Robot Rescue

by Lena Castletini
illustrated by Teri Farrell-Gittins

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN

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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN BOSTON

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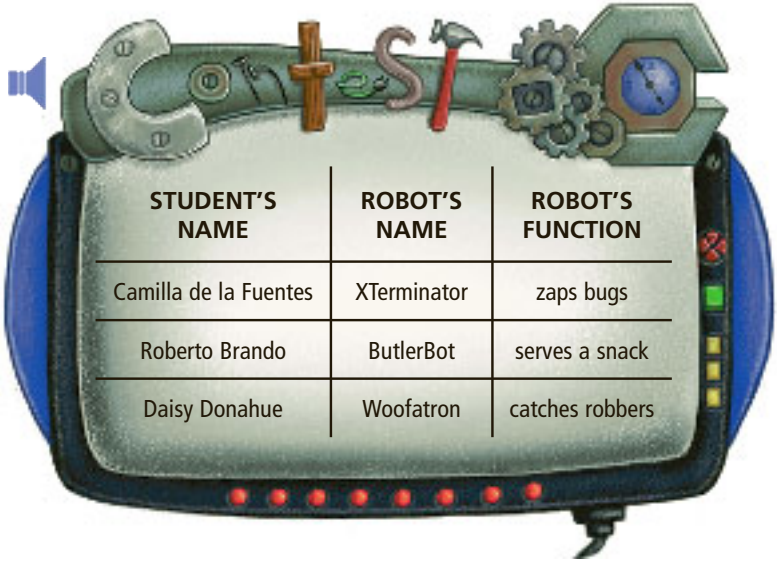
Milo Millicent scanned the list of entries for the robot contest. Three robots had been entered so far.



STUDENT'S NAME	ROBOT'S NAME	ROBOT'S FUNCTION
Camilla de la Fuentes	XTerminator	zaps bugs
Roberto Brando	ButlerBot	serves a snack
Daisy Donahue	Woofatron	catches robbers

The contest would be held on May 2, 2040. Milo still had a week to enter his robot. But his robot wasn't finished yet.

"Hey, Millipede." Milo turned around. Camilla de la Fuentes was striding down the hall. "Want to see XTerminator's latest catch?"

She opened a little box. Eight zapped bugs were lying on a little velvet cloth.

Gross, Milo thought.

"So, Mealyworm, where's your robot?" Camilla asked. "Do you even have one?"

"It's *Milo*. And my robot isn't ready."

Camilla scoffed, "You don't HAVE a robot! What you have, Mealyworm, is a NOT-bot! *Not-Bot, Not-Bot!*" Camilla chanted as she skipped down the hall, holding her box of bugs.

That's how the rumor got started. Soon, no one believed that Milo really had a robot. All week, the teasing went on.

Camilla teases Milo about his robot.

"Milligram, how's your not-bot coming?" Roberto asked on Tuesday.

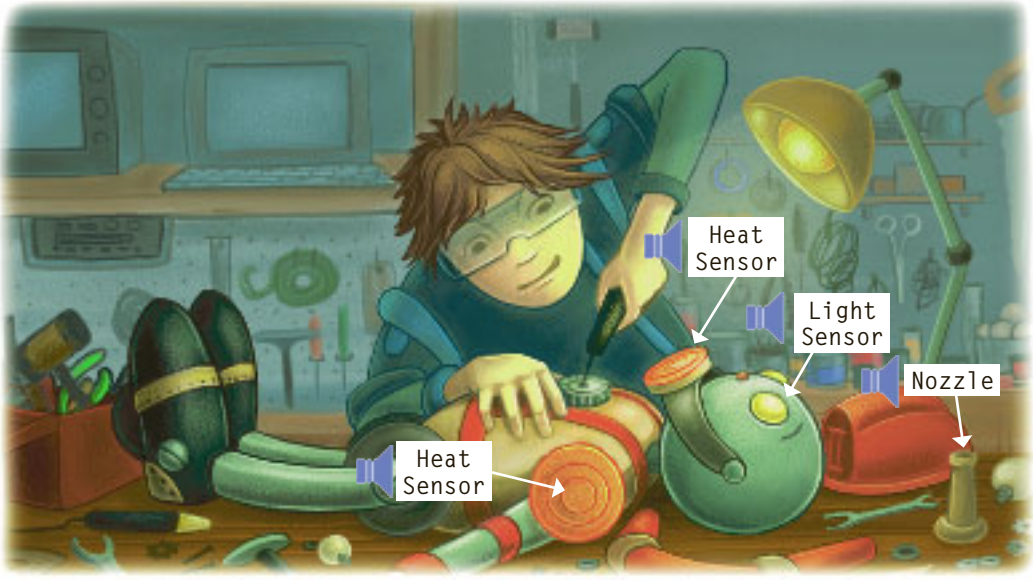
On Wednesday, Milo was standing in the lunch line. He heard Camilla ask, "Have you seen Milo's robot? Neither has he!" Everyone laughed.

