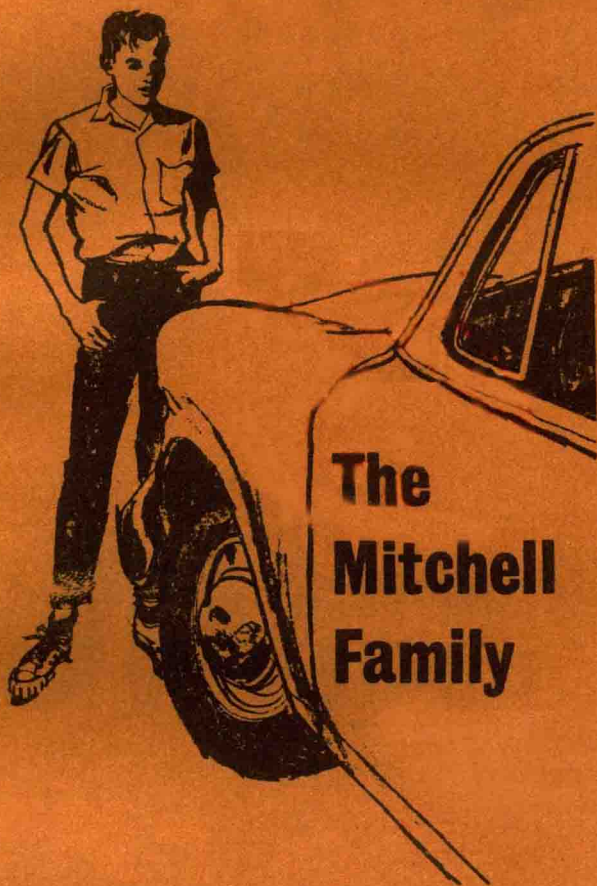


ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICES, INC.



COLLIER MACMILLAN INTERNATIONAL, INC.
NEW YORK
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LONDON

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**The
Mitchell
Family**

**COLLIER MACMILLAN INTERNATIONAL, INC.
NEW YORK
COLLIER MACMILLAN PUBLISHERS
LONDON**

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Philippines Copyright 1965
by MACMILLAN PUBLISHING CO., INC.

Seventh printing 1977

Collier Macmillan International, Inc.
866 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022
Collier Macmillan Canada, Ltd., Don Mills, Ontario
Printed in the United States of America

PREFACE

The increasing study of English as a second language throughout the world has resulted in a great demand for supplementary reading material that is relatively simple in structure and vocabulary, but which deals with subject matter that will hold the adult student's interest. *The Mitchell Family* is one of a series of readers that have been prepared to help fill this need.

A secondary demand, particularly on the part of those who plan to study in the United States, is for books that will familiarize readers with everyday ways of life in the United States. Much of the available material deals with romantic periods of the past, or with the lives of famous citizens of the United States. Although these books are interesting, they do not prepare the stranger for actual life in the country today. It is present-day customs that interest the foreign visitor most, after all, since it is in present-day society that he will be taking part.

The Mitchell Family was planned to help fill that need. It describes a year in the life of a skilled manual worker—an automobile mechanic—and his family in a small town. Their interests and pursuits are typical of the life of millions of Americans. A companion book in this series, *The Russells of Hollytree Circle*, describes the family life of a professional man living in the suburb of a large city. Together, these two books describe the living patterns of a large proportion of the now predominantly urban population of the United States. Farmers are a minority now, and it is only in movies and on the television screen that most Americans see cowboys and Indians.

The Mitchell Family has been written in a straightforward way with a vocabulary held, as far as practicable, to the 2,000-word level. Words beyond this level that are

necessary to the story have been marked with an asterisk (*) on their first appearance, and defined in the glossary. The Glossary and Notes also include definitions of idiomatic phrases and of unusual meaning for common words from the word list. Cultural notes are included whenever they are required. Besides the glossary, word-study exercises have been provided to reinforce the student's familiarity with new terms. Comprehension questions have also been included for each chapter. All the didactic material is in the back of the book, where it will not interfere with the enjoyment of the reading, but may be referred to when it is needed. Thus, the book is suitable for either recreational or supplementary reading, or for use as a classroom text.

