

## NOTES

In recent years, violence in our schools has been escalating at a fevered pitch. In his poignant short story, *Special*, Jake Barton introduces us to a mentally-challenged teenager, who gives us a unique and more innocent perspective in the aftermath of a fictitious school shooting. *Special* is a work of fiction and is perhaps best performed by a male. This selection may be entered in either Prose Interpretation or Dramatic Interpretation. The protagonist in this selection is slow; however, be sure to play the innocence and likeability of the narrator. This character has a great sense of humor. Again, really make the audience fall in love with this narrator. If performed in Prose Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply suggestions as to when to turn the pages in the manuscript.

I'm so glad to be back at school. This is where all of my friends are. At home, it's just me and my mom. She's sick a lot, because she has diabetes. Her feet get real big sometimes, and it looks like they are going to pop. So I ask her, "Mom? Do you want me to pop your feet?" She just tells me to go watch my cartoons or play my video games. Sometimes she'll ask me to put lotion on her feet, because she says they get real dry.

I like my teachers at school. They're real nice. They take us on field trips, and sometimes we get to each lunch at Taco Bell. I like to get their spicy burritos. They make my mouth feel like it's on fire. I'm glad they have free refills at Taco Bell, because I drink as much Pepsi as I want—even though my mom doesn't let me drink sodas at home. She doesn't want me to become a diabetic, like her. But when my mouth is on fire, I drink gallons of Pepsi—like a camel. I don't think camels drink Pepsi though, because I don't think they have soda machines in the desert.



At school my favorite time of day is lunch, but not because that's when we get to eat. I like lunchtime, because it lets me and the other kids in my class see all of the other kids at school. The kids at school can get really loud in the cafeteria. My class always has to sit together, and we're not allowed to sit with the other kids at school. But that's okay. That's okay, because my class gets to go eat lunch first. So while we're eating our dessert, the other kids start coming in to get their lunch. This girl named Sarah, who sits next to me, always waves to the kids waiting in the lunch line. When the other kids see Sarah waving at them, they always say

really loud—“Hi! Hi, Sarah!”—and then they usually laugh. I want to tell them that she’s not deaf. Maybe they’re the ones who are deaf, because they don’t know how loud they’re talking. Sarah always says ‘hi’ back to those others kids, and then it’s usually time for us to go back to our class.



When we get back to class, our teacher, Mrs. Fletcher always reads us a story. Usually it’s a story we’ve already heard before, but sometimes it’s a new story. New stories are the best. Those are the ones that we all get really excited about, because we don’t know what’s going to happen. Mrs. Fletcher always stops at different parts of the story, and she wants us to guess what we think is going to happen next. We almost always guess wrong, but once in a while we’re right.

There was this one time, Mrs. Fletcher said I couldn’t guess what’s going to happen next anymore, because she said when she stops and I guess what’s going to happen next—I always make the story sound scary. It’s never scary though. They’re all just a bunch of babies—except Anthony—who thinks my guesses would always make the story better. Mrs. Fletcher said that I can’t guess anymore, because she’s afraid the other kids in my class will have nightmares. And every day after lunch—once we’ve heard our story—Mrs. Fletcher tells us that we have to take a nap for a little while. Mrs. Fletcher said we should never tell any of the other kids in school that we get to take a nap, because she said they would be jealous. She said it’s not nice to make somebody else jealous when you get to do something and they don’t get to do it, too. So I never tell anyone that we get to take naps. But we do. And I don’t ever think any of the other kids have nightmares after I tell them what I think happens next in the story. In fact, I don’t think most of the kids in my class ever even take a nap. They just lay there and pretend to be asleep, except Anthony, whose always picking his nose and wiping the boogers on his blanket. I told my mom what Anthony does, and she said I should tell Mrs. Fletcher. But I told Mom that I couldn’t tell on Anthony, because he’s my friend. So she said I should tell Mrs. Fletcher that we should all have assigned blankets. So I told Mrs. Fletcher we should all have assigned blankets, and she thought that was a good idea. So now we all have assigned blankets. And Anthony’s blanket has a lot of boogers on it. But that’s okay. It’s his blanket, and he can do whatever he wants with it.



I’m just glad we’re back at school again. We haven’t got to come back to school in over a week, and it’s not even a holiday. It’s not Christmas, and