

**PUFFIN CHAPTERS**



# How to Be Cool in the Third Grade

Some people are born cool.  
Others have to work at it.



**Betsy Duffey · Illustrated by Janet Wilson**

# BECOMING COOL

*What is cool in the third grade?* Robbie York punched his pillow and turned it over. He leaned back and closed his eyes but he could not get to sleep.

The question floated around in his head. It was a question that he had to answer before morning. He flipped his pillow over and punched it again.

Tomorrow was the first day of school. Tomorrow he would start third grade.

Something about the first day of a new school year makes everything seem bright and wonderful. New clothes. New shoes. Long sharp

pencils with unchewed erasers. Sheets of fresh blank notebook paper.

Robbie thought of the new year as a chalkboard wiped clean and black, waiting for him to write on it. This year anything was possible. Anything was possible, that is, if he knew the answer to the question:

*What is cool in the third grade?*

If only he knew the answer, then this year everything would be perfect.

He sat up. It was useless even trying to get to sleep. He flipped on the light beside his bed.

At the foot of his bed he could see his things laid out for school. His clothes. His shoes. His new backpack.

He frowned.

The backpack was dark blue and said **ROBBIE** on the back in big white letters. His mother had ordered it from a catalogue.

Robbie had been afraid that she would get him one with a Smurf or a Muppet Baby on it. It was a nice plain blue one, but . . .

He reached down and picked it up. He looked at the letters on it.

ROBBIE.

He sighed.

That was one thing that he knew was not cool. A third grader should not have a baby name. He did not know a single grown-up named Robbie.

ROBERT HAYES YORK.

His real name was great. Couldn't he have just as easily been called *Robert* or *Rob*? He held his fingers over the last three letters.

ROB.

That looked so much better.

He buried his nose into the stiff canvas and smelled the newness of the material.

He unzipped it and pulled out a new spiral notebook. He opened it. The pages were clean and white.

*What is cool in the third grade?*

He needed a plan. A plan to become cool.

“Robbie! Robbie!”

His mother called from downstairs.

ROBBIE!

That was it! He knew what the first step to becoming cool would be . . .



## What *is* cool in the third grade?

It's not easy to seem cool when the whole class knows you wear superhero underwear and your mom still kisses you good-bye at the bus stop. But Robbie York has a plan: (1) get rid of the name Robbie, (2) get jeans, (3) avoid bullies like Bo Haney. If only it were that simple!

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