

Shirin

How I Became
Famous



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Illustrator: Sernur Işık



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An Incredible Day

It was an incredible day. I had the best grade in the class. This was incredible not just for me, but for the teacher, for the hardest working kid in class, and even for my friend Brittany. I have never gotten the highest grade in class. Heck, I haven't even gotten the second highest, or the fifth, for that matter. This grade came out of nowhere. When our teacher handed me back my test paper, she smiled and patted my head.

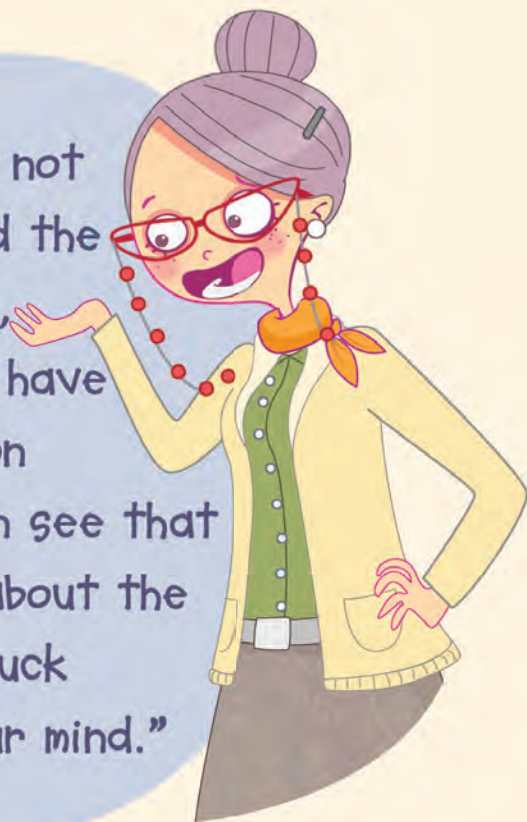


If I tell the truth, our teacher will be disappointed and I will set a bad example for the rest of class. But I know that you have to tell the truth, even when it will disappoint people.



My teacher just kept
on patiently smiling.

You may not
have studied the
night before,
but you must have
paid attention
in class. I can see that
everything about the
subject stuck
in your mind.”



“Maybe. I dunno.”

I actually knew for a fact that I hadn't studied. I didn't listen in class either. Yet I got the highest grade. And that's just because it was a multiple choice test.

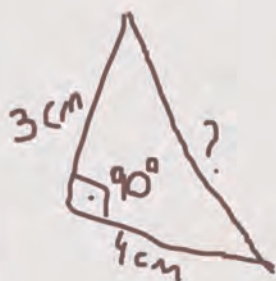
Everyone knows that kids are expected to work hard so we can get these goofy numbers called grades. Adults work hard and they get money, but us kids just get grades. That's a raw deal. The teacher asks a question and wants a precise answer in response. Not just a precise answer, she wants it to be properly punctuated in beautiful handwriting. If you write silly answers, you get a bad grade. If you write good answers with wrong punctuation, or with bad handwriting, you'll still get a bad grade.

*But multiple
choice tests
aren't like that.*



$$8 \times 6 = ?$$

Which of the
following is one
of our
responsibilities
at school?



I don't even know who invented the multiple choice test, but it's brilliant. I mean, even if you don't know a thing about the subject, you can just pick one. You never have to hand in a blank paper. What could be better than that?

While I was enjoying the incredible grade written by my name, our teacher was talking about the importance of studying. She said, "we should all study. You live in a country with a good system and you have this amazing opportunity to get an edu-

cation. Some countries don't have schools for children. They work instead of going to school, and earn a very small amount of money."



Do they really only earn a small amount of money?
I might have been wrong before.



“Yes Shirin! It’s terrible! They can’t go to school, but they have to work for pennies a day.”

“Teacher, we are at school, but we don’t even earn that small amount of money in exchange for it. We are even worse off than those other kids!”



It was as if a lightbulb went on in every head in the class. The room filled with noise. Everyone wanted to tell the teacher how bad off they were by saying how small their allowance was. Mine was the worst though. I get less allowance than anyone.