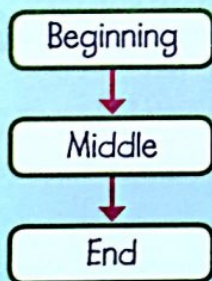


Genre Study

Realistic fiction is a story with characters and events that are like people and events in real life. Look for

- details that help the reader make predictions.
- a plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end.



Comprehension Strategy



Monitor comprehension—

Read ahead if something does not make sense to you as you read.

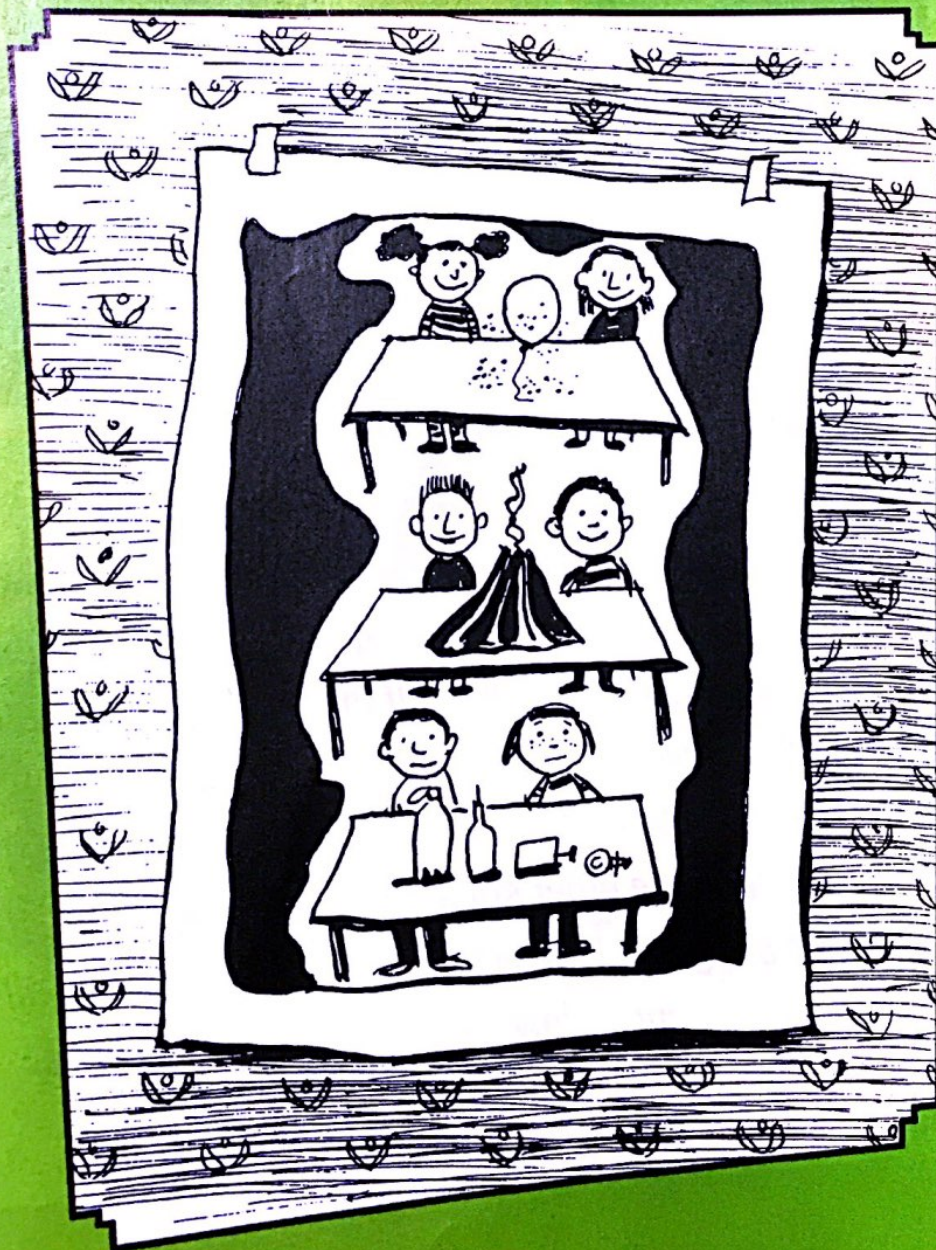


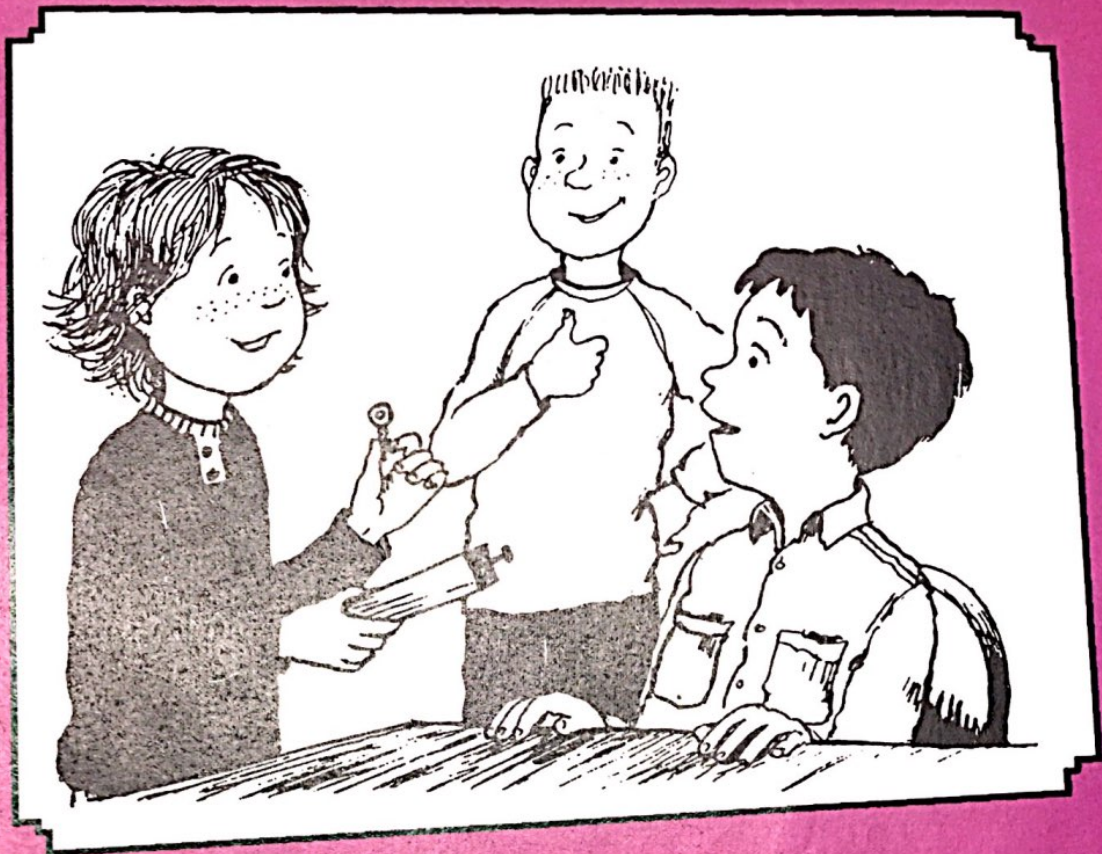
CALIFORNIA STANDARDS
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS—Reading 3.1
Distinguish common forms of literature (e.g., poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction).

