

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

Harriet the Spy

Written by

Louise Fitzhugh

Published by

Collins Modern Classics

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

HARRIET THE SPY

Louise Fitzhugh was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1928, the only child of attorney Millsaps Fitzhugh and tap-dancer Louise Perkins. Her parents were divorced soon after she was born and Louise lived with her father, having virtually no contact with her mother. She attended a succession of schools and colleges then travelled around Europe, finally settling in New York and pursuing a career as an artist. She published *Harriet the Spy*, her first novel, to mixed reviews in 1964, but it has since been recognised as a children's classic. *The Long Secret* followed in 1965 and *Sport* was published posthumously in 1979. Louise Fitzhugh died suddenly in 1974, of a brain aneurysm, aged only 46.

Collins Modern Classics

HARRIET THE SPY

by

Louise Fitzhugh



Illustrated by Louise Fitzhugh

Collins

An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*

First published in the USA by Harper and Row 1964
First published in Great Britain by Collins 1980
First published as a Collins Modern Classic 2003

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Collins Modern Classics is an imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd, 77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JB

The HarperCollins website address is www.harpercollins.co.uk

Text copyright © Louise Fitzhugh 1968
Illustrations by Louise Fitzhugh

The author asserts the moral right to be identified as the author and illustrator of the work.

ISBN: 978-0-00-733386-8

Conditions of Sale

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's written consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

CONTENTS

Book One	7
Book Two	127
Book Three	247
Postscript by Wendy Coooling	281

Book One





Chapter One

HARRIET WAS TRYING to explain to Sport how to play Town. "See, first you make up the name of the town. Then you write down the names of all the people who live in it. You can't have too many or it gets too hard. I usually have twenty-five."

"Ummmm." Sport was tossing a football in the air. They were in the courtyard of Harriet's house on East Eighty-seventh Street in Manhattan.

"Then when you know who lives there, you make up what they do. For instance, Mr Charles Hanley runs the

filling station on the corner." Harriet spoke thoughtfully as she squatted next to the big tree, bending so low over her notebook that her long straight hair touched the edges.

"Don'tcha wanta play football?" Sport asked.

"Now, listen, Sport, you never did this and it's fun. Now over here next to this curve in the mountain we'll put the filling station. So if anything happens there, you remember where it is."

Sport tucked the football under his arm and walked over to her. "That's nothing but an old tree root. Whaddya mean, a mountain?"

"That's a mountain. From now on that's a mountain. Got it?" Harriet looked up into his face.

Sport moved back a pace. "Looks like an old tree root," he muttered.

Harriet pushed her hair back and looked at him seriously. "Sport, what are you going to be when you grow up?"

"You know what. You know I'm going to be a ball player."

"Well, I'm going to be a writer. And when I say that's a mountain, that's a mountain." Satisfied, she turned back to her town.

Sport put the football gently on the ground and knelt beside her, looking over her shoulder at the notebook in which she scribbled furiously.

"Now, as soon as you've got all the men's names down,

and their wives' names and their children's names, then you figure out all their professions. You've got to have a doctor, a lawyer—"

"And an Indian chief," Sport interrupted.

"No. Someone who works in television."

"What makes you think they have television?"

"I say they do. And, anyway, my father has to be in it, doesn't he?"

"Well, then put mine in too. Put a writer in it."

"OK, we can make Mr Jonathan Fishbein a writer."

"And let him have a son like me who cooks for him." Sport rocked back and forth on his heels, chanting in singsong, "And let him be eleven years old like me, and let him have a mother who went away and has all the money, and let him grow up to be a ball player."

"Nooo," Harriet said in disgust. "Then you're not making it up. Don't you understand?"

Sport paused. "No," he said.

"Just listen, Sport. See, now that we have all this written down, I'll show you where the fun is." Harriet got very businesslike. She stood up, then got on her knees in the soft September mud so she could lean over the little valley made between the two big roots of the tree. She referred to her notebook every now and then, but for the most part she stared intently at the mossy lowlands which made her town. "Now, one night, late at night, Mr Charles Hanley is in his filling station. He is just about to turn out the lights

and go home because it is nine o'clock and time for him to get ready for bed."

