

THE KIDS OF THE POLK STREET SCHOOL

# The Beast in Ms. Rooney's Room



YEARLING

by two-time Newbery Honor-winning author

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# Chapter 1



The nine o'clock bell rang.

Richard Best pounded down the hall of the Polk Street School.

He burst into Room 113.

Ms. Rooney was telling everyone where to sit.

She smiled at Richard and pointed. "Right there behind Matthew Jackson," she said.

Richard slid into the seat behind Matthew. Matthew had stick-out ears and a wet-the-bed smell.

It was September. The first day of school.

Everything was just the same.

The same old classroom, painted up a little.

The same old Ms. Rooney with her puffy brown hair and a lot of orange lip stuff.

There was something different though. The rest of the kids.

Last year they were babies in Mrs. White's class.



Now they were in Ms. Rooney's class.

And so was he. Again.

A left-back.

The kids probably thought he was huge. Gigantic. He slid down in his seat. He pulled his head into his neck a little.

A girl sat across from him. She was wearing a pink party dress and dirty red sneakers. Her legs looked like Popsicle sticks.

She had a little white rubber horse on her desk. The kind with a horn on its head. Richard forgot what it was called.

The girl looked over at him and smiled. Maybe she thought he was the one with the wet smell.

He frowned at her. Then he pulled in his breath. Sniffing loudly, he stuck the eraser end of his new pencil up his nose.

He shook his head. The pencil swung back and forth gently.

The girl looked as if she were going to throw up. Good.

Ms. Rooney began to call the roll.

“Emily Arrow,” she said.

“Here,” said the girl in the party dress and the red sneakers.

Richard tore a piece of paper out of his new notebook. He started to draw a picture of a ship. Then a plane with bombs coming down. Then lots of bullets.

“Timothy Barbiero,” Ms. Rooney said.

Richard drew a shark with lots of pointed teeth.

Ms. Rooney said some more names.

Richard put in a sailor jumping over the side of the ship, right into the shark’s mouth. “Yee-ouch,” he said under his breath.

“Richard Best,” Ms. Rooney said.

“Beast,” Richard said.

Ms. Rooney looked up. She shook her head.

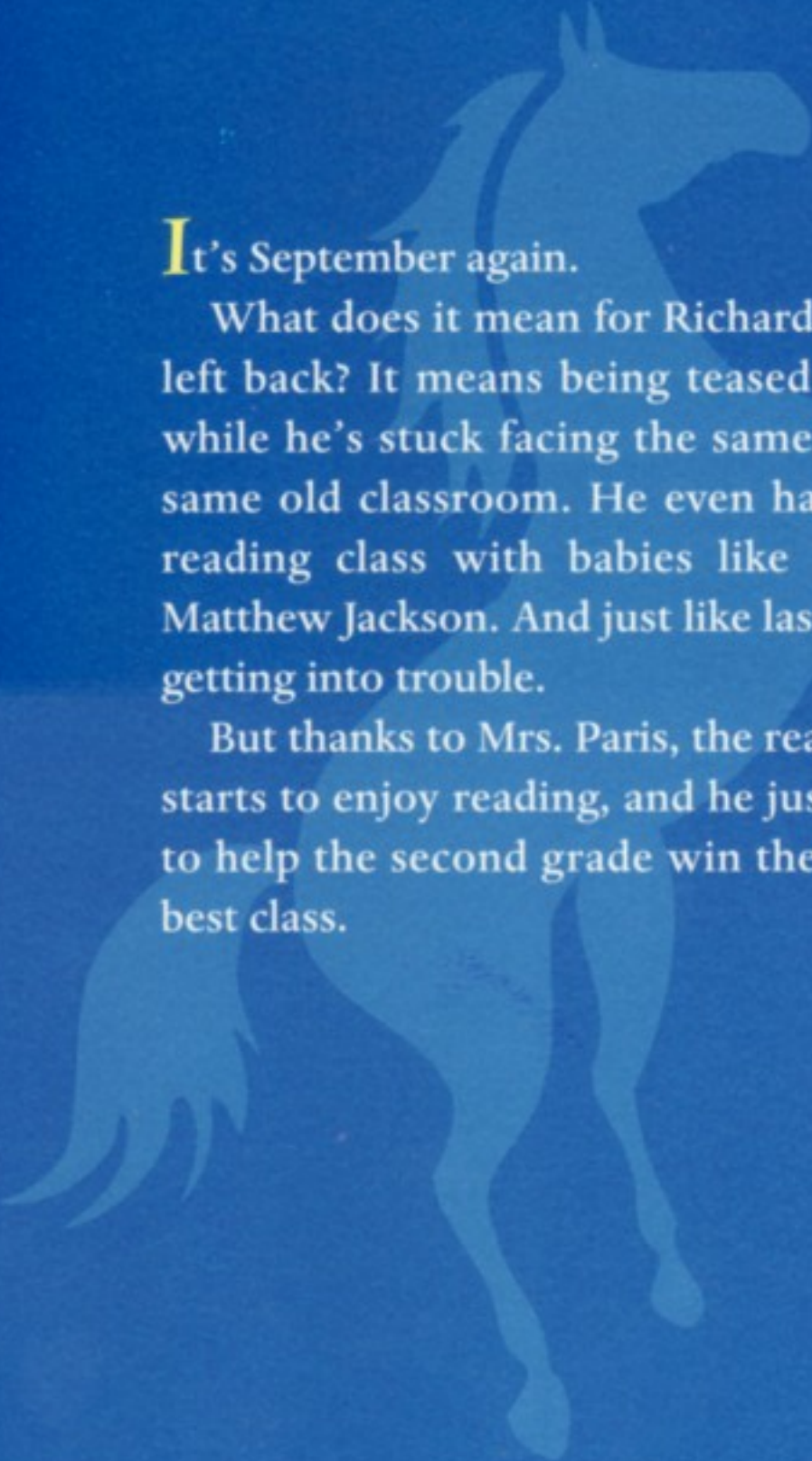
Matthew turned around. He grinned at Richard.

His teeth were big and curled on the ends.

Richard ran his tongue over his teeth. Little bitty stumpy things.

He pressed on them hard to see if they would wiggle.





**I**t's September again.

What does it mean for Richard "Beast" Best to be left back? It means being teased by his old friends while he's stuck facing the same old teacher in the same old classroom. He even has to take a special reading class with babies like Emily Arrow and Matthew Jackson. And just like last year, he can't help getting into trouble.

But thanks to Mrs. Paris, the reading teacher, Beast starts to enjoy reading, and he just might find a way to help the second grade win the school banner for best class.

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