

The bully asleep

One afternoon, when grassy
Scents through the classroom crept,
Bill Craddock laid his head
Down on his desk, and slept.

The children came round him:
Jimmy, Roger, and Jane;
They lifted his head timidly
And let it sink again.

"Look, he's gone sound asleep, Miss,"
Said Jimmy Adair:

"He stays up all the night, you see;
His mother doesn't care."

"Stand away from him, children."

Miss Andrews stooped to see.

"Yes, he's asleep; go on
With your writings, and let him be."

"Now's a good chance!" whispered Jimmy;
And he snatched Bill's pen and hid it.

"Kick him under the desk, hard;
He won't know who did it."

"Fill all his pockets with rubbish –
Paper, apple-cores, chalk."
So they plotted, while Jane
Sat wide-eyed at their talk.

Not caring, not hearing,
Bill Craddock he slept on;
Lips parted, eyes closed –
Their cruelty gone.

"Stick him with pins!" muttered Roger
"Ink down his neck!" said Jim.
But Jane, tearful and foolish,
Wanted to comfort him.



John Walsh

Answer in sentences.

- 1 What was the name of the bully who was asleep?
- 2 What does the word "timidly" (verse 2) tell us about how the children felt when they lifted up his head and let it sink back on the desk again?
- 3 Why was the bully so tired?
- 4 What did Jimmy do to get his own back on the bully?
- 5 Why did the boys think it would be a good opportunity to kick him hard even though it would wake him up?
- 6 Write down four acts of revenge that they discuss and plan but don't actually carry out before the end of the poem.
- 7 Why was Jane "wide-eyed" at the boys' talk?
- 8 Why do you think Jane wanted to comfort Bill Craddock?

