

Home Is Where the Art Is

by Lydia Okutoro-Seck • illustrated by Henry Ezeokeke

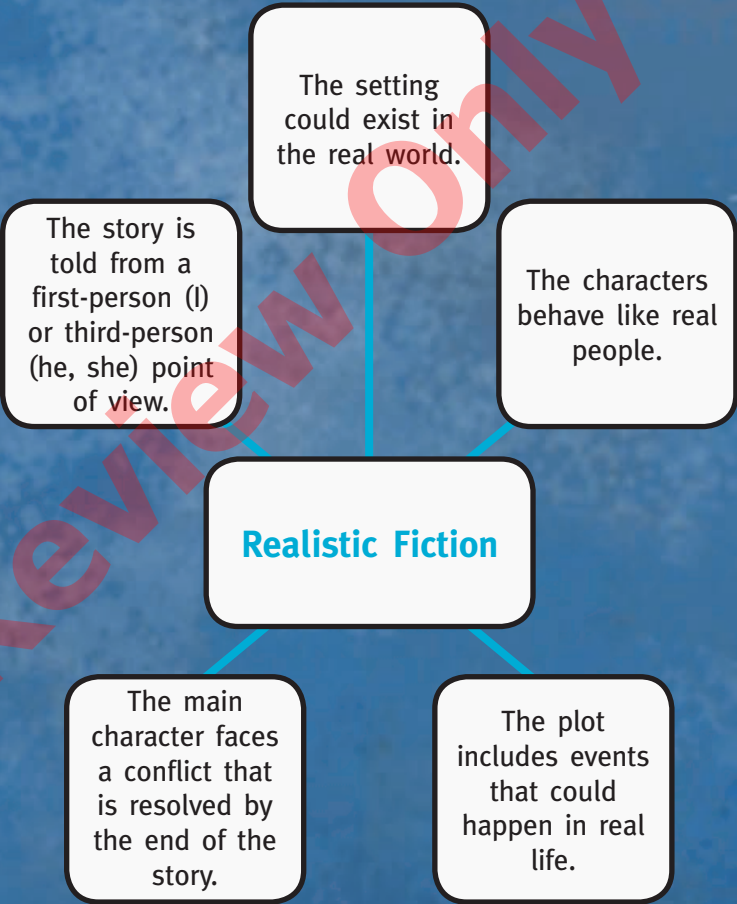


REALISTIC FICTION
LITERATURE

Level	P/38
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Realistic Fiction

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Art Class

Danladi watched as the syrup ran off his pancakes, like a shiny river rolling down a wide hill.

Sara, his adoptive mom, watched him as they ate. She talked about the weather. He nodded. Suddenly, she put her hand on his shoulder.



