

A Stolen Pencil

“Tell him you’re sorry.” The words cut through Matt’s smile like a blade. It was the same voice that always tormented him. The sickeningly sweet tone, designed to trick teachers into thinking he was just concerned. It was Jamie’s voice. “Tell him you’re sorry.”

Matt turned in his seat and looked up into Jamie’s emerald eyes. The corner of the bully’s mouth twitched as he tried to fight back a smirk. Matt felt the eyes of the rest of the class boring holes into the back of his head. They all knew what Jamie was doing, and they knew how Matt would react.

“What for?” he asked. It was a fair question, but he knew it didn’t matter. He hadn’t done anything wrong, but that wouldn’t matter to Jamie. It was the humiliation that mattered. That’s why he’d waited until the teacher had left the room. Now, he was in charge.

“You stole Mark’s pencil.”

“No, I didn’t,” Matt argued, pointlessly.

“Then where is it?” Mark said from behind Jamie’s towering form. The rest of the class sniggered. Matt ignored them.

“Maybe you dropped it?” Matt said. Or ate it, he thought.

Jamie was on top of him before he could react. His strong arms pinned Matt’s face to the table, his hot breath stank of cheese and onion crisps. “Don’t you dare answer Mark back after stealing his pencil. Where is it?”

Matt felt the familiar burning sensation at the back of his eyes. It was an old, familiar enemy. Every time Jamie targeted him – whether it was a punishment for tackling him in PE or because he felt like Matt was the reason he’d been told off by a teacher – he ended up crying. The other kids always ended up laughing, but he didn’t blame them. If they didn’t, they might be next. As hard as he tried, the feeling of all those eyes watching him and the pain of Jamie’s elbow in his ear were too much. He felt the tears rush down his cheeks and pool on the table.



“He’s back,” Matt heard Mark whisper to Jamie.

As suddenly as the attack had happened, Jamie was away and sat back in his chair – the perfect image of a well-behaved child.

“Why on earth are you crying?” Mr Hamley said as soon as he walked back into the room.

“He stole my pencil,” Mark said angrily.

“Did you?” Mr Hamley asked, looking awkwardly at Matt.

“Oh, never mind,” Jamie said brightly. “It turns out I’d put it in my pencil case after all! I’ll forget my own head, next!”

“There we go,” the teacher said. “I really don’t know why you’re getting so worked up over these little things, Matt,” he finished and turned to the board.

Matt didn’t say a word. He bit his lip and winced at the taste of blood. In his head, he counted down the days to the next school holiday.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find and copy a phrase that tells you Matt was enjoying himself before Jamie turned up.
2. What does “tormented” mean in this context?
3. What colour does the word “emerald” tell you Jamie’s eyes were?
4. Which word in the text tells you that the class laughed quietly?
5. What does the word “familiar” tell you about Matt feeling like he was going to cry?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

What did Jamie say that Matt had stolen?

R

Where was the pencil all along?

I

What evidence is there that Jamie is bullying Matt?

I

What evidence is there that Matt hasn’t told a teacher what is happening?

I

Why might Matt be counting down the days to the next school holiday?

A Broken Friendship

Wet, salty streaks poured down Thomas's face. He knew that they would make things worse if anybody saw him. He had to get to the bathroom quickly. Some of the teachers turned to watch him, their mouths frozen in perfect Os at the beginning of a rushed sentence that never saw the light of day. None of them said anything. They never did. Thomas preferred it that way.

The corridors were empty other than a few kids moving between lunchtime detentions and the dining hall. Thomas hadn't had anything to eat today. Nothing new there. Ashley made sure of that.

Thomas knew that the disabled toilet would be empty; it was his refuge at times like this. It wasn't always Ashley that made him cry. Sometimes, things at home got so bad without his dad that he needed to cry as well. Ashley didn't help, though.

They'd been best friends at primary school, Thomas and Ashley. Ashley had been there when Thomas wet the bed on his first sleepover when he was six. He'd been there when Thomas had told a girl that he liked her, and she'd laughed in his face. He'd been there when his mum had told him that his dad had been involved in a terrible car crash. He'd been there.

