

TYLER AND NOAH

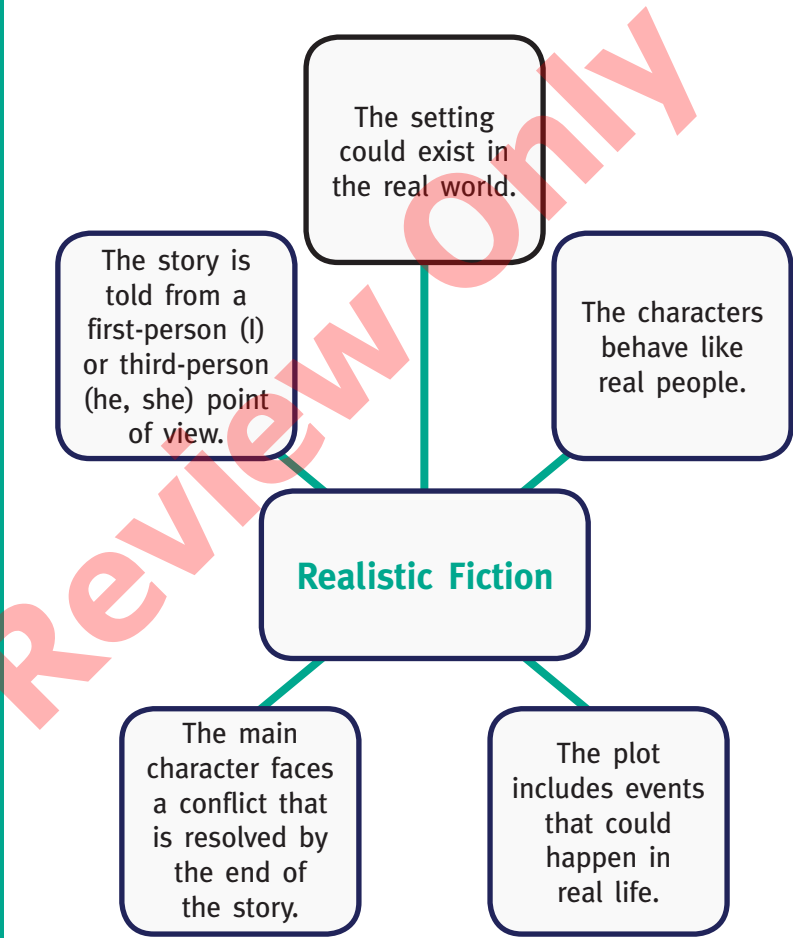


REALISTIC FICTION
LITERATURE

Level **S/40**
Lexile® **630L**

Realistic Fiction

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The Cafeteria Rescue

SPLAT!

Noah winced as he felt the spaghetti noodles and sauce oozing down his back. It felt like seaweed. The slimy mess was all over Noah, smothering his dark hair and dripping down his face. He heard the chorus of laughs and felt like the entire school cafeteria was staring at him.

Brody the Bully had struck again—the third time this week. This time, Brody and his friends had dumped an entire plate of spaghetti on Noah's head.



Noah gently removed his eyeglasses and wiped the goo on his stained shirt. Noah sighed. *I'm not that hungry today anyway*, he thought.

Through the blur of his bad vision, Noah saw something else. It looked like a hand with an open-faced turkey sandwich was moving toward his face. Noah quickly closed his eyes, gritted his teeth, and braced for impact.

Suddenly, the laughter stopped. Noah opened his eyes. He squinted. He could just make out the hulking form of the new kid, Tyler Ward, holding back the hand with the turkey sandwich. Finally, the sandwich dropped to the ground, and the entire cafeteria went silent.

"Let's go," Tyler said gruffly.

Together, Tyler and Noah left the lunchroom.

Trying Out for the Team

“No. The Yankees lost the 2001 World Series in the seventh game,” Noah said.

“Are you sure?” Tyler asked.

“Yes! The Diamondbacks won because Luis Gonzalez hit a bloop single in the bottom of the ninth inning,” Noah answered assuredly.

Tyler was impressed.

“You know a lot about sports,” Tyler said.



Noah blushed and sheepishly said, “I remember a lot of sports statistics. And I never forget a birthday.”

Every since Tyler had rescued Noah from the cafeteria, Tyler sat with Noah at lunch. It had been weeks since Brody and his friends had decided to single out Noah. Tyler looked intimidating to a lot of other kids, but he wouldn't hurt a fly.

“Do you play any sports?” Tyler asked. “I’ve been wanting to join a team since I started school here. At my old school, I played everything from football to basketball and baseball. I miss it.”





Noah hung his head. Of course, he wanted to play sports, but he wasn't very coordinated. Noah wanted to look good in front of his new friend. He quickly looked around the cafeteria and saw a poster that said: SWIMMING TRYOUTS ON TUESDAY!

"Um ... how about the swim team?" Noah asked.

