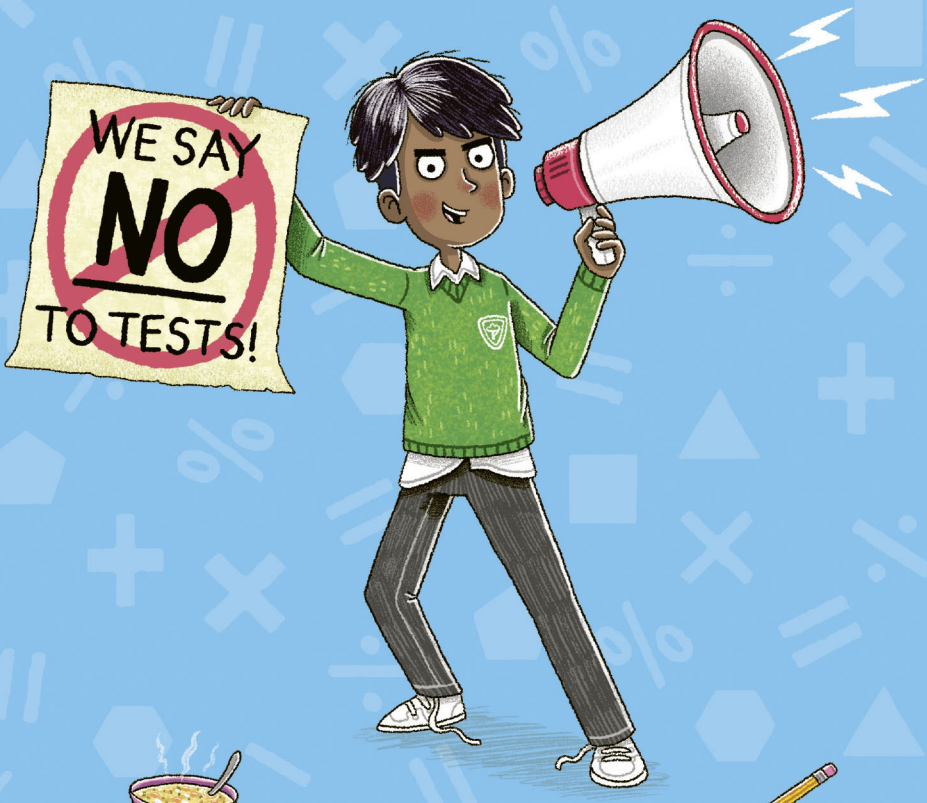
SERENA PATEL



TEST TROUBLE

Illustrated by Louise Forshaw



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Illustrated by
Louise Forshaw

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For my children

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CHAPTER 1
Worst News Ever!

As soon as Miss Herbert said the words Maths, Test and Next Week, Arun's stomach dipped. He looked around the classroom. Clever boy Kale grinned at Arun and gave a shrug. "I know I'm gonna get a hundred per cent anyway!" he said.

"You don't actually *know* that," Arun muttered softly to himself.

Teacher's pet Olivia-Mae shot her hand in the air. "Miss, is it on Fractions? Please say it's Fractions!"

Arun frowned. Why would anyone *ask* for a test on Fractions? Some people were seriously weird!

Miss Herbert smiled. "No, sorry, Olivia-Mae, it's not just on Fractions," she said. "It's actually going to cover all sorts of Maths – Shape and Space, Decimals, Times Tables."

Somebody at the back of the class groaned.

Miss Herbert went on talking, "Now, class, let's try to be positive about this test. The test results will help us see where you're at with everything and where we need to do a bit more work. It's nothing to worry about."

Arun didn't agree. His stomach began spinning around inside him. Tests always made him feel bad.

His partner, Leo, gave him a nudge. "You OK?" he whispered. "You look like you're going to throw up!"



"I'm OK. It's just a bit hot in here, isn't it?" Arun said.

"Umm, not really," Leo replied.

Arun looked around again. No one else seemed to be that bothered about the test. Maybe he was over-reacting. For a moment Arun thought it might not be too bad. But then Miss said the worst thing of all.

