

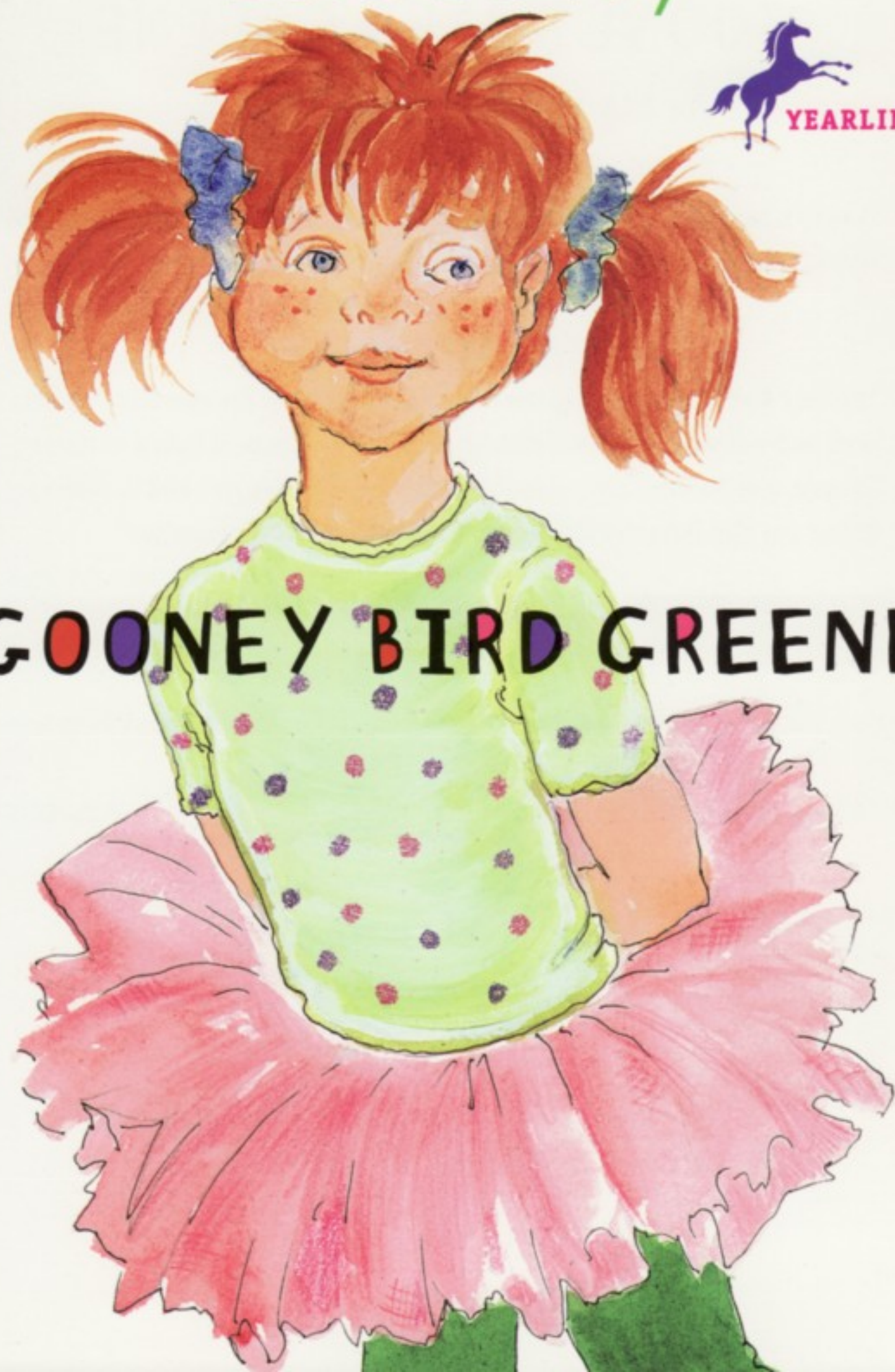
By the Two-Time Newbery Award Winner

Lois Lowry



YEARLING

GOONEY BIRD GREENE



1.



