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opening extract from

a giant slice of horrid henry

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51+22=74
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HORRID HENRY READS A BOOK

Blah blah blah blah blah.

Miss Battle-Axe droned on and on and on. Horrid Henry drew pictures of crocodiles tucking into a juicy Battle-Axe snack in his maths book.

Snap! Off went her head.

Yank! Bye bye leg.

Crunch! Ta-ta teeth.

Yum yum. Henry's crocodile had a big fat smile on its face.

Blah blah blah books blah blah blah read blah blah blah prize blah blah

. . . PRIZE?

Horrid Henry stopped doodling.

"What prize?" he shrieked.

"Don't shout out, Henry," said Miss Battle-Axe.

Horrid Henry waved his hand and shouted:

"What prize?"

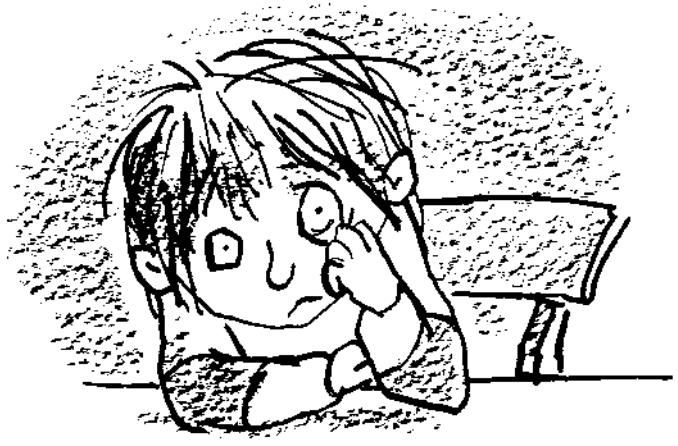
"Well, Henry, if you'd been paying attention instead of scribbling, you'd know, wouldn't you?" said Miss Battle-Axe.

Horrid Henry scowled. Typical teacher. You're interested enough in what they're saying to ask a question, and suddenly they don't want to answer.

"So class, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted—" she glared at Horrid Henry—"you'll have two weeks to read as many books as you can for our school reading competition. Whoever reads the most books will win an exciting prize. A very exciting prize. But remember, a book report on every book on your list, please."

Oh. A reading competition. Horrid Henry slumped in his chair. Phooey. Reading was hard, heavy work. Just turning the pages made Henry feel exhausted. Why couldn't they ever do fun competitions, like whose tummy could rumble the loudest, or who shouted out the most in class, or who knew the rudest words? Horrid Henry would win *those* competitions every time.

But no. Miss Battle-Axe would never have a *fun* competition. Well, no way was he taking part in a reading contest. Henry



would just have to watch someone undeserving like Clever Clare or Brainy Brian swagger off with the prize while he sat prize-less at the back. It was so unfair!

"What's the prize?" shouted Moody Margaret.

Probably something awful like a pencil case, thought Horrid Henry. Or a bumper pack of school tea towels.

"Sweets!" shouted Greedy Graham.

"A million pounds!" shouted Rude Ralph.

"Clothes!" shouted Gorgeous Gurinder.

"A skateboard!" shouted Aerobic Al.

"A hamster!" said Anxious Andrew.

"Silence!" bellowed Miss Battle-Axe. "The prize is a family ticket to a brand new theme park."

Horrid Henry sat up. A theme park! Oh wow! He loved theme parks! Rollercoasters! Water rides! Candy floss!

His mean, horrible parents never took him to theme parks. They dragged him to museums. They hauled him on hikes. But if he won the competition, they'd have to take him. He had to win that prize. He had to. But how could he win a reading competition without reading any books?

"Do comics count?" shouted Rude Ralph.



Horrid Henry's heart leapt. He was king of the comic book readers. He'd easily win a comic book competition.

Miss Battle-Axe glared at Ralph with her beady eyes.

"Of course not!" she said. "Clare! How many books do you think you can read?"

"Fifteen," said Clever Clare.

"Brian?"

"Eighteen," said Brainy Brian.

