizza boy cheering him up either.

Tonight at supper (beans and franks) I got up my courage to ask Mom if she thought Dad would get married again. She thought awhile and then said, "I don't see how he could afford to. He has big payments to make on the truck, and the price of diesel oil goes up all the time, and when people can't afford to build houses or buy cars, he won't be hauling lumber or cars."

I thought this over. I know that a license for a truck like his costs over a thousand dollars a year. "But he always sends my support payments," I said, "even if he is late sometimes."

"Yes, he does that," agreed my mother. "Your father isn't a bad man by any means."

Suddenly I was mad and disgusted with the whole thing. "Then why don't you two get married again?" I guess I wasn't very nice about the way I said it.

Mom looked me straight in the eye. "Because your father will never grow up," she said. I knew that was all she would ever say about it.

Tomorrow they give out the Young Writers' Yearbook! Maybe I will be lucky and get to go have lunch with the Famous Author.

Monday, March 26

Today wasn't the greatest day of my life. When our class went to the library, I saw a stack of Yearbooks and could hardly wait for Miss Neely to hand them out. When I finally got mine and opened it to the first page, there was a monster story, and I saw I hadn't won first prize.

I kept turning. I didn't win second prize which went to a poem, and I didn't win third or fourth prize, either. Then I turned another page and saw Honorable Mention and under it:

A Day on Dad's Rig

by

Leigh M. Botts

There was my title with my name under it in print, even if it was mimeographed print. I can't say I wasn't disappointed because I hadn't won a prize, I was. I was really disappointed about not getting to meet the mysterious Famous Author, but I liked seeing my name in print. Some kids were mad because they didn't win or even get something printed. They said they wouldn't ever try to write again which I think is pretty dumb. I have heard that real authors sometimes have their books turned down. I figure you win some, you lose some.

Then Miss Neely announced that the Famous Author the winners would get to have lunch with was Angela Badger. The girls were more excited than the boys because Angela Badger writes mostly about girls with problems like big feet or pimples or something. I would still like to meet her because she is, as

they say, a real live author, and I've never met a real live author. I am glad Mr. Henshaw isn't the author because then I would *really* be disappointed that I didn't get to meet him.

Friday, March 30

Today turned out to be exciting. In the middle of second period Miss Neely called me out of class and asked if I would like to go have lunch with Angela Badger. I said, "Sure, how come?"

Miss Neely explained that the teachers discovered that the winning poem had been copied out of a book and wasn't original so the girl who submitted it would not be allowed to go and would I like to go in her place? Would I!

Miss Neely telephoned Mom at work for permission and I gave my lunch to Barry because my lunches are better than his. The other winners were all dressed up, but I didn't care. I have noticed that authors like Mr. Henshaw usually wear old plaid shirts in the pictures on the back of their books. My shirt is just as old as his, so I knew it was OK.

Miss Neely drove us in her own car to the hotel, where some other librarians and their winners were waiting in the lobby. Then Angela Badger arrived with Mr. Badger, and we were all led into the dining room which was pretty crowded. One of the librarians who was a sort of Super Librarian told the winners to sit at a long table with a sign that said Reserved. Angela Badger sat in the middle and some of the girls pushed to sit beside her. I sat across from her. Super



Librarian explained that we could choose our lunch from the salad bar. Then all the librarians went off and sat at a table with Mr. Badger.

There I was face to face with a real live author who seemed like a nice lady, plump with wild hair, and I couldn't think of a thing to say because I hadn't read her books. Some girls told her how much they loved her books, but some of the boys and girls were too shy to say anything. Nothing seemed to happen until Mrs. Badger said, "Why don't we all go help ourselves to lunch at the salad bar?"

What a mess! Some people didn't understand about salad bars, but Mrs. Badger led the way and we helped ourselves to lettuce and bean salad and potato salad and all the usual stuff they lay out on salad bars. A few of the younger kids were too short to reach anything but the bowls on the first rows. They weren't doing too well until Mrs. Badger helped them out.



