

BAKER'S DOZEN
By Carole L. Cooney

Hundreds of years ago, some English bakers cheated their customers by baking bread with big holes in the loaves, making them lighter. In 1266, the English Parliament passed a law that said that bakers who sold underweight bread would be severely punished. To be sure they were selling enough bread to meet the new weight regulations, the bakers started giving thirteen loaves for every twelve a customer ordered.

Setting: Sean's Bakery Shop; Robert's Bakery Shop; Sir Nicholas's Law Office

Characters:

Narrator

Baker Sean

Mistress Mary

Little Megan

Baker Robert

Sir Nicholas

Baker Sean: And what can I get for you, today, Mistress Mary?

Mistress Mary: I'm not buying any more of your bread, sir!

Baker Sean: Why not, Mistress? I'm the best baker in town.

Mistress Mary: Sir, when I cut into the bread there is hardly any *bread* at all. There are large, *large* holes.

Little Megan: Mama, may I have a sweet apple tart?

Mistress Mary: Not now, Little Megan. It is much too early in the morning, and we're NOT buying any of *this* baker's goods. Come, Megan.

Narrator: Mistress Mary and Little Megan quickly turned to leave Baker Sean's shop, and crossed the cobblestone street to Baker Robert's bakery.

Baker Robert: Good Morning, Mistress Mary and Little Megan. What a delight to see you on such a bright morning. What may I get for you?

Mistress Mary: You can get me nothing, sir. But please hear my complaint. I've bought bread from your bakery AND from Sean's bakery and all of the bread is mostly filled with holes.

Baker Robert: Humph! Suit yourself, Mistress. Go to another baker if you think you can find a difference.

Little Megan: Mama, may I have a sweet biscuit? They look so delicious!

Mistress Mary: Indeed, you may not! You are going with me to walk to the lawyer's office and put in our complaint.

Little Megan: Mama, what's a complaint?

Mistress Mary: A complaint is telling the authority when someone does a wrong doing.

Little Megan: Do I have to go? I'm too tired. Can we go home now?

Mistress Mary: Little Megan, you must be a big girl now. We are going to do something very important for all of the people in the town. Please Little Megan, put a smile on your sweet face and let us walk!

Narrator: Once again Mistress Mary and Little Megan turned sharply to leave Baker Robert's shop. They walk several blocks and arrive at Sir Nicholas's law office.

Sir Nicholas: Well, well. If it isn't Mistress Mary and Little Megan. What may I do for you today?

Mistress Mary: Sir Nicholas, I have a complaint about the bakers' bread.

Sir Nicholas: What is the matter with the baker's bread?

Little Megan: I know! I know! Mama, may I tell?

Mistress Mary: Of course, Little Megan, do tell.

Little Megan: Well...when Mama cuts into the bread there are a lot of holes inside.

Sir Nicholas: I see. This is serious because it means the bakers are cheating their customers. I shall bring this up in court and see what can be done.

Narrator: Several weeks pass. One day, Sir Nicholas posts a sign inviting all the townspeople to attend a meeting in the square that night. An important announcement is to be made.

Sir Nicholas: I have called you here to announce a new law from Parliament about the bread that the bakers make. The law says: Any baker who sells bread with the incorrect weight will be severely punished.

Narrator: The next morning every baker's shop had a large sign in the window. It said, "All who buy our bread will receive a "BAKER'S DOZEN"- that is, 13 portions instead of 12.

Little Megan: Mama, why is the baker giving 13 portions instead of 12?

Mistress Mary: That's to make sure that the baker will obey the new law and not get punished for cheating.