"But he's a grown-up!" Sport looked intently at the spot occupied by the gas station.

"In this town everybody goes to bed at nine-thirty," Harriet said definitely.

"Oh" – Sport rocked a little on his heels – "my father goes to bed at nine in the morning. Sometimes I meet him getting up."

"And also, Dr Jones is delivering a baby to Mrs Harrison right over here in the hospital. Here is the hospital, the Carterville General Hospital." She pointed to the other side of town. Sport looked at the left root.

"What is Mr Fishbein, the writer, doing?"

Harriet pointed to the centre of town. "He is in the town bar, which is right here." Harriet looked down at the town as though hypnotised. "Here's what happens. Now, this night, as Mr Hanley is just about to close up, a long, big old black car drives up and in it there are all these men with guns. They drive in real fast and Mr Hanley gets scared. They jump out of the car and run over and rob Mr Hanley, who is petrified. They steal all the money in the gas station, then they fill up with gas free and then they zoom off in the night. Mr Hanley is all bound and gagged on the floor."

Sport's mouth hung open. "Then what?"

"At this same minute Mrs Harrison's baby is born and

Dr Jones says, 'You have a fine baby girl, Mrs Harrison, a fine baby girl, ho, ho, ho.'"

"Make it a boy."

"No, it's a girl. She already has a boy."

"What does the baby look like?"

"She's ugly. Now, also at this very minute, on the other side of town, over here past the gas station, almost to the mountain, the robbers have stopped at a farmhouse which belongs to Ole Farmer Dodge. They go in and find him eating oatmeal because he doesn't have any teeth. They throw the oatmeal on the floor and demand some other food. He doesn't have anything but oatmeal, so they beat him up. Then they settle down to spend the night. Now, at this very minute, the police chief of Carterville, who is called Chief Herbert, takes a stroll down the main street. He senses something is not right and he wonders what it is..."

"*Harriet.* Get up out of that mud." A harsh voice rang out from the third floor of the brownstone behind them.

Harriet looked up. There was a hint of anxiety in her face. "Oh, Ole Golly, I'm not in the mud."

The face of the nurse looking out of the window was not the best-looking face in the world, but for all its frowning, its sharp, dark lines, there was kindness there. "Harriet M. Welsch, you are to rise to your feet."

Harriet rose without hesitation. "But, listen, we'll have to play Town standing up," she said plaintively. "That's the

best way" came back sharply, and the head disappeared.

Sport stood up too. "Why don't we play football, then?"

"No, look, if I just sit like this I won't be in the mud." So saying, she squatted on her heels next to the town. "Now, he senses that there is something wrong—"

"How can he? He hasn't seen anything and it's all on the other side of town."

"He just feels it. He's a very *good* police chief."

"Well," Sport said dubiously.

"So, since he's the only policeman in town, he goes around and deputises everybody and he says to them, 'Something is fishy in this here town. I feel it in my bones,' and everybody follows him and they get on their horses—"

"*Horses!*" Sport shrieked.

"They get in the squad car and they drive around town until—"

"*Harriet.*" The back door slammed and Ole Golly marched squarely towards them across the yard. Her long black shoes made a slap-slap noise on the brick.

"Hey, where are you going?" asked Harriet, jumping up. Because Ole Golly had on her outdoor things. Ole Golly just had indoor things and outdoor things. She never wore anything as recognisable as a skirt, a jacket, or a sweater. She just had yards and yards of tweed which enveloped her like a lot of discarded blankets, which ballooned out when she walked, and which she referred to as her Things.

"I'm going to take you somewhere. It's time you began

to see the world. You're eleven years old and it's time you saw something." She stood there above them, so tall that when they looked up they saw the blue sky behind her head.

Harriet felt a twinge of guilt because she had seen a lot more than Ole Golly thought she had. But all she said was, "Oh, boy," and jumped up and down.

"Get your coat and hurry. We're leaving right now." Ole Golly always did everything right now. "Come on, Sport, it won't hurt you to look around too."

"I have to be back at seven to cook dinner." Sport jumped up as he said this.

"We'll be back long before that. Harriet and I eat at six. Why do you eat so late?"

"He has cocktails first. I have olives and peanuts."

