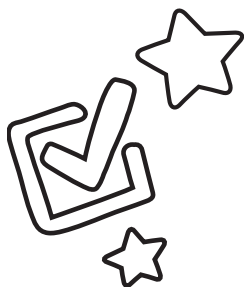


An illustration featuring a brown hand placing a white ballot into an orange ballot box. The ballot has the words 'THE VOTE' in large, bold, purple letters. There are four orange stars: one to the left of 'THE', one to the right of 'THE', one inside the 'O' of 'VOTE', and one to the right of 'VOTE'. The background is blue with white paper scraps.

# THE VOTE

**Jeff Gottesfeld**



## MEET THE



Rae

**Age:** 11

**Special Skill:** can get anyone to talk to her

**Favorite Way to Have Fun:** watch or play sports

**Career Goal:** to be president of the United States of America

**Best Quality:** loyal

# CHARACTERS



Kia

**Age:** 11

**Special Skill:** organizing

**Favorite Hobby:** reading

**Secret Wish:** to study art in Paris, France

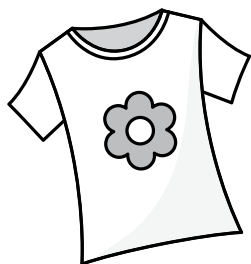
**Best Quality:** supportive

# 1

## NEW SCHOOL

*Wow! Sixth grade!* Rae Mars was excited to start school. She thought sixth grade was a big step up. In her town, there was one school for the whole grade. That seemed special to her.

Rae got ready for her first day. Picking what to wear was a big deal. A black skirt and red top seemed best. Tying back her long dark braids added to the look. Rae felt grown up.



The perfect outfit!





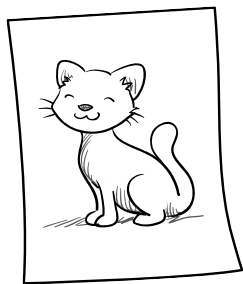
She could no longer walk to school. The new one was too far away. Rae had to take the bus.

Her best friend was Kia Ladd. They had the same bus stop. Kia was at the stop when Rae arrived.

“Are you ready?” Rae asked Kia.

Kia shook her head. She wore jeans and a gray T-shirt. “Not really. You know I don’t like change.”

Rae nodded. She got it. Kia was quiet. Talking was not fun for her. Drawing and reading were better. Rae was the opposite. Socializing gave her joy. But she loved Kia. They had been friends for years.



Kia is  
the BEST  
artist.



“Don’t worry,” Rae told her. “I’ve got your back.”

Kia smiled. “Thanks. That means a lot to me. Here’s the bus.”

The girls got on. It was almost full. Only two seats were open. One was close to the front of the bus. Another was near the back. Rae knew Kia would hate walking past all the kids to sit in the back.

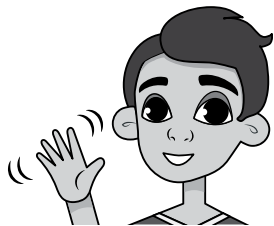
“You can sit up front,” Rae told her.

Kia looked grateful and took the first open seat.

Rae walked toward the back. She saw a boy seated next to the second open spot.

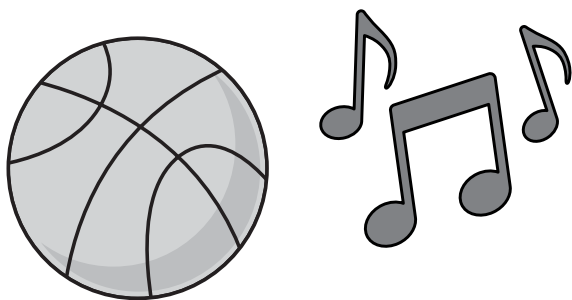
“Hi. My name is Rae,” she said, sitting down next to the boy.

“Hey,” he replied. “I’m Leo.”



Rae and Leo talked a lot. Leo thought she was cool. They both liked sports. Their taste in music was the same too.

Instant friendship!



They did not stop talking until the bus arrived at school. Leo knew some other kids on the bus. He introduced them to Rae. All of them were as nice to her as he was. One girl's name was Elly. She was super funny.

Rae had made a group of new friends before even leaving the bus. She wanted Kia to meet them. Then they could all be friends.

She got off the bus. But her best friend was nowhere in sight. *Did Kia go inside already?* Rae wondered. *Why didn't she wait for me?*



# THE VOTE

I really want to win the race for student council president. But can I keep my best friend when she's running too?



  
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