

Name: _____

Date: _____

A Bad Start

(Sample chapter from the book THE NEW KID by Maureen Straka)

I overslept on the first day of school. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know what you're thinking. How could anyone oversleep on their first day? So **irresponsible**, blah..blah..blah.... Believe me I heard it all from my parents that morning, but it really wasn't my **fault**. I barely got any sleep the night before. And it wasn't like I stayed up late playing video games or watching TV. It was because of kid brother, Dylan. He was on a monster-in-the-closet kick, and I was at his mercy.

He woke up screaming at least ten times during the night. I tried everything to get him to go back to sleep, but nothing worked.

I put on the hall light. No luck.

I dug an old flashlight out of our toy box and let him hold it, but he shined it in my eyes like every three minutes asking, "Alex, are you awake? Did you hear that noise? I think the monster just sneezed."

Finally, he ended up crawling in my bed, sleeping with his feet in my face.

So, when that alarm clock started beeping at seven o'clock, I thought it was part of my dream. I was dreaming that an ice cream truck was driving down my street with its bells ringing. I was chasing after it waving my two dollars, trying to catch up to it. That's when Dylan rolled over and kicked me in the face, finally waking me up.

I **glanced** at my alarm clock and my eyes popped open. "Oh God! It's 7:45. No time to shower! I'll miss the bus." I shouted.

I jumped into my new jeans, tripping over my feet. Then I dug a green polo shirt, from my hamper and gave it a quick sniff. It would have to do. I squirted a blob of gel in my hand and pulled it through my hair. I was going for that "messy look", but it looked a little more like bed head.

I hurried to the kitchen to scarf down some Captain Cocoa because the bus would be there any minute. Dylan was busy playing under the table. I pulled out a chair and sat down. That's when I felt the squish.



“What the heck?” I jumped up and felt the gooey mess on the back of my pants. I looked down at the chair and saw a paint brush lying in a puddle of brown paint.

“O, God. It’s paint!” I **glared** at my mom and said, “He left his paintbrush on the chair. My pants are a mess and the bus will be here any second. You’ve got to do something!”

Dylan popped his head out from under the table and said, “Alex, did you go poopy in your pants? You should use the potty.”

I was about to let him have it when I heard the screech of the bus’s brakes outside.

“Oh God, Mom. Help!” Mom grabbed some paper towels and tried rubbing the brown stain off the back of my pants. She got most of it out, but now I had a big wet spot in the back.

“Go ahead Alex, you’re fine. It will be dry by the time you get to school.”

I didn’t have a choice. I grabbed my lunch and rushed out the door.

There were only two empty seats left on the bus, one next to my cousin Danielle and one next to my new neighbor. He was wearing those dark jeans and the goofy saddle shoes. He looked up and smiled a big hope-we-can-be-friends grin, and then he dropped his pencil case. A sea of colored pencils rolled across the floor. I knew that I should help him pick them up, but I stepped over them and kept walking. It was going to be hard enough starting middle school without Luke, but sitting with this kid could be the kiss of death. He just seemed too weird. I had to **fend** for myself. So, I sat next to Danielle, but right away I knew that was a big mistake.

Danielle giggled. “Alex, what’s wrong with your pants. You have a big wet spot on them. Honestly, Alex, you should try to make yourself look more **presentable**. After all, it is the first day of middle school.”

I **shrugged**. “Gee, thanks for the advice. You look nice, too.”

She **rattled** on about school for the entire ride. I lost interest when she started blabbing about our new teacher Ms. Riley, saying she looked like a hippie. I tried staring out the window and tuning her out. Not a great start for my first day. Things had to get better from here, right? Boy, was I wrong!

(This passage is an excerpt from the novel THE NEW KID by Maureen Straka)



Name: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary:

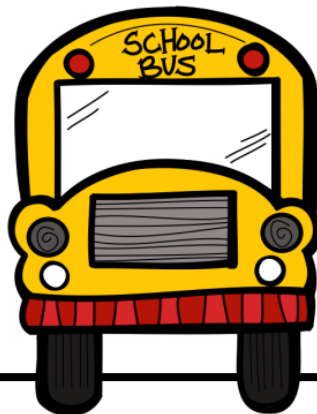
Find these words in the passage. Use context clues to help determine the meaning of each word.

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. irresponsible _____ | a. stared in an angry way |
| 2. fault _____ | b. moved shoulders up and down |
| 3. glance _____ | c. not responsible |
| 4. glared _____ | d. a quick look |
| 5. presentable _____ | e. blame |
| 6. shrugged _____ | f. acceptable; well-dressed |
| 7. rattled _____ | g. defend or protect oneself |
| 8. fend _____ | h. made noise; talked incessantly |

Choose 2 words from above. Write a sentence using each word.

1. _____

2. _____



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Questions:

1. What is the setting of the this passage? (where/when)

2. Why did Alex oversleep on the first day of school?

3. What finally woke him up?

4. How does Alex get a stain on his pants?

5. Who does Alex sit next to on the bus?

6. Do you think that Alex treats his new neighbor fairly? Why or why not?

7. What is the genre of this passage?

biography drama realistic fiction fantasy fiction

8. What is the author's main purpose?

entertain persuade inform

9. What is the point of view of this passage?

first person second person third person

10. Fact or opinion?

Alex is having a very bad first day of school. _____



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Written Response:

Alex is not very kind to his new neighbor at the beginning of this story. Later in the book, he gets to know his new neighbor and becomes good friends with him.

There is an old saying. “Never judge a book by it’s cover.” What do you think this phrase means? Do you think that this is good advice for Alex?

How could Alex be more welcoming to his new neighbor? List some things that he could do to show kindness to his new classmate.



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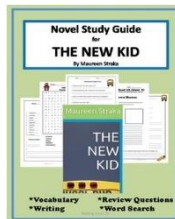
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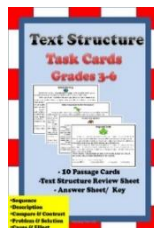
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