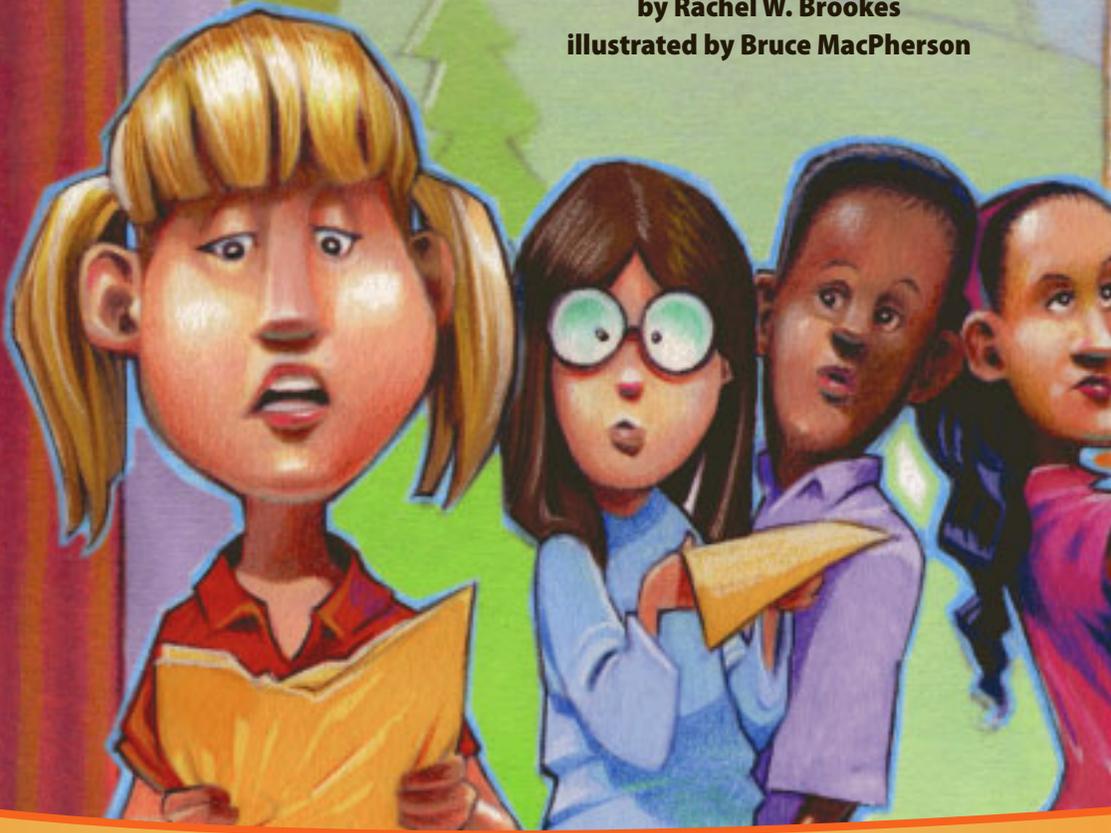


# ▶ PARKER'S PROBLEM

by Rachel W. Brookes  
illustrated by Bruce MacPherson



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN



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**by Rachel W. Brookes**  
**illustrated by Bruce MacPherson**



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

BOSTON

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 Parker is waiting to start reading the play.

 It was the first day of rehearsal, and Parker's hands were shaking. She almost wished that she hadn't been picked for a part in the school play.

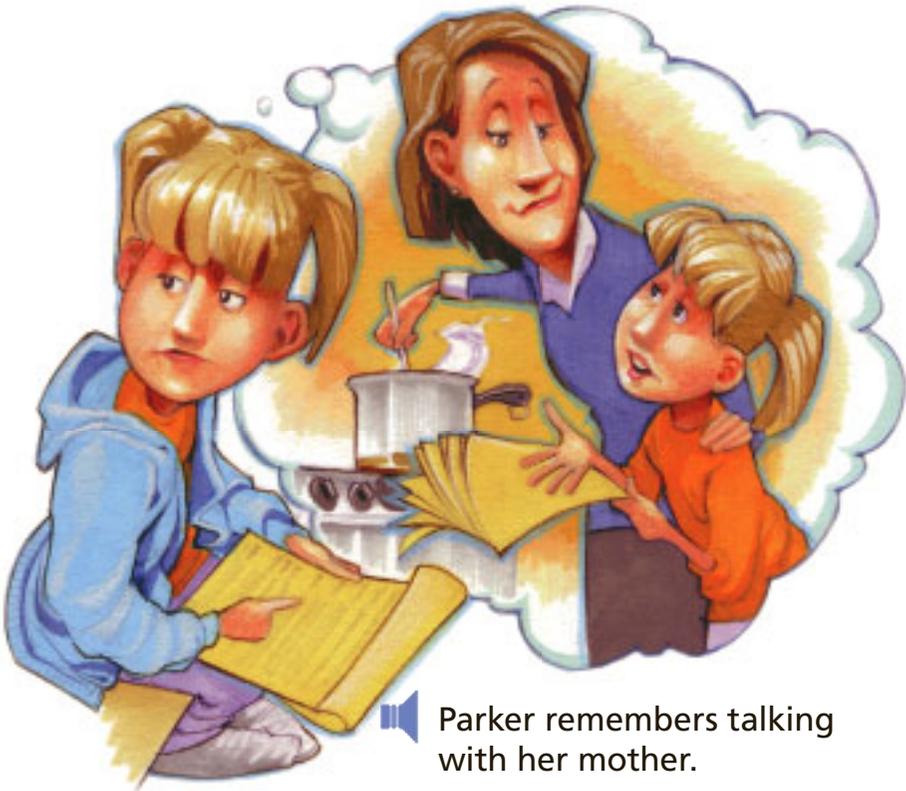
“Okay, everyone,” the teacher, Mr. Preston, called out. “Let's start.”

