

CLAUDIA MILLS

7 x 9 = Trouble!



Pictures by
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Wilson Williams searched through his desk for a pencil that didn't have a broken point and a chewed-off eraser. He found one that was pretty sharp, but the eraser had been bitten down to nothing. It would have to do.

Wilson knew he shouldn't chew his erasers. He did it only when he was nervous. Or bored. During math, doing multiplication, he was nervous *and* bored.

"All right, class," Mrs. Porter said. "You'll have two minutes for your times-table test." Wilson followed her eyes up to the creeping second hand on the classroom clock. "Ready, set, go!"

Wilson was doing the 3s. Some kids were already up to the 6s and the 7s. Wilson's best friend, Josh Hernandez, was up to the 5s. Laura Vicks was up to the 9s.

The 3s were hard enough for Wilson. He stared down at his paper. $3 \times 1 = 3$. That one wasn't bad. $3 \times 3 = 9$. But what was 3×8 ? Wilson couldn't remember. He wrote down 26, but that didn't look right. He tried to erase it with what was left of his eraser. It didn't erase.

Beside his desk, Squiggles, the class hamster, dozed in a pile of wood shavings. Squiggles was the best thing about third

grade, Wilson thought. Squiggles, and art, and hanging out with Josh were all good things. Math was the worst thing. And multiplication was the worst thing about math. And daily times-table tests were the worst thing about multiplication.

Wilson gave up on 3×8 . $3 \times 10 = 30$. $3 \times 11 = 33$. He came to another hard one: 3×7 .

At least it was Friday, and Wilson was finally the person who was taking Squiggles home with him for the weekend. He and his little brother, Kipper, could hardly wait.

They had already planned it out. Wilson would give Squiggles his food; Kipper would give Squiggles his water. Squiggles would sleep in Wilson's room on Friday night and in Kipper's room on Saturday

AN ALA Notable Book

**A Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books
Blue Ribbon Book**

Wilson would be having a wonderful time in third grade if he could learn his multiplication tables. But there they are—mocking him with their inexplicable patterns and never-ending challenges . . . It seems to Wilson that everyone can learn the tables except for him . . . An excellent selection for the new chapter book reader.

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Kids will have no trouble figuring that this is a winner, especially if they are or have been math-challenged.

—*Booklist*



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