The Science Fair

by
Susan
Wojciechowski

illustrated by
Susanna
Natti





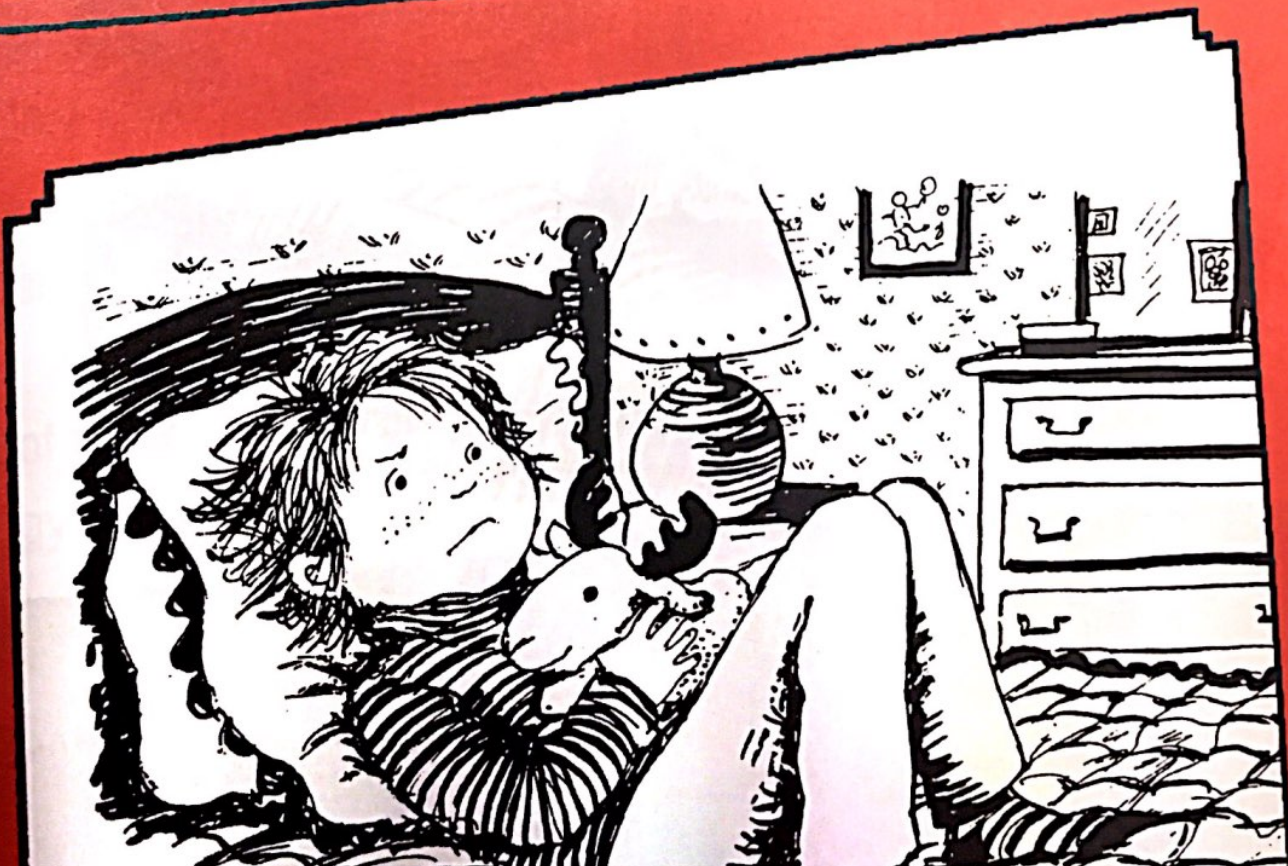
Ms. Babbitt's third-grade class is having a science fair. Beany is a girl in that class who doesn't like science. Her partner, Kevin Gates, is good at science. He came up with two experiments to show that heat makes liquids and gases **expand**, or get bigger. Beany is proud of herself for figuring out how to show that solids also expand when they are heated.

But Beany is worried that their experiment will not get a good grade. Some of the other students are making glittery posters. Others are going to play music. Kevin insists that all they need is good science. How can they compete without fancy props?

