



Tazmin

**Age:** 9

**Best Part of Crow's Crossing:** Lots of things to do outdoors—for free

**Favorite Snack:** Saltine crackers with honey

**Future Goal:** College!

**Best Quality:** Accepts others for who they are

# CHARACTERS



## MR. RIDLEY

**Age:** 30½

**Worst Habit:** Loses his temper a lot

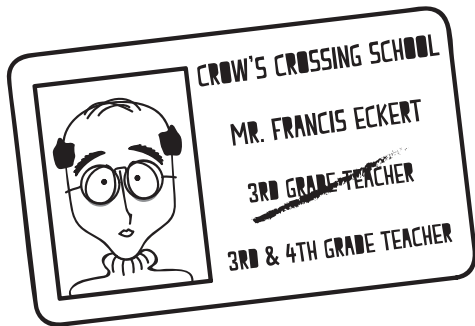
**Favorite Book:** *The Wind in the Willows*

**Little-Known Fact:** Wears size 6 EEE shoes for his very short and wide feet

**Best Quality:** Knows how to inspire people

# 1 NEW TEACHER

There was no fourth grade teacher at Crow's Crossing School. The fourth graders had to join the third graders. The teacher, Mr. Eckert, was not doing a good job of teaching third grade. Or fourth grade.



Then Mr. Ridley moved to town. He was hired to teach fourth grade.



Mr. Ridley was a tall young man. About thirty. Thick dark hair. Strange silvery eyes. He looked sad sometimes. And sometimes he looked gray. Like he was scared. Like he had seen a ghost.



Some of the kids were afraid of him. But nine-year-old Tazmin Jones liked him from the start.

Crow's Crossing was a small town. Most



of the people there had come from bad parts of the city. They were poor. They wanted to get their children out. Because of crime. Because of gangs. And houses were cheap in Crow's Crossing.



“We don’t have much here,” Mom said. “But we got green hills. We got little streams. Our house is not big. But we got flowers and trees. A great garden.”

“I like Crow’s Crossing,” Tazmin said. “I have friends in school. Mister Ridley is