

Bourne
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creative writing
workshops

I Can't Explain Why

by Miriam Silver

William fiddled with Jumble's string lead while obviously trying to find an answer for his irate teacher, who unbeknown to him was more exasperated than annoyed with him.

"I can't explain why I did these things," adding quickly, "Sir,"

"I'm sure you can't, though maybe a nice long detention or if you prefer a written explanation, both would help me understand."

"Oh Sir, please, anything but writing," his pupil pleaded.

"My mind's made up Brown, on my desk by tomorrow morning."

And while the class looked on he waved them 'good afternoon' and left the room leaving a worried William whose only immediate desire was to join his friends in their den. This is what they called this unsafe construction composed mostly of disused cardboard, corrugated iron, and boxes.

The Outlaws, as they called themselves were trying to light a campfire out of damp paper and cardboard when he arrived.

"That's it, there's no way I can write any of that stuff," he announced gloomily.

"Cors' you can," encouraged Henry their only academic who recognised the hopeless fire lighting.

“Yeah! Come on, we’ll help, won’t we you lot?” Ginger threw out, giving in too and inspiring Derek to offer a sticky sweet to their usual ‘full of ideas’ leader who, while sucking gratefully mumbled,

“Ok, ‘spose’ I can write about Jumble chasing that cat, he’s got his own mind my dog, don’t ‘suppose’ he’ll care. I did mean my arrow to hit the tree, silly thing went straight for the window and, oh! forgot the catapult, bad luck that stone went the wrong way too.” At this point he came to a stop, which allowed Henry to point out,

“Go on, explain those muddy clothes, kidnapping that stupid girl who wanted to be maid Marion to your King Arthur.”

All of which brought forth a moaning groan of hopelessness.

“I can’t find any reasons, I was only looking for treasure in the ditch got mud all over me, actually found some old Roman stuff, remember?”

His faithful friends, all trying hard to help, fell about laughing.

“You got muddy for nothing, ‘tho’ we did have ‘em believed they were old Egyptian hieroglyphics.”

“And persuaded that lot to come to the fair where they had to pay to have a look.”

“Wasn’t our fault they weren’t real, we did offer a nice exhibition of our pets too.”

“Not our fault those silly girls didn’t like our mice or white rat.”

None of this memorabilia seemed to be helpful for our poor young fellow who despaired about adults.

“No one remembers when I played Marcus Aurelius in that end of term play, or when we collected all that scrap for the Spitfire fund, Sir only wants me to explain all that other stuff, doesn’t want to know about those successes.”

“Wish I was like those ole’ Egyptians, wrote in scribbles, bet I could do that.”

Time was running out, William had to write his defence by tomorrow.

“Well, there’s only one thing to do. Got my exercise book here, come on Henry let’s go, and he began to write, “Sir, I apologise for,

1. Chasing the cat.

2. Catapulting that window.
3. Using my bow and arrow all wrong.
4. For Jumble.
5. King Arthur
6. And Maid Marion.
7. Roman findings.
8. The fair.
9. Muddy clothes.

That's all the reasons, explanations and excuses I can think of, Sir.