On the day of the science fair, I woke up early, before the alarm went off. I lay in bed hugging Jingle Bell and worrying.

“What if our project is the worst one there?” I said to Jingle Bell. “What if I mess up when I do my part for the judges? What if the judges laugh when they walk away from our table? What if Ms. Babbitt told us that she liked our project just to be nice?” Ms. Babbitt would do something like that. Once I heard my dad tell my mom that Ms. Babbitt does a good job of building self-esteem. When I asked him what that meant, he said she works hard to make us kids feel good about ourselves.

Jingle Bell understood that there was a lot to worry about.





On the bus that morning, I saw that Carol Ann and Stacy were dressed alike. Carol Ann and Stacy didn't seem worried. They were talking nonstop about how much fun the science fair was going to be.

"We're handing out rock candy to everyone who comes to see our project," Carol Ann said. "I bet we win first prize."

"Well, maybe second," said Stacy. "The volcano project sounds really great."

Nathaniel and Montrell's project was about how volcanoes erupt. They were going to build a volcano out of papier-mâché and put something inside that would make it get all bubbly, like a volcano erupting.

Stacy said to me, "Your project is good, too," but I knew she was just doing self-esteem on me.


After lunch we went into the gym. There were three rows of tables with four tables in each row set up at one end of the gym.

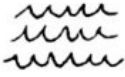
"You have a half-hour to set up your projects," Ms. Babbitt said. "And have fun," she added. I felt like throwing up.


Gases, liquids, and solids get bigger when they're heated up.
It is Not Magic ! It is Science!

The Experiments

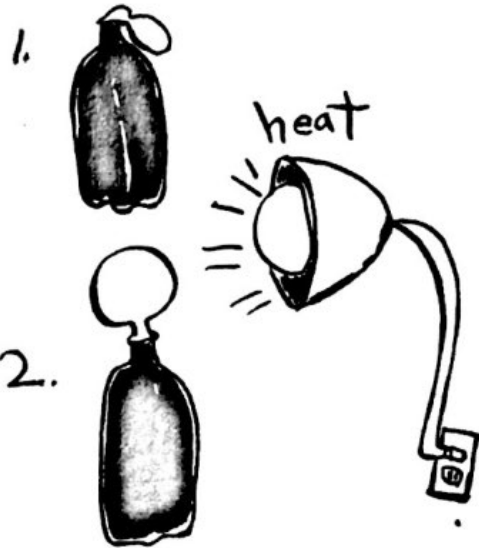
Heat makes things get bigger:

A. Gas 

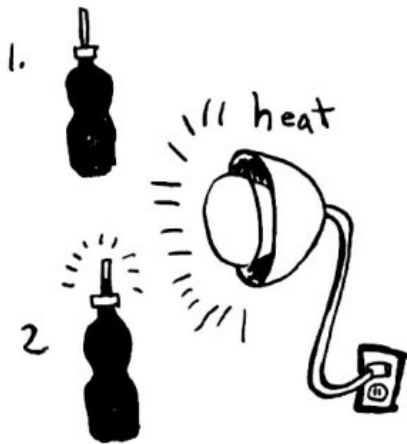
B. Liquid 

C. Solid 

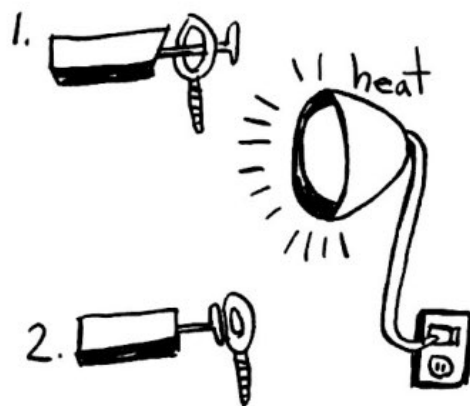
A. Gas (air)



B. Liquid



C. Solid



Kevin and I covered our table with a white tablecloth that my mom let us use. It had a big gravy stain in the middle, but she said we could set something on top of the stain so it wouldn't show. We laid out our stuff and a sign. I taped my posters to the front of the table.

