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opening extract from

Purple Class and the Half-Eaten Sweater

written by

Sean Taylor

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Purple Class and the Half-Eaten Sweater



"Sit yourselves down!" called out Mr Wellington, as the first of the children came bouncing into Purple Class. There was a chatter of voices and a scraping of feet.

It was Yasmin and Leon's turn to feed Bad Boy, the class guinea-pig. So they went across to his hutch. Bad Boy sniffed up at them. Leon unhooked the water bottle and took it to the sink. Yasmin got a handful of pellet food and dropped it in Bad Boy's bowl.

Mr Wellington picked up the register.

But instead of opening it, he wrinkled up his nose and asked, "What's that smell?"

Some of the children wrinkled their noses as well. Some of them just stared back.

"Is it perfume or something?" Mr Wellington went on.

"I've got a cold, so I can't smell," shrugged Leon, sitting down with the others.

"I can smell it and it's Shea," said Jodie.

Mr Wellington looked at Shea. So did everybody else.

"It's not *perfume*," said Shea, folding his arms. "It's Ocean Touch deodorant."

Mr Wellington puffed out his cheeks.

"You don't need deodorant at your age, do you?" he asked. Then he dropped the register on his chair and started opening the windows. "It's making this classroom smell like a flower shop on a hot afternoon!"

"My brother's got Ocean Touch deodorant!" announced Leon. "He stinks out his bedroom with it the whole time."

"You should smell the deodorant my dad uses," said Jodie. "He sprays on so much that I can smell it when I talk to him on the phone."

"But you need deodorant when you're old," pointed out Ivette. "My Mum's a beautician and she says it stops bad smells like *armpits*."

"And we don't like bad smells do we?" interrupted Mr Wellington. He picked up the register again. Ivette and her friends shook their heads. Zina said, "There are so many bad smells in the world that some days you almost wish you didn't have a nose."

A giggle spread round the class. Mr Wellington nodded. "Let's get on with our morning!" he said.

But Jamal put up his hand and announced, "I've got my own personal deodorant invention. I spray some toilet air-freshener and I run through it!"

This time the whole class burst out laughing and Mr Wellington had to hold up his hand.

"That's enough!" he called out. "And let me remind you, Jamal, you've promised to be on your very best behaviour. Otherwise you won't be taking part in our cricket session today."

Jamal nodded. "I'm going to be on the very best behaviour you've ever seen anyone do."

"Good," said Mr Wellington. He took the

register. Then he told the class, "We've got numeracy to start with. Then, who remembers who's coming in to do cricket with us?"

Ivette put her hand up. "Mike Bevington," she said.

"That's right," nodded Mr Wellington. "And what's special about Mike Bevington?"

"He once played cricket for England," replied Shea.

"He played for England *sixteen times*, in fact," pointed out Mr Wellington.

Ivette frowned. "I'd DIE of embarrassment if I had to play cricket for England," she said.

"Cricket's too slow," added Jodie.

"Well, some people say that," Mr Wellington told her. "But I think you're going to discover cricket's actually fun."

"I agree," said Jamal. "Because I'm a keen cricket enthusiast like you are, Mr Wellington."

"Thank you, Jamal," said the teacher. "And look, because we're going to be playing cricket later, I've brought in something rather special."

He reached into his bag and took out a pale sweater.



"This might look like any old sweater to you," he said. "But it's actually a treasured possession of mine. It was my grandfather's. And he wore it when he played for Hampshire Cricket Club."

The class leaned forward to get a better view.

"Can I feel what it's like?" asked Zina.

"Yes," nodded Mr Wellington. "Pass it quickly round."

He handed the cricket sweater to Zina, who looked at it for a moment then held it up to her nose and said, "It *stinks*."

Jodie took the sweater and sniffed it as well.

"That's disgusting," she said. "Your grandfather needed to use some Ocean Touch deodorant."

Mr Wellington gave an angry tut. "There's no need to sniff the sweater!" he said. "And there's no need to make *silly comments*!"

The children carried on passing the sweater round. Nobody said anything. But not many of them could resist giving it a little sniff either. And when it reached Leon, he squeezed his nose and shouted,

"*PWOOOOR!*"

Mr Wellington took the sweater straight back.

