

Archer's Quest ... an excerpt

Chapter One: Falling Off

Kevin ripped the page out of his notebook and crumpled it into a ball, making it as hard and tight as he could. Then he threw it straight up into the air and hit it with his open palm. Wham!

A perfect shot right into the wastebasket. The only good thing that had happened since he'd gotten home from school. Monday was always his worst day. The weekend was over.

Kevin's parents both worked late every Monday, so the house was empty when he got home. Sometimes he liked being on his own, having the house to himself. But it was February, the bleakest part of winter, and the house felt cold, even with the heat on.

Today school had let out early – something about a half-day staff workshop – which was usually a good thing. But his best friend, Jason, had a dentist appointment and a guitar lesson, and couldn't hang out after school. The afternoon stretched ahead of Kevin, long and dreary.

Plus it seemed like the teachers always loaded up at some kind of giant homework depot over the weekend, unpacking tons of homework every Monday. Kevin had already finished the math worksheet and answered the unit questions about ecosystems for science.

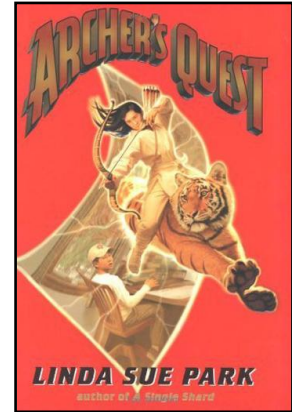
He'd saved the worst for last.

Social studies. Names and dates and places from ages ago. Boring, boring, boringest.

It was a page of social-studies homework that was starting its new life in the wastebasket.

Kevin took off his baseball cap, scratched an itchy spot on his forehead, and pulled the cap on again. Then he saw his little rubber bouncy ball on the shelf above the desk. He picked it up and started a game of wall ball. The plunk of the ball against the wall made a steady beat. Thunk – thunk – thunk . . .

It wasn't – thunk – that he was bad at social studies. Not anywhere – thunk – close to failing. His grades were right in the middle of the class, pretty much where they were for all his other subjects, except for math. He did better at math, although you'd never know it from the way his dad checked his homework. His dad was a genius geek-head number-nerd whiz-brain computer programmer – super good at math. He seemed to know the answer before Kevin had even finished reading the problem. Whenever his dad tried to help him with math homework, it was as if they were speaking two different languages.



Still, math made sense. When you got the answer, you knew it was right; and when you were wrong, you could figure out the mistake. But social studies? Memorizing stuff that he'd never have any use for again, and having to write out answers to those awful essay questions, where right and wrong weren't clear. Well, no, not exactly – you could be wrong, that was for sure. But you could also be partly right or even mostly right and still get points taken off your answer.

Kevin sighed. He read the question in his social-studies book again. "Describe the relationship between King George III and the American colonists, and how this relationship led to the Revolutionary War."

Who cares! Kevin raged silently and put a little more into his throw. THUNK. The ball thunked harder against the wall. Why doesn't stupid King George mind his own business and leave me alone?

What difference did it make what some old king or queen had done hundreds of years ago – thunk –

THUD! The room shook, as if something heavy had fallen on the floor. Kevin missed the catch, and the ball bounced crazily around the room. He turned to see what had made the noise.

– twang –

– swish –

THWOCK!

"What the – ?"

Now he could see what had made the thwock: An arrow hitting the wall above his desk. An arrow that had pierced his baseball cap, lifted it clean off his head, and pinned it to the wall.