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Who Is Richard Branson?



by Michael Burgan



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by Michael Burgan
illustrated by Ted Hammond

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To Debbie, for all her support and love—MB

To my mom—TH

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Who Is Richard Branson?

During the 1950s, the Branson family took a vacation to the beach in Devon, England. On the trip, five-year-old Ricky's aunt Joyce made a bet with him. She would pay him if he could learn to swim before the end of their vacation.

Ricky spent the whole vacation trying to teach himself how to swim. Most of the time, he kept one foot on the sandy sea bottom and hopped along in the water. Waves would roll over him as he fought to keep the cold

water out of his mouth. By the last day of the vacation, Ricky had not learned how to swim. Aunt Joyce told him he could try again next year. But Ricky wasn't ready to give up. He wanted to win the bet.

Ricky made one last try to learn how to swim. His family gathered around to watch. Ricky saw his mother smile, as if she were thinking, "You can do it!" He took a deep breath, went into the water, and then moved his arms and legs as best he could. He was swimming! Going around in a circle, he heard his family cheering. When Ricky came ashore, Aunt Joyce handed him the money for winning the bet. Ricky later said that even though it was only about two dollars, it "seemed like a fortune."



As Ricky Branson grew up, he built a real fortune. He started many companies. Some of his businesses failed, but several became very

successful. The world came to know him as the billionaire Richard Branson. And just as when he was a boy, he took plenty of risks. He learned to sail boats and to fly hot-air balloons. He even bought a rocket that could take him into space. Richard lived by this thought: “If you’ve got a great idea, you need to just give it a try. And if you fall flat on your face, pick yourself up and try again.”