"That's enough!" he said. "If you can't pass the sweater around sensibly, then you're not going to touch it at all."

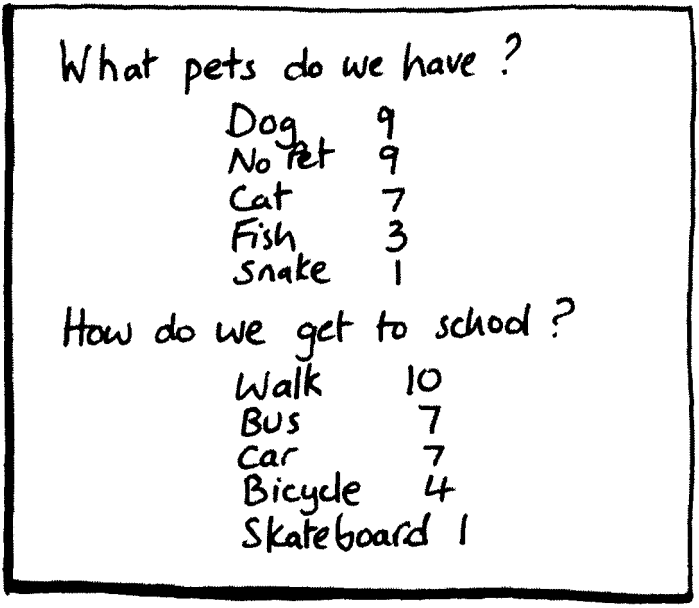
"Oh *man*!" groaned Jamal, "I didn't even get to smell it!"

"You're the lucky one," Jodie told him.

"QUIET!" snapped Mr Wellington. He told Yasmin to get the numeracy books out from the stationery cupboard. Then he hung the sweater from the top of one of the windows, where it was too high for the children to reach.

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Mr Wellington had shown the class how to do bar charts the day before. Now they each had to draw one of their own. Some children chose to do a bar chart of what pets everyone in Purple Class had. And some chose to do a bar chart of how different children came to school. Mr Wellington put the numbers up on the whiteboard. Then he said, "I'm here to give a hand if anyone gets stuck."



"I've got a cousin in Australia who goes to school on a kangaroo," announced Jamal.

"That isn't funny, or clever," Mr Wellington told him. Then he started going round the tables, helping the children to get started.

Jamal fetched a pencil and a ruler. He found a fresh page in his numeracy book and drew one line up and one line across. Then he looked up

at the cricket sweater.

"Leon," he whispered. "What was so wrong with the smell of that sweater?"

Leon leaned back from his work and whispered, "I don't know. But it was about the worst smell I've ever smelt. And that's with a cold."

Jamal shook his head. "Everyone got to smell it except for me," he said.

"Too late now," shrugged Leon.

"Wanna bet?" Jamal asked.

Mr Wellington was busy explaining to Zina how to start her bar chart, and Jamal stood up. Then he reached towards the sweater with his ruler. Leon squeezed his lips with his fingers to stop himself laughing. Jamal stretched and managed to get the end of the ruler into the neck of the sweater. But, as he gave it a tug, the sweater slithered down outside the window. Jamal ducked as if something had hit him on the head. Leon's glasses flashed. Both of them swung round to see if Mr Wellington had seen. But the teacher was still talking to Zina.

"You're in trouble when Mr Wellington finds out," said Leon.

"Don't tell him," Jamal whispered back. Then he jumped a little to see where the sweater had landed. It was in a litter-bin at the edge of the playground.

And just then Mr Wellington looked round.

"Jamal!" he called out. "Why are you jumping about as if you've got a bee in your underwear?"

"Sorry," said Jamal. "Can I go to the toilet?"

Mr Wellington sighed. "Go on," he said. "But make it snappy."

Jamal hurried out of the classroom. The next door along the corridor was open. Orange Class was out. There was nobody in sight. So Jamal walked on past the toilets and out down the steps. Orange Class was in the playground doing PE. Miss Zanetos was lining them up for a race between lines of cones. And underneath the Purple Class windows was the litter-bin, with the cricket sweater's sleeve dangling out of it.

Jamal walked slowly across to the bin as if a teacher had sent him. Then he took the sweater out. There was some excited shouting as the Orange Class children started their race. Miss Zanetos didn't pay any attention to Jamal.