

Ready to Fight the Wind

by F. Isabel Campoy • illustrated by Adam Horsepool

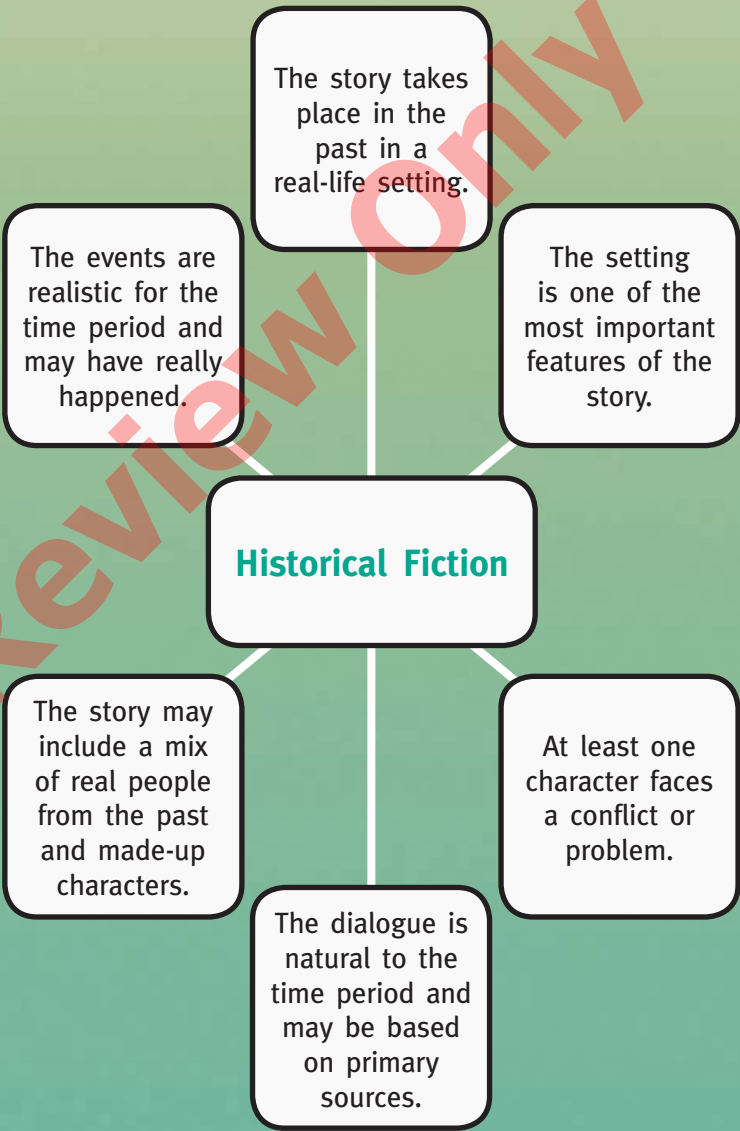


HISTORICAL FICTION
LITERATURE

Level	S/40
Lexile®	690L

Historical 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: 978-1-5322-8005-4

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

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



The Newspaper Route

Lorena pedaled her bicycle away from the newspaper office as if her feet were on fire.

She could barely keep up with the storm of thoughts that swirled through her head. *Less pay for equal work! Boys get more because they're boys! It's 1970, how can the world be so backward?*

Lorena had woken up early that morning, excited for her first payday from her new newspaper delivery job. She had taken over the paper route for her older brother, Roberto, who had to quit because of his demanding soccer practice schedule. Thirty-eight houses at six cents a paper for seven days was \$15.96. It was more money than she could make in a year raking leaves. But when Lorena received her pay envelope at the newspaper office, it had only \$10.64.

Lorena counted the bills and coins over again to be sure. “I think there has been a mistake,” Lorena told Mr. Wheeler, the boss. “Roberto used to get more every week.”

“Ah,” Mr. Wheeler said. “Roberto had a much tougher route. You get four cents a paper.”

“We have the same route,” Lorena protested. “Why does he get six cents? That’s 33 percent more!”

Mr. Wheeler shrugged. “That’s just the way it is, for girls. Four cents a paper. Take it or leave it, kid.”

Lorena was furious. So furious that she decided to get as far away from the newspaper office as possible. She didn’t see the bump in the road before her that sent her bike bouncing into Miss Ella’s front yard.

“Careful, young lady! Look where you’re going!” Miss Ella shouted from her garden.