And now, he wasn't. Or not in the same way.

All of those things had been horrible, but having Ashley there had made it easier. Now Ashley loved to tell those stories (not the one about his dad, even Ashley wasn't that horrible) to his new friends from the other schools. It was the same every day – as soon as they got in the queue to buy dinner, Ashley would start. It didn't seem to matter that Thomas felt like acid was being poured into his throat every time he heard them. He didn't say anything; he didn't want to seem like a wimp to the other kids. He just ran away to cry in the disabled toilet. He hadn't made it as far as the food counter for a fortnight.

It wasn't like Ashley didn't know. Thomas had told him how the stories made him feel. Ashley



just laughed and told him it was banter, that he needed to toughen up. The thing was, Ashley had enough of his own stories to tell, but he never did. He never mentioned that he'd wet the bed at the same sleepover or that the first time he rode on a roller-coaster, he'd thrown up over the side. Thomas didn't mention them either – Ashley was his friend. Or was supposed to be.

A sudden knock on the door startled Thomas halfway through washing his face. With a sinking feeling, he felt the cold water splash down his front. It soaked his shirt but, more importantly, the front of his trousers. "I'll just be a minute," he said, fighting back more tears.

After a few seconds under the hand dryer, his shirt was a bit better. He closed his eyes and opened the door.

"What on earth are you doing?" Ashley said. "Why did you run off like that again?"

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. What were the "wet, salty streaks" pouring down Thomas's face?
2. Why was Ashley responsible for Thomas not eating?
3. How long had it been since Thomas last had lunch?
4. Why might Thomas be worried about the water mark?
5. Why do you think Ashley doesn't tell his own stories?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

V

List three words that you think describe how Thomas feels towards Ashley.

P

What do you think Thomas should do next and why?

P

What shouldn't Thomas do next?

V

Find and copy a phrase that tells Thomas that Ashley thinks he is being a bit of a wimp.

R

Where did Thomas hide?

Excluded

SCENE 1 : SCHOOL CLASSROOM

*Inside a school classroom. The characters are sat around a table, except for **CARRIE**, who is stood up. The rest of the children are out for break time.*

CARRIE

(Authoritatively)

Thanks for coming, everyone. I know it's break time, but I think it's worth missing it for this.

(Snapping) Dan, what are you writing down?

DAN

(Looks up nervously)

Nothing. I was just doodling.

CARRIE

(Suspiciously)

Hmm. Okay then. You know we can't have anything written down. Mrs Gibb would go mad if she found out.

CARRIE *shuffles a pile of papers and sits down.*

CARRIE

As you know, Lyra has been trying to play with us again. She's trying to infiltrate our lovely group!

I've just about had enough of her. She's too poor to go to this school anyway. She only got in because of an outreach program. She only has one car, for goodness sake. I've tried to be nice and just ignore her and not let her play, but she's gone too far.

SARAH

What has she done that's so bad?

CARRIE

I'm glad you asked, Sarah. That's why we're here, and Devon isn't. Yesterday, and I can't believe I'm saying this, I saw Devon playing with her at lunch. When I told Devon to leave her alone and come and join me, she refused. Somehow, that witch has brainwashed Devon into liking her.



DAN

Isn't it possible that she's just a nice person and Devon likes her?

CARRIE

(Gets angrier as she speaks)

How dare you? She is not nice. She is a pain. Frankly, I should kick you out of this meeting right now.

DAN

Don't bother. I'm leaving. I can't believe all of you are prepared to put up with this hideous behaviour. Just because Carrie's dad is the mayor, it doesn't mean she can treat people this way. I'm off to find Mrs Gibb.

DAN storms out of the room while **CARRIE** shouts threats at him.

CARRIE

(Turning to the rest of the children)

Any of you lot want to follow him? Good. From now on, none of you are allowed to play with Devon or Lyra. Or Dan, now. Am I clear?

The **OTHER CHILDREN** nod their heads sullenly.

CARRIE

Good. And if they dare to say anything about me, make sure you let me know so that I can tell Mrs Gibb. I will not have hideous people like that being mean to me.