When we were finished setting up, I walked around the gym to see what the other teams were doing. When I saw the volcano, I ran back to our table. "Kevin, you should see the volcano. It's huge. Why didn't we think of a volcano?"

Before Kevin could say anything, I ran off to look at other projects, then went back to report to Kevin. "Carol Ann and Stacy have streamers all around the edge of their table. Why didn't we think of that? Should I call my mom to ask if she'll run out and buy us some streamers? She'd do it. I know she would."

"We don't need streamers," said Kevin.

I left our table again, then went back with more news.

“Manuel and Boomer are doing a planet project, and they have a black tablecloth with stars all over it. Why didn’t we use a cool tablecloth instead of a dumb white one with a gravy stain on it?”

“You need to chill,” said Kevin. “Forget about what other people are doing and just—” But before Kevin could finish, I ran off again. In a minute I was back.

“Linda and Elaine have bubbles for their project, big ones!” I said, out of breath. “Everybody loves bubbles. Why didn’t we do bubbles?”

“Beany,” he said, “could you go get some paper towels in case the red water comes up to the top of the straw and runs over?”



Then I noticed the crowd of kids around the table next to ours. I peeked over. It was Shaleeta and Jessica's project. They had a bunch of big balloons on their table and a plate sprinkled with black pepper. "Oh no," I said to Kevin. "Look at all those balloons! Balloons are even better than bubbles! How come we only have one itsy-bitsy one in our project?"

Shaleeta rubbed a balloon on her arm and then held the balloon a few inches above the plate of pepper. The pepper jumped right off the plate onto the balloon.

"That happens because of static electricity," Shaleeta explained. Everyone said, "Wow." One kid even said, "That's a winner."

My stomach started to hurt. I told Kevin I had to go to Mrs. Facinelli's office to lie down. Mrs. Facinelli is the school nurse. She has *Ranger Rick* magazines we can look at while we try to feel better.

"If I'm not back by the time it's our turn, you go ahead without me," I said. I almost got away, but Kevin grabbed my arm.

"Paper towels," he said.

Parents started to come into the gym and walk from table to table. Teachers from our school brought their classes to see the projects, too. When I saw my mom and dad, I waved to them, and they came over to wish us luck. Kevin said his mom was going to try to get off work early and come, but even though he kept looking toward the door and looking all around the gym, I don't think he saw her.

Then the judges showed up and went from table to table. I started to bite my nails. When they got to the balloon table, I knew we were next. My knees got wobbly.

As the judges walked to our table, Kevin took one last look toward the gym door. He started waving. "She made it," he said. I looked toward the door and saw a woman coming into the gym. She looked out of breath, like she'd been running.

Mr. Shanner said, "Hi, Beany and Kevin. What do we have here?"

"We have a project to show that heat makes things expand, or get bigger," Kevin said.