Lorena hit the brakes—but not in time. Her bicycle rolled right through Miss Ella’s daisies.

“Oh! I am so sorry! I didn’t mean to ... I was just so upset!” cried Lorena.

“You’re upset? I AM UPSET! Look what you’ve done to my flowers!” said Miss Ella. “I’m supposed to sell them at Saturday’s farmers market.”

The crumpled daisies under Lorena's wheels caused hot tears to roll down her face. She had always admired Miss Ella's garden of geraniums, carnations, and roses, each in four different colors.

"I can pay you," Lorena said, fumbling with her envelope. "I was just paid for my paper route."

"Money! I don't want your money. I want to have something to take to the farmers market to sell," Miss Ella said.

"Is there anything I can do to make up for my mistake?" Lorena asked.

Miss Ella took a few deep breaths and began to cool down. She inspected her flowers and said, "I don't think there's too much damage. I'll still have some to sell at the farmers market." Then she looked closely at Lorena and asked, "Are you hurt?"

The question caused a fresh flood of tears to spill down Lorena's cheeks.

"I'm not hurt. But oh, it's been a terrible day!" Lorena said.

"Now why is that?"

"I took over my brother's newspaper delivery route last week. Today I got paid. But it was so much less than I expected—and just because I am a girl! I had plans for that money. My friend Linda and I were going on a shopping trip for crazy socks and lots of other cool stuff," Lorena said. "It isn't fair. My brother and I did the same work."

"That is terrible. But I think I can help you make some of it up," Miss Ella said.

“Lorena brushed the tears away. “How?”

“Why don’t you help me sell flowers on Saturday?” Miss Ella suggested. “I could use some help during the busiest hours. I can’t pay much, but it will help you buy at least a single sock!”

Lorena hesitated for a moment. Working for Miss Ella wouldn’t solve her newspaper route issue, but at least she would be able to buy the socks. Plus, she had ruined Miss Ella’s daisies and wanted to make up for that. Lorena chuckled and said, “Sure.”



As she rode home, Lorena thought about how her life had so quickly taken such a downturn. Only a week ago, she had almost floated away with excitement when Roberto had chosen her to take over his paper route. Mr. Wheeler had told him to find a replacement. Lorena had expected him to choose one of his friends, but he had picked her.

Roberto spent an afternoon training her. First, he showed her how to load a bag with folded newspapers and balance its weight on her bicycle. Then, leading her through their neighborhood, he demonstrated how to pitch each newspaper perfectly into the clients' driveways.



“Slow down, aim, and then shoot!” he said with a laugh.

By the time they reached the third block, Lorena had mastered the throw, managing to keep her bike straight.

“You’re like an old pro now,” Roberto said.

“I can’t wait!” Lorena said. “Imagine what I can get with the paycheck! Art supplies, books, and hot chocolates with Linda. Oh, and new sneakers!”

Lorena went home that night, sweaty and tired but happy. Learning to throw and balance her bike had been tricky, but she and Roberto had not hung out together like that in forever. And, of course, she was thrilled at the idea of getting paid for doing a job.

Now, as Lorena rode the last few blocks home, the memory of Mr. Wheeler made her more upset. She passed the hospital where she had been born. She saw both men and women wearing white doctor’s coats. She saw both males and females loading a stretcher into an ambulance.

Do those women get paid less, too? Lorena wondered.

Roberto’s bike was on the front lawn when she arrived home. He was in the kitchen making himself a peanut butter sandwich, still in his soccer uniform.

Roberto noticed Lorena’s red eyes and pinched mouth.

“What’s the matter?” he asked. “Isn’t today the happy payday you were expecting all week?”

Lorena slammed down on the table the envelope Mr. Wheeler had given her.

“It is so unfair!” Lorena said.

“What’s unfair?” Roberto asked.

“The newspaper office gave me less than you got for the same job!” Lorena blurted out.

Roberto grabbed the envelope off the table. He counted the bills inside three times. “This is all Mr. Wheeler gave you?” he asked.

Lorena nodded. Roberto’s face grew red. He hurried over to the phone on the kitchen wall and furiously punched in a phone number.

“Mr. Wheeler? This is Roberto García,” he said into the phone. “I think you made a mistake with my sister’s pay.”

Roberto was silent for a few moments and then said, “Even though we did the same job? The same paper route?”

After another minute, Roberto sighed and said, “I see. Goodbye, Mr. Wheeler.”