Milo sighed. His robot, Squirt II, did exist. Squirt II had replaced Squirt the First. An unlucky accident had done away with the original Squirt. That had seemed unlucky at the time, but it really wasn't. Squirt II was a better robot, scientifically speaking. Milo just had to finish him.

Forget about them, Milo told himself. He tried to stay calm. It was more important to focus on the contest. This contest was different from most. For one thing, the judges were also robots. And robot judges expected a lot!

Thirty years ago, kids had made robots, too. But those robots were little more than toys. Now, in 2040, things were different. Kid-made robots had to be smarter. They had to do more. Now, it was harder than ever to win a robot contest.

Robots Over Time



Milo works hard to make Squirt II perfect.

Milo worked day and night to finish Squirt II. Squirt was a firefighting robot. He had two kinds of sensors in his head. Light sensors helped him find his way through a maze of rooms. Heat sensors helped him locate a fire. He carried a water tank backpack that had a special robotic arm. It could move like a human arm. Plus, it had a nozzle on the end. Water shot out of the nozzle.

As Milo worked, he kept thinking about the first prize. He pulled a slip of paper out of his pocket and unfolded it.

FIRST PRIZE
Two Weeks at Robot Camp—
Become a Robot Expert!

Milo wanted that prize. He wanted it badly. Milo loved making robots. He believed that robots could make the world a safer place. But Milo's mom worked two jobs. He knew that she did not have the money to send him to the camp.

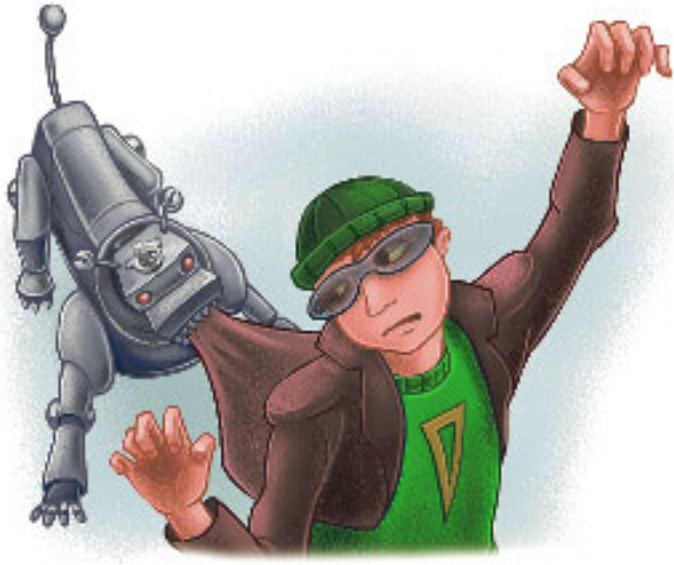
At last, the day of the contest arrived. Milo placed his robot, Squirt II, on the exhibition table.

"Well, Millimutt. Looks like you *do* have a robot," Camilla said. "Good luck beating XTerminator. You'll need it!"

There were three robot judges. Each one had a notepad. "Quiet, humans! It is time to begin!" one said.

Daisy was up first. She strutted onto the stage. "Everyone knows that crime doesn't pay," she announced. "Now, Woofatron will prove it!"

Daisy tells the judges about her robot.



Woofatron shows off its crime-fighting skills.

"Come, Woofatron!" she said. The robotic dog marched onto the stage. It let out a metallic woof. Then a kid dressed like a robber came onto the stage. He pretended that he was climbing through a window.

Woofatron went crazy. He barked. His metal teeth snapped open and shut. Woofatron's teeth clamped down on the robber's jacket. The robot held on tight. Daisy flipped open her cell phone and pretended to call 9-1-1. Then she put the phone back in her pocket and faced the crowd again. "Woofatron will hold the robber until the police get here. Thank you."

The crowd clapped politely. The robot judges scribbled notes.

Next, it was Camilla's turn. She told the crowd how her robot worked. XTerminator had a special light in its head. The light contained neon, which is a glowing gas. A wire mesh covered the light.

A transformer on top of XTerminator's head gave the wire mesh an electric charge. Bugs flew toward the light. When they hit the wire mesh, ZAP! Then, the zapped bugs fell into a little cup.

