



# The One That Got Away

*by Jan Mark*

‘And what have we to remember to bring tomorrow?’ Mrs Cooper asked, at half past three. Malcolm, sitting near the back, wondered why she said ‘we’. *She* wasn’t going to bring anything.

‘Something interesting, Mrs Cooper,’ said everyone else, all together.

‘And what are we going to do then?’

‘Stand up and talk about it, Mrs Cooper.’

‘So don’t forget. All right. Chairs on tables. Goodbye, Class Four.’

‘Goodbye, Mrs Cooper. Goodbye, everybody.’

It all came out ever so slow, like saying prayers in assembly. Class Four put its chairs on the tables, collected its coats and went home, talking about all the interesting things it would bring into school tomorrow.

Malcolm walked by himself. Mrs Cooper had first told them to find something interesting on Monday. Now it was Thursday and still he had not come up with any bright ideas. There were plenty of things that he found interesting, but the trouble was, they never seemed to interest anyone else. Last time this had happened he had brought along his favourite stone and

shown it to the class.

‘Very nice, Malcolm,’ Mrs Cooper had said. ‘Now tell us what’s interesting about it.’ He hadn’t known what to say. Surely anyone looking at the stone could see how interesting it was.

Mary was going to bring her gerbil. James, Sarah and William had loudly discussed rare shells and fossils, and the only spider in the world with five legs.

‘It can’t be a spider then,’ said David, who was eavesdropping.

‘It had an accident,’ William said.

Isobel intended to bring her pocket calculator and show them how it could write her name by punching in 738051 and turning it upside down. She did this every time, but it still looked interesting.

Malcolm could think of nothing.

When he reached home he went up to his bedroom and looked at the shelf where he kept important things: his twig that looked like a stick insect, his marble that looked like a glass eye, the penny with a hole in it and the Siamese-twin jelly-babies, one red, one green and stuck together, back to back. He noticed that they were now stuck to the shelf, too. His stone had once been there as well, but after Class Four had said it was boring he had put it back in the garden. He still went to see it sometimes.

What he really needed was something that could move about, like Mary’s gerbil or William’s five-legged spider. He sat down on his bed and began to think.

### *Friday*

On Friday, after assembly, Class Four began to be interesting. Mary kicked off with the gerbil that whirred round its cage like a hairy balloon with the air escaping. Then they saw William’s lame spider, James’s fossil, Jason’s collection of snail shells stuck one on top of the other like the leaning tower of Pisa, and David’s bottled conkers that he had kept in an air-tight jar for three years. They were still as glossy as new shoes.

Then it was Malcolm’s turn. He went up to the front and held out a matchbox. He had chosen it very carefully. It was the kind with the same label top and

bottom so that when you opened it you could never be sure that it was the right way up and all the matches fell out. Malcolm opened it upside down and jumped. Mrs Cooper jumped too. Malcolm threw himself down on hands and knees and looked under her desk.

‘What’s the matter?’ Mrs Cooper said.



‘It’s fallen out!’ Malcolm cried.

‘What is it?’ Mrs Cooper said, edging away.

‘I don’t know – it’s got six legs and sharp knees... and sort of frilly ginger eyebrows on stalks—’. He pounced. ‘There it goes.’

‘Where?’



‘Missed it,’ said Malcolm. ‘It’s running under your chair, Mary.’

Mary squeaked and climbed on to the table because she thought that was the right way to behave when creepy-crawlies were about.

‘I see it!’ Jason yelled, and jumped up and down. David threw a book in the

direction that Jason was pointing and James began beating the floor with a rolled-up comic.

‘I got it - I killed it,’ he shouted.

‘It’s crawling up the curtains,’ Sarah said and Mrs Cooper, who was standing by the curtains, moved rapidly away from them.

‘It’s over by the door,’ Mary shrieked, and several people ran to head it off. Chairs were overturned.

Malcolm stood by Mrs Cooper’s desk with his matchbox. His contribution was definitely the most interesting thing that anyone had seen that morning. He was only sorry that he hadn’t seen it himself.

1. Circle the correct option to complete each sentence below.

- (a) At the end of the day Mrs Cooper reminded Class Four that the next day they were to bring something interesting to school. After school Malcolm walked home

**alone**   **in a group of friends**   **with James and Sarah**   **with Mrs Cooper**

1 mark

- (b) He was trying to think about what he could bring in to show the class. Last time he had brought his

**calculator**   **stone**   **penny with a hole in it**   **interesting marble**

1 mark

- (c) The other children discussed what they were going to bring. Mary decided she would bring her

**cat**   **mouse**   **gerbil**   **rabbit**

1 mark

- (d) When Malcolm got home he went into

**the kitchen**   **the garden**   **his bedroom**   **the lounge**

and looked at all of his interesting things.