Getting lunch took a long time, longer than in a school cafeteria, and when we carried our plates back to our table, people at other tables ducked and dodged as if they expected us to dump our lunches on their heads. All one boy had on his plate was a piece of lettuce and a slice of tomato because he thought he was going to get to go back for roast beef and fried chicken. We had to straighten him out and explain that all we got was salad. He turned red and went back for more salad.

I was still trying to think of something interesting to say to Mrs. Badger while I chased garbanzo beans around my plate with a fork. A couple of girls did all the talking, telling Mrs. Badger how they wanted to write books exactly like hers. The other librarians were busy talking and laughing with Mr. Badger who seemed to be a lot of fun.

Mrs. Badger tried to get some of the shy people to say something without much luck, and I still couldn't think of anything to say to a lady who wrote books about girls with big feet or pimples. Finally Mrs. Badger looked straight at me and asked, "What did you write for the Yearbook?"

I felt myself turn red and answered, "Just something about a ride on a truck."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Badger. "So you're the author of 'A Day on Dad's Rig!'"

Everyone was quiet. None of us had known the real live author would have read what we had written, but she had and she remembered my title.

"I just got honorable mention," I said, but I was thinking, She called me an author. *A real live author called me an author.*

"What difference does that make?" asked Mrs. Badger. "Judges never agree. I happened to like 'A Day on Dad's Rig' because it was written by a boy who wrote honestly about something he knew and had strong feelings about. You made me feel what it was like to ride down a steep grade with tons of grapes behind me."

"But I couldn't make it into a story," I said, feeling a whole lot braver.

"Who cares?" said Mrs. Badger with a wave of her hand. She's the kind of person who wears rings on her forefingers. "What do you expect? The ability to write stories comes later, when you have lived longer and have more understanding. 'A Day on Dad's Rig' was splendid work for a boy your age. You wrote like *you*, and you did not try to imitate someone else. This is one mark of a good writer. Keep it up."

I noticed a couple of girls who had been saying they wanted to write books exactly like Angela Badger exchange embarrassed looks.

"Gee, thanks," was all I could say. The waitress began to plunk down dishes of ice cream. Everyone got over being shy and began to ask Mrs. Badger if she wrote in pencil or on the typewriter and did she ever have books rejected and

were her characters real people and did she ever have pimples when she was a girl like the girl in her book and what did it feel like to be a famous author?

I didn't think answers to those questions were very important, but I did have one question I wanted to ask which I finally managed to get in at the last minute when Mrs. Badger was autographing some books people had brought.

"Mrs. Badger," I said, "did you ever meet Boyd Henshaw?"

