

## Walden Lane

Where the mountains meet the sea ... Where the city blends into the wilderness ... This is Walden Lane. Hike in the sage-green hills, or surf in the cool Pacific—all in the same day. Is Walden Lane perfect? No. But it is home.

### Meet the Characters

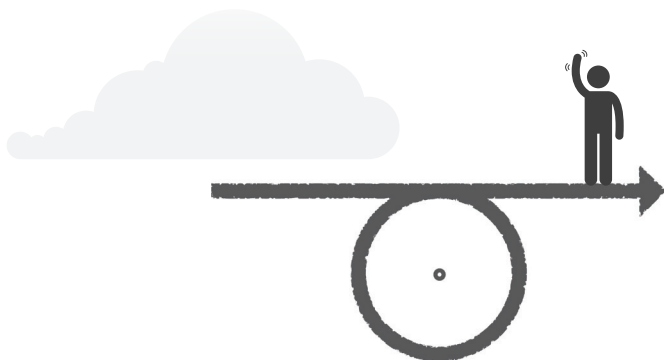


**Marlon Moore** loves gaming. When he's not in school or riding his bike, he's online. But 14-year-old Marlon is also a loyal friend and a great little brother. He would tell you his best friend is Steve McCain. But his dad is his true BFF.



**Ashley Moore** is an overachiever. She's good at almost everything she tries. Is she a perfectionist? Maybe. But Ashley is 16 and likes to have fun too. And her family doesn't let her accomplishments go to her head.

# Calculus Is Hard!



Mr. Raj often goes off on a tangent.

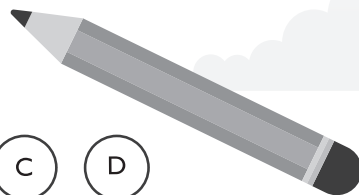
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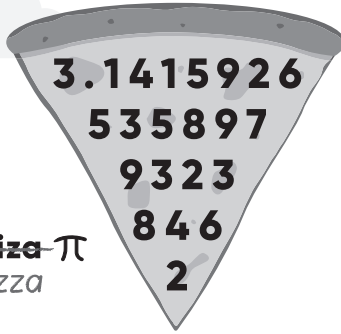


Nico is smart. He got a perfect score on the SAT.  
Five times! (He retakes it for fun.)

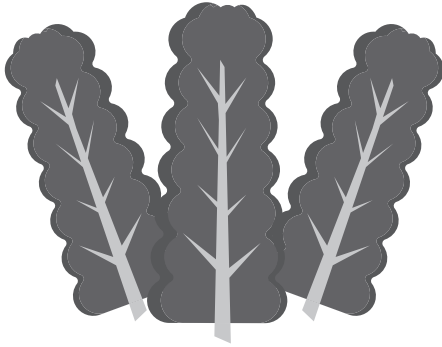


# Fun Facts

slice of ~~pizza~~  $\pi$   
pizza



Dr. Stefani can't spell, but he's great at analytic number theory.



Math is like kale. It's good for you, but it doesn't taste good.





# Chapter 1

## Math Test

Ashley Moore was always super busy. She represented the sophomore class in student government. Student leaders met at zero period. That was 6:45 a.m. Talking about school events was fun. It woke her up. The next period was math. Calculus. By then she was ready to go.

Ashley was also in Model United Nations. Key Club meetings were every Wednesday at lunch. She ran track for Walden Lane High School too. Being busy was great. She loved

it. Her dream after college was law school. Then she wanted a law career.

Mr. Raj taught calculus. He was not in class that morning. Ashley knew he wouldn't be there. The teacher and his wife were expecting. He had missed class a few times already.

Mrs. Smith was the sub. She had taught at the school years ago. She was retired now. But she liked to teach part-time.

There was a test that day. Mrs. Smith was ready. Mr. Raj liked to be there on test day. But he respected Mrs. Smith. She would take the test seriously.

"I didn't study," Darryl Atkins said, laughing. He sat on Ashley's left. Darryl wore his letterman's jacket. He played water polo. His blond hair was buzzed.

"Neither did I," Skylar Martinez said, smirking. Skylar sat in front of Ashley. His

head was shaved too. Skylar played on the baseball team.

“Nico,” Darryl called. “Did you study, dude?”

Nico Dale looked up from his textbook. He grinned. Nico always dressed preppy. But he didn’t play any sports. He just hung out with guys who did.

“Of course,” he said.

Mrs. Smith stood in front of the class. “Put everything away, please,” she said. She was holding the stack of tests. “You will have the entire period.”

A student handed out the tests. Everyone got to work.

Ashley didn’t have any trouble. She loved math. Using her brain was fun.

After 20 minutes, she was done. She turned in her test. Mrs. Smith smiled at her.

Then Ashley walked back to her seat. No way! She couldn't believe what she saw. Darryl, Skylar, and Nico were cheating!

Nico finished a problem. He showed the answer to Darryl. Darryl copied it. Then Darryl showed it to Skylar. Nobody noticed. Everyone was focused on their own work. The three boys kept their heads down. It looked like they were working.

Ashley sat down at her desk. She took out some English homework. At one point she looked up. Darryl made eye contact. He had just finished giving Skylar an answer.

Darryl grinned at her.

Ashley went back to her work. But she could feel Darryl's eyes on her.

The bell rang. All the students stopped working. The tests were collected.