"That's nice. Now go get your coats."

Sport and Harriet ran through the back door, slamming it behind them.

"What's all the noise?" spluttered the cook, who whirled around just in time to see them fly through the kitchen door and up the back stairs. Harriet's room was at the top of the house, so they had three flights to run up and they were breathless by the time they got there.

"Where're we going?" Sport shouted after Harriet's flying feet.

"I don't know," Harriet panted as they entered her room, "but Ole Golly always has good places."

Sport grabbed his coat and was out the door and halfway down the steps when Harriet said, "Wait, wait, I can't find my notebook."

"Oh, whadya need that for?" Sport yelled from the steps.

"I never go anywhere without it," came the muffled answer.

"Aw, come on, Harriet." There were great cracking noises coming from the bedroom. "Harriet? Did you fall down?"

A muffled but very relieved voice came out. "I found it. It must have slipped behind the bed." And Harriet emerged clutching a green composition book.

"You must have a hundred of them now," Sport said as they went down the steps.

"No, I have fourteen. This is number fifteen. How could I have a hundred? I've only been working since I was eight, and I'm only eleven now. I wouldn't even have this many except at first I wrote so big my regular route took almost the whole book."

"You see the same people every day?"

"Yes. This year I have the Dei Santi family, Little Joe Curry, the Robinsons, Harrison Withers and a new one, Mrs Plumber. Mrs Plumber is the hardest because I have to get in the dumbwaiter."

"Can I go with you sometime?"

"No, silly. Spies don't go with friends. Anyway, we'd get

caught if there were two of us. Why don't you get your own route?"

"Sometimes I watch out my window a window across the way."

"What happens there?"

"Nothing. A man comes home and pulls the shade down."

"That's not very exciting."

"It sure isn't."

They met Ole Golly waiting for them, tapping her foot, outside the front door. They walked to Eighty-sixth Street, took the cross-town bus, and soon were whizzing along in the subway, sitting in a line – Ole Golly, then Harriet, then Sport. Ole Golly stared straight ahead. Harriet was scribbling furiously in her notebook.

"What are you writing?" Sport asked.

"I'm taking notes on all those people who are sitting over there."

"Why?"

"Aw, Sport" – Harriet was exasperated – "because I've *seen* them and I want to *remember* them." She turned back to her book and continued her notes:

MAN WITH ROLLED WHITE SOCKS, FAT LEGS. WOMAN WITH ONE CROSS-EYE AND A LONG NOSE. HORRIBLE LOOKING LITTLE BOY AND A FAT BLONDE MOTHER WHO KEEPS WIPING HIS NOSE OFF. FUNNY LADY LOOKS LIKE A TEACHER AND IS READING. I

DON'T THINK I'D LIKE TO LIVE WHERE ANY OF THESE PEOPLE LIVE OR DO THE THINGS THEY DO. I BET THAT LITTLE BOY IS SAD AND CRIES A LOT. I BET THAT LADY WITH THE CROSS-EYE LOOKS IN THE MIRROR AND JUST FEELS TERRIBLE.

Ole Golly leaned over and spoke to them. "We're going to Far Rockaway. It's about three stops from here. I want you to see how this person lives, Harriet. This is *my* family."

Harriet almost gasped. She looked up at Ole Golly in astonishment, but Ole Golly just stared out the window again. Harriet continued to write:

THIS IS INCREDIBLE. COULD OLE GOLLY HAVE A FAMILY? I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT. HOW COULD OLE GOLLY HAVE A MOTHER AND FATHER? SHE'S TOO OLD FOR ONE THING AND SHE'S NEVER SAID ONE WORD ABOUT THEM AND I'VE KNOWN HER SINCE I WAS BORN. ALSO SHE DOESN'T GET ANY LETTERS. THINK ABOUT THIS. THIS MIGHT BE IMPORTANT.

They came to their stop and Ole Golly led them off the subway.

"Gee," said Sport as they came up on to the sidewalk, "we're near the ocean." And they could smell it, the salt, and even a wild soft spray which blew gently across their faces, then was gone.

"Yes," said Ole Golly briskly. Harriet could see a change in her. She walked faster and held her head higher.

