

# MEETING HENRY GREENFIELD

Written and Illustrated by Christopher Francis  
Teacher's Guide by Nicole Hamel and Holly Moniz

## Chapter One: Eat it

“I’m sorry, I’m really

sorry,” Alex whimpered.

“What did you just say?”

Alex looked up at the large boy staring down at him. He was a giant among a sea of tiny and fragile adolescents. “I’m...I’m sorry.”

The gawking students on the basketball court didn’t move an inch.

“Eat it,” the boy grunted.

Alex knew there was no choice; there was no question what had to be done. The insignificant role he played as a junior student at Timpleville Public School was extremely small. He was at the bottom of the pyramid. He had to do whatever an intermediate student told him to do. It was just a matter of wrapping his mind around it. “You really want me to put this in my mouth?”

The boy rubbed the thick peach fuzz on his chin and chuckled, “I want you to swallow it.”

The crowd of kids whispered and pointed, anxiously waiting to see what Alex was going to do next.

“Really?”

Alex wasn’t sure why he was questioning it. It was suicide to actually think he could get out of it, especially when the threat was coming from someone who was once suspended for beating up the school mascot.

“Do it now, or else.”

Alex shook his head and sighed. If only he had got on the bus. If only he had just shut his mouth and moved on. If only...

If only he didn’t step in and stop Henry Greenfield from having a gigantic worm shoved down his throat.

Alex looked down at the concrete. There it was, squirming about along the cracks in the cement trying desperately to escape.

“You knocked it out of my hand...it’s no good to me now,” the boy said. “Eat it.”



Alex slowly picked up the worm and lifted it up to his mouth. It danced about between his fingers, unaware it was about to be sucked down the throat of a helpless klutz who clearly should have minded his own business.

“This isn’t happening, this isn’t happening,” Alex muttered.

Its slimy body squished against the tips of his fingers. Alex opened his mouth and lowered it toward his tongue.

No one said a thing.

Not a single student moved a muscle.

Alex closed his eyes. He wanted to be somewhere else...anywhere but there. He wondered why he always managed to find himself in the worst possible predicaments. He wondered what unfortunate series of events led to this very moment...the lowest and most humiliating point in Alex Thomas’ tiny life.

## First Day

Alex wasn’t always a ‘trouble-finder’. Up until that year his life was quite safe and normal. But when his brother graduated from the eighth grade and his best friend, Finley, moved away, Alex suddenly found himself starting a new year in grade six, vulnerable and totally alone.

The school was no longer a safe place.

Timpleville was now different.

Everything was different.

“I’m sorry for making you late, it was all my fault. It will never happen again,” mumbled Alex as he sat at the front of the school bus that morning.

“Um, okay,” replied a little girl stepping past him.

“Louder!” shouted the bus driver.

“I’m sorry for making you late, it was all my fault. It will never happen again,” Alex repeated.

“Better.”

Somehow, in a matter of twenty-four hours, Alex's life had turned completely upside down.

First of all, Alex had a hard time wrapping his head around going back to school. The summer was just too hard to forget. There were just too many pleasant, relaxing, lazy, fun, happy memories that were difficult to give up. Starting school in September was like jumping into ice water, head first...with a fifty-two inch TV tied to your feet.

Second, Alex barely slept a wink the night before. He sat with Finley at school every day last year at lunch. They traded sandwiches and chocolate puddings. They finished each other's sentences.

And now, he was gone.

To Boston.

"I'm sorry for making you late, it was all my fault. It won't happen again."

"Whatever," replied Ryan Samson kicking Alex's shin.

Third, Alex spent way too much energy trying to convince his parents to homeschool him this year. He argued with them practically the entire night...at least until about 10:30. All he got from his convincing argument and desperate cries was a lunch bag filled with leftover pepperoni pizza. It was like expecting to get an iPad for Christmas and receiving a twelve-pack of fruity colored underwear.

"I'm sorry for making you late. It was all my fault. It will never happen again."

Finally, because of all the stress Alex endured over the last twenty-four hours, he was extremely late for the bus that morning. What was worse was the mean bus driver, Mr. 'Crusty' Grayson decided to make Alex apologize to every student who got picked up.

The day had barely started and already Alex Thomas wanted to cry.

## Meeting Henry Greenfield

After the painful bus journey, Alex finally walked into his homeroom class. Stumbling through the narrow aisles he made his way to the back of the room and sat down.

"Good morning Class, and welcome back," Mrs. Oxford announced. She stood in the middle of the room with her long flowery dress and extra-large red framed glasses. Her jet-black hair was pulled back tightly in a bun.

Alex looked around the room.

No Finley.

No Friends.

Rudy Jerqson sat a few rows ahead of him. He knew the guy when Finley and him did lunch duty in Mrs.

Humphrey's kindergarten class last year. He was sort of funny, but had an annoying laugh. Then there was Satbir, two seats over to his right, but all he ever talked about was basketball - and his feet always smelled funny. Alex looked at the boy sitting in front of him. He had never seen him before. His giant orange hair puffed out like cotton candy.

"I hope everyone had a wonderful summer," continued Mrs. Oxford. "Before we get started today, I would like all of you to welcome our new student to the class, Henry Greenfield."

Henry sat so tall in his seat that Alex couldn't even see the front of the class.

"Henry just moved from Red Apple Creek I believe. Isn't that right Henry?"

"Yes Ma'am, that's right," he replied. The kid could barely fit in his desk chair.

Lisa Weatherly pulled her phone out of her desk and took a picture of him. She giggled and showed Tori Backwater.

Rudy Jerqson shot up his hand. "Um, Miss? Isn't he in the wrong class?"

"No, Rudy, why would you think that?" Mrs. Oxford walked back to the front of the room.

"Well, because he's a grown-up. This is only grade six."

Mrs. Oxford shook her head and turned on the Smart-board. "He's the same age as you, Rudy."

"Oh," he replied, chewing madly on the end of his pencil. He looked at Henry and spit out bits of the eraser. "Wait til Damian Dermite gets a load of you."

Henry folded his hands on his desk. Alex wondered if Henry had heard of Damian, the school bully. The guy terrorized kids at Timpleville for years. Being invisible before school, after school, between classes and during recess was an important part of surviving the year at Timpleville. With Henry's crazy giant hair, and his purple overalls and bright pink shirt, Alex knew the big guy didn't stand a chance.