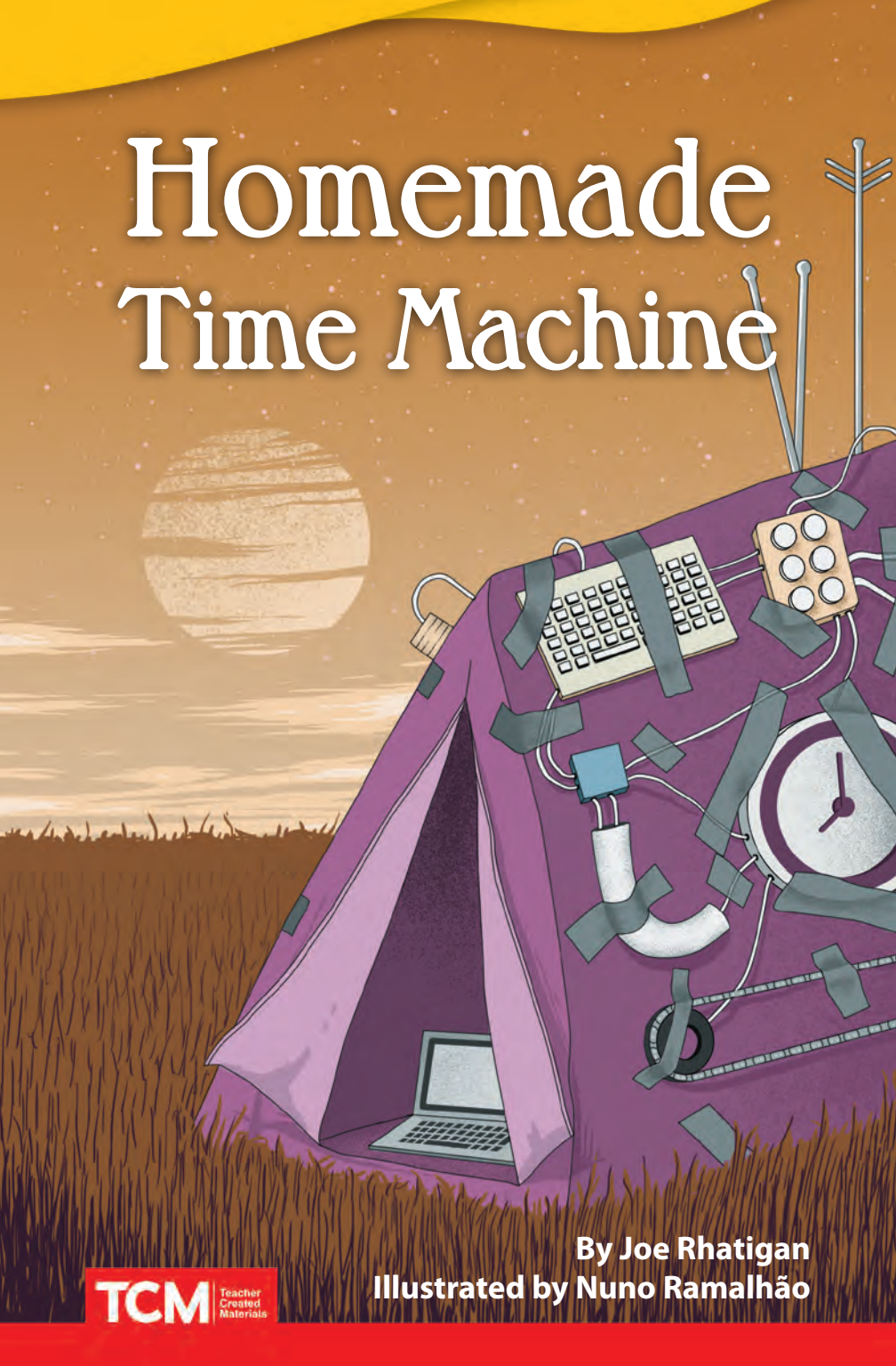
Homemade Time Machine



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TCM Teacher Created Materials

Table of Contents

Chapter One:
Science Fair Project Freak Out 5

Chapter Two:
The First-Ever Car Crash 11

Chapter Three:
Mrs. Brown's Success 15

Chapter Four:
Mr. Edison, I Presume 21

Chapter Five:
One More Stop 27

About Us 32

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CHAPTER ONE



Science Fair Project Freak Out

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"I give up!" yelled Ralph as he wiped his brow with a dirty rag and threw a wrench to the ground.

"That's the ninth time you've said that. We've got to keep trying," I groaned. "The science fair is tomorrow,

and I want to win—and we *won't* since all we did was create a really gross time machine!"

We were standing next to what looked like a pup tent attached to a supercomputer with wires plugged into it. In fact, that's *exactly* what it was… but if we had our science right, this tent should have taken us anywhere in the past or the future. I programmed my smartphone to direct the tent to different days, months, years, and locations. But, no matter what we tried, the time machine kept taking us to the same smelly place.