INFERENCE FOCUS

1. Who do you think is the leader of the group?
2. What evidence supports this?
3. What do you think Carrie was worried Dan was writing down?
4. Do you think Dan did the right thing by leaving? Why?
5. Do you think Carrie's behaviour is bullying? Why?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

Which character was stood up at the beginning?

V

Which word in the text means Lyra is trying to force her way in?

R

What evidence does Carrie use to claim that Lyra shouldn't be at the school?

R

Where are the rest of the class?

S

Who was the first person, other than Lyra, to annoy Carrie?



What Can You Do?

Bullying can have a serious effect on a person's mental health, but it isn't only the victim who suffers. If one of your friends is being bullied, you might be worried for them. This can make you upset and worried as well. It is important that anybody who recognises bullying behaviour does something about it, even if it isn't happening to you.

Try not to retaliate

Sometimes it is very hard not to lash out if somebody is bullying you. Instead, try to get away from the situation as quickly as possible and tell a trusted adult. If you know that one of your friends is being bullied, you mustn't get involved with the bully. This can make the situation much worse. Many people bully to get a reaction, so try not to give them one. Instead, find a trusted adult and tell them exactly what has happened.

Walking away from cyberbullying can be much harder because your device follows you home. It is important to try to be strong and put your device away so that you can get a break from any hurtful messages. Remember to keep the messages to show to your trusted adult.

Keep the evidence

Not all bullying leaves evidence. It is very hard to prove that somebody said something horrible if there weren't any witnesses. Cyberbullying is one type of bullying that does leave evidence. If somebody is bullying you online, keep all of the messages and pass them on to a trusted adult. It is important that you show them all of the information, even if that includes messages that you have sent back that might be mean as well.

Take support

Telling a parent or teacher that somebody is bullying you can be very scary. Even though your parents and teachers are probably lovely people, many bullies make their victims believe that telling an adult will make it worse. If you are worried about telling an adult, ask a friend to go with you for support. If you have a friend who has seen what is happening, then this is even better as they can help to give information that you might have forgotten.



Don't spread rumours

If you believe that your friend is being bullied, then it is important to let trusted adults deal with the situation. If you tell everyone else that “so-and-so is bullying my friend”, then you will make the situation much worse, and you might end up in trouble yourself.

Keep people informed

Once you have told an adult what is happening, it is important to keep them informed if anything else happens. They might have punished the person involved and think that it has stopped - if the bullying behaviour continues, then it is important that you go back to the same adult and let them know.

SUMMARY FOCUS

1. How might bullying affect other people?
2. Why is it harder to walk away from cyberbullies?
3. Why mustn't you tell everyone that somebody is a bully?
4. Why might it be hard to provide evidence of verbal bullying?
5. How can you help somebody who is worried about telling a teacher about a bully?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R True or false: once you have reported bullying behaviour, you don't have to think about it again.

V What does the phrase “lash out” mean?

R Why should you try to walk away from a bullying situation?

I Why do you think it is important to pass any mean messages to an adult?

I Why do you think it is important to also include messages that you have sent?

BULLYING STAGE 4



Gossip



Rumors



Insults



Lies



Threats



Punishing



Cyber bullying



Racist

What Is Bullying?

Whether you are at school or at home, there will be people around you who act in different ways. Some people act in lovely ways and make you feel good about yourself. Other people might act in ways that make you feel bad about yourself. You might have acted in this way to somebody else before. Everybody makes mistakes, but it is important to learn from them and try not to repeat them.

If somebody is making another person feel bad on a regular basis, then it is likely to be bullying. Bullying is when somebody is mean to a certain person or group of people and usually repeated. If somebody is mean once, it is isn't nice, but it isn't always bullying.

Is it important to recognise that bullying can take many forms.

Verbal bullying is when a person says things that are hurtful. These might be about somebody's appearance or their personality or their home life, for instance. This would also include name-calling.

If somebody is excluding somebody else from activities, then this is called social bullying. The victim might not be allowed to play games during break time, or they might be pushed away from their friends.

Threatening behaviour can be both physical and mental. The threat of being hurt can have a significant impact on somebody's mental health. If it turns to actual physical harm, then this is called physical bullying. Physical bullying might also involve taking things away from the victim, such as their money or toys or damaging their property.