The 2,000-word list used in preparing *The Mitchell Family* and the rest of this series of readers was selected by the following method. Michael West's *General Service List of English Words* was used as a base. To these 2,000 words were added such words as were needed to complete sets of terms commonly used in discussing everyday subjects like food, health, travel, home, family, the weather, school, and so on. Then all words of a frequency of 35 occurrences per million words according to Thorndike-Lorge *Teacher's Word Book of 30,000 Words* were added. In order to adapt the resulting list to American usage in the 1960's expressions that are out of date or not generally used in the United States were eliminated. Proper nouns, inflected forms and derived words were also eliminated. For example, *kind* is listed, but *kindly*, *kindness*, *unkind*, etc., are not. Such regular derivatives, formed by adding common prefixes and suffixes to a base word, which are not listed as separate items, but are assumed to be understood by the student, are allowable according to the restrictions in use in this book. Common function words (about 250 articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, numerals, days of the week, etc.) were removed to a separate list. Thus, the 2,000-word list consists of basic content-words, and taking into consideration

the possible derivatives of these, plus the function words, the total working vocabulary is considerably larger.

This book is one of the COLLIER MACMILLAN ENGLISH READERS, which, together with other types of teaching materials, have been prepared for the Collier Macmillan English Program by the Materials Development Staff of English Language Services, Inc., under the direction of Edwin T. Cornelius, Jr., and Willard D. Sheeler. *The Mitchell Family*, an original story by George P. McCallum, was simplified by Joyce R. Manes, who is also responsible for the exercises. Elizabeth A. Cole and Helena Newman applied vocabulary control and prepared the Glossary.

Illustrated by John Lawn.

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Chapter One

A TEN-DOLLAR *DEPOSIT

In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns, not to love, as the poet says, but to automobiles, especially if he happens to be about fifteen and almost old enough to get his first driver's license.

Herby and Alvin stood staring at the old car on the used-car lot with the sign on it telling them to "Take It Away for \$100!" They had been studying it for weeks. Two fifteen-year-old boys could not, in their happiest dreams, have found anything better—at least, not in the town where they lived. They knew, because they had looked at every *secondhand car in town that year. This particular car was old and in poor condition, but with a few repairs and some paint it could appear on the road along with the very latest models. Besides, most of the fun of owning a car was being able to take it apart, fix it, and put it back together again.

"It's exactly what we want," said Herby to his companion.

"Yes, but there's one big problem to *solve before we can take it away," said Alvin.

"What's that?"

"Money, of course. Where do you think we're going to get a hundred dollars?"

Herby did not share his friend's concern with practical difficulties. "How does anybody get money?" he said. "Work! We'll work hard this summer and save up the hundred dollars between us. If you pay fifty and I pay fifty—"

"Sure," interrupted Alvin, "but we have other things to buy in the fall, remember? School supplies, for one thing.

By the time school starts, I'll be lucky if I have ten dollars left."

But Herby could not be *discouraged so easily. "We can try, can't we?"

Alvin nodded. "I just hope no one else decides to buy it before we save up the money. It's three months until September."

"A ten-dollar deposit would hold it for you," said a voice behind them. It was the used-car dealer.

"But we don't have even ten dollars," Alvin told the man.

"Well," the car dealer said, "don't worry. The school year will end in a couple of weeks, won't it? You can get summer jobs. I think I could wait a few weeks for the deposit."

"Could you? Would you?" both boys exclaimed, speaking together.

"Do your families know of your plan?" asked the used-car man *suspiciously.

Herby and Alvin looked at each other. Finally Herby said, "Well, they know we want a car . . ."

"But it's all right," Alvin assured the man. "Both my dad and Mr. Mitchell—Herby's father—have said that when we're sixteen and get our *licenses, we can have our own car."

"If we pay for it ourselves," Herby added.

The used-car dealer seemed satisfied and promised not to let anyone else buy the car for a month. If the boys had not paid the deposit by then, he would have to sell it. The rest of the money would be due in September. Both boys thought this was fair. They thanked him and started for home.

"I'll be going to my uncle's farm for the summer," Alvin said. "I can earn my part of the money picking *berries and helping around the farm. But what about you, Herb? Have you got any ideas for a job?"

Herby shook his head. "Not yet," he said, adding confidently, "but I'm sure I can find something. There are

*lawns to cut and yards to clean—all kinds of small jobs I could do for some of the neighbors."

"Do you think we'll have enough money by September?"

Herby had no doubts. "I'm sure we will," he said. "Well, here's where I leave you. I promised my mother I'd stop at the store on my way home from school. See you tomorrow."

"So long."

The two separated, Alvin going off down the street whistling "Jingle Bells," even though it was a warm spring afternoon and hardly a time for songs about "dashing through the snow."

