

You get to choose  
what kind of  
person  
you want  
to be.

**“Operation Frog Effect  
will make you laugh,  
cheer, and strive to be  
a better person.”**

—SHANNON HITCHCOCK,  
author of *Ruby Lee & Me*  
and *One True Way*

**“A perfect middle-grade  
read. I absolutely  
adored this book.”**

—DONNA GEPHART,  
author of *Lily and Dunkin*

**“Heartwarming. . . .  
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students you are sure to  
fall in love with.”**

—ERNESTO CISNEROS,  
intermediate school teacher  
and author of the upcoming  
debut *Efrén Divided*

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find a book that feels  
like a gift. [This] is one  
of those books.”**

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author of *Sheep*

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**YEARLING HUMOR**

Ages 8–12

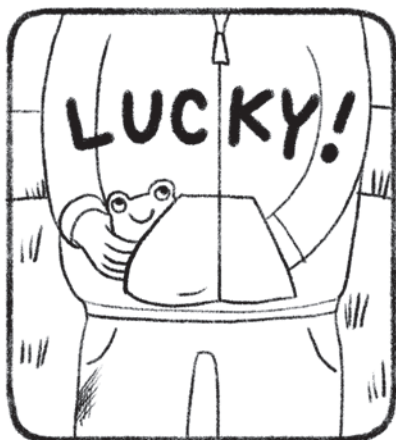
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OPERATION  
**FROG**  
EFFECT

# CHAPTER 1

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BLAKE



# EMILY

Status: 😊

Dear Hope,

Ms. Graham said we could give our journal a name (so we feel like we're writing to a real person). I've always liked the name Hope. It sounds so optimistic. Okay, I just reread that and *duh!* Of course "hope" sounds optimistic. That's basically the definition, right?

I'm feeling pretty *hopeful* about my First Day of Fifth Grade! We're the kings and queens of White Oak Elementary! I've got both my besties in my class—Aviva (my number one) and Kayley (close second). They came today with matching bracelets (I bet they'll surprise me with one too). They're sitting together in the back of the room. I wish they'd grabbed seats at my table, but oh well. Maybe they didn't see me when they came in?

I can't believe Ms. Graham let us pick our own seats. She looks kinda young, maybe that's why? I hope she winds up being cool. She's gonna lock up the journals at the end of every day. My secrets will be safe with you, Hope, right?

Love and luck,  
Emily

PS I think Blake is making frog noises. This doesn't surprise me.

# KAYLEY

Dear Ms. Graham,

I *know* you're reading this. I'm tired of pretending I don't know what adults are up to. I'm not being conceited or anything here, Ms. Graham, but I'm harder to fool than other kids.

No offense—but if you *tell* the kids you're not reading the journals, you know half of them won't write at *all*, right? You'll wise up. And then some will be kiss-ups—like Emily, for example. I can see her up front, practically writing a Novel. Aviva and I are outgrowing her. Last year we only sat next to her at lunch to be nice.

Blake Benson is the other one who drives me bananas. Somehow I got stuck with him at my table group, and all he's doing is drawing in his journal and making strange noises under his breath. I hate Blake Benson more than I hate knockoff jeans, and that says a lot. He's basically the cause of every problem.

I'll write every day, like you've asked us to, but I want you to know I'm not fooled. Come on! We're kids! We have Zero Privacy. And anything written at *school* and collected by a *teacher* is most certainly *not private*.

PS I can't even see Blake's mouth moving. Maybe he'll be a ventriloquist someday. That boy needs a plan, because he is *not* good at doing the school thing.

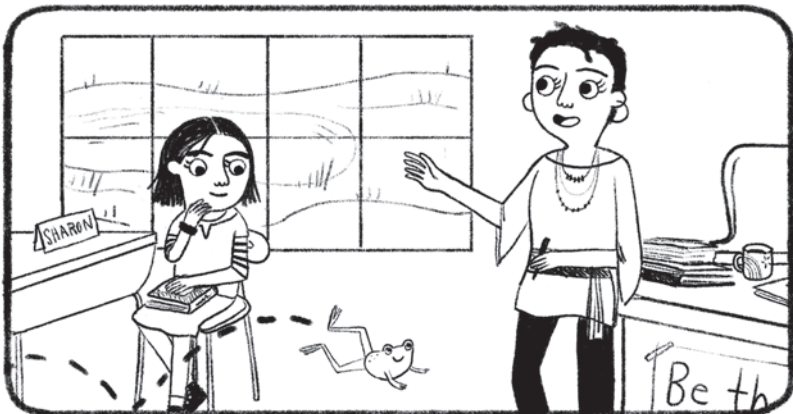
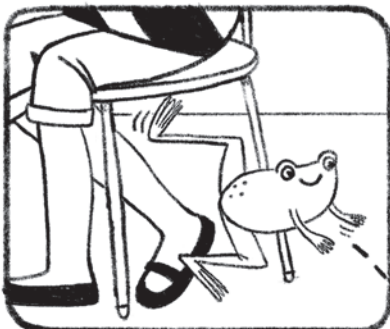
# SHARON

I'm going to write my journal in poems.  
Sometimes it's easier  
To speak the *truth* through a ballpoint pen  
Than through my lips.  
Probably because no one can interrupt.