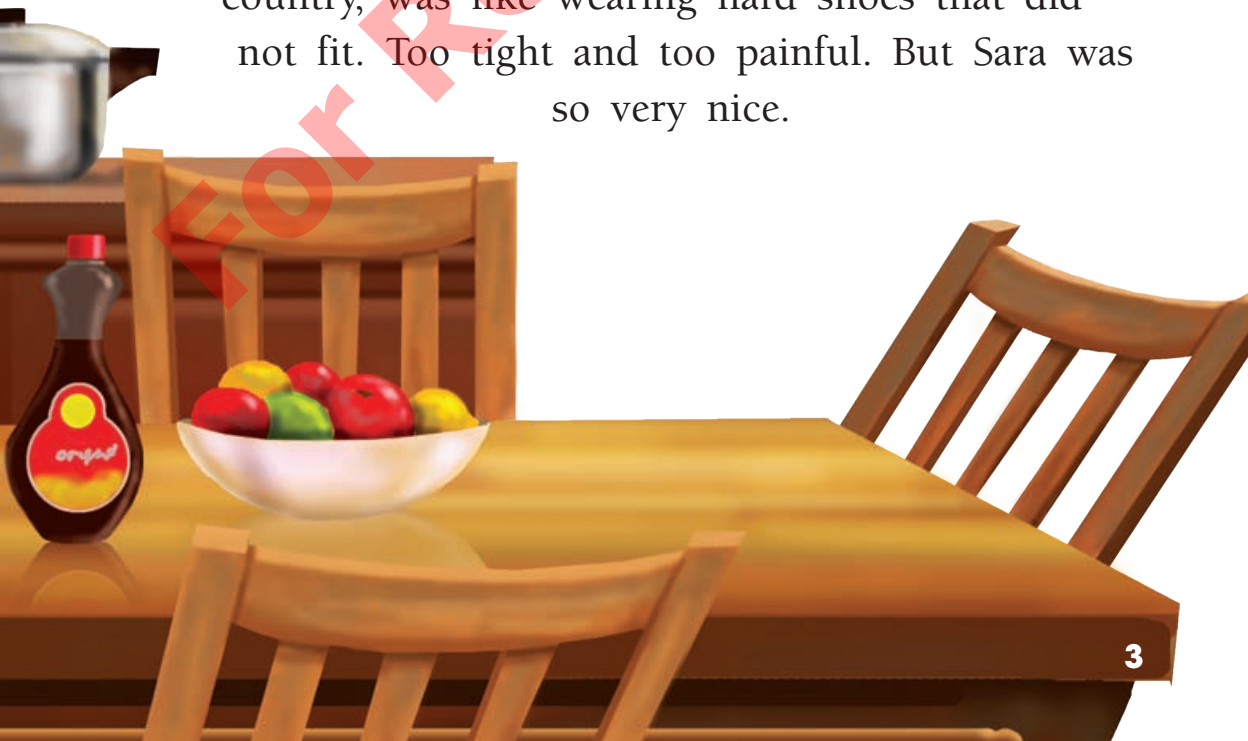
“Come on, Danladi. I know you’re nervous but I think this art class will be fun,” Sara said finally. She patted his arm. He stared at her pale, freckled hand against his own dark, smooth skin.

Danladi just wanted to go back into his room, where the walls were blue and everything was quiet. He didn’t like the color blue. But he had nodded yes when Sara had asked him if it was his favorite color. Sometimes there were just too many questions to answer, here in America.

“Ready?” she asked.

Danladi nodded in agreement.

I must try, he thought. Being here, in this new country, was like wearing hard shoes that did not fit. Too tight and too painful. But Sara was so very nice.



They drove to the building next to the park. Sara took him to the large art room.

Inside, the lights were too bright. A woman was greeting everyone as they took seats at the small tables. “Good morning, young artists! I’m Ms. Springer.”

Danladi looked around the bright room. There were twelve other students. He took the first open seat he could find.

Danladi felt as if flies were bouncing around in his stomach. Meeting new people made him feel this way.

Ms. Springer continued. “For the next few weeks, we’ll be exploring the world of art. And about two months from now, we’ll have an art show at the community center.”

On the board, she wrote the word *medium*.

“A medium is the material or method an artist chooses to use,” she said. “Each medium let’s you express yourself in a different way. Terry, can you show what I mean?”

The tall boy, who had been sitting next to Danladi, raised a poster with pieces of pictures and words cut out of magazines. They were arranged into the shape of a face.



“Wonderful!” Ms. Springer said. “Now, please say hi to your elbow partner. Then share your work.”

The boy with the poster turned to Danladi and said, “I’m Terry.” He held out his hand.

Danladi shook his hand. “My name is Danladi.”

“What kind of name is that?” Terry asked.

Danladi sighed. *Not again.*

On the first day at his American school, a boy had made up silly ways to say his name: *Dan-Lady*, *Lady-Dan*, *Dan-Dan*.

It frustrated Danladi. That day, he had filled pages of his art book with angry drawings. Making art made him feel better. He liked to draw.

“It’s an African name,” he told Terry. “I’m from Nigeria, in West Africa.”



“Oh, cool!” Terry said. “How do you spell your name?”

“D-A-N-L-A-D-I.”

“Okay. Cool. Can you say your name again so I know the right way to say it?”

Danladi sounded it out for him, “don-LAH-dee.”



