



Read-  
Aloud  
Fiction

# GOOD ENOUGH

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# Can wearing the right clothes bring you happiness?

## Part 1

I stood on the toilet lid and stared into the bathroom mirror. Then I flushed the toilet with my foot. I didn't want my mother to suspect anything.

I jumped down from the toilet and turned on the hot water full blast. I soaked my washcloth in steaming water until my palms burned. Then I pressed it quickly onto my face. I breathed in through the wet heat. After a few splashes of cold water, I dried my face. I attempted a smile. **I hoped nobody could tell I'd been crying.**

Mom gasped happily when I stepped out of the bathroom. "Oh, it fits perfectly! Boys, look at Dori!"

She pulled me out to the deck as my brothers **complimented me on my new hoodie**. "Cool, Dori." "Looks good." I stared up at my dad, who was watching from his chair. "You look beautiful, sweetheart," he said.

I tried to say thank you—but only the "thank" came out. I pressed my lips together and counted to 210 by 7's. It's a trick I use—I calm myself with math.

Of course, math is what got me into this mess in the first place.

## Part 2

My troubles started a few days ago. My mom had come home between shifts working at the diner, just to say hi. I was busy with my math homework. She sat down next to me and **put her swollen feet up on the kitchen table**.

Mom tries to come home between shifts whenever she can. But she doesn't actually need to. My older brother is in charge while she's at work. And I'm definitely old enough to keep myself out of trouble. I just do homework or read.

"So, have you thought of what you want for your birthday yet?" I remember Mom asking.

"An Orion hoodie," I mumbled, focusing on my math homework.

"What's an Orion hoodie?" Mom asked **enthusiastically**.

I shook my head. I hadn't meant to say anything.

### SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The events of this story do not unfold in order. After Part 1, Dori will go back in time to explain why she was crying.

### PREDICTION

Why might a new hoodie make Dori so upset?

### CHARACTER

What do the details in this paragraph tell you about Don's mom?



## VOCABULARY

**enthusiastically:** showing excitement

**sympathetically:** showing care or understanding

**fantasizing:** imagining doing things you are unlikely to do

**imitation:** something made to be a copy of something else

**taunted:** teased



**BUILDING KNOWLEDGE**

The Orion hoodie is named after the Orion constellation. It is a group of stars that form the shape of a hunter.

**INFERENCE**

What can you infer about the family's current situation? How is it affecting Dori?

**INFERENCE**

Why does Dori say she was "just kidding"? Do you think she would really prefer colored pencils?



**MAKING CONNECTIONS**

Orion hoodies are made up. But they remind us of real-life "must-have" items. What clothes and shoes remind you of Orions?



"Tell me," Mom said, giving me a nudge with her iced-tea glass. "What's an Orion hoodie? I never heard of that. Don't chew on your lips, Dori. They get so chapped."

I let my lip slip out of my teeth and said quietly, "It's nothing, just a kind of sweatshirt."

"That everybody wears?"

I shrugged, then nodded. "They're just, you know, soft cotton. They come in a bunch of colors. And on the left side there are **three little black stars.**"

"Oh, yeah," Mom said cheerfully. "I've seen a lot of the girls wearing those at the diner. They're the 'thing' this year?"

I shrugged. "But they're expensive."

"Oh." Mom stood up and kissed me on the top of my head. "Well, maybe Dad will find a new job soon."

"Maybe," I said. My father had lost his job in July, more than two months ago already. **We hadn't even gone shopping for school supplies**, our annual family tradition. I was still using last year's notebook and pencils.

"I don't really want an Orion hoodie," I told her as she rinsed her iced-tea glass. "**I was just kidding. What I'd really like is, um, a package of colored pencils.** You know, the eight-pack—like in AJ's store." I knew my brother AJ could get them for a discount at the store where he works.

"We'll see," Mom said as she was leaving.

\*\*\* **Part 3** \*\*\*

The only reason the Orion sweatshirt had even entered my mind was Lisa Verilli. She has the locker next to mine again this year. And every morning I hear her and Carleen and their other friends talking. Usually they're complimenting one another—on their Orions, their hair, their homework, their everything.

They are polite girls, I guess. They're never really mean—at least not to my face. Lisa even whispers "Hi" to me sometimes. She gave me half a hug the first day of school this year. But mostly she doesn't notice me. None of them do.

They are the A-group, the most popular girls in school. I am in no group at all. I do my work and go home. Sure the A-group is mostly polite. But they definitely scare me a little.