"Watch this," Camilla said. She flipped a switch. XTerminator's head lit up and began to hum. "Dim the lights!" she shouted.

ZAP! ZAP! ZAP! Bugs hit the wire mesh. When the zapping stopped, the lights went on.

Camilla took out the cup of dead bugs and tilted it toward the crowd. "See?" she said proudly.

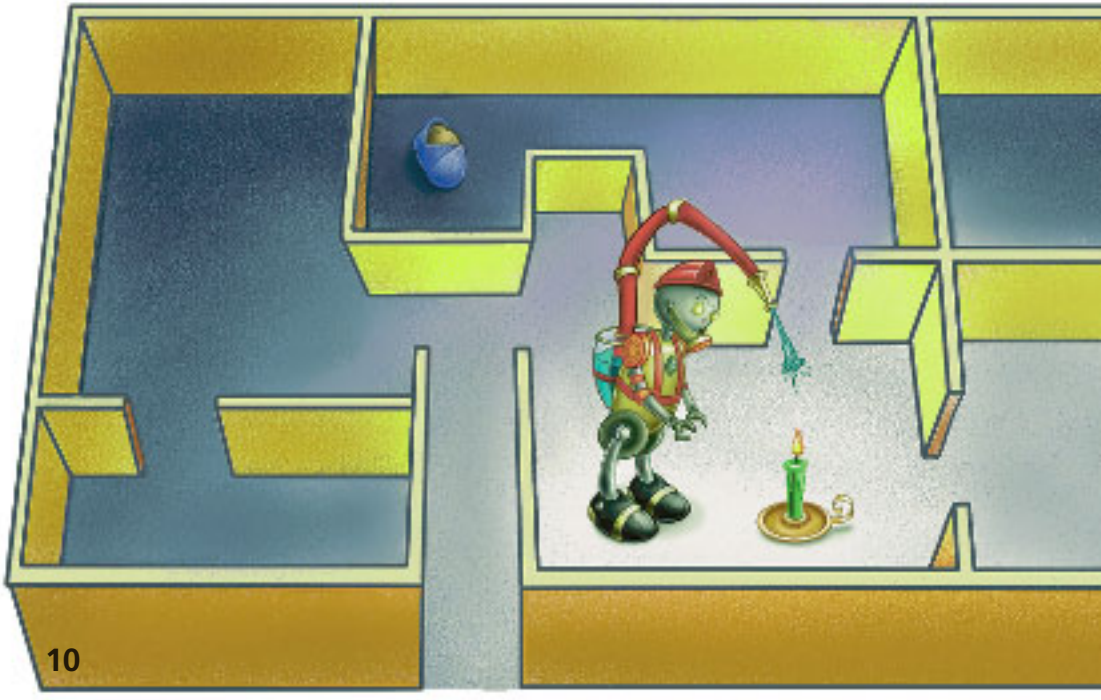
"EWWWW!" said the crowd. The judges scribbled notes.

Camilla proudly shows what XTerminator zapped.

At last, it was Milo's turn. Milo had prepared a scientific speech. "The human arm can move in seven ways," he began. "ONE…" He moved his arm forward. "TWO…" He moved his arm backward. Continuing to count, Milo moved his arm in all seven of its possible ways.

The audience seemed bored. But Milo kept going. “Plenty of robots have arms. But most robot arms only move in three ways. JUST THREE, ladies and gentlemen! My robot has a very special third arm. He can move his arm in SEVEN ways! When you are fighting fires, this is very important! Now, you will see why.” Then Milo pushed Squirt’s ON button. “GO!”

Squirt II had to enter a burning house, put out a fire, and rescue a “baby.” The house was a maze made of wood. It was supposed to be on fire. The fire was a lit candle. The baby was really a potato wrapped in a dish towel.



Squirt entered the maze. His first task was to find the fire. The robot used his light sensor to locate the walls. He turned this way and that. Using his heat sensors, he quickly found the fire. He aimed his nozzle arm at the fire. A stream of water put the fire right out. Now for the baby. It was in the next room. The crowd held its breath. Could Squirt do it? Squirt found the baby! He picked it up. "Don't cry," the robot said.

Holding the baby, Squirt moved right out of the maze. The audience cheered. Milo looked at the judges. They were cheering, too!

Camilla said, "Not bad, Millipod."

It's not exactly a compliment, thought Milo. *But it's the nicest thing she's ever said to me.*

Squirt II puts out the fire and saves the baby.