Parker felt her heart race. She tried to remember how she had felt last week.

▶ Parker had read the play several times at home. Learning her lines had seemed fairly easy. She had been so excited.

Then suddenly, last night, she kept losing her place and forgetting the words. They just wouldn't come out **properly**.

“What’s wrong with me, Mom?” she’d asked. “This can’t happen at rehearsal!”



▶ Parker remembers talking with her mother.

 Now, as Parker stood on the stage, she tried to stay calm. Darice read first. She had the lead role in the play and sounded like a movie star. This only made Parker more nervous.

Soon it was time for Parker's first line. She opened her mouth to speak, but only a tiny squeak came out.

 Parker felt her face grow red. She tried again. This time was better, but her voice was shaking. She skipped several words. Parker wished she could just disappear!



 Rusty runs to meet Parker.

 When Parker stepped off the bus, her dog Rusty ran to meet her in the yard. Seeing him always put her in a good **mood**.

Parker threw Rusty's ball high into the air and he caught it in his mouth.

Mrs. Torres, Parker's next-door neighbor, clapped her hands. "Your dog certainly has a **talent** for catching things!" she called.



🔊 Rusty drops the ball onto Parkers play.

🔊 “Thank you, Mrs. Torres,” Parker answered.  
Rusty ran past Parker and dropped the ball  
onto her play.

“Ruff,” he barked. He sat down next to Parker  
and looked up at her.

🔊 “He wants you to read to him,” Mrs. Torres  
said as she walked into the yard.

“I think he would enjoy it,” Parker’s mother  
added as she came outside.

“I could use the practice, too,” Parker said.  
“Rehearsal didn’t go so well today.”

“You survived it anyway,” her mother answered with a smile. “We’ll be in the house if you need anything.”

Parker looked at Rusty. “I’ll read Darice’s lines to you, too. I know how those sound.”

“Ruff,” said Rusty.

Parker reads the play to Rusty.



 The next day at school, Parker kept thinking about rehearsal. Would she still feel so nervous?

When Parker and the other students got to rehearsal, they all smiled. The stage had come to life.

“Places, everyone,” Mr. Preston called.  
“We have a lot to cover today.”

 Mr. Peterson shows the students where to stand.





▶ Parker tries to read her lines.

▶ Darice began to read the first lines of the play. As usual, she read it perfectly. Parker tried to think of all the helpful things her mother had said to her. *“You’ll do fine. Just relax and pretend you’re reading to Rusty.”*

It was her turn to read. She took a deep breath and started. Her lines sounded better, but her voice still shook.

When Parker got off the bus, her mom was waiting on the porch.

“How was rehearsal today?” she asked.

“It was better,” Parker answered, “but I still got so nervous! I have to have my lines memorized by the end of the week.”

“Well, I was going to mention Rusty again, but I don’t think he’ll be much help. It looks like you and I will be practicing tonight.”



Parker’s mom helps her practice.



 Parker asks Darice what is wrong.

 Every day after school, Parker and her mother practiced lines. Finally, the night of the school play arrived.

Parker was backstage when someone tapped her. It was Darice. She had a strange look on her face. “What’s wrong?” Parker asked.

Darice answered with a squeaking voice, “I can barely talk. My throat feels really tight.”