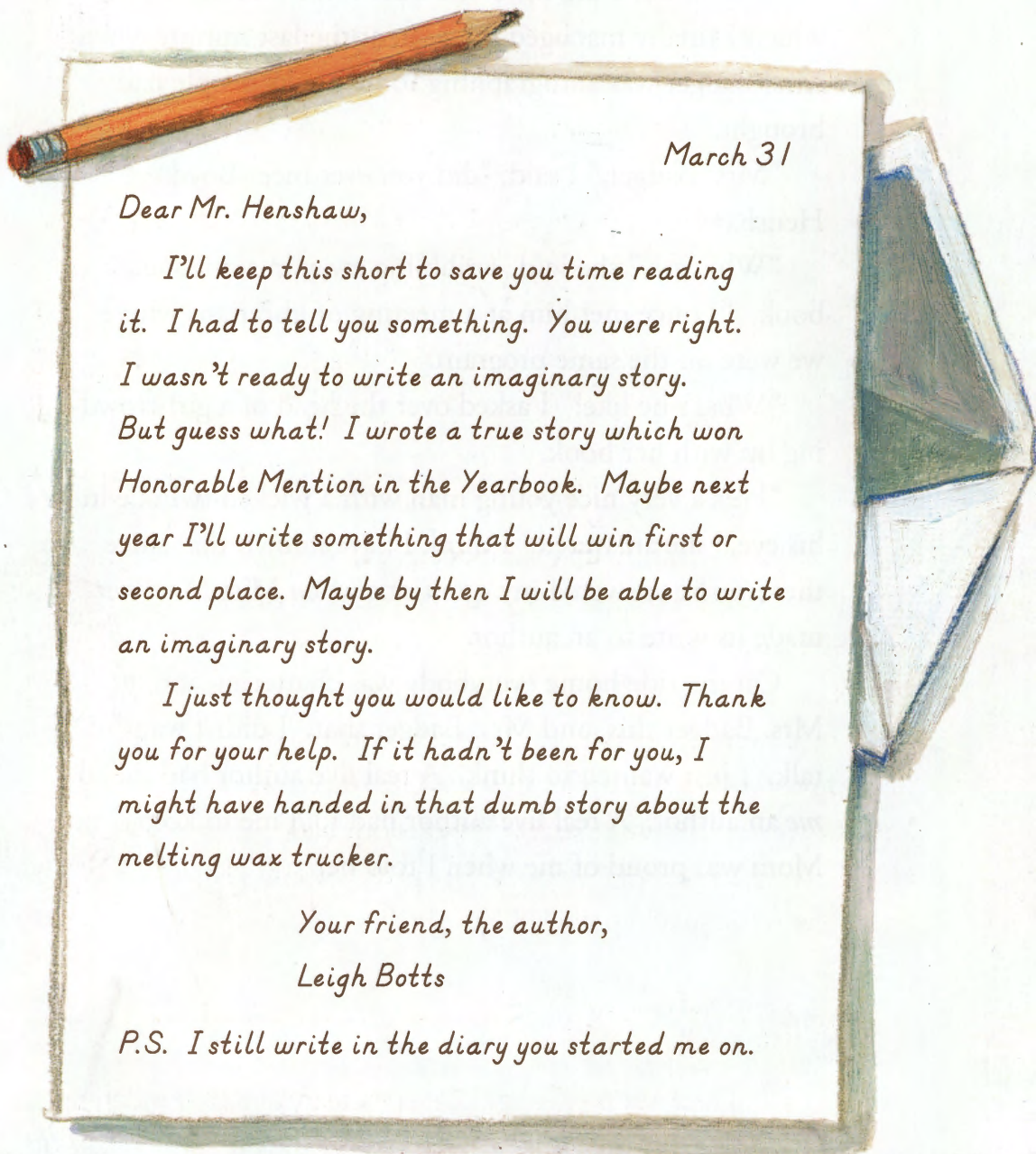
"Why, yes," she said, scribbling away in someone's book. "I once met him at a meeting of librarians where we were on the same program."

"What's he like?" I asked over the head of a girl crowding up with her book.

"He's a very nice young man with a wicked twinkle in his eye," she answered. I think I have known that since the time he answered my questions when Miss Martinez made us write to an author.

On the ride home everybody was chattering about Mrs. Badger this, and Mrs. Badger that. I didn't want to talk. I just wanted to think. A real live author had called *me* an author. A real live author had told me to keep it up. Mom was proud of me when I told her.

The gas station stopped ping-pong a long time ago, but I wanted to write all this down while I remembered. I'm glad tomorrow is Saturday. If I had to go to school I would yawn. I wish Dad was here so I could tell him all about today.



March 31

Dear Mr. Henshaw,

I'll keep this short to save you time reading it. I had to tell you something. You were right. I wasn't ready to write an imaginary story. But guess what! I wrote a true story which won Honorable Mention in the Yearbook. Maybe next year I'll write something that will win first or second place. Maybe by then I will be able to write an imaginary story.

I just thought you would like to know. Thank you for your help. If it hadn't been for you, I might have handed in that dumb story about the melting wax trucker.

