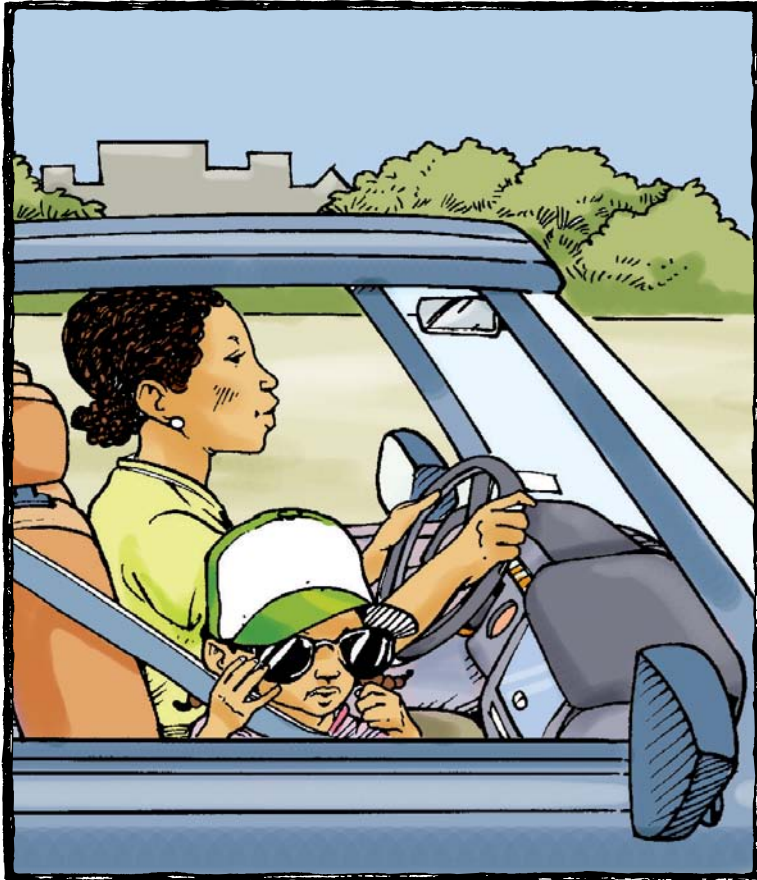


Harold the Dummy

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,617



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Correlation

LEVEL S

Fountas & Pinnell	○
Reading Recovery	34
DRA	34

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Chapter 1

There are two things a mother should never do. First, she should never, and I mean NEVER, name her daughter Ermaline, even if it was her grandmother's name.

I'd liked my name until I started kindergarten, but then kids teased me, making silly rhymes like "Ermaline the jelly bean" and "Ermaline's a trampoline." Kids still tease me about my name, but I'm used to it now.

The second thing a mother should never do is to make her daughter travel with a dummy, no matter how good her reasons are.

It's like this: one day, when Mom came home from getting her hair done, she was carrying a Styrofoam wig stand shaped like an egg. This egghead had no eyes, ears, nose or mouth. The minute I saw it, I knew there was trouble ahead.

"Ermaline, let's go to Sally's Second Hand Store. I have a great idea I know you will just love," she said.

"Oh, no, Mom, what are you going to do to me now?" I asked.

"Just get in the car, Ermaline. It's a surprise!" she said.



At Sally's, Mom gave me two dollars to spend and told me to look around while she shopped. But instead of looking around, I spied on Mom while she picked out a man's black long-sleeved tee shirt and a pair of men's sunglasses. I watched as she dug through a pile of wigs that looked like roadkill, finally picking a scruffy black one.

Next, Mom sorted through baseball caps, bonnets, **berets**, and fishing hats. She added a purple baseball cap to her selections. I couldn't stand it any longer—I *had* to find out what she was up to.

“Mom, what *are* you doing?” I asked.

“I’m going to make a dummy, Ermaline,” she said as she paid for the stuff.

“A what?” I asked in disbelief.

“You heard me, Ermaline—a dummy. When we ride in the car, we’ll put him in the back seat so it looks like we have a man with us. That will make us safer, especially when we take those long drives for our summer vacation,” she explained.

My mom had found another way to totally embarrass me.



Chapter 2

I love my mom, but she is a **certified** safety **fanatic**. We already had three dead bolts on our apartment door, motion detector lights outside, and automatic timers on all our lamps. As if these things weren’t enough, Mom had also **customized** our doorbell. Instead of ringing like other people’s doorbells, our doorbell barked and growled. Mom had hooked the doorbell switch to a tape recording of a dog.