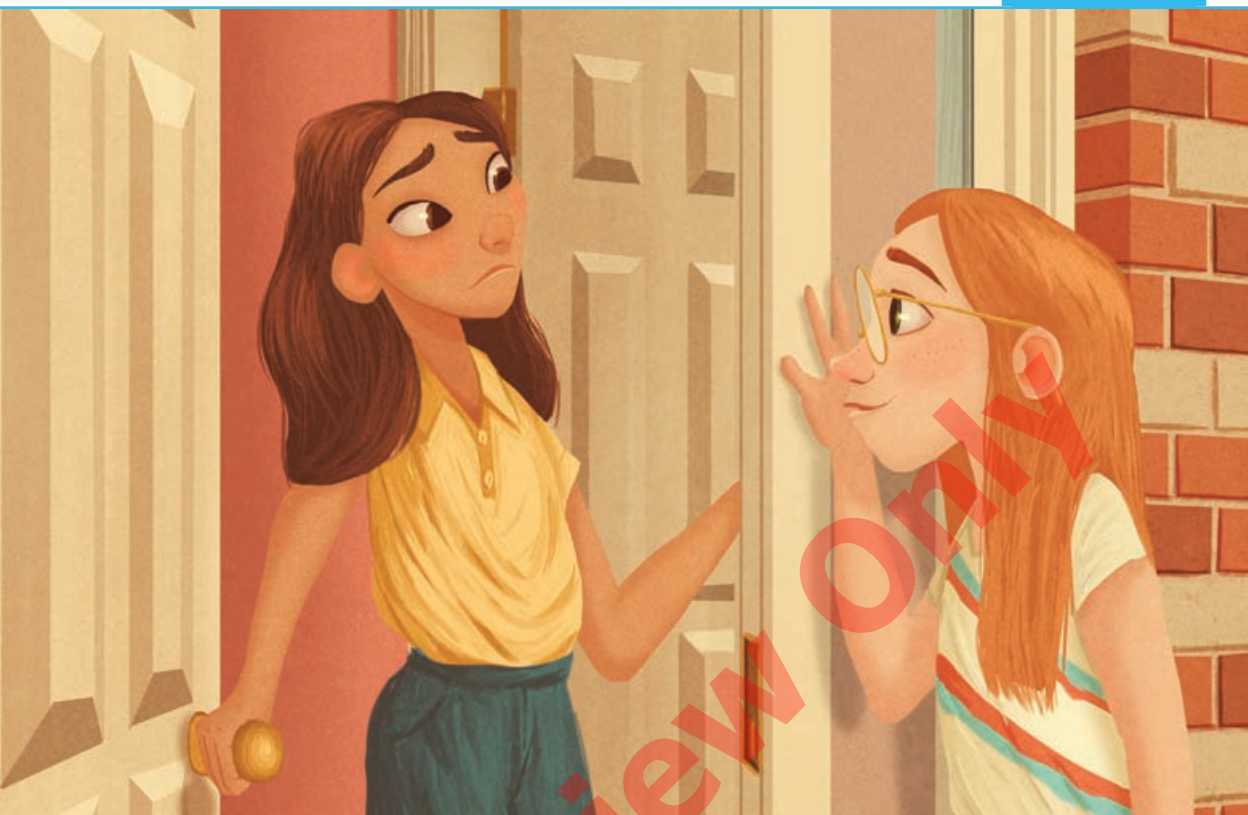
Lorena watched as he hung up the phone with disappointment etched on his face.

“He told me that that’s the way things are done. And he told me that you don’t have to work there if you don’t like it,” Roberto said.

Lorena hung her head low. She thought once again of all the things she was planning to buy with that money: books and sneakers and art supplies and hot chocolates with Linda and those crazy socks. If she quit, there would be no money for any of those things. Still, it wasn’t right that she got paid less.

“I’ll think about it over the weekend,” Lorena said.

“I’m sorry,” Roberto said. “I didn’t know it was like this.”



The Farmers Market

The next day, Linda knocked loudly on Lorena's front door. It was Saturday morning, and that meant time for the Writing Club.

Linda and Lorena had become friends four years ago, when they signed up for their elementary school library's Writing Club. Back then, Lorena barely spoke any English and needed extra help with writing assignments. Linda was happy to help. When they moved on to middle school, the friends kept the tradition alive by meeting up every Saturday and writing.

Lorena usually woke up on Saturday mornings energized for the Writing Club, but today she was still upset about her pay from the day before.