

Bill's New Frock

It rained all through the lunch hour. The sky went grey, the windows misted over, and from overhead came the steady gunfire sound of huge raindrops pinging smartly on the skylight.

And Mrs Collins slipped into one of her dark wet-break moods.

Everyone knew the signs: the eyebrows knitting together over her nose; the line across her forehead deepening to furrows; her lips thinning into tightened purse strings.

Everyone knew it was not the time to cause trouble.

So as the rain beat heavily against the window panes, everyone crept quietly around the classroom, trying to look as if they were up to something useful or sensible, or, at the very least, quiet.

And out of the storeroom came the old comic box.

Nobody *meant* to make a great noise and a fuss. All anyone wanted was simply to go to the box, dip in their hand, and pick out a couple of comics they liked. Nobody *meant* to end up in a scrum, pushing and shoving the others out of the way, using their elbows, desperate to get an arm in and whip out a favourite comic before someone else leaned over and snatched it.

Nobody *meant* to end up in a riot.

'SILENCE!' roared Mrs Collins. 'Go back to your places at once! I will give out the comics *myself*.'

As she came over, everyone melted away from the comic box and drifted back to their own favourite wet-break places. Talilah and Kirsty sat side by side on the fat radiator pipes. Flora perched on the window sill. Philip and Nicky sprawled on the floor beneath table five, and Bill, who probably would have joined them on any other wet day, glanced down at all the marks and smears and tears he already had on his pretty pink frock, and then at the muddy grime and footprints all over the floor where his friends were – and thought better of it.

He settled himself alone, leaning his chair back against the wall, and waited for Mrs Collins to hand round the comics.

They were a shabby and dog-eared lot. It was with a slight shudder of disgust that Mrs Collins dipped her hands into the box to lift them out, and started round the room. Like everyone else, Bill hoped so hard that she would go round his way first, but he was out of luck.

Questions

1) In the story, Bill wears a 'pretty pink frock'. Which of these words could replace 'frock' in this sentence? [1 mark]

sweater dress blouse skirt cardigan

2) Draw lines to match the characters to the information about them: [1 mark]

Talilah and Kirsty	lay on the floor
Flora	sat on the radiator pipes
Philip and Nicky	sat on the window sill

3) Number these events to show the order in which they come in the story. [1 mark]

The children pushed and shoved to get the comics.	
The children had to stay inside as it was a wet playtime.	
Mrs Collins took the comic box out of the cupboard.	
Mrs Collins shouted 'SILENCE!' at the children.	

4) Which words tell you that Mrs Collins has been in a bad mood with the children before? [1 mark]

5) What do 'shabby' and 'dog-eared' make you think about the comics? [1 mark]

6) Why do you think Bill 'thought better' of sitting on the floor with his friends? [1 mark]

7) '... from overhead came the steady gunfire sound of huge raindrops'
What does this phrase suggest about the sound of the rain? [2 marks]

8) Why do you think the author has written the word '*meant*' three times in italics?
[2 marks]

9) What do you notice about the children's behaviour before Mrs Collins shouts '*SILENCE!*' and then afterwards? [1 mark]

10) '*It rained all through the lunch hour.*'
Find and copy **two** more places where the author tells you about the weather. [1 mark]