"Oh, I need to tell you all that the test will be timed. You'll have thirty minutes to complete it."

Timed! Arun really did feel sick now. He wasn't good with anything which was timed. That was just a fact.

Every morning, his mum woke him up early so he had plenty of time to get ready for school. But no matter how much time she gave him, it was never enough. He always ended up having to wolf down his toast and run out of the door before he'd done up his shoes properly and with his backpack half on, half off.

The trouble was that Arun was always thinking about too many other things. There was always lots of very interesting and important stuff that he wanted to do. His mind just wouldn't concentrate on the one thing he HAD to do right now.

His mum said his brain was like a box of frogs – noisy and always jumping around. So a test was going to be hard. Arun would have to concentrate and answer questions, and the whole time the clock would be ticking away. No, a test wasn't hard – it was impossible!

At break, Arun chatted to his friends about it.

His best friend Nasir was chilled out. "Arun, you heard what Miss said. It's nothing to worry about."

"That's easy for her to say. She doesn't have to do the test!" Arun complained. "Why don't the teachers sit all the tests too? See how they like it!"

"I dare you to ask Miss that," Nasir laughed.

"Do I look like I want to go to the headteacher's office?" Arun replied. "This test is a disaster. You know I don't cope well with

pressure, and it's timed. Oh man, it's gonna be bad."

His other friend, Mika, tried to make him feel better: "Calm down, bro. It will be OK."

But Arun wasn't listening. He was freaking out!

*

When Arun got home, he was really panicking. The last time he had to do a test, he'd answered all the questions, but somehow he'd put the answer for Question A in the space for Question B, and then after that he'd put all the other answers in the wrong places too! It was a total disaster. Arun knew this test was going to be just as bad, maybe even worse!

It looked like Mum was home, and Uncle Paresh's car was out front too. They'd know what Arun should do.

Mum and Uncle Paresh were in the kitchen making rotli together. They liked to cook, and whenever Uncle Paresh was round, he'd get Mum to let him roll the rotli while she cooked them. But his rotli always turned out to be weird shapes, and Mum would tell him off in between laughing at him.

Arun kicked off his shoes and flopped onto the sofa. He gave a loud sigh so that someone would ask him what was wrong. But Mum and Uncle Paresh were too busy laughing.

Arun coughed and sighed even louder.

Mum looked up. "You OK, diku?"

Arun hated it when she called him that as it made him sound like a baby, but he didn't say anything.

"No, I had the worst day ever," Arun moaned.



Uncle Paresh laughed. “Worst day ever? What happened? Did the school fall down?”

Arun frowned. “No.”

"Well, did you fall and break all your bones on the way home?"

"No, obviously not!" Arun replied.

"OK, so maybe not the WORST day ever then, huh? You know there are places in the world where—"

Arun cut him off. "Yes, I know, Uncle. There are places in the world where they don't even have school."

Uncle Paresh looked happy that Arun had remembered. "Exactly. Now tell us – what happened today that was so terrible?"

Arun looked at Mum and his uncle. "So, they told us today that next week we have a TEST! And if that wasn't bad enough, it's going to be TIMED!"

Mum came and put her arm round Arun. "OK, well, sweetheart, you just have to do your

best. You're very smart when you focus. You'll be fine."

Uncle Paresh snorted. "Don't listen to your mum. Look, you want to BE the best, right?"

"Do I?" Arun asked.

"Of course!" Uncle Paresh boomed. "This family is always top of the class! It's in your genes!"

"I'm not wearing jeans, Uncle," Arun began to say, but Uncle Paresh didn't stop. He was giving his speech about how he went to one of the best schools in the country and how he was expecting Arun to become a top brain surgeon one day.

Arun sighed. His family were no use at all. He knew they were trying to be kind, but none of this was any help with the actual problem – the test!

Mum patted Arun on the head. "Practice makes perfect," she said. "You just need to prepare!"

Grown-ups always said things like that – it was so annoying. The test was coming, and he was feeling worse and worse about it. There was nothing else he could do. Arun was going to have to try to practise his Maths and be as ready as he could be for the test.