



Surprise isitor

1 It was meant to be just another, ordinary lunchtime at Bottle Forest School ...

John and Ed were returning from a quick visit to the library and were on their way to the playground to join their mates for a game of handball. This was their plan, anyway.

2 Neither paid much attention to what was going on around them. They chatted away as they turned the corner of the last building. John offered a few suggestions for the coming weekend.

"So what do you think?" asked John, looking down as he walked.
... Silence.

"Ed, what do you think?" he asked again.
... Nothing.

John looked to his right. There was no one there. His friend had vanished.

3 John noticed a boy, who looked very much like Ed, running across the top of the playground seats about thirty metres away.

The boy leapt from the seats and scrambled quickly through an open ground-floor window and disappeared. John was surprised. This was strange behaviour, even for Ed. Ed's nickname at school was "The Mad One", but this was ridiculous.

4 John was in store for an even bigger surprise.

As he shook his head in disbelief, John realised he was alone in the playground. It was the middle of lunchtime. Bottle Forest was a big school. There should have been hundreds of children racing around the playground, but it was empty.

Or was it?

5 John scanned the playground. Just forty metres away he found the explanation for the empty grounds. He took a deep breath as a chill went up his spine. Standing stock still, and staring straight at him, was a huge, brown bull. This wasn't possible. How could there be a bull in a school playground? The school was in the middle of the city!

6 It was then that John noticed a number of boys and girls sitting on top of the steel cricket nets, seeking safety from the four-legged monster. Others were clinging to the highest branches of the nearby trees. John had no idea where the other children could have gone.

7 Now it was just John and the bull. This wasn't a very good place to be for John.

He stood very still, not wanting to upset the bull. What could he do? Maybe he should just

run and hope for the best.

The bull made the decision for him. It suddenly began to charge at John! He could see the sharp, curved horns flashing in the sunlight.

John turned with a yell and raced as fast as he could back towards the library.

8 The bull was much faster than the terrified boy and closed the gap quickly. John ran through the passage between the end buildings. He realised there was no time to reach the library entrance. There was nowhere to go. All the buildings were locked on either side of him, while straight in front there was a two-metre high mesh fence topped with barbed wire. A dead end!

9 John could hear the bull close behind him, snorting, hooves pounding on the concrete. There was no need to look back; he knew he wouldn't like what he would see. He had to face the bull or the fence.

10 There was no choice. John hit the fence at full speed and climbed it like a panicked monkey. Up the meshing and over the barbed wire — as if it wasn't there. Thump! He landed on the grass on the other side of the fence. Gasping for breath, he turned quickly to see the bull come to a sliding halt at the edge of the fence. It snorted and wheezed, its dark brown eyes glaring straight at its intended victim. They stared at each other for a long moment, and then, with another snort, the massive bull turned and trotted back towards the playground in search of another unsuspecting student.

11 John, still panting and shaking, now had a chance to see what injuries he had suffered in his dash over the barbed wire. There was no blood that he could see, nor were there any cuts on his hands. Amazing! He checked his school uniform next. Nothing — not even a tear.

12 John left it a few minutes, to make sure the bull had left the scene, before he started to climb back over the fence. He thought he might hide in the library until somebody else dealt with the bull. But as hard as he tried he couldn't climb back over the fence without getting caught on the barbed wire. In the end he had to give up and walk all the way around the school fence. This took a while.

When he finally reached the front entrance, he saw a large cattle truck with its tailgate down. Four men with long ropes were trying to load the bull back onto the truck.

13 The next day the whole school was buzzing about the bull. Supposedly, after nearly catching John, it went back to the playground. No other students were foolhardy enough to walk into the playground that afternoon, so the bull trotted into the toilets to look for a little more action. This caused more than a bit of panic with the kids who had decided to hide in the toilets. It was here, though, in the toilets, that the bull was finally trapped.

Thank goodness!



Questions

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Why were John and Ed going to the playground?
a to get their lunch
b to borrow a book
c to have a game of handball</p> <p>2 Bottle Forest School was in
a the city.
b the country.
c a small town.</p> <p>3 The bull was
a brown.
b black.
c brown and white.</p> | <p>4 John was trying to escape to
a the library.
b the playground.
c the end buildings.</p> <p>5 Why did John walk back the long way?
a He was too tired.
b The fence was too high to climb.
c He couldn't avoid getting caught on the barbed wire.</p> <p>6 Why do you think the bull charged at John?
a John was in its way.
b The bull was looking for lunch.
c John was the only person left in the playground.</p> |
|--|---|

Vocabulary

Match the words from the text to the clues. The brackets show the text sections ().

pounding wheezed scrambled
foolhardy scanned

- 7 Climbed quickly and uneasily (3)
8 Looked around while standing still (5)
9 Hitting heavily (9)
10 Breathed with a whistling noise (10)
11 Foolish and reckless (13)

Grammar

The words in **BLUE** appear in the text. Match them by writing the correct synonym shown in **RED**.

E.g. *under / below*

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 12 strange | friends |
| 13 little | searching |
| 14 mates | unusual |
| 15 seeking | small |

Back To The Text...

- 16 In which part of the library would you find this text?
a fiction b non-fiction
- 17 What would be a good sub-heading for section 12?
a The Library
b A Barbed Barrier
- 18 The purpose of this text is
a to persuade. b to entertain.

Sequencing

Look back through the card to find what happened first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- 19 a Ed raced across the seats.
b The boys discussed the weekend.
- 20 a The bull stood still, staring at John.
b John stood still, not wanting to upset the bull.
- 21 a John checked for tears in his uniform.
b John tried to climb back over the fence.

Think About This

- 22 In which of the following sections do we first learn of the bull?
a four b five
c six d seven
- 23 Another good name for this text might be:
a Fun with Ed and John
b An Unwelcome Guest
c A Trip to the School Playground

Challenge Option

Design: Draw a picture of John trying to climb back over the fence.

