

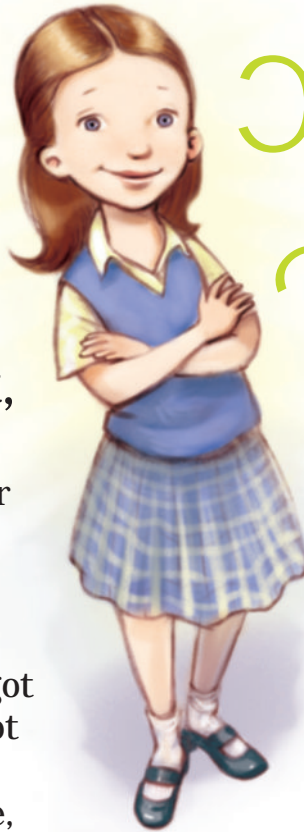
Perfect Penelope

Penelope was perfect, or so she tried to be.

So perfect, that her friends called her perfect Penelope. What makes her perfect, you might wonder?

Her room was always spotless; her homework was done as soon as she got home from school (and she always got everything right). Her clothes were matching, her hair never out of place, and she always ate everything on her plate, even her peas.

She was even perfect at school. Her second grade teacher, Mrs. Silveira, was always reminding kids how to sit on the rug, but Penelope never had to be spoken to. She sat criss-cross applesauce and raised her hand every time she knew the answer, which was all the time.

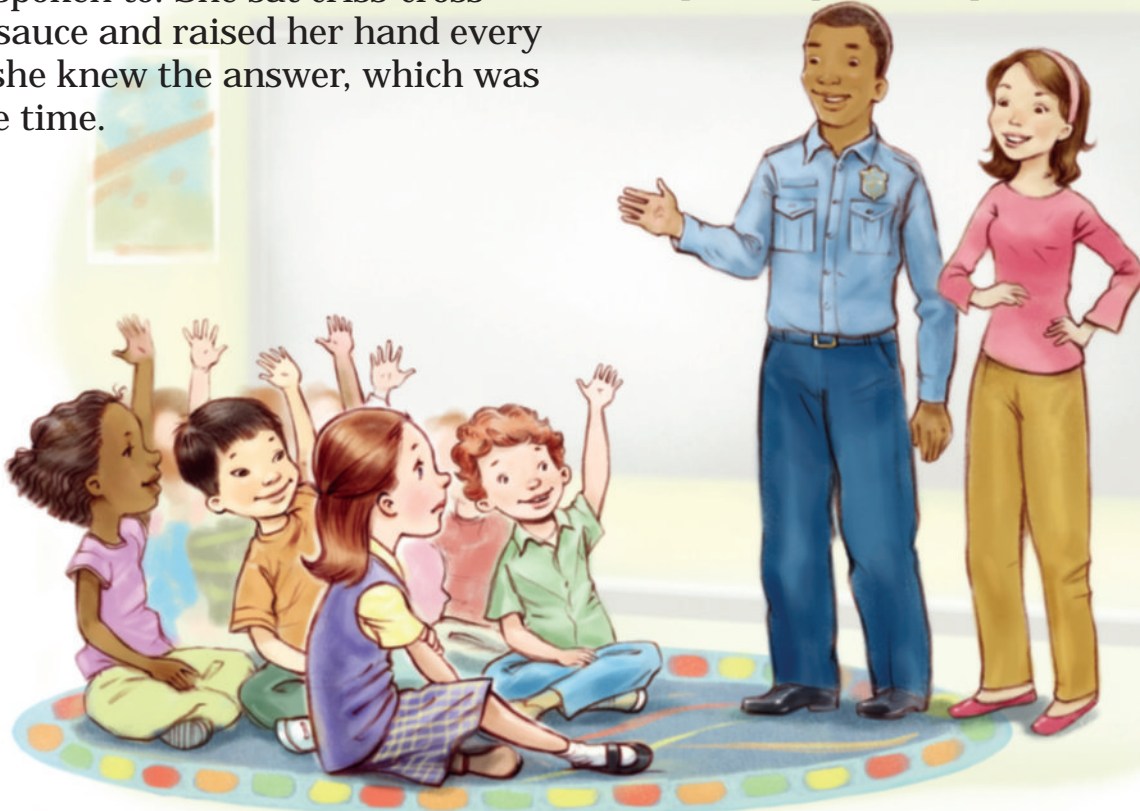


perfect hair

matching clothes

Penelope's perfect world ended the day Firefighter Chris came to her class to teach them about home fire escape planning. She knew that a home fire escape plan is a plan you make with your family so you know what to do in case there is a fire. But there was one MAJOR problem.

“Raise your hands if your family has home fire escape plan,” said Firefighter Chris. Zoey's hand shot up, then Jack and Ethan and both Matthews, Parker, Hope and even Josh. One by one everyone's hand went up...except Penelope's.



She felt her face get hot, and she started to wiggle on the rug. Then it happened, Mrs. Silveira gave Penelope “THE LOOK.” Her stomach did a somersault; every one knew what “THE LOOK” meant. It was the look that needed no words. The look only a teacher (and your mom) could give.

“Penelope, please sit still and listen to Firefighter Chris,” said Mrs. Silveira. Penelope settled down, but she could not stop thinking — how imperfect it was that she did not have a home fire escape plan.

After Firefighter Chris left, Mrs. Silveira said, “When you go home tonight, I want everyone that does not have a home fire escape plan to make one with your family. For those of you that already have one, please go over it with your family. You will be presenting your escape plans to the class tomorrow.”

All the way home Penelope worried about her imperfection. How could her family not have a plan? She knew her parents would work on one with her, but her little brother? No way. He was always playing some silly dinosaur or super hero game. She would have to make him, end of story.

That night at dinner Penelope made her announcement. “Our family does not have a home fire escape plan. It is very important that we make one... tonight,” she exclaimed. Everyone looked at her and said nothing. “I know all about them,” said her brother Owen. “Sparky the Fire Dog® came to our class with Firefighter Chris last week. Let’s make one, I can help.”

This might be easier than she thought. She took out a piece of paper and her checklist and made assignments. “Owen, you go with Mom and make sure there are two ways out of every room. Dad and I will test all the smoke alarms to make sure they are working and they are in the right places. We will meet back here in 10 minutes to decide on our outside meeting place,” Penelope said.

“High five, Owen!”



A half an hour later they were all sitting at their outside meeting place, a tree in their neighbor’s yard. Penelope’s home fire escape plan was complete and her assignment was done! More importantly, her family would now know what to do if there was ever a fire. She had actually had fun doing it...even with Owen. How perfect she thought to herself as she sat back and relaxed.