The Lightning Thief

by Rick Riordan

I sat at my desk, trying to focus on the words in front of me, but my attention kept slipping away. Lately, that had become more common. No matter how hard I tried, my thoughts would drift into places I couldn't fully control. It felt like I was constantly missing something important— something everyone else seemed to understand without effort.

People talked as if I was already supposed to know the answers, but I didn't. And no one ever really stopped to explain. At school, teachers expected quick responses.
At home, conversations often ended before anything meaningful was actually said.

It was starting to feel less like confusion and more like being slightly out of sync with everything around me. I leaned back in my chair and stared at the ceiling, thinking. "Why does everything feel like there's a set of rules I was never given?" I muttered quietly. Of course, no one answered. I let out a slow breath and rubbed my forehead. I wasn't trying to be difficult - I just wanted clarity, something solid to hold onto for once.

Most kids worried about normal things like homework, sports, or friends. I kept wondering why my world felt just a little off-balance, like I was always adjusting but never quite catching up. And deep down, I couldn't shake the feeling that this was only the beginning of something I didn't yet understand.

Wonder

by R.J. Palacio

I walked into school that morning trying to look normal.
That was what I had learned to do—act like I didn't notice the stares, or the whispers,
or the quick glances away.
But the truth is, you always notice. Even when you pretend you don't.
In the hallway, I heard my name. I didn't turn around. I just kept walking.
"Ignore it," I told myself. "Just get through the day."
But ignoring it didn't make it disappear.
At lunch, I sat down carefully at the table.
For a moment, everything felt normal.
Then someone stood up. One by one, others followed.
No one said anything. No one needed to.
I was left sitting there, staring at my tray. My appetite was gone.
I wondered what it would feel like to be invisible.
No stares. No whispers. No questions.
Maybe invisible would be easier.
But then I heard my mother's voice in my head. "You are not invisible,"
she always said. "You are stronger than you think."
Strong. I wasn't sure I felt strong.
Still, I picked up my fork. I forced myself to eat.
Because even if I couldn't change how people saw me,
I could choose not to disappear.
And somehow, that felt like a small kind of victory.

Frindle

by Andrew Clements

Nick stared at the dictionary on his desk.

“Words don’t belong to anyone,” he thought. “So why do we act as if they do?”

In class, his teacher had just explained that every word has a correct meaning.

Exact. Fixed. No exceptions.

But Nick wasn’t convinced.

After school, he turned to his friend. “What if we just decided to call a pen a frindle?” he asked.

His friend laughed. “That’s not a real word.”

“Not yet,” Nick said with a grin.

The next day, he tried it again. “Can I borrow your frindle?” he asked, pointing to a pen.

People stared at him. Some laughed. Some looked confused.

But Nick didn’t stop. Every time he said “pen,” he corrected himself. “Frindle.”

Slowly, something strange started to happen.

Other students began using the word too.

Then even teachers started noticing.

One day, Nick was called to the principal’s office.

“You can’t just change words,” the principal said firmly.

Nick stayed quiet for a moment.

Then he replied, “But words only work because people use them. Right?”

The room went silent.

Because for the first time, even the adults weren’t completely sure anymore.

And Nick realized something important—

maybe language wasn’t as fixed as everyone believed.