Herby headed towards the store, deep in thought. He was determined to have that car, but he wasn't as confident about getting the money as he had pretended to be at the used-car lot. He really didn't know whether or not he could get a summer job taking care of other people's yards. Most of the neighbors had children of their own to do this; and those who didn't had probably already hired someone to do the work. He'd just have to look around until he found something. Maybe it would be a good idea to look in the "help wanted" section of the newspaper.

He bought the things his mother had asked for: a quart of milk, two pounds of ground beef, and a *loaf of bread. The Mitchell family was having a very simple meal that evening—*hamburgers. It was what they always had when they were in a hurry. They would be rushing through supper tonight because, at eight o'clock, Herby's sister Irene would be *graduating from Milton High School and the whole family was going to the school for the ceremony.

Herby hoped his sister would like his graduation gift. It was a pen and pencil set that had cost almost five dollars. The card on the package read, "To Irene from Herby—to help you take good notes in college next year."

* * *

"Hurry and take your shower now, Herby," his mother told him as he came into the kitchen with the milk, bread,

and meat. "And thanks for getting those things for me at the store." Helen Mitchell was busy setting the table for an early supper. "Irene has to be at the school no later than seven and we're all going together. I pressed your suit and put it on your bed, but you'll have to polish your shoes. Hurry and get finished with the bathroom before your father gets home. He'll want to take a shower, too."

Herby wanted to talk to his mother about the various possibilities for summer work, but he knew that this was not the right time.

"Don't use up all the hot water," his mother warned as he went upstairs. "And be sure to wash your neck and your ears!"

He got undressed quickly, put on his bathrobe, and went to the bathroom. The door was locked.

"I'll be out in a minute," Irene called out when her brother knocked on the door—"as soon as I finish combing my hair."

Herby sighed. "Combing my hair" meant the bathroom would be occupied for at least another half hour. By that time, his father would be home and would want the bathroom so that he could shave and take a shower. Herby, if he was lucky, might have just enough time to wash his face. What this house needed was two bathrooms!

He returned to his room and sat down on the edge of his bed to polish his shoes. As he rubbed the soft polish into the leather, his thoughts returned to his greatest boyhood ambition—a second-hand car of his own.

From his bedroom window on the second floor he could look across town to the hills of Fairview Gardens, the section of town with the biggest and most expensive houses in Milton. Suddenly he had an idea. Of course! That's the place to look for work. Those houses were large and had large grounds. Taking care of one of those places would be a full-time job, and, if he was lucky, he might find someone in need of a yard man. Tomorrow after school he'd go to Fairview Gardens.

"Bathroom's free!" sang out Irene. Herby dashed in, locked the door and began immediately to take his shower. He finished just as his father came home.

Helen Mitchell greeted Jim, her husband, with the same speech that she had given her son, except that she left out the part about washing behind the neck and ears. Irene came into the kitchen. "Hi, Daddy!" she greeted him gaily. "Tonight's the big night!" She started to kiss him.

"Don't get too close," he warned. "I'm all dirty. But you can't be a *mechanic and keep clean all day." He laughed. "At least if I'm good and dirty it means I've worked hard." He turned to his wife. "Say, Helen, I got a new man at the *garage today. He's young—just out of high school, but I think he's going to be a fine mechanic. Does a good job and takes pride in his work."

"You can tell me about him later," Helen said. "Now, go get cleaned up. Supper will be ready in fifteen minutes, so don't take too long."

As he left the room Jim asked, smiling, "A sports shirt will be all right for tonight, won't it?"

"Daddy!" said Irene. "You wouldn't dare!"

"I ironed your good blue suit, Jim," said Helen, *ignoring his little joke. "And I put a clean white shirt out for you on the bed. Now hurry!"

In half an hour all four Mitchells were seated at the table having a simple supper of hamburgers, milk and apple pie. Helen usually made a complete dinner for her family, but the family didn't object to the hamburgers. They were easy to fix, and they tasted good. The conversation centered on the big event, Irene's high school graduation. She was going to be presented with a *scholarship to the state university, and in addition was receiving a special prize as the best all-around girl student at Milton High. Not only was she a good student, she was also active in outside activities—student government and sports. Jim and Helen Mitchell were very proud of their daughter, and even Herby, who was generally critical of his older sister, felt a family pride in her accomplishments.

By seven o'clock the Mitchells were at the high school and, as Irene went to join the other students of the graduating class, her parents and brother sought good seats among the audience.

