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Opening extract from

Can It Be About Me ?

Written by

Cheryl Moskowitz

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To Martha

With special thanks to the children and teachers
at Rhodes Avenue Primary School

JANETTA OTTER-BARRY BOOKS

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Can it be about me?

Poems by

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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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When I decided to write poems about being at primary school, I thought I'd better remind myself what it's like. It has been quite a long time since I was there.

I asked at the local school if I could come in and be a 'fly on the wall' to gather some ideas.

Being a fly on the wall means you sit and observe what is going on without being noticed. But I am not a fly and wasn't exactly invisible.

One boy, John, was particularly keen to know what I was doing there. He was a very smiley boy who was known for only ever wearing shorts, even when it was snowing.

John asked me why I was sitting in the corner making notes. I told him that I was trying to get ideas for some poems. He suggested that the first poem be about him.

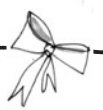
Can it be about me?

Are you writing a poem
will it be long
can it be about me?
My name is John.
I don't have any
trousers on.
I just wear shorts
for all the year
but don't write that
because it doesn't rhyme.

In one class everyone liked to speak out. But they were supposed to put their hands up before they did. It sometimes took a long time for Miss Chapman, the teacher, to call on everyone.

It can be frustrating to wait, especially if you have something really important you want to tell people.

One little girl had her hand up for a long time, trying to do everything right so she would be picked. I think I know how she felt.



Martha wants to say something

Oh Miss, I have a good one
please look over here at me
I've been sitting still as anything
surely you can see.

I'm not fidgeting like William
or kicking Ahmed's chair
I've been waiting very patiently
so it really isn't fair.

I've got my finger on my lips
and my arm raised overhead
Once you almost saw it
but you chose Eleanor instead.

I'm not shouting out like Isobel
or pulling Holly's hair
I'm minding my own business
so it really isn't fair.

I've planned exactly how to say it
this thing I want to say
I'm crossing all my fingers
so that you will look this way.

I'm not daydreaming like Thomas
or giggling like Keir
I'm being good as gold
so Miss, it really isn't fair.

There's only five more minutes
until the home bell goes
I'm keeping all my fingers crossed
and now I've crossed my toes.

I didn't burp out loud like Roxy
she said she did it for a dare
I wouldn't be so silly, Miss
so you see it really isn't fair.

Three minutes now, oh thank you, Miss
you really aren't so rotten
You've asked me what I want to say
but . . . now I have forgotten!

There are two sides (at least) to every argument.
Some schools have a uniform, some don't.
This one didn't. But that didn't stop some people thinking that it should.
I never had to wear a uniform when I was at primary school, but sometimes I wished that I could.

Reasons

Reasons to wear a uniform:

so I don't have to think too hard when I get dressed
in the morning
so me and my friend can be twins
because my mum thinks I should

Reasons to wear whatever I want:

so I can look at the day and decide what's right to put on
so my friends can't copy me
because my mum thinks I shouldn't

On some mornings, even before you open your eyes to see what the day looks like outside, you know you'd rather spend it in bed.

That's just how it is.

Some days you're just not meant to go out

It is a dog barking, nose dripping, pavement tripping,
finger flicking, boy spitting
kind of day.
If I had my way
I'd rather stay in
then I could say
it's a TV watching, teddy hugging, toast eating,
book reading, bed snuggling,
curtain closed
kind of day
and so much better
that way.