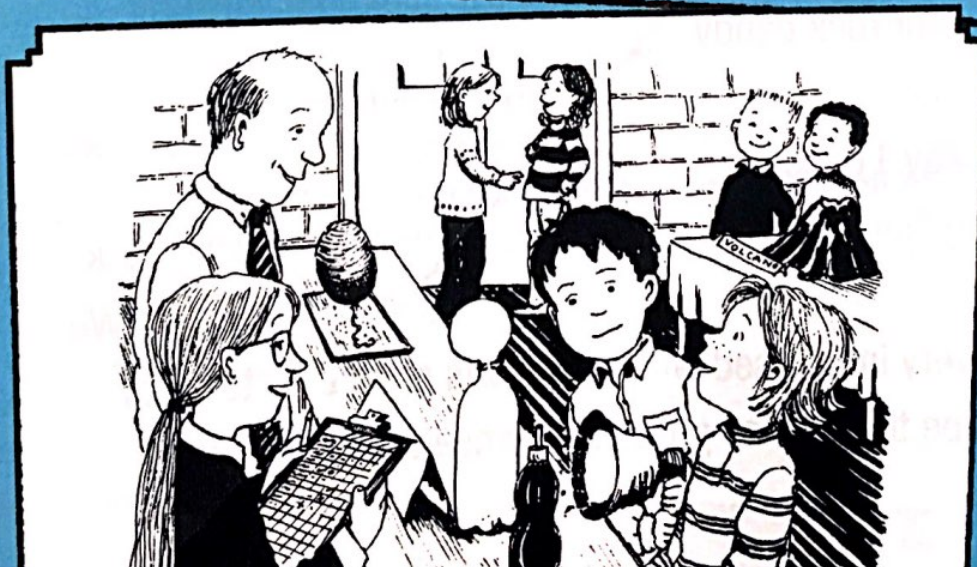
Then he poked me with his elbow, and I said, "We will now show how heat makes gases expand." Then Kevin did the experiment with the balloon on the bottle and explained everything he was doing as he went along.

Next I said, "We will now show how heat makes liquids expand." Kevin did the bottle and straw experiment and explained it. We did not need paper towels. The red water didn't come up too high, just high enough.

Then it was Kevin's turn to talk. He said, "We will now show how heat makes solids expand." This time I did the experiment, the one with the nail and the eye. When we were finished, Mr. Shanner said, "Hmm." The judges wrote stuff on clipboards and asked us a few questions. They shook our hands and moved on to the next table.

"Why weren't they smiling when they shook our hands?" I asked Kevin. "Why didn't they say *wow* when the water came up the straw? Why did Mr. Shanner say *hmm*? What were they writing on their clipboards?"

Kevin sat down and smiled. "We did a good job," he said.



While we were waiting for the judges to make their decisions, I went over to Carol Ann and Stacy's table and asked how their presentation went.

"Well," said Carol Ann, "I think the judges liked our outfits and the necklaces, but they told us to turn off the music so they could hear us better. Plus, we were supposed to start growing the crystals a few days ago, only we forgot to read the instructions on the box. We didn't do it till this morning, so the crystals are kind of small."

I looked at the fish bowl of water on their table. It had a string going through the water and the crystals were supposed to be growing on the string, but all I could see was a little bit of pink **grainy** stuff on one part of the string.

"And," Stacy added, "Boomer's mom broke a tooth eating our rock candy."

"How did yours go?" Carol Ann asked me.

"Okay, I guess."

The judges came back into the gym. We all went back to our tables. I crossed my fingers. Ms. Kowalski said, "We were very impressed with the efforts of all the students. We hope they are as proud of themselves as we are of them."

Then Mr. Shanner said, "It was hard for us to choose the three best, but after much **deliberation**, we have chosen for third place the static electricity experiment. It was creative and educational." Shaleeta and Jessica screamed.

My only hope had been third place. I sighed. I uncrossed my fingers and clapped as they went up to get their certificates and third-place ribbons.

Next, Ms. Kowalski gave the second-place award. It went to the volcano project. "Nathaniel and Montrell's volcano was impressive," she said, "but it was their charts and their explanation of what causes a volcano to erupt that we especially liked. Those were **thorough** and easy to understand."

After the clapping, Mr. Shanner coughed, then said, "Now, for the first-place project. We felt the winning project was a fine example of real science. It was organized, clear, and complete."

I knew we wouldn't get first place. I started reciting the sevens times tables in my head, just to keep myself from crying. But right at seven times four, Kevin started pushing me out from behind our table.

"Go," he said. "We won."

"We what?"

"We won."

I screamed and jumped up and down. I couldn't believe it!