There was a new student in the Watertower Elementary School. She arrived in October, after the first month of school had already passed. She opened the second grade classroom door at ten o'clock on a Wednesday morning and appeared there all alone, without even a mother to introduce her. She was wearing pajamas and cowboy boots and was holding a dictionary and a lunch box.

"Hello," Mrs. Pidgeon, the second grade teacher, said. "We're in the middle of our spelling lesson."

"Good," said the girl in pajamas. "I brought my dictionary. Where's my desk?"

"Who are you?" Mrs. Pidgeon asked politely.

"I'm your new student. My name is Gooney Bird Greene — that's Greene with a silent 'e' at the end — and I just moved here from China. I want a desk right smack in the middle of the room, because I like to be right smack in the middle of everything."

The class stared at the new girl with admiration. They had never met anyone like Gooney Bird Greene.

She was a good student. She sat down at the desk Mrs. Pidgeon provided, right smack in the middle of everything, and began doing second grade spelling. She did all her work neatly and quickly, and she followed instructions.

But soon it was clear that Gooney Bird was mysterious and interesting. Her clothes were unusual. Her hairstyles were unusual. Even her lunches were very unusual.

At lunchtime on Wednesday, her first day in the school, she opened her lunch box and brought out sushi and a pair of bright green chopsticks. On Thursday, her second day at Watertower Elementary School, Gooney Bird Greene was wearing a pink ballet tutu over green stretch pants, and she had three small red grapes, an avocado, and an oatmeal cookie for lunch.

On Thursday afternoon, after lunch, Mrs. Pidgeon stood in front of the class with a piece of chalk in her hand. "Today," she said, "we are going to continue talking about stories."

"Yay!" the second-graders said in very loud voices, all but Felicia Ann, who never spoke, and Malcolm, who wasn't paying attention. He was under his desk, as usual.

"Gooney Bird, you weren't here for the first month of school. But our class has been learning about what makes good stories, haven't we?" Mrs. Pidgeon said. Everyone

nodded. All but Malcolm, who was under his desk doing something with scissors.

"Class? What does a story need most of all? Who remembers?" Mrs. Pidgeon had her chalk hand in the air, ready to write something on the board.

The children were silent for a minute. They were thinking. Finally Chelsea raised her hand.

"Chelsea? What does a story need?"

"A book," Chelsea said.

Mrs. Pidgeon put her chalk hand down. "There are many stories that don't need a book," she said pleasantly, "aren't there, class? If your grandma tells you a story about when she was a little girl, she doesn't have that story in a book, does she?"

The class stared at her. All but Malcolm, who was still under his desk, and Felicia Ann, who always looked at the floor, never raised her hand, and never spoke.