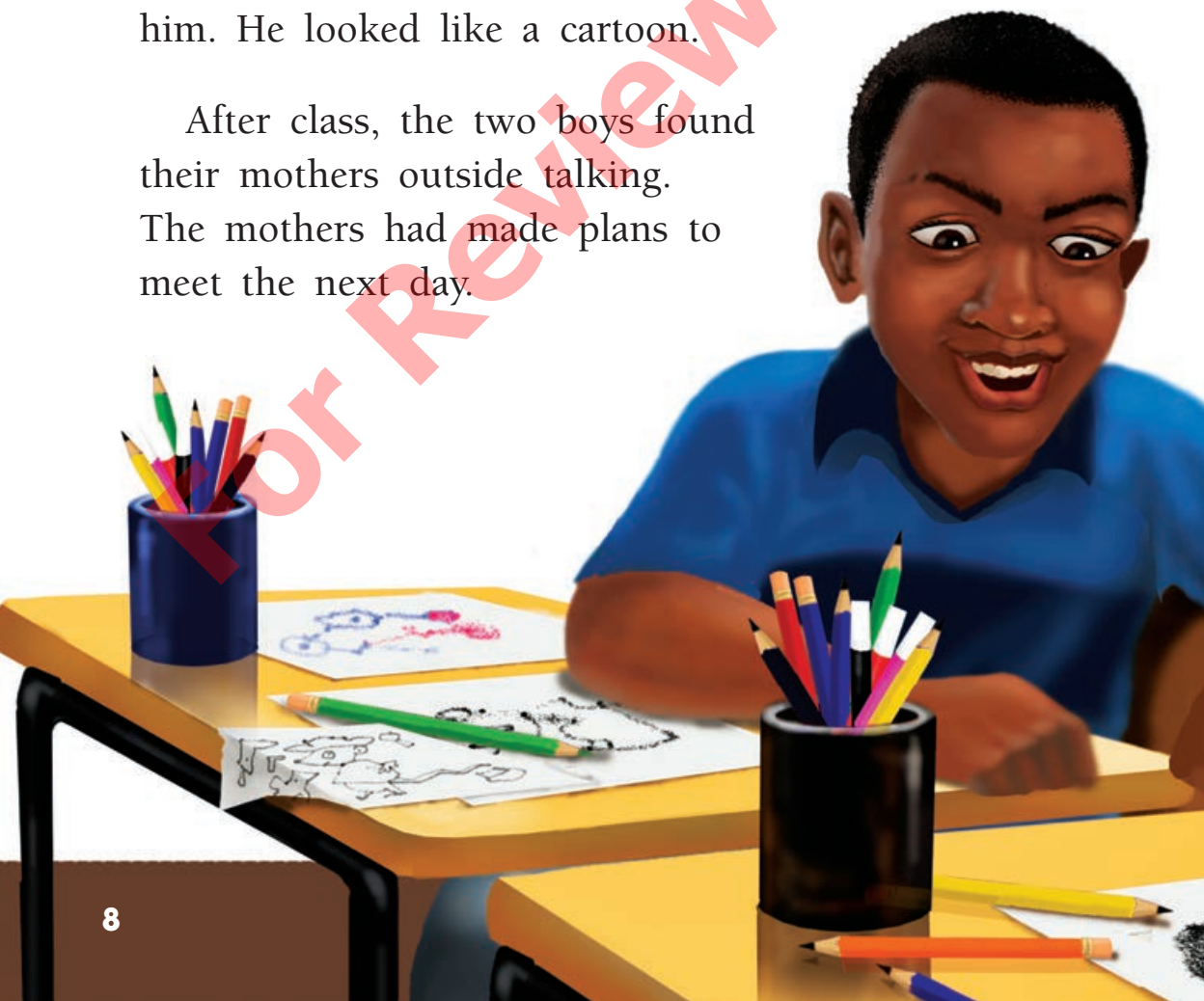
He's different from the other kids, Danladi thought. He liked how Terry said cool about everything. Cool made Danladi's stomach feel better.

"Okay," Danladi said, pointing to Terry's art, "but first, can you explain how you made that?"

"Sure." Terry smiled. *"That is a collage."*

After their introductions, the students changed seats to draw pictures of one another. Danladi relaxed. He laughed when Terry drew him. He looked like a cartoon.

After class, the two boys found their mothers outside talking. The mothers had made plans to meet the next day.



“Did you know her?” Danladi asked Sara on the way home.

“No. But we saw you together from the doorway,” she said. “It looked as if you had made a friend.”

“Cool,” Danladi said, trying out Terry’s word.