The program consisted of a *procession by the graduates, special music by the school band, a number of speeches, and the presentation of the prizes. Jim and Herby *applauded and Helen had tears in her eyes when Irene, in the white dress her mother had made especially for the occasion, stepped forward to accept the highest honor given a graduating girl student at Milton High. After the ceremony, the family went to *congratulate Irene and talk with her friends and teachers. Then they drove home, leaving her to join her friends at a graduation party.

Chapter Two

THE LAST HOUSE ON THE HILL

The next afternoon after school Herby, with his friend Alvin, crossed the city to Fairview Gardens and began knocking on the doors of the big houses there. "Sorry, young man, but we have a regular gardener," was the usual reply as the door closed. It was a warm afternoon, and as he and Alvin went from house to house on the hill, they became very tired and discouraged. "I don't know what I'm going to do," complained Herby. "It seems they've all got somebody to take care of their yards."

The situation did not improve as the afternoon went on. The boys knocked on a dozen doors and the answer was always the same: "Sorry, but . . ."

Parker Place was the last house on the hill, on a point

overlooking the entire city. It was the largest property in Milton; it was also in the worst condition. The grass was high, the trees and bushes needed *trimming, and the house itself was badly in need of repairs and painting. Strangers in town would probably think it was unoccupied. It was not, however; Mrs. Elizabeth Parker lived there with Catherine French, her housekeeper.

Milton was a small town and most of the neighbors knew each other quite well, but Elizabeth Parker had remained a mystery. For as long as anyone could remember, she had cut herself off from the activities of the town. She was confined to a *wheelchair and never left her home. The housekeeper, a younger woman, did the shopping, ran the necessary *errands for the household, and went to church on Sunday; but other than that, she did not associate with the townspeople any more than her employer did.

The big hilltop house was a popular subject for conversation. Small-town people like to exercise their imaginations, and new theories about life in Parker Place were continually being dreamed up. A favorite story to explain the strange unfriendliness of the two women was that Elizabeth Parker's husband had deserted her many years before for a pretty young girl half his age; that he and the girl had been killed some time afterwards in an automobile accident; that Catherine, the housekeeper, was really their daughter; and Mrs. Parker had taken her into her home after the accident. (Actually Catherine and Mrs. Parker were not related at all.)

The children of the town had their own story about the run-down house. It was *haunted. The mysterious old lady, whom no one ever saw, was really a *witch and Catherine had to do exactly what the witch told her. During the daylight hours the children would occasionally walk up the hill to the old house hoping for a sight of the "witch"—never at night, however, for fear of what might happen if they were caught. Herby and Alvin had grown up listening to these wild tales, and although they no longer

believed any of them, they were hesitant about knocking on this particular door.

"You're not going in *there*, are you?" Alvin asked in disbelief as Herby approached the entrance to the Parker house.

"It's the only place I haven't tried, and you can see for yourself they don't have anyone to take care of the yard."

"Yes, but . . ."

"But what?"

Alvin didn't seem to know what he wanted to say next. "Well, *you* know. . . ."

"I know—what? What's the matter with you, Alvin?"

"Nothing—it's just those stories about Mrs. Parker . . ."

"Oh, is *that* all!" Herby said. "You don't believe any of that, do you?"

"Well, no, I guess not. But. . . ."

