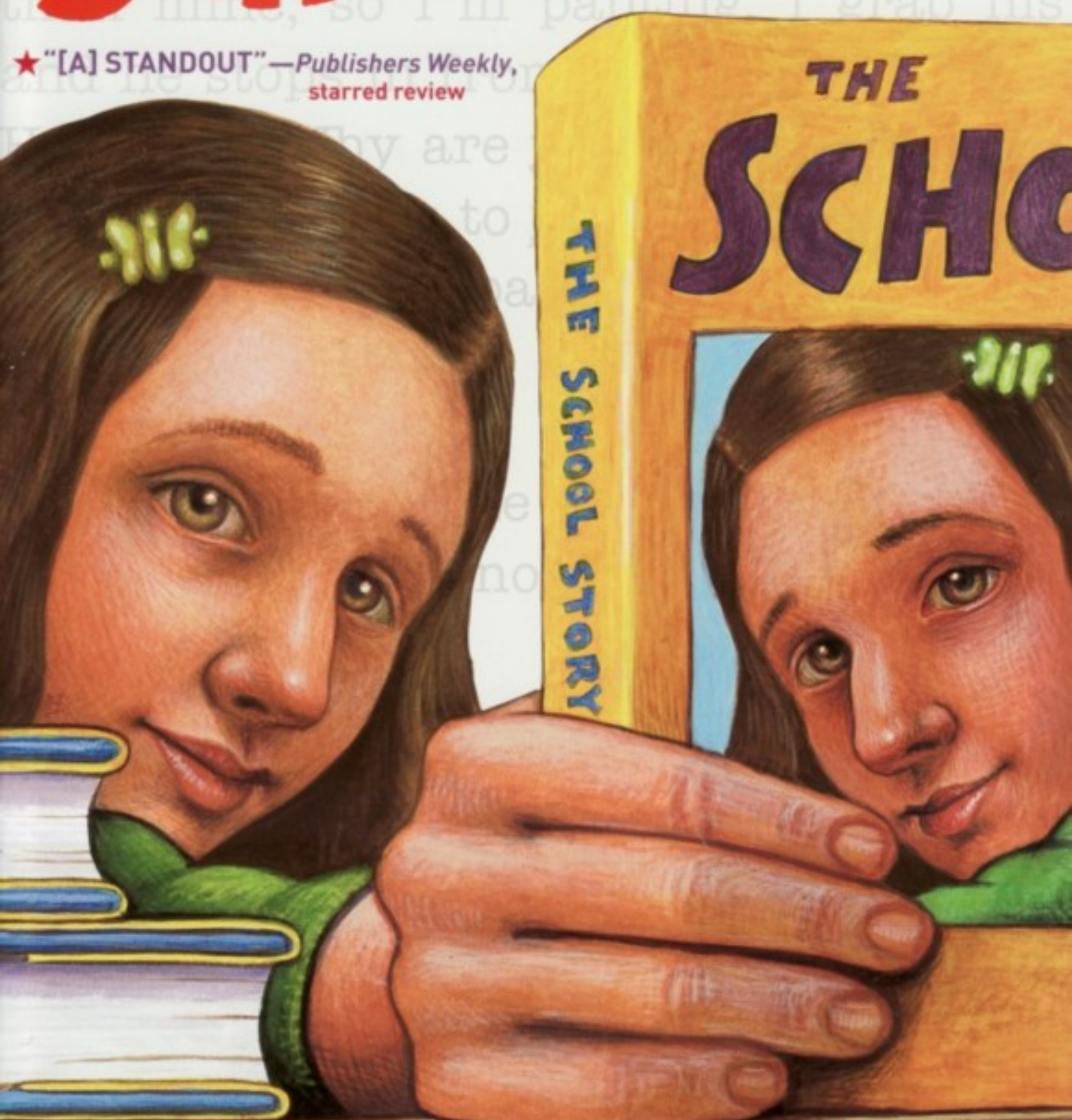


the Cheater by Nelson • page 1
I can't help it, Sean, between eighth and
and he's not a pet. His is a lo
mine, so I'm panning. I grab his

THE SCHOOL STORY

★ "[A] STANDOUT" —*Publishers Weekly*,
starred review



Illustrated by Brian Selznick

Andrew Clements

Author of the million-copy bestseller **FRINDLE**

CHAPTER 1

Fan Number One

Natalie couldn't take it. She peeked in the doorway of the school library, then turned, took six steps down the hall, turned, paced back, and stopped to look in at Zoe again. The suspense was torture.

Zoe was still reading. The first two chapters only added up to twelve pages. Natalie leaned against the door frame and chewed on her thumbnail. She thought, *What's taking her so long?*

Zoe could see Natalie out of the corner of her eye. She could feel all that nervous energy nudging at her, but Zoe wasn't about to be rushed. She always read slowly, and she liked it

that way, especially when it was a good story. And this one was good.

The Cheater by Natalie Nelson

page 12

I catch up with Sean between Eighty-second and Eighty-first Streets. His legs are longer than mine, so I'm panting. I grab his arm and he stops in front of a bodega.

He says, "Why are you following me?"

"I've got to talk to you."

"Yeah, well, too bad. You had your chance to talk during the Penalty Board hearing. And you didn't."

"But if I told the truth, then the whole school would know I cheated. I'd get expelled."

He just looks at me. "But you really did cheat, right? . . . And I really didn't steal that answer key, right? . . . And you know I didn't steal it because you did, right?"

I nod yes to all the questions.

Sean is almost shouting now, his eyes wild. "So first you steal, then you cheat, and now you've lied. And me? You've left me to take the punishment."

The shopkeeper is worried. He moves from the counter to the doorway of the bodega, looking at us.

Sean ignores him and gets right into my face, screaming. "Well, guess what, Angela. We're not friends now—and I don't know if we ever were!"

He storms away, hands jammed in his pockets, shoulders hunched, stabbing the sidewalk with every step.

Me, I cry.

Zoe let page twelve slip onto the table and then stared at it, deep in thought.

"So, what do you think?"

Natalie was right behind her, and Zoe jumped six inches. "Jeez, Natalie! Scare me to

AUTHOR! AUTHOR!

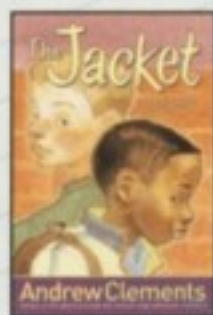
Natalie's best friend, Zoe, is sure that the novel Natalie's written is good enough to be published. But how can a twelve-year-old girl publish a book? Natalie's mother is an editor for a big children's publisher, but Natalie doesn't want to ask for any favors.

Then Zoe has a brilliant idea: Natalie can submit her manuscript under a pen name, with Zoe acting as her literary agent. But it's not easy for two sixth graders to put themselves over as grown-ups, even with some help from a couple of *real* grown-ups who are supportive but skeptical. The next best-selling school story may be in their hands—but can Natalie and Zoe pull off their masquerade?


"A sure winner" —*School Library Journal*

"Be prepared for kids lining up to read this one." —*Booklist*

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Ages 8–12

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