



THE HERO

OF

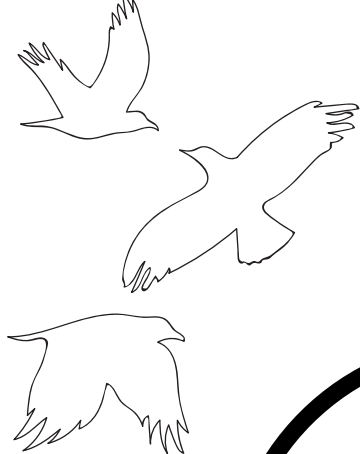
CROW'S

CROSSING



Anne Schraff





MEET THE



Tazmin

Age: 9

Best Part of Crow's Crossing: Lots of things to do outdoors—for free

Favorite Snack: Saltine crackers with honey

Future Goal: College!

Best Quality: Accepts others for who they are

CHARACTERS



MR. RIDLEY

Age: 30½

Worst Habit: Loses his temper a lot

Favorite Book: *The Wind in the Willows*

Little-Known Fact: Wears size 6 EEE shoes for his very short and wide feet

Best Quality: Knows how to inspire people

1 NEW TEACHER

There was no fourth grade teacher at Crow's Crossing School. The fourth graders had to join the third graders. The teacher, Mr. Eckert, was not doing a good job of teaching third grade. Or fourth grade.



Then Mr. Ridley moved to town. He was hired to teach fourth grade.



Mr. Ridley was a tall young man. About thirty. Thick dark hair. Strange silvery eyes. He looked sad sometimes. And sometimes he looked gray. Like he was scared. Like he had seen a ghost.



Some of the kids were afraid of him. But nine-year-old Tazmin Jones liked him from the start.

Crow's Crossing was a small town. Most



of the people there had come from bad parts of the city. They were poor. They wanted to get their children out. Because of crime. Because of gangs. And houses were cheap in Crow's Crossing.



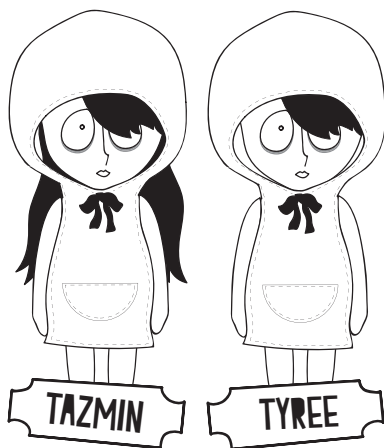
“We don’t have much here,” Mom said. “But we got green hills. We got little streams. Our house is not big. But we got flowers and trees. A great garden.”

“I like Crow’s Crossing,” Tazmin said. “I have friends in school. Mister Ridley is

a great teacher. He's the best fourth grade teacher. Maybe ever."

Tazmin's twin brother, Tyree, did not like Mr. Ridley. "He's mean. Crazy. He yells," Tyree said.

TWINS, BUT OPPOSITES.



"I'm learning," Tazmin said. "I didn't learn from Mister Eckert."

"Well, I'm glad you're learning," Mom said. She quit school. She had to help her

mother clean houses. Dad quit school too. Now he did odd jobs in Crow's Crossing.

CLEAN OTHER PEOPLE'S CLOTHES? NO THANK YOU!



"I'm getting good at math," Tazmin said proudly. "Mister Ridley helps everybody."

"He gets crazy mad if you don't mind him," Tyree said.

"Not at me," Tazmin said. "*I* mind him."

"We never finished school, your dad and me," Mom said. "That's why we have nothing. But you kids are going to do better. At least we got a clean house. Food on the table."

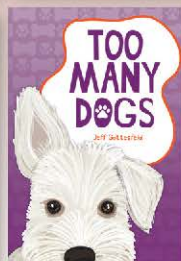
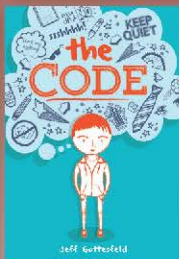
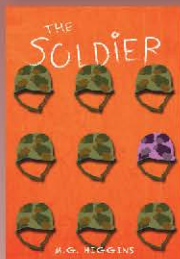
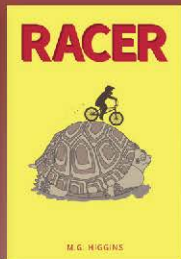
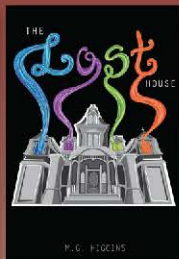
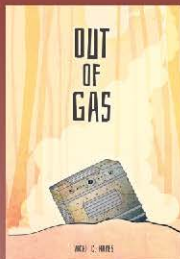
“And we got the best teacher ever,” Tazmin said. She pulled out her paper. There was a gold star on it. Tazmin was so proud.



Word had gotten around town. Mr. Ridley was a very good teacher. But everybody wondered why he was here. The pay was low. Nothing was close-by.

Some did not trust him. They thought he was hiding. From someone. Or something.

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THE HERO OF CROW'S CROSSING

Our new teacher is
my hero. Nobody ever
believed in us before. But
does he have a secret?



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