

ROOM ONE

Edgar
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Winner

A
MYSTERY
OR TWO

Andrew Clements

Author of the award-winning two-million-copy bestseller **FRINDLE**

Chapter 1



MAY

Ted Hammond huffed and puffed as he pedaled up the small hill on the road back into town. Every morning he rode his bike to the junction of Route 92 and County Road 7 and picked up a bundle of the *Omaha World-Tribune*. And between seven thirty and eight thirty, rain or shine, summer or winter, Ted delivered the news.

The newspapers in his canvas shoulder bag felt like they weighed a hundred pounds. That's because it was Tuesday, and that meant he had an extra bundle of the county paper, the *Weekly Observer*. But at least there wasn't any snow or rain or hot dust blowing into his face.

May was Ted's favorite month for bike riding. Not too hot, not too cold. He loved October, too. But with May, summer wasn't far off, and summer meant no school. So May was the best.

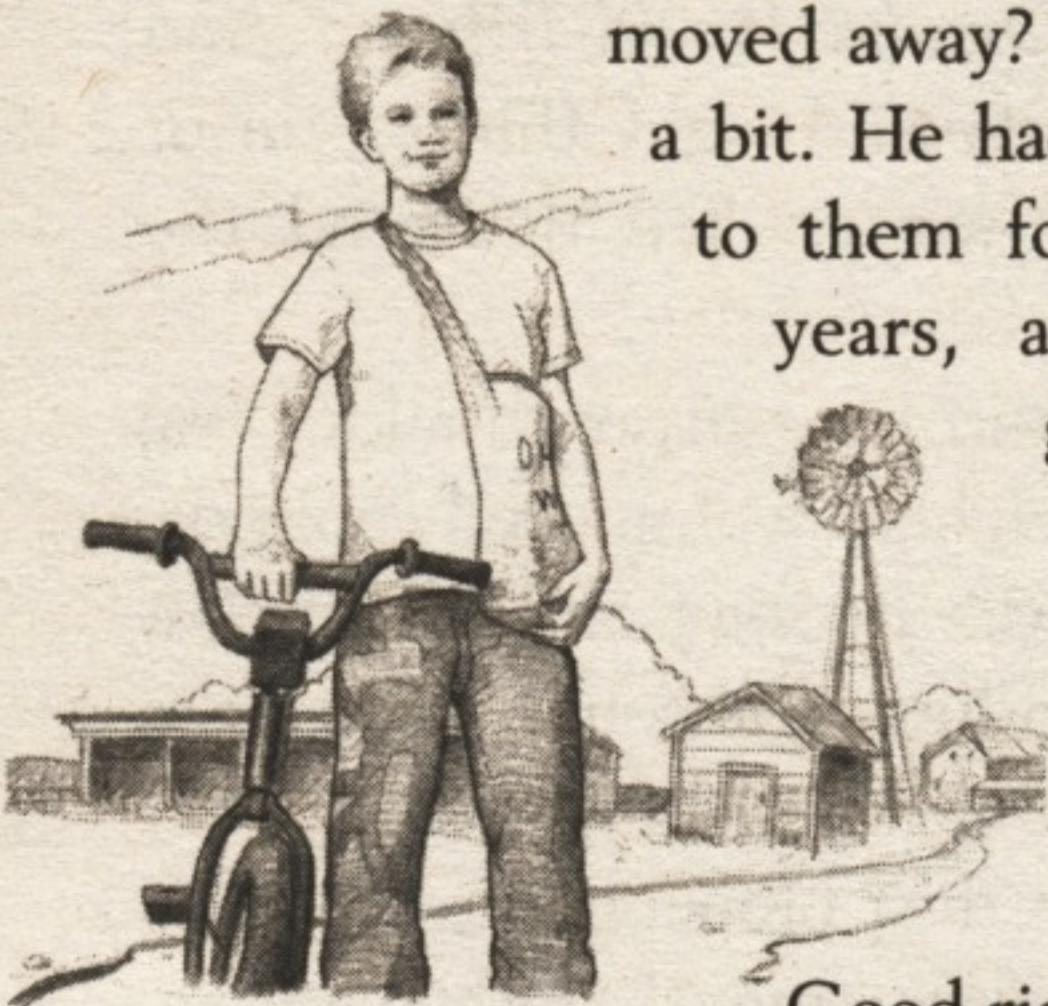
It wasn't like Ted made a lot of money delivering papers, but in Plattsford, Nebraska, any job was a great job. Even during its high point in the 1920s, Plattsford had been a small town, not much more than a speck on the Great Plains of west central Nebraska. And for years and years the population had been shrinking.

But that didn't bother Ted. He liked the leftovers, the people who were still around.

And when the Otis family had moved away? Didn't bother Ted a bit. He had delivered papers to them for two and a half years, and they'd never given him a tip, not even a dime—not even at Christmas. Plus Albert Otis had been a dirty rotten bully.

Good riddance.

Ted could ride up and down the streets and know who lived in every house—well, nearly. He didn't personally know all 108 people who lived in Plattsford, because



the whole township covered thirty-six square miles. But the in-town part, the part where he had most of his paper route, that was only about forty houses, and he'd knocked on almost every door looking for new subscriptions or collecting money from his customers. His last stop every day was Clara's Diner, right on Main Street, and a homemade doughnut and a glass of milk was always waiting for him on the end of the counter.

With a last burst of effort, Ted got his bike over the crest of the hill, and then he was coasting down the other side, the early sun bright on his face. Bluebirds singing along the fence row, the waving grass beginning to green up, the faded red paint on the Andersons' barn—Ted pulled it all into his eyes and ears, and then into his heart. He loved this place, his own peaceful corner of the world.

And when Ted happened to see a face in an upstairs window of the Andersons' house, he wanted to smile and wave and shout, "Hey! Beautiful day, huh?" But he didn't. And there was a good reason for that. The Andersons

A Face in the Window

Ted Hammond loves a mystery, and the face he sees in the window of an abandoned farmhouse is a good one. It's almost enough to distract him from the other mystery he's trying to solve—how can his one-room schoolhouse, with only five students, stay open next year?

At first there seems to be no connection between Ted's two mysteries. But Ted soon learns that in a very small town, there's no such thing as an isolated event. And the mystery of the face in the window may just be the key to saving his school.

★ "Once again, Clements captures real people and real issues. . . . Another fine work of fiction."

—*Publishers Weekly*, **starred review**

WINNER OF THE 2006 EDGAR ALLAN POE AWARD FOR
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