Your friend, the author,
Leigh Botts

P.S. I still write in the diary you started me on.

MEET THE AUTHOR *Beverly Cleary*

Beverly Cleary took up writing because, like Mildred Pitts Walter, she couldn't find enough books about the kids she knew — “plain, ordinary boys and girls,” as she called them. Since 1950 Cleary has introduced dozens of extraordinary characters to readers, including Henry Huggins, Ramona Quimby, and Leigh Botts. Cleary's mother once started a lending library in Oregon, and Cleary went on to become a librarian herself, in Yakima, Washington. Telling stories and thinking about characters led directly to her first book, *Henry Huggins*.



Dear Mr. Henshaw was a change for Cleary to a more serious character, and critics approved. The book won the Newbery Medal in 1984. You can read more about Leigh Botts in Cleary's book *Strider*.



MEET THE ILLUSTRATOR *Nancy Carpenter*

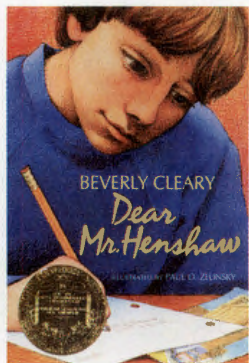
Nancy Carpenter grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She says that she learned how to draw princesses and ballerinas before she learned how to talk.

In elementary school, Carpenter's mother was her art teacher, and she often felt that her mom was hard to impress. It turns out that her mom had always liked Carpenter's artwork, but hadn't wanted to appear to be playing favorites in class!



To find out more about Beverly Cleary and Nancy Carpenter, visit Education Place. www.eduplace.com/kids

Responding



Think About the Selection

1. Why do you think Leigh decides to write “A Day on Dad’s Rig” instead of using his other story ideas?
2. Writing is important to Leigh. In what ways do you think writing helps him?
3. On page 420, Leigh says: “It helps to have a friend.” Helps how? Describe a time when having a friend has helped you.
4. What kind of person is Angela Badger? Name some story details that help reveal her personality.
5. How would you sum up the advice Angela Badger gives Leigh about writing stories?
6. What does Leigh’s behavior at the luncheon tell you about him?
7. **Connecting/Comparing** Leigh Botts uses his writing to connect with people. How do Mariah, Mom, and Yingtao make connections with people?



Expressing

Write a Letter

Like Leigh, write a letter to the author of your favorite book. Tell why you liked the book and describe what you like to write about.

Tips

- Use details from the book to tell what you liked.
- Begin a new paragraph for each new subject.
- Be sure to use correct letter form when you write your letter.

Art

Design a Book Jacket

What if Leigh's story, "A Day on Dad's Rig," were made into a book? Design a book jacket for it. Include the title, the author's name, and illustrations. View some real book jackets before you begin to find out what information to include on the front, back, and spine.

Bonus Write a description of the book and a brief author biography for the two side flaps.

Listening and Speaking

Perform a Radio Show

Picture Angela Badger hosting a radio show in which young writers call her for advice. In a group, prepare a script for the show. Create questions and answers for Mrs. Badger. Write an introduction that an announcer might say at the beginning. Then perform the radio show.



Internet

Send an E-Postcard

What books have you been reading during this theme? Which ones would you recommend? Send an electronic postcard to a friend. You'll find one at Education Place. www.eduplace.com/kids

Poetry Link

Skill: How to Read a Poem

As you read . . .

- Pause at the end of each line, but pay attention to punctuation. Ask yourself how the lines fit together.
- Enjoy the rhythm and sound of the poem. What do you “hear” in your mind?
- Ask yourself: What is the poem about? How does the poem make me feel? What pictures does the poem create in my mind? With these ideas, read the poem again.

California
Standards

Standards to Achieve

Reading

- Figurative language (R1.5)
- Analyze literary forms (R3.1)
- Describe literary devices (R3.5)

More Young Writers

Write honestly about what you know and feel strongly about, says Mrs. Badger in *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. Here are five students who have done just that.