Noah's mind drifted to summers he spent at his grandma's house near a lake. He would have been in the water all day if his mom hadn't insisted on him coming inside once in a while.

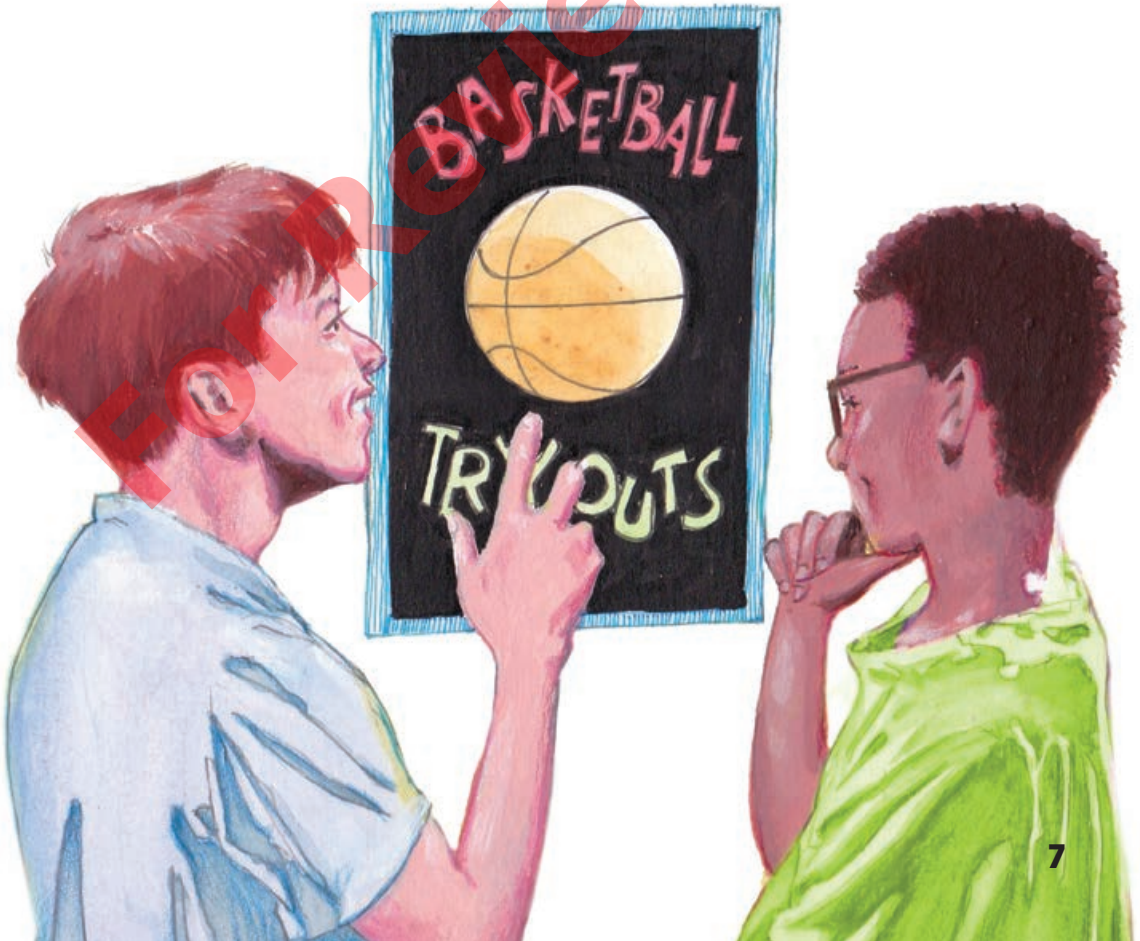
Tyler frowned.

“I was thinking more of a different kind of sport,” Tyler said. He pointed to another sign in the cafeteria. This one was for basketball tryouts on Monday.

Noah’s stomach twisted. He was always last to be chosen for basketball. He wasn’t very good. That’s one of the reasons why Brody always bullied him. Noah was that kid who was always chosen last in gym class. But Tyler looked excited about basketball.

I don’t want to lose my new friend, Noah thought.

Reluctantly, Noah nodded his head.



Technical Foul

“Okay, for our first drill, we are going to run sprints,” Coach Hernandez said, pointing to the end of the basketball court.

Noah felt like a rock was in his stomach. Despite having watched basketball games all weekend and memorizing all the statistics of the last ten basketball MVPs, he didn’t feel ready for this tryout.

“You look kind of sick,” Tyler said, looking at Noah.



Noah gulped and pushed up his glasses. Tyler had come to the tryouts early and was practicing layups when Noah finally gathered courage to go into the gym. Tyler was a natural. He looked like he belonged out on the court.

The boys started running down the court as the coach instructed. Noah closed his eyes as he ran with the other boys. He didn't want to open his eyes because he knew he was probably last.

