

Tommy Thompson's Talking Parrot

written and illustrated by Jerry Craft

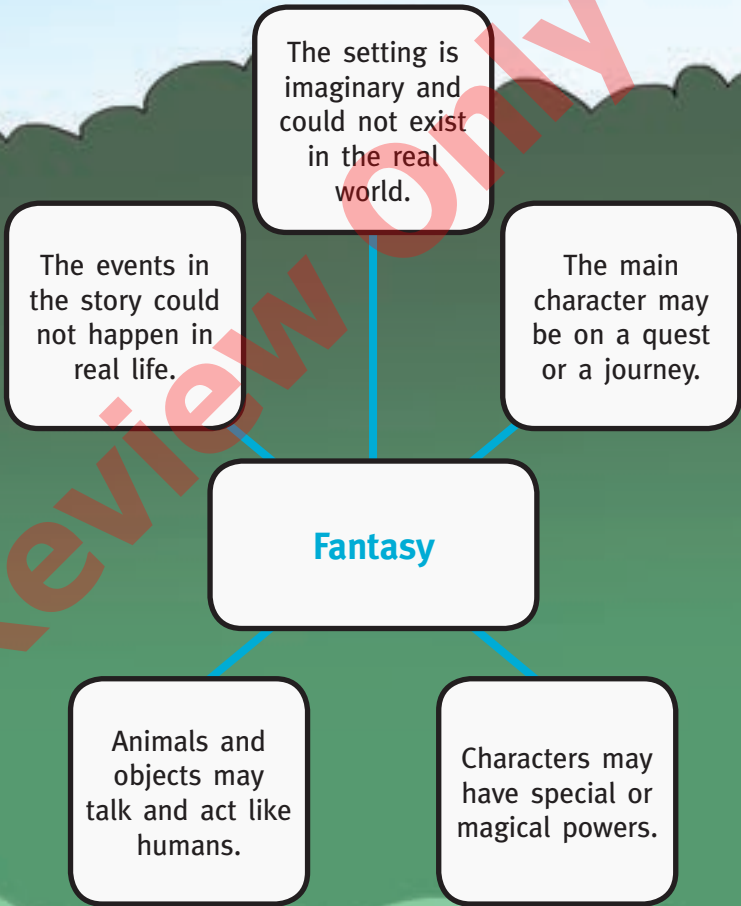


FANTASY
LITERATURE

Level	N/30
Lexile®	560L

Fantasy

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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The Spelling Bird

“Believe,” Tommy said, reading the first spelling word out loud.

“B-e-l-i-e-v-e,” Tommy said. “Remember, *i* before *e* except after *c*.” Then he wrote down the next word on the list as he said it and spelled it aloud. “Quart—q-u-a-r-t.”

“Awk!” said a high, screechy voice, “q-u-a-r-t! The letter *u* always follows *q*!”







Tommy looked around the living room. The television was on, but there was no one else in the room except Clarence, a large gray parrot that belonged to his Uncle Gregory. Clarence was sitting on his perch inside his iron cage.

“Did ... um, did you just talk?” Tommy asked the bird.

“I sure did!” said Clarence. Then, the large gray parrot opened the door to his cage with his beak. He flew down and landed right next to Tommy’s notebook.

“How did you learn to ...” Tommy began to ask.

“Talk and spell?” said Clarence. “From your Uncle Gregory. He’s a professor who teaches English in college, you know. We talked all the time.”

“But why didn’t you say anything to us before?” asked Tommy. “Uncle Gregory never told us you could talk.”

“I’ve been a little shy ever since the day my egg hatched. I get nervous around strangers,” Clarence said, tucking his head under a wing.

Then he looked up at Tommy. “It looks like you could use a little help studying.” He moved closer and put a wing on Tommy’s shoulder.

Tommy rubbed his eyes to make sure he wasn’t dreaming.



“Uncle Gregory always says there are two parts to doing well on a test,” Clarence said. “Studying and practice, followed by a good night’s sleep. How does that sound?”

“Great!” said Tommy. “But I’m not the best speller, and the spelling test is tomorrow.”

“Then, let’s start by turning off the TV,” said Clarence.

Tommy frowned. He didn’t want to miss his favorite show, but he did want to pass the test.

“Okay, your next word is exactly,” said Clarence. “Ready?”

“E-x-a-c-t-l-y,” said Tommy.

“Exactly!” said Clarence. When Tommy spelled a word wrong, Clarence made him keep spelling it until he got the word right.

The Early Bird Catches the Bus

The next morning, Tommy felt great. For the first time, he was confident he was a good speller and could pass the test. He couldn't wait to get to school.

But just as Tommy was about to leave, he suddenly remembered it was his day to bring in something for the class animals exhibit. He darted all over the living room.

"I know!" he said. "I'll take Clarence!"

He picked up the heavy cage gently so he wouldn't wake Clarence. *This will be great, Tommy thought. No one has ever brought in a talking pet.*



When they got to the classroom, Clarence opened his eyes and looked around. He was very confused. There were so many kids. He had never been around so many people before. He was NOT happy!

As soon as the spelling test was over, Tommy ran to the window to get Clarence. He couldn't wait to show the class his pet. "My parrot can talk!" he said.

"So? All parrots talk!" said his friend Ariaah.

"No!" Tommy told her. "Other parrots repeat what they hear, but MY parrot can actually talk to you. He's a really good speller, too. And not just for a bird."

Everyone laughed!



“No! No! Really! You’ll see,” Tommy said. “Go ahead, Clarence, spell quart.”

Clarence looked around the room, then back at Tommy. He slowly opened his beak.

The class leaned forward.

“Awk!” screeched Clarence.

Everyone laughed again. Even their substitute teacher, Miss Karim, hid her smile behind a book.

Tommy felt his face become hot.