Los ojos de mi gente

Los ojos de mi gente son brillantes
Cuando están tristes o felices
Los ojos de mi gente son las estrellas
De la media noche en el firmamento

The Eyes of My People

The eyes of my people are bright
They are sad, they are glad
The eyes of my people are stars
In the arch of the midnight sky

— DaMonique Domínguez, 11, California

To Mother

I remember those days at the old house
the house where my life began
You would weed the small garden
of blue-starry forget-me-nots and violets
tending those delicate dahlias
you so loved
I frolicked on the grass, in the sprinkler
running in and out of the junipers
both of us building —
me building forts and imaginary worlds
you building reality, building the garden
building me

— Aaron Wells, 11, Oregon

Problems

As my life comes to a mountain
I climb it
As my life comes to a river
I swim across it
As my life comes to an obstacle
I overcome it
And as my life comes to a stop sign
I rest a while

— Kevin A. Zuniga, 12, Texas

Swish

My basketball springs
like a tumbleweed jumping up and down
in the dusty afternoon
the ball goes up and up
till it encircles
the rim like a
hurricane or a tornado
beginning
the net tickles its side
as it swishes through
another three-pointer makes the day

— Chance Yellowhair, Arizona

Maputo Saturday Craft Market

It's Friday afternoon,
nearly evening.

The whirl of my bike is comforting in the silence.

One or two late workers hurrying home.

I stop my bike,
breathing in the cool evening air.

The plaza.

Today it is a barren stone circle
Patches of grass and a tree or two
is all it has to offer.

But for me, the plaza is special
My heart leaps in anticipation
of Saturday morning
when the plaza comes alive.

At first, just a vendor.

Then two,
then three.

Mostly young boys and men
Cloths are spread out on the sidewalk
Gentle hands unwrap intricate wooden carvings,
handsome wooden chests,
and hand-painted toys.