They were walking down a street that led to the water. The houses, set back from the sidewalk with a patch of green in front, were built of yellow brick interspersed with red. It wasn't very pretty, Harriet thought, but maybe they liked their houses this way, better than those plain red brick ones in New York.

Ole Golly was walking faster and looking sterner. She looked as though she wished she hadn't come. Abruptly she turned in at a sidewalk leading to a house. She strode relentlessly up the steps, never looking back, never saying a word. Sport and Harriet followed, wide-eyed, up the steps to the front door, through the front hall, and out the back door.

She's lost her mind, Harriet thought. She and Sport looked at each other with raised eyebrows. Then they saw that Ole Golly was heading for a small private house which sat in its own garden behind the apartment house. Harriet and Sport stood still, not knowing what to do. This little house was like a house in the country, the kind Harriet saw when she went to Water Mill in the summer. The unpainted front had the same soft grey of driftwood, the roof a darker grey.

"Come on, chickens, let's get us a hot cup of tea." Ole Golly, suddenly gay, waved from the funny little rotting porch.

Harriet and Sport ran towards the house, but stopped cold when the front door opened with a loud swish. There, suddenly, was the largest woman Harriet had ever seen.

"Why, lookahere what's coming," she bellowed, "looka them lil rascals," and her great fat face crinkled into large cheerful lumps as her mouth split to show a toothless grin. She let forth a high burbling laugh.

Sport and Harriet stood staring, their mouths open. The fat lady stood like a mountain, her hands on her hips, in a flowered cotton print dress and enormous hanging coat sweater. Probably the biggest sweater in the world, thought Harriet; probably the biggest pair of shoes too. And her shoes were a wonder. Long, long, black, bumpy things with high, laced sides up to the middle of the shin, bulging with the effort of holding in those ankles, their laces splitting them into grins against the white of the socks below. Harriet fairly itched to take notes on her.

"Wherecha get these lil things?" Her cheer rang out all over the neighbourhood. "This the lil Welsch baby? That her brother?"

Sport giggled.

"No, it's my husband," Harriet shouted.

Ole Golly turned a grim face. "Don't be snarky, Harriet, and don't think you're such a wit either."

The fat lady laughed, making her face fall in lumps again. She looks like dough, Harriet thought, about to be made into a big round Italian loaf. She wanted to tell Sport this, but Ole Golly was leading them in, all of them squeezing past that mountain of a stomach because the fat lady stood, rather stupidly, in the doorway.

Ole Golly marched to the teakettle and put a fire under it. Then she turned in a businesslike way and introduced them. "Children, this is my mother, Mrs Golly. Mother – you can close the door now, Mother. This is Harriet Welsch."

"Harriet M. Welsch," Harriet corrected.

"You know perfectly well you have no middle name, but if you insist, Harriet M. Welsch. And this is Sport. What's your last name, Sport?"

"Rocque. Simon Rocque." He pronounced it Rock.

"Simon, Simon, hee, hee, hee." Harriet felt very ugly all of a sudden.

"You are not to make fun of anyone's name." Ole Golly loomed over Harriet and it was one of those times when Harriet knew she meant it.

"I take it back," Harriet said quickly.

"That's better." Ole Golly turned away cheerfully. "Now let's all sit down and have some tea."

"Waal, ain't she a cute lil thing." Harriet could see that Mrs Golly was still hung up on the introductions. She stood like a mountain, her big ham hands dangling helplessly at her sides.

"Sit down, Mother," Ole Golly said gently, and Mrs Golly sat.

Harriet and Sport looked at each other. The same thought was occurring to both of them. This fat lady wasn't very bright.

Mrs Golly sat to the left of Harriet. She leaned over Harriet, in fact, and looked directly into her eyes. Harriet felt like something in a zoo.

"Now, Harriet, look around you," Ole Golly said sternly as she poured the tea. "I brought you here because you've never seen the inside of a house like this. Have you ever seen a house that has one bed, one table, four chairs, and a bathtub in the kitchen?"

Harriet had to move her chair back to see around Mrs Golly, who leaned towards her, motionless, still looking. The room *was* a strange one. There was a sad little rug next to the stove. Harrison Withers has only a bed and a table, Harriet thought to herself. But since she didn't want Ole Golly to know she had been peering through Harrison Withers' skylight, she said nothing.

