



First Day

1 My father wanted me to go to the same school he'd been to. You know what fathers are like. Trouble is, this school was a long way from where we lived. So I was going to have to get up at the crack of dawn and take a million buses to get there.

The worst thing about living so far away was that I didn't know a single solitary person who was going to be in high school with me. Most of my mates were going to our local high school. They could wake up at 8.30 am if they liked and still make it to school on time.

2 I couldn't sleep very well the night before my first day. When Mum woke me, it looked too dark to be morning.

"Toast, Jack?" Mum asked.

I shook my head.

"We've strawberry jam," she offered. I grumbled.

"Enjoy yourself then," said Mum.

"And Jack, behave yourself," added Dad. "Listen to what Mr Strapper says."

Mr Strapper was the headmaster, with a head as bald as a billiard ball, a voice that shook windows, and eyes that could see around corners.

"Yeah Mum. Yeah Dad," I said. "Bye." Sometimes it's easier just to agree with your parents.

3 An older boy with lots of gold braid on his blazer met me at the school gates. He told

me that the seventh grade corridor was up two flights of stairs. When I walked up there, I found the corridor filled with lots of other boys, some of them looking as nervous as I felt. A big group thundered down the corridor past us. They obviously knew each other. I gulped.

4 Everyone else seemed to be choosing a locker, so I found one in a corner and unloaded my pencil case. It looked very small, all alone in the locker. I put my bag in there as well.

"Hey, bags go in the cloakroom," said a boy. "Not in there." I felt a fool.

"Where's the cloakroom?" I asked.

The boy rolled his eyes. "Down the end of the corridor," he said. "Follow your nose."

5 In the cloakroom I found a spare peg, hung up my bag and went back into the corridor. There didn't seem to be anything else to do, so I leant on the balcony and looked over.

"It's a long way down," said a voice next to me. I looked up and saw it was one of the nervous-looking boys I'd noticed earlier.

6 "Yep," said a tall boy who joined us. "Hey, watch this!" He suddenly launched an enormous gob of spit right over the side of the balcony. It sailed down, shining silver, to land smack on the path a full metre away from the balcony.

"Bet you can't beat that," he said.

The boy next to me said, "I'll try."

We watched while he rolled his tongue around to find enough spit, took a deep breath and launched his messy missile. It landed well short of the first one.

7 "I can beat it," I found myself saying. I was the champion spitter of Lesley Vale Primary School.

"Oh yeah?" said the tall boy, raising his eyebrows. "Go on then."

I smirked. Here was my chance to prove myself.

8 I sucked in my dribble and made a good round ball on my tongue. I always found I spat further if I closed my eyes. So I shut my eyes, visualised a spot a good twenty centimetres further than the tall boy's mark, took a huge deep breath, and let fly.

9 There was a gasp from the other two boys. I must have really impressed them. I opened my eyes to see them frozen — but it wasn't with admiration.

Down below us, his red face turned upwards, his hand wiping something white and gloopy from his shiny baldhead, was the furious figure of Mr Strapper, the headmaster. I had just enough time to register that he was standing about twenty centimetres past the tall boy's shining blob when the soundwave of his voice hit me.

10 "You, boy!" he roared. "The one wiping his mouth! Get down here now!"

Uh-oh. I was in for it all right. I slunk down

the two flights of stairs, a curious mob of boys gathering as I went.

I didn't register much of what Mr Strapper bellowed. It was too loud. "Disgrace to the school ... disgusting habit ... three detentions," was about all that penetrated. There was a ring of staring faces. I wanted to vanish right into the ground. Luckily the bell rang to announce the assembly.

"This way," said the tall boy, taking hold of my arm.

- 11 The crowd parted, and I heard one of the boys whisper, "Got him right on the billiard ball," and then another, "He's sure got some nerve. Imagine — on your first day."

"Yeah, that's him," I heard another boy say. "Got Strappy fair and square."

I didn't have to worry about eating my lunch alone. Somehow three detentions on my first day didn't seem so terrible after all.



Questions

- Jack had to get up for school
 - at eight-thirty.
 - at the crack of dawn.
 - at eight o'clock.
- Mr Strapper had eyes that
 - could shake windows.
 - looked like billiard balls.
 - could see around corners.
- What did Jack store in his locker?
 - his pencil case
 - his books
 - his school bag
- How many boys were spitting off the balcony?
 - one
 - two
 - three
- How much further than the tall boy did Jack want to spit?
 - one metre
 - ten centimetres
 - twenty centimetres
- At the end of the story, why did Jack think he wouldn't be eating lunch alone?
 - The teachers would always keep an eye on him.
 - Some boys from his old school had arrived.
 - He had accidentally become a legend for spitting on Mr Strapper.

Vocabulary

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

visualised solitary vanish
smirked admiration

- To be alone (1)
- Gave a smug look (7)
- Pictured something in your head (8)
- Respect and awe (9)
- To disappear (10)

Grammar

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

E.g. **under** / **over**

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 12 older | dusk |
| 13 dawn | light |
| 14 nervous | younger |
| 15 dark | relaxed |

Back To The Text...

- Prediction: What is likely to happen in the future?
 - Jack will stop spitting at school.
 - Jack will practise spitting over the balcony every day.
- In which part of the library would you find this text?
 - fiction
 - non-fiction
- Another good name for this text would be:
 - The Instant Hero
 - The Headmaster

Sequencing

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

- Mum offered Jack some strawberry jam.
 - Dad warned Jack about Mr Strapper.
- A boy told Jack to put his bag in the cloakroom.
 - A boy told him how to find the seventh grade corridor.
- Jack was given three detentions.
 - The assembly bell rang.

Think About This

- Which of the following adjectives best describes Jack before he started at his new school?
 - exuberant
 - apprehensive
 - incoherent
- What was the main purpose of this text?
 - to tell an interesting story
 - to argue the dangers of spitting at school
 - to explain how to improve your spitting technique

Challenge Option

Drawing: Draw a picture of your principal. Be nice!