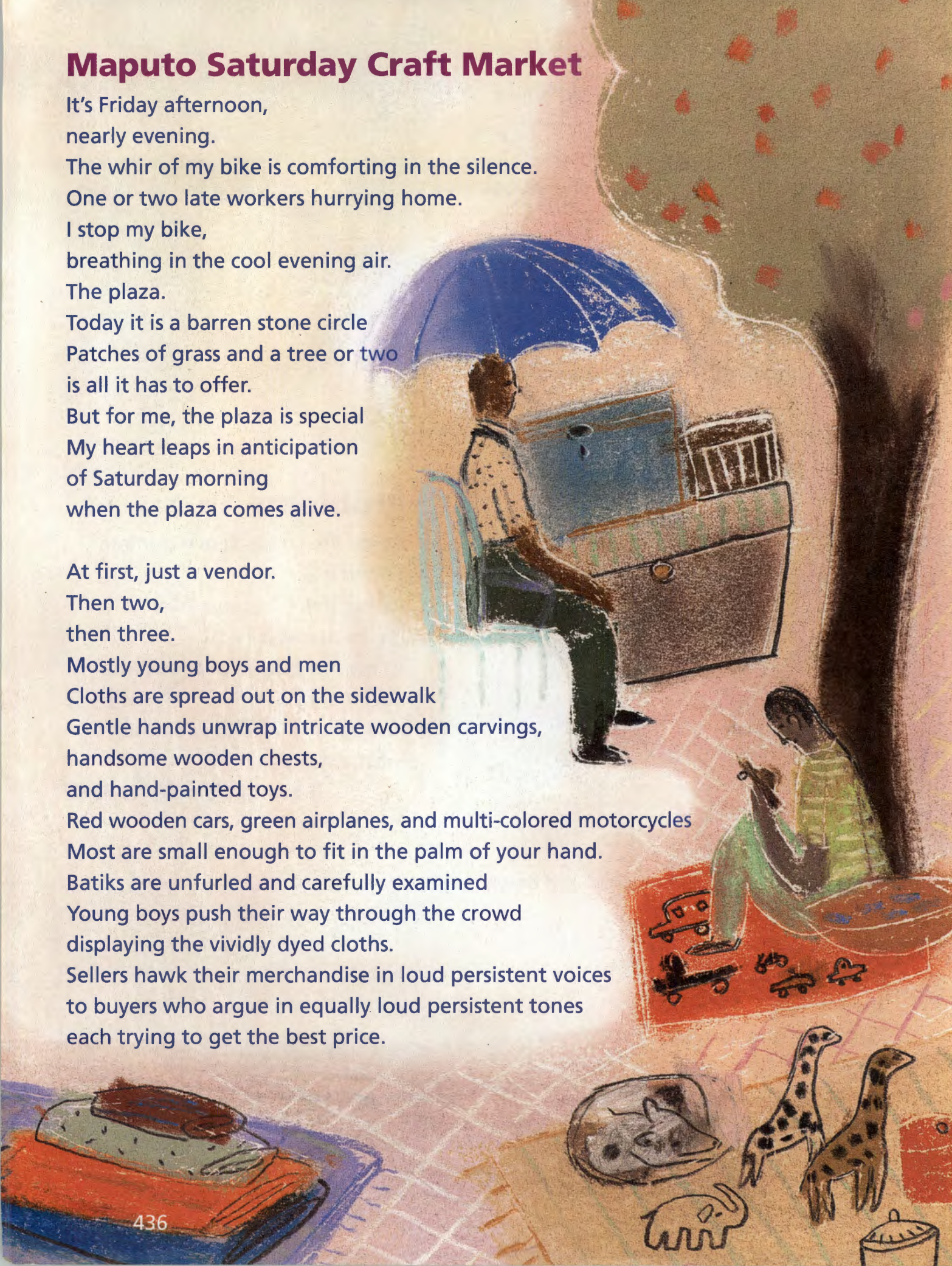
Red wooden cars, green airplanes, and multi-colored motorcycles

Most are small enough to fit in the palm of your hand.

Batik is unfurled and carefully examined

Young boys push their way through the crowd
displaying the vividly dyed cloths.

Sellers hawk their merchandise in loud persistent voices
to buyers who argue in equally loud persistent tones
each trying to get the best price.



The market bustles with activity
enveloping me.

I become a part of it,
bargaining with vendors,
admiring the finely carved masks and jewelry,
Beaded necklaces, bracelets and earrings.
Comparing and choosing until midday.

I can't wait until tomorrow!
The plaza will come alive again,
with me swept up along into it.
I pedal off into the glowing darkness
thinking of and anticipating
the Saturday morning craft market.

— *Rebecca Beatriz Chavez, 11, Virginia*
Rebecca was living in Maputo, Mozambique,
in Africa, when she wrote this poem.



Vocabulary Items

Some test items ask you to identify a word that has more than one meaning and can fit in two sentences. You are given three to five answer choices. How do you choose the correct answer? Below is a sample item. The correct answer is shown. Use the tips to help you answer this kind of test item.

Tips

- Read the directions carefully. Make sure you understand what to do.
- Read the sentences and all the answer choices.
- Try each word in both sentences. Ask yourself which word makes sense in both sentences.

Read the sentences below. Then choose the word that correctly completes both sentences.

1 Leigh wanted to _____ a sandwich for lunch.

Mariah had to _____ the flat tire on her bicycle.

- A prepare
- B fix
- C make
- D repair

ANSWER ROW 1 A ● C D

Now see how one student figured out the correct answer.

I am looking for the word that fits in both sentences. I know it isn't **D** because *repair* doesn't fit in the first sentence. I see that *prepare*, *fix*, and *make* all work in the first sentence.

I won't choose **A** or **C** because they don't fit in the second sentence. Only **B** works in both the first and second sentences. Now I see why **B** is the correct answer.