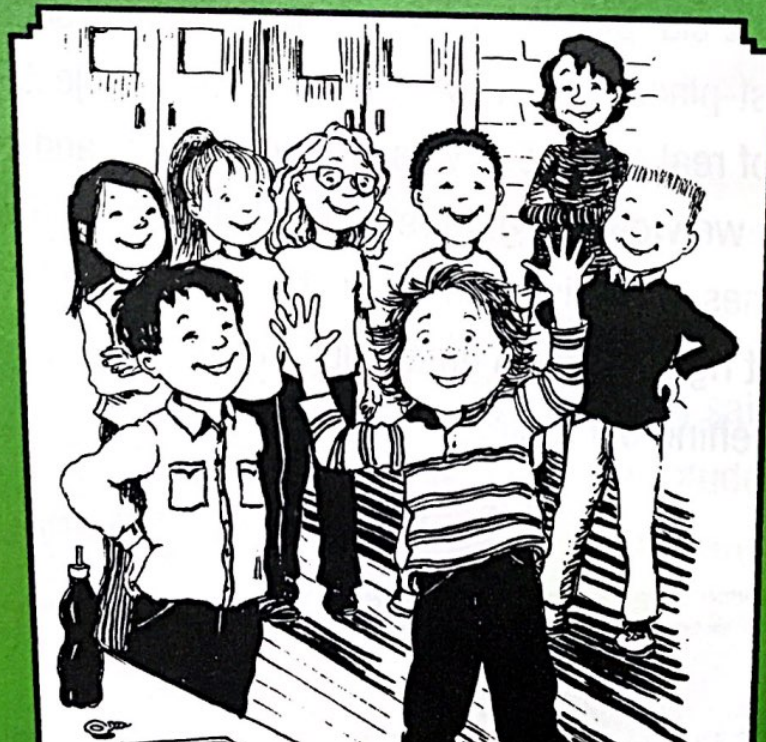
Kevin and I each got a certificate and a blue ribbon that had FIRST PLACE, SCIENCE FAIR stamped on it in gold letters. Ms. Babbitt hugged us. Then she whispered in my ear, "I knew you could make it work." My mom and dad came up and hugged us. So did Kevin's mom.

"Thanks for coming," I heard Kevin say to her.



"I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I'm just sorry I was late," she said. Then his mom pulled a camera out of her purse.

"Say *cheeseburger*," she told Kevin and me.

"Aw, Mom, come on," Kevin said. But he smiled.



Think Critically

- ① What do you think Beany will do the next time she enters a science fair?  MAKE PREDICTIONS
- ② Why are Carol Ann and Stacy's crystals so small?
CAUSE/EFFECT
- ③ Did you think that Beany and Kevin would win first place? Why or why not? EXPRESS PERSONAL OPINIONS
- ④ How can you tell that the author thinks the content of a science experiment is more important than decorations?
DRAW CONCLUSIONS
- ⑤ **WRITE** What do you think Beany learned from doing the science experiment? Give examples from the story to support your answer.  SHORT RESPONSE

Meet the Author Susan Wojciechowski

Susan Wojciechowski had many different jobs before she became a children's book author. She says she discovered writing after her neighbor had a story published in a magazine. She wanted to have her name in a magazine, too!

The author often writes while sitting in a big squishy chair in her living room. Sometimes, an idea will come to her while she is doing the dishes. She says the character for Beany came into her head while she was in bed with the flu.

In her spare time, Susan Wojciechowski likes to do crossword puzzles, read good books, and visit schools. She lives in York, Pennsylvania with her husband and three children.



www.harcourtschool.com/reading



Meet the Illustrator Susanna Natti

When she was only five years old, Susanna Natti liked to copy paintings from her parents' art books. By the time she was eight, she already knew she was going to be an illustrator. Susanna grew up in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where many artists and authors lived. Her mother, too, was an author of children's books.

Susanna Natti has won awards for some of her illustrations. She likes to work in schools because she thinks that art is especially important there. She also enjoys music, sewing, reading, and gardening. Susanna Natti says, "I love to garden and read—NOT garden and WEED!"