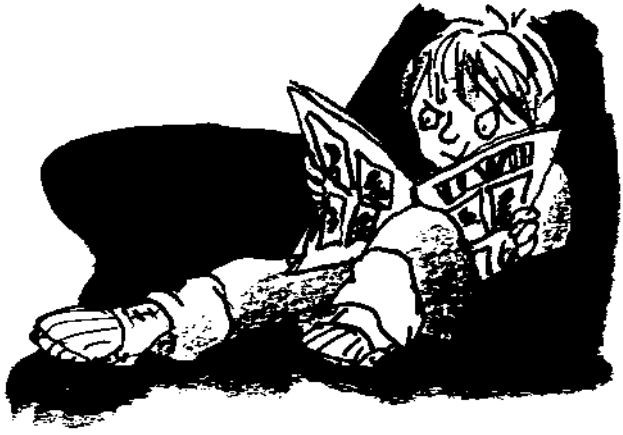
"Nineteen," said Clare.

"Twenty," said Brian.

Horrid Henry smiled. Wouldn't they get a shock when *he* won the prize? He'd start reading the second he got home.

Horrid Henry stretched out in the comfy black chair and switched on the TV. He had plenty of time to read. He'd start tomorrow.

Tuesday. Oh boy! Five new comics!



He'd read them first and start on all those books later.

Wednesday. Whoopee! A Mutant Max TV special! He'd definitely get reading afterwards.

Thursday. Rude Ralph brought round his great new computer game, "Mash 'em! Smash 'em!" Henry mashed and smashed and mashed and smashed . . .

Friday. Yawn. Horrid Henry was exhausted after his long, hard week. I'll read tons of books tomorrow, thought Henry. After all, there was loads of time till the competition ended.

"How many books have *you* read, Henry?" asked Perfect Peter, looking up from the sofa.

"Loads," lied Henry.

"I've read five," said Perfect Peter proudly. "More than anyone in my class."

"Goody for you," said Henry.

"You're just jealous," said Peter.

"As if I'd ever be jealous of you, worm," sneered Henry. He wandered over to the sofa. "So what are you reading?"

"*The Happy Nappy*," said Peter.

The Happy Nappy! Trust Peter to read a stupid book like that.

"What's it about?" asked Henry, snorting.

"It's great," said Peter. "It's all about this nappy—" Then he stopped. "Wait, I'm not telling *you*. You just want to find out so you can use it in the competition. Well, you're too late. Tomorrow is the last day."

Horrid Henry felt as if a dagger had been plunged into his heart. This couldn't be. Tomorrow! How had tomorrow sneaked up so fast?

"What!" shrieked Henry. "The competition ends—tomorrow?"

"Yes," said Peter. "You should have

started reading sooner. After all, why put off till tomorrow what you can do today?"

"Shut up!" said Horrid Henry. He looked around wildly. What to do, what to do. He had to read something, anything—fast.

"Gimme that!" snarled Henry, snatching Peter's book. Frantically, he started to read:

"I'm unhappy, pappy," said the snappy nappy. "A happy nappy is a clappy—"

Perfect Peter snatched back his book.

"No!" screamed Peter, holding on tightly. "It's mine."



Henry lunged.

"Mine!"

"Mine!"

Riii—iippp.

"MUUUUMMMM!" screamed Peter. "Henry tore my book!"

Mum and Dad ran into the room.

"You're fighting—over a book?" said Mum. She sat down in a chair.

"I'm speechless," said Mum.

"Well, I'm not," said Dad. "Henry! Go to your room!"

"Fine!" screamed Horrid Henry.

Horrid Henry prowled up and down his bedroom. He had to think of something. Fast.

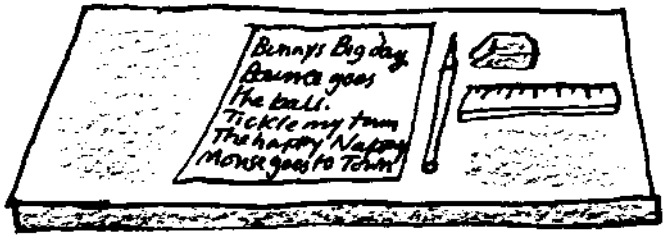
Aha! The room was full of books. He'd just copy down lots of titles. Phew. Easy-peasy.

And then suddenly Horrid Henry remembered. He had to write a book

report for every book he read. Rats. Miss Battle-Axe knew loads and loads of books. She was sure to know the plot of *Jack the Kangaroo* or *The Adventures of Terry the Tea-Towel.*

Well, he'd just have to borrow Peter's list.

Horrid Henry sneaked into Peter's bedroom. There was Peter's competition entry, in the centre of Peter's immaculate desk. Henry read it.



Of course Peter would have the boring and horrible *Mouse Goes to Town.* Could he live with the shame of having baby books like *The Happy Nappy* and *Mouse Goes to Town* on his competition entry?