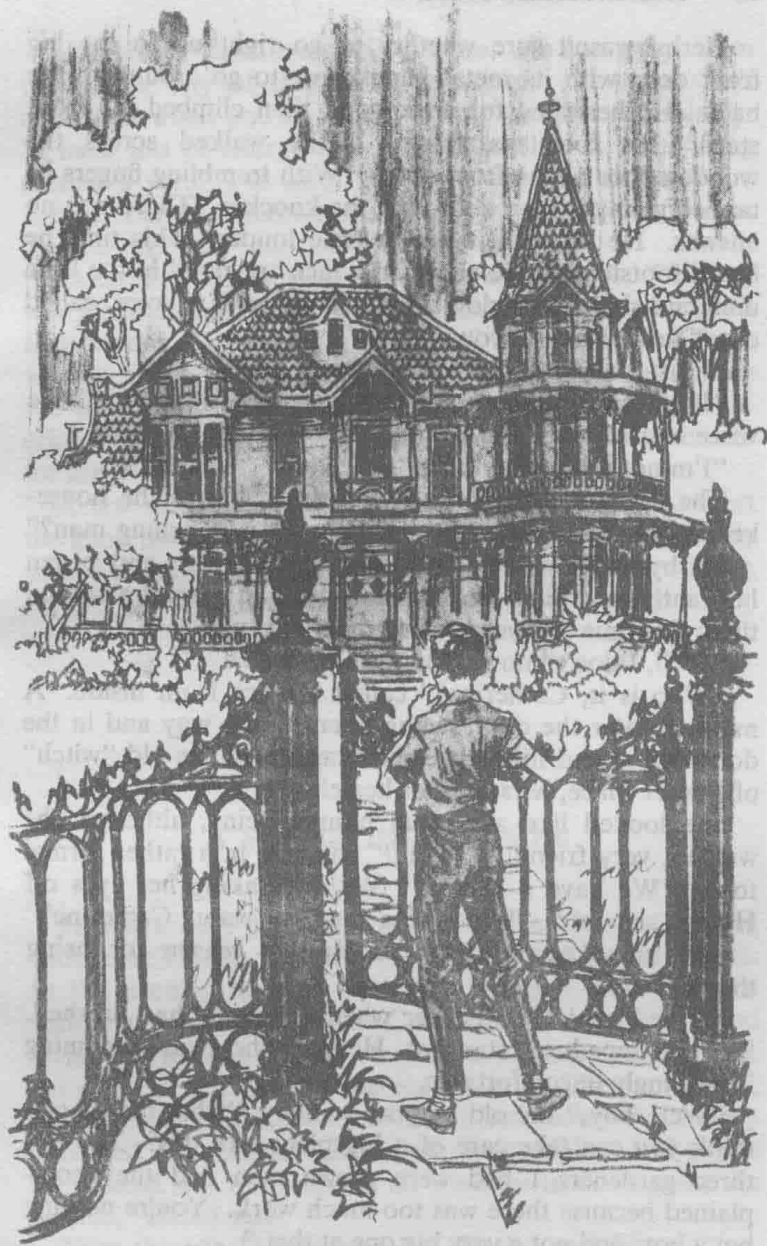
Herby interrupted. "Look—we want the car, don't we? And the only way we're going to get the money is to earn it. That means we've got to work and right now it looks as though I'll have to take any job I can get. Besides, maybe they'll say 'No,' just like everybody else."

Herby was a little nervous, but he wouldn't admit this to Alvin. "Do you want to come with me?" he asked.

Alvin shook his head. "It's late," he replied quickly. "I have to go home."

"O.K. I'll see you later." Herby took a deep breath, opened the iron gate and started up the walk to the old house, which looked more and more *sinister* to him as he approached it. Alvin stood and watched for a moment, admiring his friend's courage, then turned and went down the hill.

Looking about him as he went along the path, Herby realized that at least there could not be the excuse this time of "Sorry, young man, but we have a regular gardener." It was easy to see that this yard had not been properly cared for in well over a year. Whether haunted or not, the house certainly looked like something out of a mystery story.



Herby wasn't sure whether to go right up to the big front door with its metal knocker or to go around to the back. He hesitated for a moment, then climbed the front steps. His footsteps echoed as he walked across the wooden floor of the front porch. With trembling fingers he tapped gently on the door with the knocker. There was no answer. He knocked again, a little louder. This time he heard footsteps inside and then a face appeared in the little diamond-shaped window in the door and a voice called out, "Yes? What do you want?"

"I just wondered if you might want . . ."

"If you're selling something, we don't want any," the voice interrupted.

"I'm not selling anything."

The door opened about two inches. It was the housekeeper, Catherine French. "Then what is it, young man?"

Herby swallowed hard, took a deep breath and began hesitantly to explain his *mission. He had to start a second time; this time the words came more easily.

"Well, I don't know," the woman replied.

"Who is it, Catherine?" called a voice from inside. A moment later the door swung open all the way and in the doorway, seated in a wheelchair, appeared the old "witch" of Parker Place, Mrs. Parker herself.

She looked like a normal human being, although she was not very friendly. "Well!" she said in a rather formal tone. "We have a visitor!" Without taking her eyes off Herby, she said, "What does the boy want, Catherine?"

The housekeeper explained Herby's reason for being there.

"I see," said Mrs. Parker when Catherine had finished. She continued to stare at Herby, who was becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

"Well, boy," the old lady said finally, "what makes you think *you* can take care of a big place like this? The last three gardeners I had were grown men and they complained because there was too much work. You're nothing but a boy, and not a very big one at that."