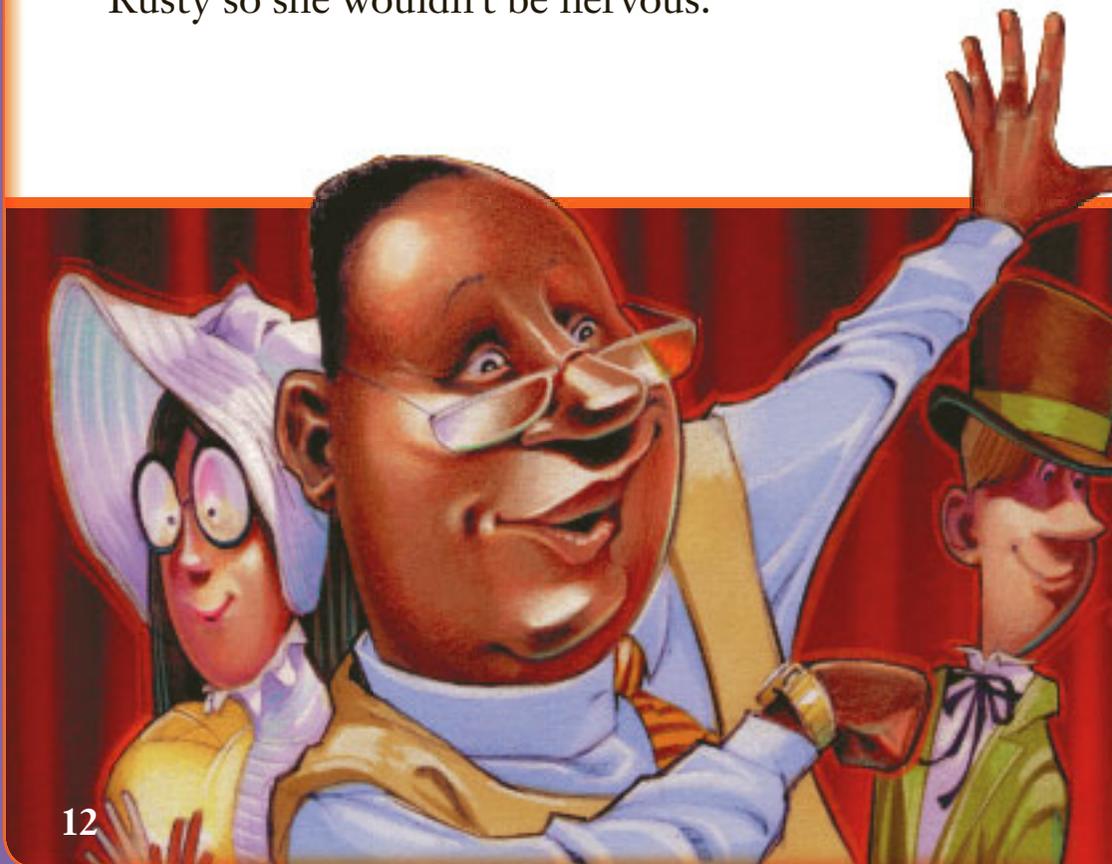
“You too?” Parker asked in surprise. “You always seem so calm. I’ve felt that way for days!”

“What should I do?” Darice squeaked again.

Parker knew she had to **comfort** Darice.

“Don’t worry,” Parker replied. “You will be fine. Let me tell you what I did.”

Parker explained how she had practiced with Rusty so she wouldn’t be nervous.



As Parker told the story, Darice forgot about her own nervousness. She even laughed.

“Did you hear yourself just then?” Parker asked. “Your voice sounded fine when you laughed. I think that you’re ready now.”

“You sound ready too, Parker. Thanks so much for helping me!”

“Places, everyone!” Mr. Preston called.

Everyone gets ready for the play.





🔊 The actors get ready to take their final bow.

🔊 The curtain opened, and Parker saw her mother and Mrs. Torres in the audience. She didn't feel nervous at all. Her lines came out easily, just as if she were reading to Rusty. The play went by so fast that it was over before she knew it.

It had been a great play. She wished Rusty could have been there to see it!

# Responding



**TARGET SKILL** **Story Structure** In *Parker's Problem*, what is the plot? What is the setting? Copy and complete the chart below.

<b>Character(s)</b> Parker Darice Parker's Mom Rusty	<b>Setting(s)</b> Parker's school Parker's house
<b>Plot</b> ?	



## Write About It

**Text to Self** Write a descriptive paragraph about a time that you had to work hard at something. Maybe it was learning how to ride a bicycle or learning to play a sport. Describe what you were trying to do and how you worked hard to do it.



### TARGET VOCABULARY

advanced  
comfort  
consisted  
intends  
mention

mood  
peculiar  
positive  
properly  
talent



### TARGET SKILL

**Story Structure** Examine details about characters, setting, and plot.



### TARGET STRATEGY

**Summarize** Briefly tell the important parts of the text in your own words.



**GENRE Realistic Fiction** is a present-day story that could take place in real life.

**Level:** P

**DRA:** 38

**Genre:**  
Realistic Fiction

**Strategy:**  
Summarize

**Skill:**  
Story Structure

**Word Count:** 850

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