Next, it was Roberto's turn. He stepped onto the stage. ButlerBot rolled onto the stage, too. ButlerBot was supposed to pick up a banana and bring it to Roberto. The banana was on a table. XTerminator's cup of dead bugs was on the floor next to the table. For some reason, ButlerBot went right past the banana. It picked up the cup of bugs instead.

"HAVE A SNACK," ButlerBot said. He handed the cup to Roberto, who jumped back in horror. Roberto landed on one of Woofatron's metal paws. Woofatron growled. His eyes clicked to the left and settled on Roberto.

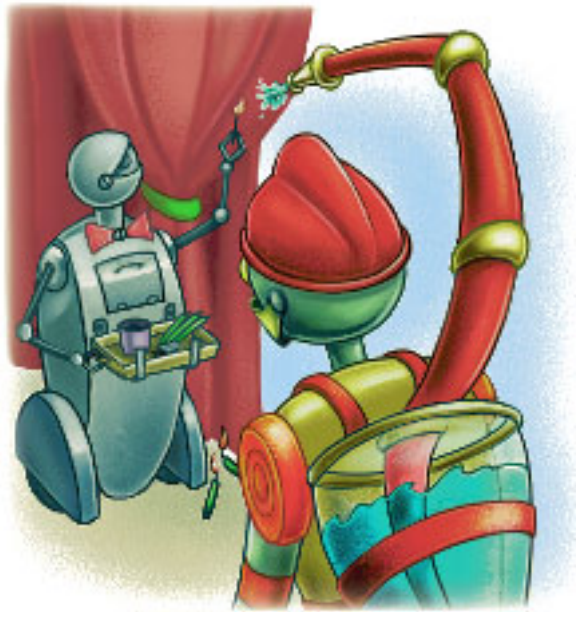
"No!" Daisy shouted as Woofatron's metal jaws snapped open. The jaws of the robot dog snapped shut on Roberto's shirttail.

"HEY!" Roberto yelled.

Daisy flipped a switch behind Woofatron's ear. The robot froze.

"I am sorry, Daisy," said one robot judge. "Your robot is dangerous. He is out of the contest."

Squirt II to the rescue



All the noise must have confused ButlerBot. For some reason, he said, "Candles are romantic." He produced a matchstick. ButlerBot must have thought he was lighting a romantic candle. Instead, he set the curtain on fire.

Before anyone had time to panic, Squirt II went into action. He extended his arm to position number six. A stream of water sprayed from the nozzle. In two seconds, the fire was out.

The crowd cheered. "Don't cry," Squirt said to the curtain.

The judges were not impressed with ButlerBot. "I am sorry, Roberto," said a judge. "Your robot is dangerous, too. He is out of the contest."

Camilla and Milo were now the only two left in the contest. Milo looked at XTerminator. Its head was still glowing. The neon seemed brighter than ever. *I wonder if Camilla should turn it off,* Milo thought.

At the other end of the room, a fly buzzed through an open window. It looped through the air. It was headed straight for XTerminator. There was a loud ZAP! Then there was a shower of sparks. All of a sudden, XTerminator's head went up in flames.

Camilla yelled, "Help! Milo!"

But it was Squirt II who jumped into action. He aimed his nozzle arm at XTerminator. A stream of water quickly put the fire out. The crowd went wild. The robot judges cheered again. "The human named Milo is amazing!" one judge observed. "His robot is amazing, too."

Milo just smiled. He was already thinking about robot camp.

Milo, a very happy winner

Responding

TARGET SKILL **Story Structure** What is the main conflict in *Robot Rescue*? How is the problem solved? What events lead to that resolution? Copy and complete the chart below.

Conflict	**Events**
Milo wants to win the robot contest so that he can go to robot camp.	• Milo's classmates make fun of his robot. • Milo's robot, Squirt II, rescues the "baby" from the fire. • When XTerminator catches on fire, Squirt II puts it out.
Resolution ?	

Write About It

Text to World Think of a camp that you would like to attend. Write a paragraph describing the camp and what people do or learn there.

TARGET VOCABULARY

admitted	impressed
collected	original
compliment	produced
concentrate	rumor
destination	suspense

TARGET SKILL **Story Structure** Examine details about characters, setting, and plot.

TARGET STRATEGY **Infer/Predict** Use text clues to figure out what the author means or what might happen in the future.

GENRE **Science Fiction** is a fantasy story whose plot often depends on scientific ideas.

Level: R

DRA: 40

Genre:
Science Fiction

Strategy:
Infer/Predict

Skill:
Story Structure

Word Count: 1,566

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