

Loll's first day

The morning came, without any warning, when my sisters surrounded me, wrapped me in scarves, tied up my boot-laces, thrust a cap on my head, and stuffed a baked potato in my pocket.

"What's this?" I said.

"You're starting school today."

"I ain't. I'm stopping 'ome."

"Now, come on, Loll. You're a big boy now."

"I ain't."

"You are."

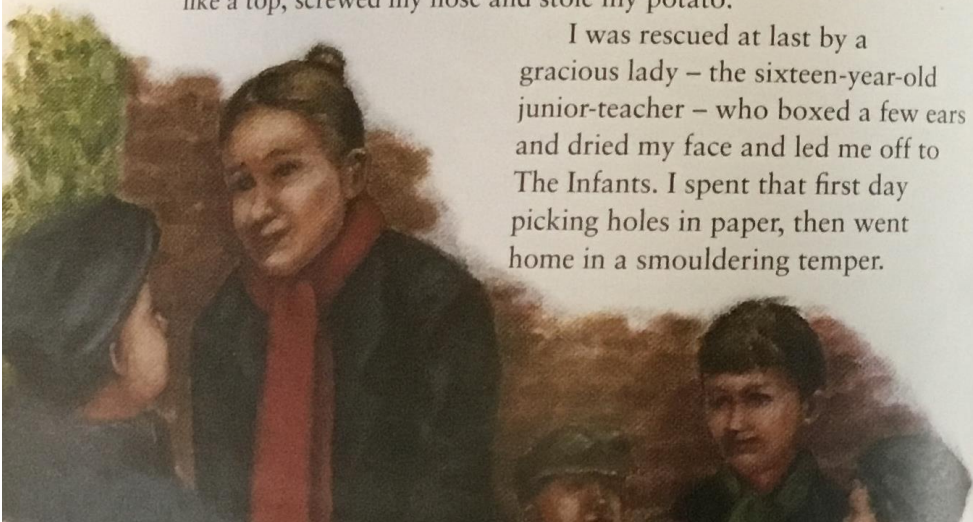
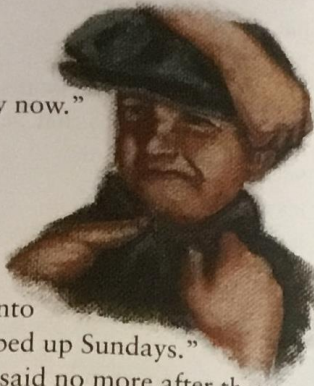
"Boo-hoo."

They picked me up bodily, kicking and bawling, and carried me up to the road.

"Boys who don't go to school get put into boxes, and turn into rabbits, and get chopped up Sundays."

I felt this was overdoing it rather, but I said no more after that. I arrived at the school just three feet tall and fatly wrapped in my scarves. The playground roared like a rodeo, and the potato burned through my thigh. Old boots, ragged stockings, torn trousers and skirts, went skating and skidding around me. The rabble closed in; I was encircled; grit flew in my face like shrapnel. Tall girls with frizzled hair, and huge boys with sharp elbows, began to prod me with hideous interest. They plucked at my scarves, spun me round like a top, screwed my nose and stole my potato.

I was rescued at last by a gracious lady – the sixteen-year-old junior-teacher – who boxed a few ears and dried my face and led me off to The Infants. I spent that first day picking holes in paper, then went home in a smouldering temper.



"What's the matter, Loll? Didn't he like it at school, then?"

"They never gave me the present!"

"Present? What present?"

"They said they'd give me a present."

"Well, now, I'm sure they didn't."

"They did! They said: 'You're Laurie Lee, ain't you?"

Well, just you sit there for the present.' I sat there all day but I never got it. I ain't going back there again!"

But after a week I felt like a veteran and grew as ruthless as anyone else.

Answer in sentences.

- 1 How did Loll feel about starting school?
- 2 Who took him to school?
- 3 Why was he given a baked potato?
- 4 Loll thought the story about boys who didn't go to school was "overdoing it rather". What does this mean?
- 5 Why did the playground "roar like a rodeo"?
- 6 Which of the following words is the plural of "potato"?
potatos potatoes potattos
- 7 What did Loll think it meant when he was told to "sit there for the present"?
- 8 What did "sit there for the present" really mean?
- 9 What sort of a temper is a "smouldering temper"?
- 10 Why did Loll go home in a smouldering temper?
- 11 After a week Loll "felt like a veteran". What does this mean?
- 12 What does "ruthless" mean?