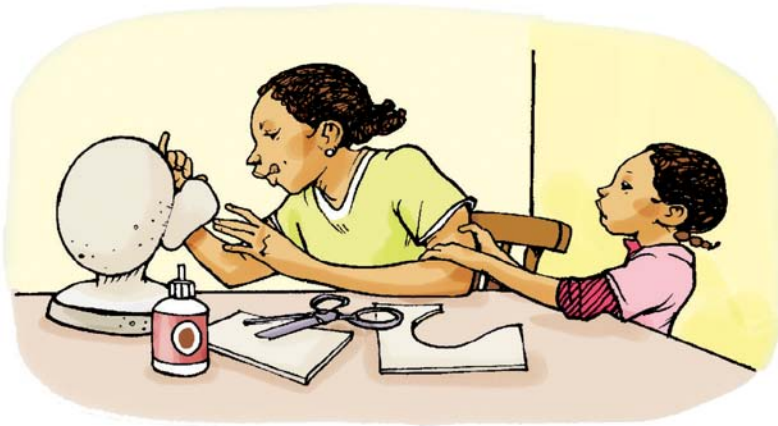
“Mom,” I begged, “please, please, please don’t do this to me. I mean, this is, like, totally weird. Don’t make me ride with a dummy.”

In spite of my whining, Mom went to work on the dummy in the kitchen.

“Our dummy will need ears,” she said. “What kind of ears should I make? Big ones, little ones?”

“Oh, please, please, please, Mom,” I pleaded. “Don’t do this to me.”

But Mom went right ahead and made the ears out of Styrofoam and glued them to the wig stand. To me, they looked like big question marks.



“He needs a nose now, Ermaline. What type of nose should he have? A **Roman nose** with a bump in the middle, or maybe a snub nose . . .”

Mom answered her own question. “I’ll make him a Roman nose—a Roman nose is a good, strong nose, like an eagle’s beak,” she said as she **whittled** the nose out of Styrofoam. Mom glued the nose on the wig stand and took a few steps back to admire her handiwork.

“He’s looking good, right Ermaline?” she asked.

I gagged.

Mom went on. "This wig stand is pure white, Ermaline. How can we make it flesh colored?"

"We could bury it in the backyard for a few years," I offered.

"I'll use a pair of pantyhose!" she said as she dashed into her bedroom and came out carrying a jumble of pantyhose.



Mom held up a pair of pantyhose and inspected it, saying, "This color is too pale—he'd look sick."

I groaned.

Mom sorted through the pile some more. "Here's a darker color that should be perfect. What do you think, Ermaline?"

I whimpered.

Mom pulled and tugged the pantyhose over the wig stand, and then she held it up, turning it around in her hands, admiring her work. "I don't think he needs eyes—I'll just put the sunglasses on him, and no one will know the difference."

On went the sunglasses and then the scruffy black wig. "Awesome!" Mom shouted. I couldn't stand to watch anymore, so I went outside. I climbed into my tire swing and spun in circles, hoping to barf. If Mom thought she was making me sick, she might change her mind about making the dummy, but I had no such luck. I didn't barf, and a little while later, Mom came outside.

"Ermaline, I'm finished with the dummy," she announced. "Come and see."



I **plodded** back into the house and took a look. The dummy looked like my worst nightmare. Mom had added a mustache and stuffed the tee shirt with towels and blankets so the dummy had shoulders like a football player and arms like a wrestler.

"Oh, please, please, please, Mom, don't make me ride in the car with this thing! Kids will point and laugh at me! I'll, like, totally die of embarrassment! If that thing had a leather jacket, it'd look like a member of a motorcycle gang."

“What a good idea, Ermaline. If I could afford a leather jacket, I’d buy him one.” Mom patted and adjusted the dummy’s clothing some more. “I had to use a wooden cooking spoon to attach his head to his body,” she explained. “His head is kind of wobbly, but I don’t think it’ll fall off.”

I groaned, but then I noticed something odd. “Why doesn’t he—er, it—have any legs?” I asked.

“When he’s sitting in the car, no one will see the lower part of his body,” she explained, “so he doesn’t need legs. Help me name him, Ermaline.”

I couldn’t speak—name a dummy?

“Let’s name him Harold,” Mom suggested. “Harold is a good, strong name, like Ermaline.”