When I talk,  
I get interrupted (corrected) all the time.  
Mostly, people don't want to hear the *truth*.  
Instead, they want some softened-up, sugared-over  
Version of reality.

Me—I like my truth  
Naturally fresh and flavorful  
Without added sugar or preservatives.  
Just like my food.  
We buy organic.

# BLAKE    ≡ OOPS! ≡



# HENRY

Someday I'll be a *real* movie writer/director, and I'll be so famous and rich that I'll pay someone to do the boring things like making my bed and setting the table.

My movies will be comedies. None of that sappy tearjerker junk for me. I think I'm pretty funny. Ma agrees. Not that I'm actually funny, but that I *think* I'm funny. She's always saying, "You think you're so funny."

And I say, "True dat," like a gangsta from a TV show, which makes her frown.

If I'm gonna be rich and famous, I've got to prepare. That's why Ba gave me his old cell phone. It's ancient but it has service (sometimes) and takes videos and photos, so I can practice making movies. I'll practice in my journal too, by writing scenes instead of regular boring journal entries. Ms. Graham said we could write our journals any way we want, so here goes. The dollar signs (\$) below are for inspiration.

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**SCENE:** *5th-grade classroom at White Oak Elementary School, 32 students sitting at desks in groups of 4. Ms. Graham moves her hands when she talks, like she's conducting an invisible orchestra.*

**MS. GRAHAM:** Look around you. The seats you've chosen today will be yours for the whole year.

**HENRY:** (*whispers to seat partner*) Rats! Should've sat closest to the door.



**EMILY:** *(raises hand)*

**MS. GRAHAM:** *(conducts)* Get to know your table groups because you'll need to work cooperatively for each assignment. We'll be learning through hands-on group projects. Yes . . . Emily?

**EMILY:** Since we didn't know about yearlong table groups when we sat down, can we switch today before we get started?

**MS. GRAHAM:** Great question! And thank you for warming us up by being the first to raise your hand. But no . . . the table groups are set. I do this on purpose so that students have a chance to work through any peer problems that arise.

**KAYLEY:** *(raises hand)* Will we be graded individually or as a team?

**MS. GRAHAM:** As a team.

**KAYLEY:** *(looks at our table group and sighs)*

**HENRY:** *(under breath to Kayley)* Okay, this is how it'll be. You work, and I'll supervise. *(Henry spies a frog leaping from Blake's pocket. It hops away from the table.)*

**KAYLEY:** Eek! *(scrambles onto her chair and points)* Ms. Graham! THERE'S A FROG BY YOUR FOOT!

**MS. GRAHAM:** Well, hello there. *(surprisingly calm, picks up frog)* He's injured.

**KAYLEY:** *(shrieking)* Now there's a FROG IN YOUR HAND!!!!

**MS. GRAHAM:** So there is. *(smiles)* First class vote of the year: What do you all propose we do with this frog?

**BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY:**  
What should we do with the frog?

*Remember, there is no such thing as a stupid idea.*

IDEA	# OF VOTES
<i>Release it to the wild</i>	5
<i>Keep it</i>	21
<i>Kiss it and see if it turns into a prince</i>	1
<i>Feed it to a bird</i>	1
<i>Hire the frog as a new principal</i>	4

KAI

Dear Frog,

Yes, I'm writing to you.

At this moment, you're the single most interesting thing in this class.

Wait—is Emily crying? She keeps sniffing and poking her fingers at the corners of her eyes. She usually hooks up with Kayley and Aviva for projects. But this time she's got me,

Sharon, and that new girl Cecilia (who started at White Oak last year). Cecilia smells like flowery girl shampoo.

Maybe Emily's sorry she's stuck with us. I kind of want to reassure her that I'll be a good team member. Just because I finish my work super-fast and teachers are always after me for reading under my desk, that doesn't mean I'm a slacker. Classwork is so easy that I can finish it all, get 100%, and still read half a novel during the school day. That's not being a slacker, that's being efficient. Same philosophy at home. I can read and mop at the same time. Don't bother asking me how (I refuse to reveal my secret method).

We're a big reading family. Maybe because both my parents are education professors at the university. They stagger their teaching schedules so that someone's always home for the four of us kids after school, and we all pitch in to help. Everyone in my house has got lots to say . . . all the time. Sometimes the only way to get away from them is to hide in the coat closet with a flashlight and read.

Reading is a good thing, right? But guess what I get in the most trouble for? *Reading*. Somehow no one thinks it's a good idea to read while walking the dog, taking out the trash, or mowing the lawn. Apparently, I got all the creative genes.

PS Writing in private journals on shared desks is a recipe for disaster. People will peek. Not me, of course. Other people.