

LOUIS SACHAR

WINNER OF THE NEWBERY MEDAL FOR *HOLES*



YEARLING

A detailed illustration of a young boy with a large, expressive face, wearing a dark blue cowboy hat and a dark blue button-down shirt with red suspenders. He is holding a silver microphone to his mouth and shouting or singing with his mouth wide open. The background is a dark purple with a large, glowing yellow circle behind the boy's head. A brown paper bag is visible in the bottom right corner.

Dogs Don't Tell Jokes

1.

This story begins with a smile.



It was a stupid-looking smile on a rather stupid-looking face. Maybe it was the smile that made the face look stupid. Or maybe it was the face that made the smile look stupid. It was difficult to tell because the two were rarely apart.

It was the smile on the face of Gary Boone.

He was in the seventh grade at Floyd Hicks Junior High School. Just about everybody there thought he was a goon. They called him Goon right to his smiling face.

"You're an idiot, Goon, you know that?" Paul Wattenburg said to him one morning.

"No, as a matter of fact I didn't," Goon said, then laughed.

He called himself Goon too. On the first day of school, his math teacher, Miss Langley, asked him his name and he said, "Goon."

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Langley.

"See, my name's Gary Boone," Gary explained, "so you take the G from Gary and the 'oon' from Boone, and you put them together and get 'Goon.' Ha. Ha."

Miss Langley went on to something else.

Last year at the end of sixth grade, Gary was voted Class Clown. He took it as a great compliment. He wanted to be a stand-up comic when he grew up. "Or a sit-down comic," he would sometimes say, "if my legs get tired."

Unfortunately, however, nobody who voted for him meant it as a compliment. They never laughed at his jokes. He was simply the obvious choice.

Gary often daydreamed about being on a late-night talk show, sitting next to beautiful starlets and other celebrities, cracking jokes. Naturally, all the starlets would fall in love with him because he was so funny.

Sometimes Miss Langley would be up on stage with him. . . .

"You were his seventh-grade teacher, weren't you?" asks David Letterman.

"That's right," says Miss Langley. "But even then I knew he'd grow up to be a famous comedian. Of course, as a teacher, I never would let myself laugh at his jokes. I bit the insides of my cheeks raw to keep from laughing. He was so funny. I only wished I was fifteen years younger."

Miss Langley happened to be one of the most beautiful teachers ever to teach seventh-grade math. At night when Gary dreamed about her, he called her Miss Longlegs.

He dreamed about her surprisingly often—at least once a week.

"Hey, Goon!" said Matt Hughes. "Has anybody ever told you you're an idiot?"

"Yes, thank you," said Gary. "Paul mentioned it this morning. Ha. Ha."

Why did the guy eat two dead skunks
for breakfast?

Because live ones squeal when
you stick the fork in.

Gary W. Boone knows he was born to be a stand-up comedian. It's the rest of the kids in his class who think he's just a goon. Then the Floyd Hicks Junior High School Talent Show is announced, and Gary starts practicing his routine nonstop. Gary is sure this will be his big break—he'll make everyone laugh *and* win the \$100 prize. But when an outrageous surprise threatens to turn his debut into a disaster, it looks as if the biggest joke of all may be on Gary.

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