

Fountas & Pinnell

Leveled Literacy Intervention



Fiction

Heinemann

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ISBN-13: 978-0-325-01707-5
ISBN-10: 0-325-01707-7



Book 105

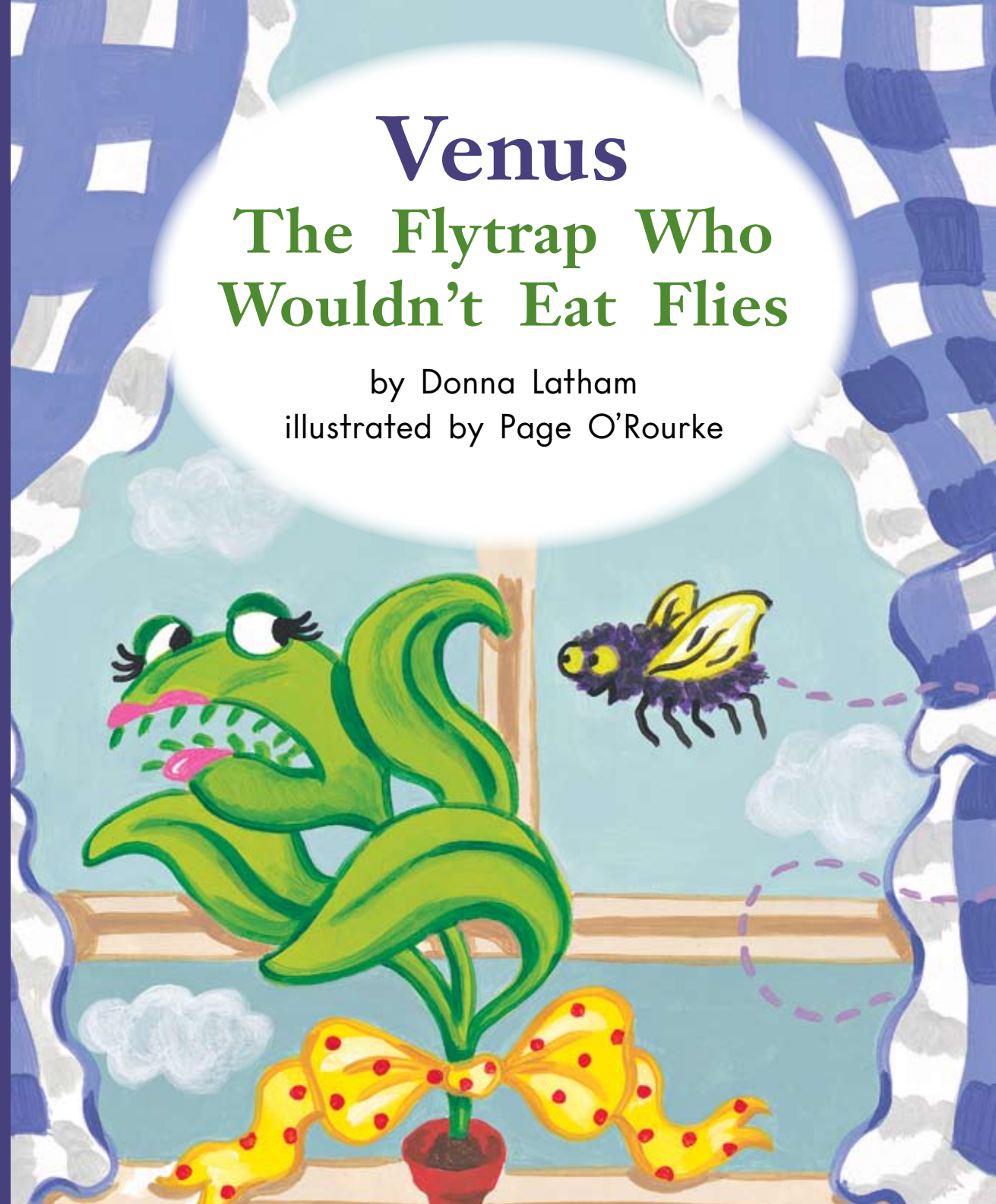
Level M

Venus

The Flytrap Who Wouldn't Eat Flies

by Donna Latham

illustrated by Page O'Rourke



Venus: The Flytrap Who Wouldn't Eat Flies

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361 Hanover Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912
www.heinemann.com

Offices and agents throughout the world

Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention Books
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ISBN-13: 978-0-325-01707-5 ISBN-10: 0-325-01707-7

Editorial Development, Design, and Production by Brown Publishing Network

Credits

Illustrations: Page O'Rourke

Printed in China

09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 RRD 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Mason was having a terrible time with his new Venus flytrap. Flytraps are plants that eat bugs. Well, they're *supposed* to eat bugs.