Cyberbullying is a more recent type of bullying that happens over digital devices. This might be a phone, a computer or a tablet. Cyberbullying can take the form of other types of bullying, such as threatening behaviour or social bullying.



What about “banter”?

Lots of people might say that the mean things they have said or done are “banter” or just a joke. The important thing to remember is that the victim’s feelings are more important than your joke. If somebody has told you that something you have said or done has upset them, then it is important that you listen and don’t repeat it. If you do repeat it when you know that it will upset them, then this is verbal bullying. It doesn’t matter whether you think that the victim should be upset or not. It is their right to ask you not to do it again.

What if I’ve bullied somebody before?

It is important to remember that bullying is an action. It is not who a person is. If you know you have been mean to somebody before, you can begin to make up for this by not doing it again. Likewise, if somebody has been mean to you and recognised that, then they need to be given the chance to be better. Things that have happened in the past cannot always be forgotten or forgiven, but making better choices in the future is important.

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. How can people make you feel good about yourself according to the text?
2. Give an example from the text of a type of bullying.
3. Which type of bullying might include other types?
4. True or false: Banter is always okay
5. True or false: Somebody who has bullied before should be given a chance to change.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- S** Summarise the difference between being mean and bullying behaviour.
- V** Which word in the text refers to somebody who has been bullied?
- V** Find and copy a word from the text that means “in the same way”.
- I** How do you think somebody might feel if they were a victim of social bullying?
- S** Why might it be considered bullying if you continue with a joke when you know it upsets somebody?

Answers - Stage 4 - A Stolen Pencil:

1. Cut through Matt's smile like a blade
2. Attacked or picked on
3. Green
4. Sniggered
5. It happened a lot

R: Mark's pencil

R: In Jamie's pencil case

I: He has done similar things a lot of times before

I: The teacher doesn't understand why Matt is crying. If the teacher knew what was happening, he wouldn't act that way

I: Jamie couldn't bully him when he wasn't at school

Answers - Stage 4 - Broken Friendship:

1. Tears
2. Thomas ran away before he had chance to eat his food
3. A fortnight
4. It looks like he has had an accident/wet himself and people will tease him more
5. They would embarrass him

V: Accept synonyms or similar words to: hurt, betrayed, let down, angry, frustrated etc

P: Accept answers that either reference Thomas telling Ashley how he feels and asking him to stop, or telling a teacher and asking them to deal with the situation.

P: Look for answers that recognise he shouldn't lash out or make the situation worse. He also shouldn't pretend that he is okay and try to hide his feelings and not tell anybody.

V: Toughen up

R: The disabled toilet

Answers - Stage 4 - Excluded:

1. Carrie
2. She is telling everybody what to do
3. What she was saying to pass to the teacher
4. Accept answers that are well-reasoned and show an understanding of reporting a bully
5. Yes. She is targetting Lyra and has been isolating her for a while now. She is also telling other people to ignore Lyra, Devon and Dan.

R: Carrie

V: Infiltrate

R: She is poor - her family only have one car

R: Out for break time

S: Carrie

Answers - Stage 4 - What Can You Do:

1. If your friend is being bullied, you might feel bad or worried for them
2. If you have your phone with you, then the bullying can carry on all of the time
3. It can make the situation worse and cause more trouble for other people
4. There is no proof of what somebody said unless somebody else hears it
5. Go with them for support

R: False, it is important to report any other things that happen

V: Don't hit them or say other horrible things back

R: You can tell an adult and you should try not to give them a reaction

I: They can see what has been said

I: They can get the full picture and it doesn't look like you are hiding something

Answers - Stage 4 - What Is Bullying:

1. They can act in a lovely way
2. Accept any of verbal, social, physical, mental and cyber
3. Cyberbullying
4. False
5. True

S: Bullying behaviour is targeted towards one person or group and normally over a period of time

V: Victim

V: Likewise

I: Accept answers that show an understanding of what social bullying is - lonely, isolated, excluded etc rather than misunderstandings with physical pain

S: You are doing something that you know will upset them, so you are deliberately hurting them