

For Natalie

–Julia



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My name is Wilma Jean. Last Friday, I didn't want to get out of bed because I didn't want to go to school...so I pretended to be asleep.



I think I had the worry flu.

Every morning, when I wake up, I feel just fine,
but then...



My tongue gets salty,
my throat gets tight,
I grit my teeth
'cause nothin' feels right.

My stomach feels like
it's tied up in a knot.
My knees lock up, and
my face feels hot.

*Worry,
Worry,
Worry!*

You know what I mean?
I'm Wilma Jean,
The Worry Machine.

On Friday, I was worried about spelling, because we had a spelling test.

“What if

I forget how to spell?

What if

everyone finishes before me?”



I worried about math.

“What if

I get picked to do a problem up on the board in front of everyone?



What if

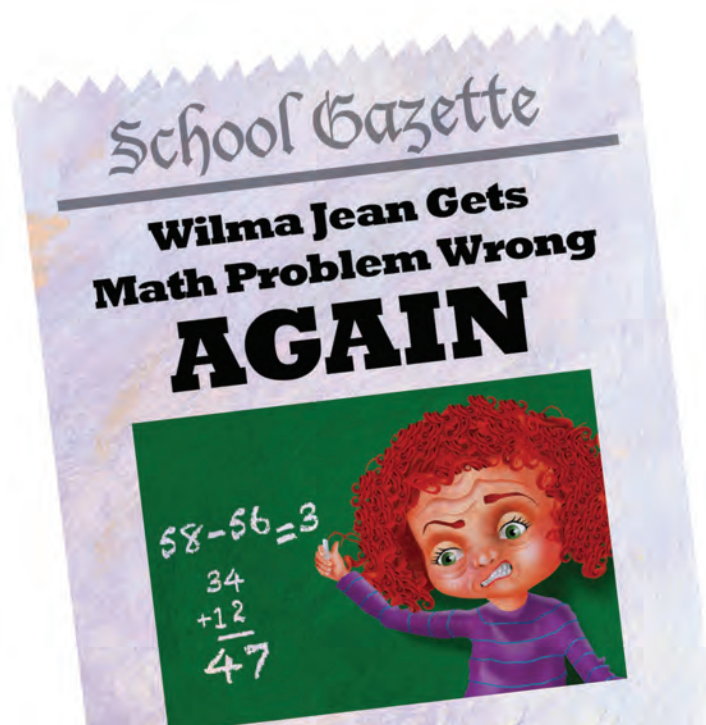
I get the problem wrong?

What if

they write about it in the school newspaper?"

What if

the kids make fun of my hair again?



I worried about school lunch.

“What if

we have buttered carrots, and the lunch ladies make me eat them?
I can't stand buttered carrots!”



“Get up, Wilma Jean,” my mom said. “It’s time to get ready for school. I know you’re not asleep because you’re making that pickle face...the one you make when you’re worried about something. If you don’t stop worrying so much, you’re going to make yourself sick again.”

“Too late.” I thought to myself.