"Venus is a little different," Mason told Mom.

"Why do you say that?" asked Mom.

"She never catches the flies buzzing around the window."



Venus was a pretty, bright green flytrap. Her wide red jaws were lined with soft little hairs. Her jaws were filled with sweet, sticky nectar. Flies buzzed around Venus trying to get the nectar.



“When a fly touches those hairs—*snap!*”

Mason said.

“Her jaws are *supposed* to trap flies inside. That’s what flytraps do.

They eat flies!”



Mason looked hard at Venus.

Something about her really *was* different.

Then Venus cried, “Ew!

That’s awful! I wouldn’t eat a fly!”

Mason swallowed hard.

Was Venus really talking?

“What about a crunchy cricket?”

Mason asked.

He pointed at one outside the window.

“Uh-uh!” said Venus, shaking her head.

“How about a buzzy bee?” asked Mason.
He showed her one as it flew
past the window.

“Uh-uh!” said Venus.
She snapped her jaws shut.

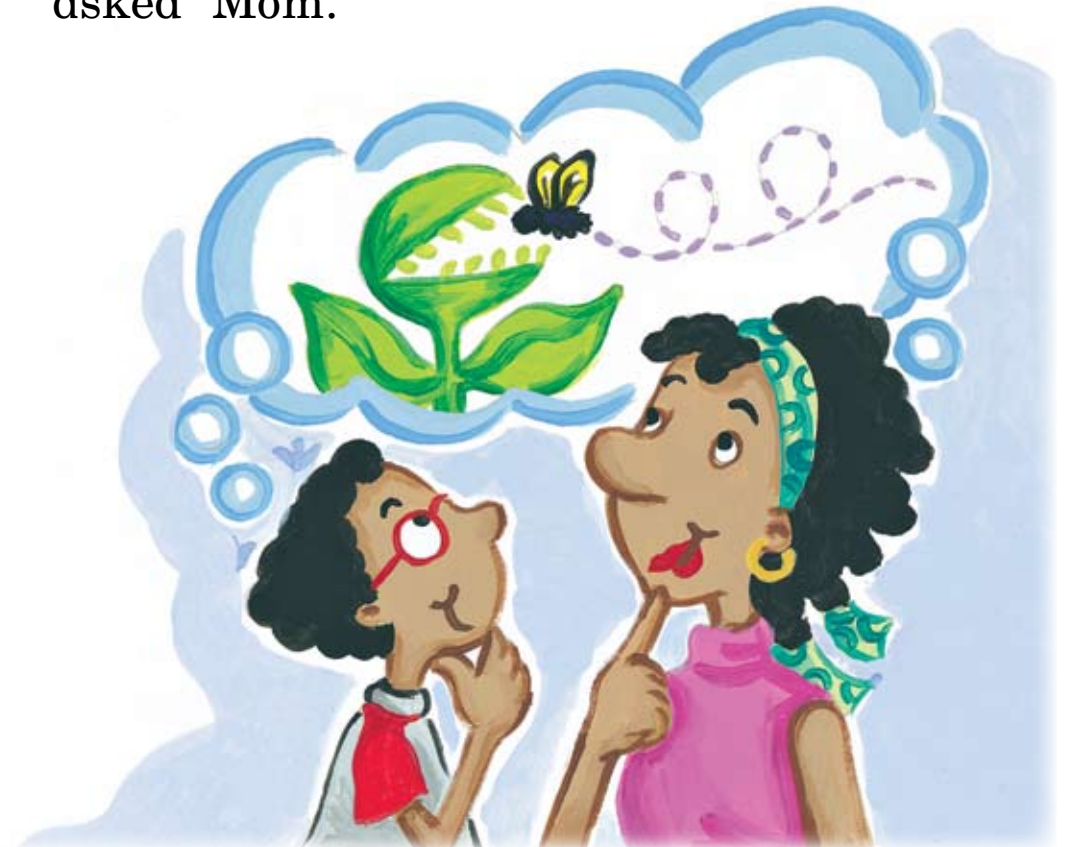
“A wiggly spider?” Mason asked.
He wiggled his fingers.

