



Keys to the City

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Chapter 1



PS: PUBLIC SCHOOL

This is what summer should be: fun family picnics, ice cream cones, trips to the beach, pool time, curling up with a good book, and more ice cream.

This is what summer should *not* be: a school project in the form of an acronym.

Our middle school principal, Mrs. Lindenberg, is the queen of acronyms. Like a lot of people, I love DEAR: Drop Everything And Read. But at our school, simply one acronym is not enough. In PE, BEE stands for Best Effort is Expected. Ms. Frindle, the PE teacher, occasionally tells us we aren't being very good bees, even though we aren't bees, we're kids. Isn't that kind of

weird? Why doesn't she just tell us to try harder, if that's what she means?

And in the cafeteria, there's FAVE, which means Fruits And Veggies Every day. "Make sure you've got your fave," the lunch lady will tell us. Would it really be so hard to add a few syllables on and just say "fruits and veggies"? I don't get it.

So when Mrs. Lindenberg told us at our end-of-year seventh-grade assembly that she had a new acronym for us, it did not make us excited.

"Are you ready for it?" she asked as she looked at us over her reading glasses, her brown hair piled into a high bun on top of her head, like always. Maybe she expected us to cheer or something, but the auditorium stayed quiet. "It's really fun, and it's going to make this summer unforgettable for you." Sorry, Mrs. Lindenberg, but unless it's the latest iPhone you're handing out, getting seventh graders excited is not easy.

I looked over at my friends Nora and Talia. They shrugged. I shrugged back.

When Mrs. Lindenberg didn't get the response she expected, she cleared her throat and looked down at her notes on the podium. "Your new acronym is HAT, and this summer you, dear seventh graders, are going to try on different hats and see which ones fit the best. Metaphorically speaking, of course."