Chapter 3

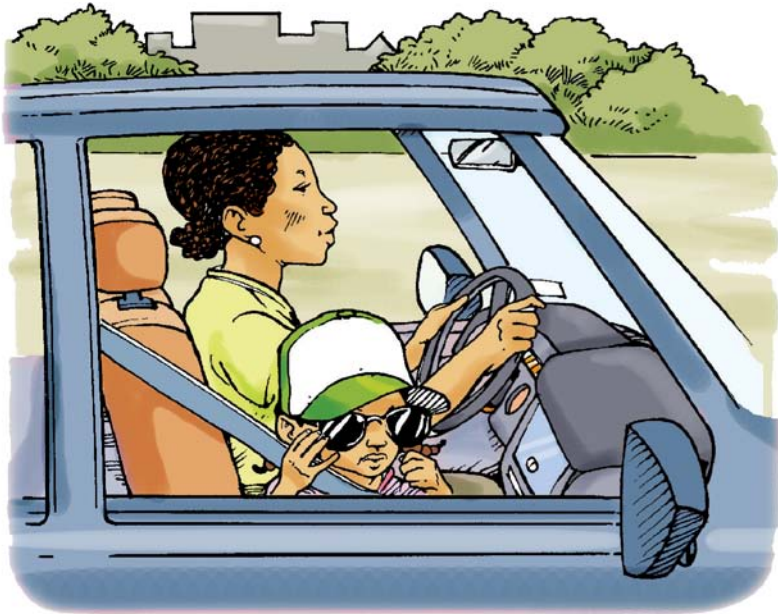
From that moment on, Harold went wherever we went in our car. He sat strapped in the back seat, staring straight ahead. His head wobbled at every corner we turned and over every bump in the road.

From a distance, Harold might be mistaken for a real person. But up close, Harold looked like what he was: a dummy. The first time my friends saw him, I nearly died of embarrassment.

“Oh, look,” they teased, “now there are two dummies in Ermaline’s car!”

Every time I had to ride in the car, I put my sunglasses on and pulled a hat down over my face, hoping no one would recognize me. I never got used to riding with that dummy.

School finally ended and summer vacation time came. Mom and I packed our car, planning to leave on our trip up north the next day. When we finished packing, I laid Harold on the back seat and covered him with a blanket. I did this every night so it wouldn't look like there was a man spending the night in our car.



Then Mom and I went to bed. In the middle of the night, the barking and growling of a dog woke us up. Someone was ringing our doorbell!

“Who is it? What do you want?” Mom called through the locked door.

“This is police officer Alice McDuff,” answered a voice. “I need to talk to you.”

Mom unlocked the three dead bolts and opened the door, and there stood a police officer holding Harold in her arms.

“Is this your, er, dummy, Ma’am?” Officer McDuff asked politely.

“Yes, that’s Harold, our traveling dummy,” Mom said. When she noticed the confused look on the police officer’s face, she explained about Harold. I expected the police officer to laugh at Mom’s idea, but instead, she said that Mom’s idea was really smart.

“What are you doing with Harold?” I asked. “We left him in the back seat of our car.”

“Your car was broken into,” replied Officer McDuff. “Your apartment security guard found a guy **unconscious** in the parking lot next to your car. We think that the guy uncovered your dummy and was so startled that he fell and knocked himself out on the pavement,” she continued.



“The guy is a thief we’ve been after for a long time. Tell you what—I’ll lock your car for you tonight. Tomorrow morning, though, before you leave, I’ll have a TV news reporter here to interview you about your, er, dummy. This is quite a story.”

Mom and I went back to bed, but I didn’t sleep the rest of the night, knowing that tomorrow I would be totally **humiliated** once again.





Chapter 4

The next morning, the mayor and Officer McDuff came with TV reporters. I hid in my bedroom and peeked around the corner while Mom was interviewed. My eyes nearly popped out of my head when I saw the mayor put a ribbon with a medal that said “Good Citizenship Award” around Harold’s neck. Everyone clapped.

I couldn’t believe it—Harold the Dummy had become Harold the Hero!

When all the excitement was over, Mom and I got ready to leave. For a second, I considered putting Harold in the front seat so people could see him and his medal better.

Then I came to my senses and climbed in the front seat next to Mom.

Glossary

berets	round, flattened, pancake-shaped French hats (p. 6)
certified	official; having been given an official certificate or registration; often used as a joke (p. 8)
customized	made personal; made special for one person (p. 8)
fanatic	person who is obsessed with something (p. 8)
humiliated	completely embarrassed (p. 20)
plodded	walked heavily and slowly (p. 14)
Roman nose	a long, large nose that has a bend in the middle, common on ancient Roman statues (p. 10)
unconscious	passed out (p. 19)
whittled	carved with a knife (p. 10)