On the day when Mom asked me what I wanted for my birthday, **Lisa and Carleen had been comparing Orion sweatshirts.** I

wasn't paying really close attention. But as I closed my locker, I turned my head and found myself eye-to-eye with Lisa.

She moved her eyes down my body, taking in my clothes. I was wearing a hand-me-down T-shirt and jeans that my older brother, AJ, had outgrown.

She smiled **sympathetically**, which is **what made me feel bad**. I shrugged to show I don't care about surface things like what I wear.

But later, I was thinking about myself in an Orion hoodie. I was imagining how it would feel to get one of those compliments: "Oh, Dori! That's the exact Orion I wanted! But it looks much better on you."

I was **fantasizing** about what it **might feel like to look good enough**.

## Part 4

On the night of my birthday, we cooked out in the backyard. We had hot dogs—my favorite food—and a white cake with chocolate frosting. After dinner, my little brother, Nate, whispered to me. "There is a big present," he said. "But don't tell anybody because it's a secret."

There were actually two presents, held together with a yellow ribbon. I let Nate tear open the small wrapped box. It was a box of colored pencils—the eight-pack. I hugged it to my chest and said thanks.

I wondered for a second what the big box could be. Then I tore open the wrapping paper and saw a shirt. It was a soft sweatshirt with a hood. And on the left side, there were three little black . . . hearts.

My stomach dropped. It was a fake Orion—a cheap **imitation** with three hearts instead of stars.

It was probably still too expensive for my mother to be buying for me this year. And it was worse than no Orion hoodie at all. It was the fakeness that was so awful. I'd rather wear my brother's old T-shirts. At least they are what they are and don't try to be anything else.

I held up the fake sweatshirt for everybody to see. While I did, my mother explained that it was an Orion—the hottest trend of the year. I chewed on my lip, and she didn't stop me.

I gave her and my dad kisses, thanked them for the presents, and quickly helped clean up. But when I got back outside, Mom was holding up the sweatshirt. "Go try it on, Dori. Let's see how it looks!" she said.

So I went to the bathroom, tried it on, **cried at my reflection**, and modeled it for the family. Then I headed straight for my room.

### INFERENCE

Why does Lisa's smile make Dori feel bad?



### CHARACTER'S MOTIVATION

What does this line tell you about why Dori wants the Orion hoodie?



### CHARACTER

Remember the opening of the story? Go back and reread Part 1. Why was Dori crying? Why was she trying to hide her tears?

**CHARACTER**  
How do you think Dori feels at this very moment?

## Part 5

When I got to my room, I peeled off the hoodie and put on an old pair of pajamas. I folded the sweatshirt and placed it neatly in my drawer. When Mom said I should come watch TV with everybody, I yelled down that I had to finish a book for school.

Mom came up. "Hey, birthday girl," she said. I kept reading while she pulled out the imitation Orion and laid it on my desk chair. "All ready to wear to school tomorrow!" she said.

I opened my mouth to protest, but no words came. Just shame. Shame at not being able to afford the real thing.

I could see myself standing at my locker wearing a fake. Not good enough. My mother tucked the blanket tight around me. "**You are so loved,**" she whispered.

## Part 6

At the lockers early in the morning, Lisa looked at me, not unkindly. But then Carleen yanked on Lisa's yellow Orion sleeve and whispered in her ear. I hung on to my locker and waited. I knew what was coming. I tasted the salty tear that had slipped out. I raised my eyes to meet Lisa's.

"New sweatshirt?" she asked.

I nodded, and another tear fell straight down onto my arm. Carleen **taunted**, "Is it an Orion?"

I shook my head and kept on crying—ready for the punishment I knew I deserved. "No," I said. "It's a fake."

Then I blinked, and the tears stopped. Suddenly I just couldn't believe that I was crying about a hoodie. "**These tears are what I should be ashamed of—not the hearts instead of stars,**" I thought.

The eyebrows of the A-group were all raised. I touched the bottom of my new sweatshirt, which felt very soft. I imagined my mother standing at the display at the Price Club. I pictured her rubbing the material, adding up how much it would cost with tax.

Then I imagined her picking up the hoodie anyway and carrying it proudly to the checkout for her daughter. "You are so loved," I heard inside my head.

A fake? Depends what's real, I guess. I smiled at the A-group. "But it's really the best present I ever got." **I walked away, feeling good enough.**

**CHARACTER**  
How does Dori's attitude about the shirt change at this moment?

**THEME**  
In the end, what does Dori decide is the best gift of all—the shirt, or her mother's love?