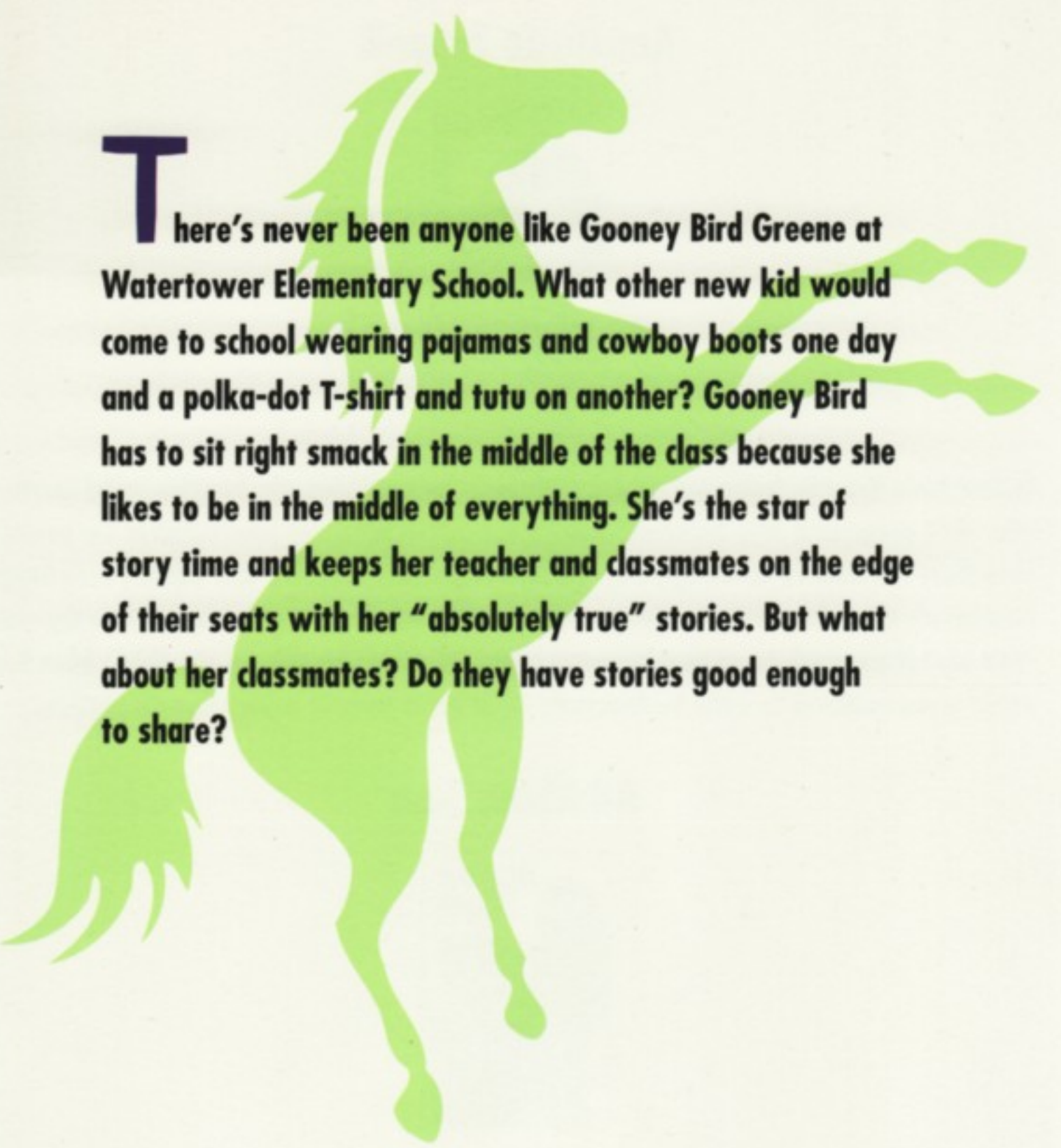
Beanie said, "My grandma lives in Boston!"

Keiko said, "My grandma lives in Honolulu!"

Ben said loudly, "My grandma lives in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania!"

Tricia shouted, "My grandma is very rich!"

"Class!" said Mrs. Pidgeon. "Shhh!" Then, in a quieter voice, she explained, "Another time, we will talk about our families. But right now —" She stopped talking and looked at Barry Tuckerman. Barry was up on his knees in his seat,



There's never been anyone like Gooney Bird Greene at Watertower Elementary School. What other new kid would come to school wearing pajamas and cowboy boots one day and a polka-dot T-shirt and tutu on another? Gooney Bird has to sit right smack in the middle of the class because she likes to be in the middle of everything. She's the star of story time and keeps her teacher and classmates on the edge of their seats with her "absolutely true" stories. But what about her classmates? Do they have stories good enough to share?

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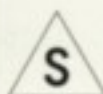
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