“No!” cried Venus, covering her eyes.



“Mom, I don’t understand why Venus
doesn’t eat flies,” said Mason.
“Flytraps aren’t like other plants.
Flytraps can’t make their own food.
They must eat meat to live.”

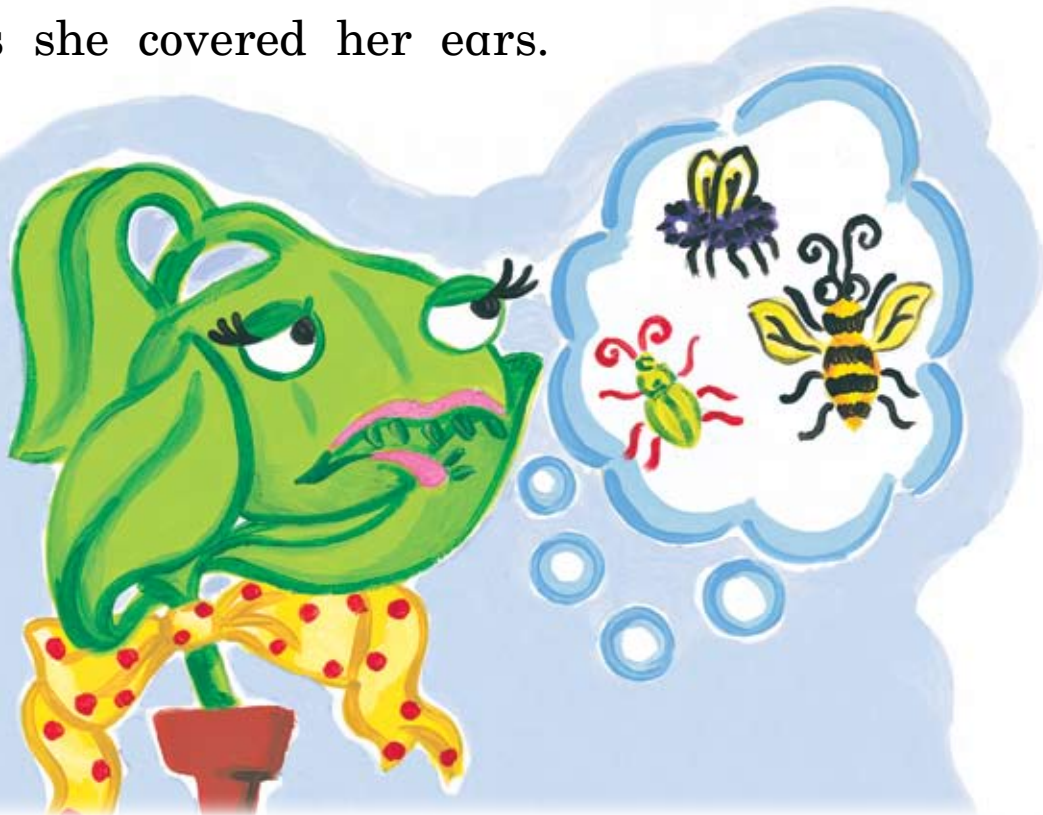
“You mean bugs, right?”
asked Mom.



When she heard the word “bugs,”
Venus shook.
She sank down in her pot.

“Yes,” said Mason.
“She’s supposed to gobble up
flies and wasps and beetles.”

“Ew, ew, ew!” said Venus,
as she covered her ears.



“Let’s give her time, Mason,”
said Mom.
“She’s still getting used to
living in a new place.
Venus will eat, sooner or later.”

But Venus did not eat.
Her bright green jaws turned
pale yellow.
Her stem bent way over.



“Oh, dear,” Mom sighed.
“Poor Venus isn’t doing well.”

“What should we do, Mom?”
asked Mason.

