

Electricity for Saburo

by Amy Weber • illustrated by Alida Massari



Realistic Fiction

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



© Benchmark Education Company, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Printed in Guangzhou, China. XXXX-XX-XXXX

LEXILE® is a trademark of MetaMetrics, Inc., and is registered in the United States and abroad.

E-books and additional digital resources available at benchmarkuniverse.com.

ISBN: 978-1-5322-5963-0

Toll-Free 1-877-236-2465
www.benchmarkeducation.com
www.benchmarkuniverse.com

BENCHMARK EDUCATION COMPANY
145 Huguenot Street • New Rochelle, NY • 10801

The Special Project

Saburo jumped over a rock and past the river. He ran around the corner. Then he ran all the way to school. Saburo spotted his friend Binti sitting outside.

“Is she here?” Saburo called out.

“Not yet,” Binti responded.

Saburo looked all around. He was impatient but also excited.

“Where is she?” he wondered.



Saburo's school had a new teacher, Ms. Lahai. Saburo was very excited to meet her. He had many questions for his new teacher. *What is Freetown like? What is college like? How did you get your scholarship to college? Why did you come back to our village?*

Ms. Lahai had grown up in Saburo's village. Saburo did not know her, but his mother did. That morning, his mother had said to him, "Ms. Lahai is a woman of strong **conviction**. You pay attention and do everything she tells you, Saburo. You can learn much from her."

Saburo was ready to learn! He dreamed of going to college. He wanted to go to college in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, just as Ms. Lahai had done. He decided to wait for as inside. He walked past some **scaffolding** and a broken bench as he made his way to the front door of the school. Lots of things were broken in Saburo's village because of the war that had ended not so long ago. *Why did Ms. Lahai come back?* Saburo wondered again.

Before entering the school, Saburo looked around one more time. But there was no sign of Ms. Lahai.

Saburo sat down at a desk near a window at the front of the classroom. He peered out the window. He saw a tall woman walking toward the school. He had never seen her before. “That must be her!” Saburo exclaimed.

A moment later, the tall woman pushed through the classroom door. She was wearing a bright red shirt.

“Greetings, class! I am thrilled to be teaching you!” Ms. Lahai said, smiling. Her smile was **infectious**, and everyone in the class smiled brightly back at her.

Ms. Lahai walked to the front of the classroom. She asked everyone to say their name. Then she said, “I have something very special planned for us. It is a challenging project. But if we work together, we can do anything.”

“Are we going to make something?” Saburo asked quickly.

“Indeed, we are, Saburo,” she replied.

Saburo’s classmates began to call out guesses about what they were going to build.

“A stadium?” “An airplane?” “A castle?”

“Ha ha,” Ms. Lahai laughed. “Before I tell you, I want to first tell you why I decided to return to our village.”

Saburo moved his chair closer to Ms. Lahai so he could hear every detail she was about to share.

“At university in Freetown,” Ms. Lahai began, “I took many science classes, and I also learned how to teach young people like you! I thought about how, in the city, we have running water and electricity, but we do not have them here in our village. Well, we sometimes have electricity. But oftentimes we don’t.”



Saburo thought about how he had to do his homework before night fell, because he had no electricity at home to power lights at night. And the school had no electricity either—not since the war, when the power lines were damaged.

“So,” Ms. Lahai continued, “we are going to build a small hydropower system. It will supply our school with electricity!” Then Ms. Lahai began drawing a simple diagram of the hydropower system on the chalkboard. “It uses the energy of flowing water to generate electricity. If we can build it, we will have electricity—and I will have a special surprise waiting for you.”

Most of the students shouted out with excitement. “Electricity!” “A surprise!”

“We can do it!”

But Saburo sat quietly, staring at the diagram. *This is it, he thought. This is how I will prove myself and one day win a scholarship to college.*



Sharing the News

After school, Saburo raced to the café where his mother worked.

“Mother, Mother!” Saburo shouted between gasps for air as he stepped inside the café. It was dark inside. The electricity was out again. But a few candles lit the inside.

Just then, Saburo’s mother walked in the back door, carrying two buckets of water. Saburo went to her and helped her with the buckets. Her face appeared tired and frustrated. Saburo could tell that this was not the time to tell her about his school project.



“Sit down, Saburo,” Mr. Bangura called out, just as Saburo finished helping his mother. Mr. Bangura was a regular customer. Saburo had known him all of his life. “How was your first day of school? I heard that your new teacher is Amina ... I mean, Ms. Lahai!”

“Oh, yes,” Saburo excitedly responded. “She is going to lead us in building a hydropower system so we can have electricity at school!”

“That would be a good thing,” Mr. Bangura said, “not only for your school but for our village. The **civil war** that ended nearly twenty years ago really hit our area hard. Many power lines and power plants were destroyed. We still have so many things to fix and ...”

Just then, the lights in the café flickered on for several seconds and then went dark again.

“Well, Saburo,” Mr. Bangura said with a sigh, “I hope your project with Ms. Lahai will be successful. We need electricity! Other hydropower projects have worked in other areas. So it should work here.”



Saburo began daydreaming about how the hydropower system would change his life.

“Saburo?” Mr. Bangura asked.

“Uh, yes,” Saburo responded. “I was just dreaming about going to a university one day ... maybe ...” Then Saburo frowned. “If I am lucky.”

“It will take plenty of hard work, Saburo, but this special project that you are working on with Ms. Lahai might be a good start,” Mr. Bangura said cheerfully.