

LESSONS LEARNED

Stories about life in elementary school

By LARRY HANKIN

IJN Associate Editor

For nine — almost 10 these days — months a year, a child's life revolves around school. School is so much more than sitting at a desk being fed information by a teacher in the front of the room. A child's world is colored by all the things that happen at school — quirky teachers, quirky kids, lunchtime,

HOW WAS SCHOOL TODAY?

Zoya Master
Boston 2018

recess, kids with challenges — and perhaps some learning math, English and social studies along the way.

Children relate to stories about school, so Denverite Zoya Master drew upon her 20 years working in Denver Public Schools to write *How Was School Today?*, a fun collection of short stories about school told through the voice of "Mike."

All the stories are tied together by a set of characters: Mike, his classmates, their homeroom teacher, and the principal.

Mike tells us 10 different stories about his friends dealing with funny situations, coping with sad situations and interacting with their teachers and the strict principal who has absolutely no sense of humor.

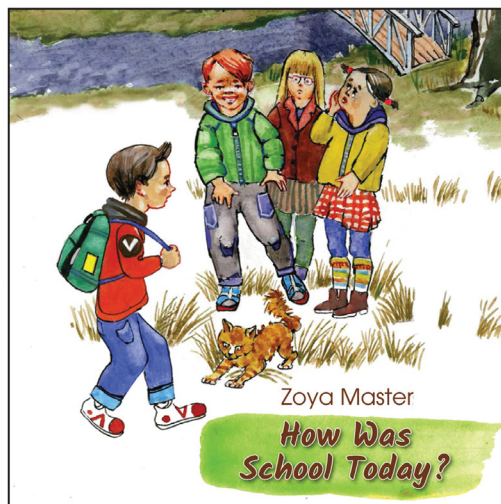
The characters are written to be identifiable, memorable and multi-dimensional through unique highlights in their individual personalities. A goal of the stories is to show how the "special" can shine through the ordinary. Each story

conveys a gentle lesson in understanding, tolerance and seeing the good — or humor — in most situations.

Examples of the short stories and their lessons include "Jerry and the Fly" — when you laugh at others, don't forget to look at yourself — and "In the Dark" — seeing a blind schoolmate and pretending to lead her life for just a few minutes changes two boys' way of thinking forever.

"Having been a teacher myself, I wrote this book intentionally for both self-reading by students in primary classes (7-9 years old), and for home reading by parents to children of late preschool age," Master says.

"I also made sure that each story had an easily identifiable plot and timeline so that teachers could use the stories to cultivate reading, comprehension and writing skills. The school-setting of the stories is key because school is one very common experience that



all children share together — and that will help motivate class discussion about their own experiences in school situations, and even to write about them."

Beyond the classroom, *How Was School Today?* is a fun book for kids to read on their own. They are bound to smile and relate as they finish each of the 10 short stories.

Master's book is already available at The Tattered Cover and Douglas County Public Libraries and will soon be on the shelves at Arapahoe County libraries.