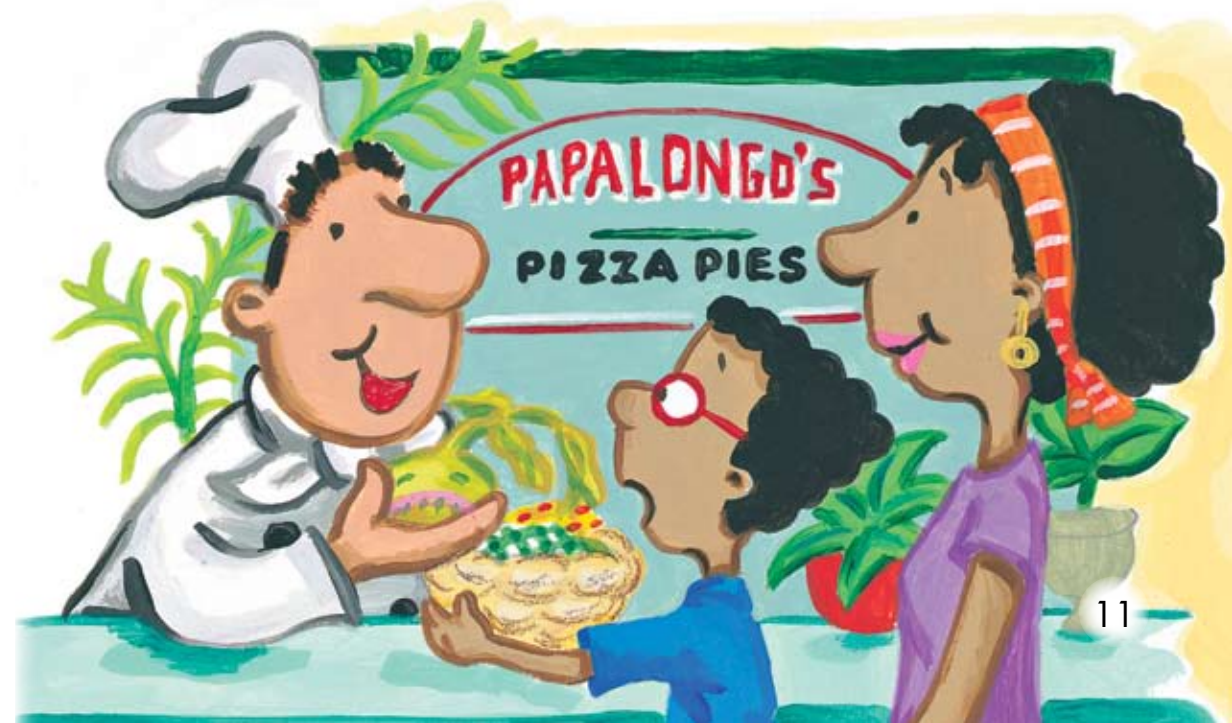
“Let’s take her to Papa Longo,”
Mom said.
“He grows beautiful plants.
If he can’t help her, no one can.”



They put Venus in a little basket
and hurried to Papa Longo’s Pizza Pies.

“Hello, hello,” Papa Longo said.
“What have you got there, Mason?”

Mason held up his sick plant.
“It’s Venus, my flytrap,” he said.
“Papa Longo, she just won’t eat.”



“Won’t eat?” asked Papa Longo.

“She doesn’t like flies,” said Mom.

“Who does?” Papa Longo laughed.

“She’s supposed to eat bugs,”
Mason said.

“Well, leave her with me,”
said Papa Longo.

“I’ll put her in a bright, sunny place.
I’ll try to get her to eat
a nice bug or two.”

Papa Longo put Venus
near a sunny, open window.
Flies buzzed at the screen.
The smell of pizza filled the air.

“Mmm,” said Venus, as she stood up
a bit. “What smells so good?”

“My best dish—pizza!”
said Papa Longo.



Papa Longo took a fresh pizza pie from the oven.

“Mmm,” said Venus.

“It smells delicious. It looks delicious.”

“It *is* delicious, I promise you,” said Papa Longo.

Venus hung over the pizza. It smelled so good!

Just then, a fly squeezed through a hole in the screen. It landed right on the pizza!

“No, no!” Papa Longo cried.

“It’s stuck in the cheese.

I can’t serve my customers a fly pizza!”

“Papa Longo . . .” Venus began.

“Yes, Venus?” he asked.

“May I have a slice?”



“Now the flytrap *wants* to eat a fly!”
said Papa Longo.

He cut a little piece of pizza
and held it out to Venus.

Venus opened her mouth wide.

Snap! Venus snapped her jaws shut.

“Yum!” she cried.