"I didn't think you had," said Ole Golly. "Look around. And drink your tea, children. You may have more milk and sugar if I haven't put enough."

"I don't drink tea," Sport said timidly.

Ole Golly shot an eye at him. "What do you mean you don't drink tea?"

"I mean I never have."

"You mean you've never tasted it?"

"No," said Sport and looked a little terrified.

Harriet looked at Ole Golly. Ole Golly wore an arch expression which signified that she was about to quote.

"'There are few hours in life more agreeable than the

hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea.'" Ole Golly said this steadily and sedately, then leaned back in her chair with a satisfied look at Sport. Sport looked completely blank.

"Henry James," said Ole Golly, "1843-1916. From *Portrait of a Lady*."

"What's that?" Sport asked Harriet.

"A novel, silly," said Harriet.

"Oh, like my father writes," said Sport, and dismissed the whole thing.

"My dotter's a smart one," mumbled Mrs Golly, still looking straight at Harriet.

"Behold, Harriet," Ole Golly said, "a woman who never had any interest in anyone else, nor in any book, nor in any school, nor in any way of life, but has lived her whole life in this room, eating and sleeping and waiting to die."

Harriet stared at Mrs Golly in horror. Should Ole Golly be saying these things? Wouldn't Mrs Golly get mad? But Mrs Golly just sat looking contentedly at Harriet. Perhaps, thought Harriet, she forgets to turn her head away from something unless she is told.

"Try it, Sport, it's good." Harriet spoke to Sport quickly in an effort to change the subject.

Sport took a sip. "It's not bad," he said weakly.

"Try everything, Sport, at least once." Ole Golly said this as though her mind weren't really on it. Harriet looked at her curiously. Ole Golly was acting very strangely

indeed. She seemed... was she angry? No, not angry. She seemed sad. Harriet realised with a start that it was the first time she had ever seen Ole Golly look sad. She hadn't even known Ole Golly *could* be sad.

Almost as though she were thinking the same thing, Ole Golly suddenly shook her head and sat up straight. "Well," she said brightly, "I think we have had enough tea and enough sights for one day. I think we had better go home now."

The most extraordinary thing happened next. Mrs Golly leaped to her fat feet and threw her teacup down on the floor. "You're always leaving. You're always leaving," she screamed.

"Now, Mother," Ole Golly said calmly.

Mrs Golly hopped around the middle of the floor like a giant doll. She made Harriet think of those balloons, blown up like people, that bounce on the end of a string. Sport giggled suddenly. Harriet felt like giggling but wasn't sure she should.

Mrs Golly bobbed away. "Just come here to leave me again. Always leaving. Thought you'd come for good this time."

"Now, Mother," Ole Golly said again, but this time got to her feet, walked to her mother, and laid a firm hand on the bouncing shoulder. "Mother," she said gently, "you know I'll be here next week."

"Oh, that's right," said Mrs Golly. She stopped jumping

immediately and gave a big smile to Harriet and Sport.

"Oh, boy," said Sport under his breath.

Harriet sat fascinated. Then Ole Golly got them all bundled into their clothes and they were outside on the street again, having waved to a cheerful Mrs Golly. They walked along through the darkening day.

"Boy, oh, boy," was all Sport could say.

Harriet couldn't wait to get back to her room to finish her notes.

Ole Golly looked steadily ahead. There was no expression on her face at all.



Chapter Two

WHEN HARRIET WAS ready for bed that night, she took out her notebook. She had a lot to think about. Tomorrow was the beginning of school. Tomorrow she would have a quantity of notes to take on the changes that had taken place in her friends over the summer. Tonight she wanted to think about Mrs Golly.

I THINK THAT LOOKING AT MRS GOLLY MUST MAKE OLE GOLLY SAD. MY MOTHER ISN'T AS SMART AS OLE GOLLY BUT SHE'S NOT AS DUMB AS MRS GOLLY. I WOULDN'T LIKE TO HAVE A DUMB MOTHER. IT MUST MAKE YOU FEEL VERY UNPOPULAR.