Imagine going back millions of years and ending up behind a giant sauropod. Cool, right? Except that he's about to deliver some giant dinosaur scat…all over you!

Well, that's what kept happening to us. We were running out of time—and clean clothes.

"Forget the science fair, Luna. We're going to fail!" Ralph was never

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much of an optimist, and when things got tough, sometimes he gave up—and things were definitely getting tough.

I, Luna Silo, had never failed. I wanted to be positive, but even I could see the writing on the wall.

Just as we were about to put our tools away and admit defeat, Mr. Castillo walked in. We had been working in a large, messy closet in the basement of Nikola Tesla Middle School, so we were surprised that our principal had found us.

"Hello students," he said. "I was just about to close up for the night, and I thought I heard noises."

"Sorry," I said. "It's just that we're having a really hard time getting our science fair project to work."

Mr. C looked like a mad scientist and was often spotted walking the halls muttering to himself. In short, he was eccentric.

"What are you working on?" he asked.

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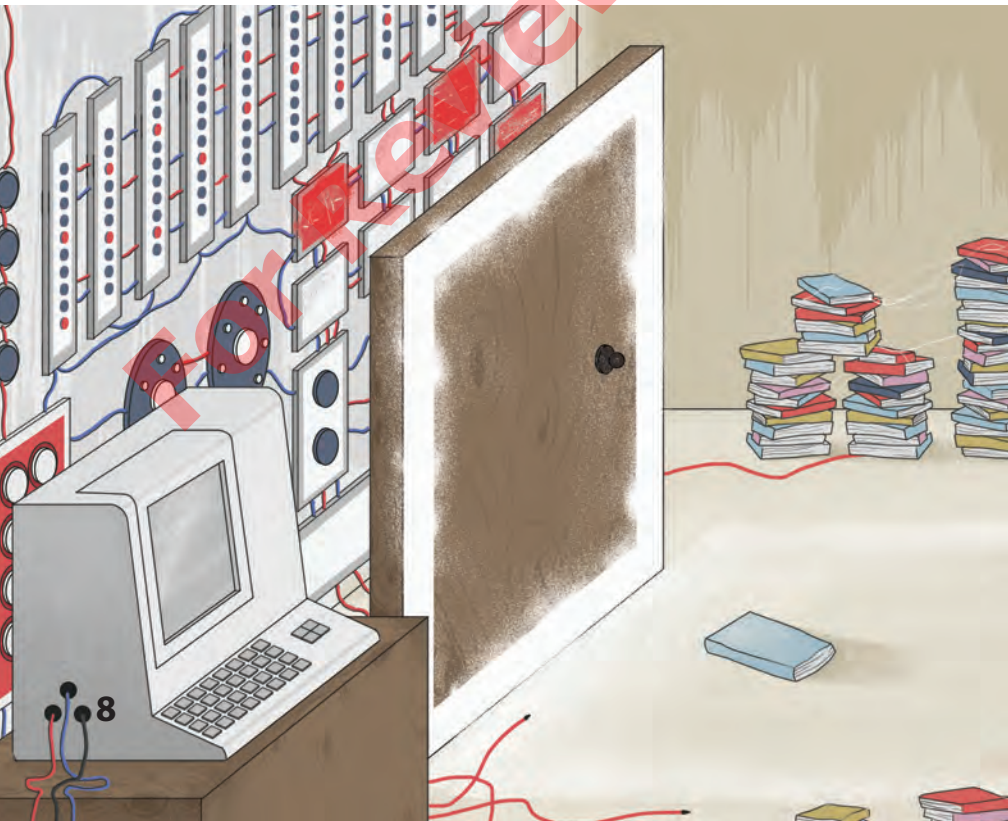
"A time machine," I answered.

"Wow! Is it working yet?"

"Kind of," Ralph said. "But it keeps taking us to the same place, right as a giant Apatosaurus…*relieves himself.* We're failures, gross failures!"

"Ah, *failure*," Mr. C said almost absentmindedly. "That's a powerful word."

"No, it's not!" said Ralph. "It just means you're not smart or talented



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enough, and I'm so frustrated that we're going to bomb at the science fair."

"Well, that's one way to think of failure, but I can offer you quite a different definition of the word."

"I know, I know," said Ralph. "You're going to say 'practice makes perfect' and 'never give up' and stuff like that."

"I'm not going to say anything," Mr. C answered. "I'm going to *show* you something; follow me."



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We followed Mr. C to a door down the hallway. Inside were a bunch of old, moldy play costumes, worn and torn textbooks piled precariously high, and a door standing in a frame that didn't lead anywhere. The principal booted up an ancient-looking computer, and the frame around the door lit up and began humming.

"After you," Mr. C said as he opened the door.

And we were gone.

Gone as in "no longer in the basement and now unexpectedly standing in the dark on the side of a dirt road."

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