1 mark

- (e) What he really needed was something that

**could move**   **made a noise**   **was funny**   **was brightly coloured**

1 mark

(f) On Friday after assembly, Class Four showed the interesting things they had brought. The first person to come to the front of the class was

**William** **Mary** **Sarah** **Jason**

1 mark

(g) Then came James with his fossil and David with his conkers. Soon it was Malcolm's turn. He went up to the front and held out a

**lego box** **shoebox** **matchbox** **chocolate box**

1 mark

(h) Malcolm opened his box upside down and jumped back in surprise. He got on his hands and knees to look under the desk. It had fallen out! All of the children started looking but they did not know exactly what they were looking for. Only Malcolm knew that they were looking for

**his interesting stone** **a matchbox** **an insect** **nothing at all**

1 mark

2. Here are some of the events that happened in the story. Put them in the right order by numbering each line. The first event has been numbered for you.

the way home the children discussed what they would bring in

the next day the class showed their objects

the class was in uproar

Cooper told the class to bring in interesting objects

the children looked at a gerbil, a spider, a snail, snail shells and conkers

at home, Malcolm thought about what he could bring to show

when it was Malcolm's turn

2 marks

### About the characters

3. The story says that Malcolm had chosen his box

*very carefully. It was the kind with the same label top and bottom*

Why do you think he had to be so careful in his choice of box?

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1 mark

4. *Malcolm opened it upside down and jumped.*  
*Mrs Cooper jumped too.*

Mrs Cooper was clearly nervous.

Find another word or phrase in the story which tells us that Mrs Cooper was not very happy that the contents of Malcolm's box had escaped.

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1 mark

- (a) Last year Malcolm had brought his interesting stone but the class *had said it was boring*. How did Malcolm feel about the reaction of the class?

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- (b) Do you think Malcolm's own feelings about the stone changed?

What in the story tells you this?

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3 marks

6. The main character in this story is Malcolm. Some parts of the story tell you a lot about what kind of person he is.  
 Look at the extracts below, which are from the story.  
 Opposite each, write what it tells you about Malcolm's character.  
 (The first one has been done for you.)

Extract from the story	What it tells you about Malcolm's character
<p><i>Malcolm ... wondered why she said "we".            She wasn't going to bring anything.</i></p>	<p><b><i>Malcolm noticed the funny way his teacher talked to the class.            She did not mean what she said.            He thought she should bring in something too.            But he was not cheeky enough to say it out loud.</i></b></p>
<p><i>...the shelf where he kept important things: his twig that looked like a stick insect, his marble that looked like a glass eye, the penny with a hole in it and the Siamese-twin jelly-babies, one red, one green and stuck together, back to back.</i></p>	
<p><i>Malcolm opened it upside down and jumped.            ....Malcolm threw himself down on hands and knees and looked under her desk.</i></p>	

6 marks

7. The writer says that the gerbil  
*whirred round its cage like a hairy balloon with the air escaping.*  
 Explain what this tells you about the way the gerbil was moving.

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2 marks

8. *Malcolm opened it [the match box] upside down and jumped.*

Choose six words from the Friday part of the story that tell us about the noise and movement in the classroom.

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2 marks

9. Malcolm's object is described in the story as *definitely the most interesting thing that anyone had seen that morning.*

Explain what is strange or funny in this line.

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1 mark

10. Did you enjoy reading this story

Yes

No

Explain, giving your own reasons, what you liked or did not like about the story.

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3 marks

11. (a) What did the class think Malcolm had in his box?

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(b) What do **you** think he had in his box?

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2 marks

12. Why do you think the author chose "The One That Got Away" as the title for this story?

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2 marks

13. Would you like to have been in that class on that Friday morning?

Yes

No

Explain your reasons using parts of the story to help you.

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2 marks

## Mark schemes

1 Award **1 mark** for each correct choice.

- (a) alone
- (b) stone
- (c) gerbil
- (d) his bedroom
- (e) could move
- (f) Mary
- (g) matchbox
- (h) nothing at all

If a child has made no mark or has circled two or more responses, no score is given. If s/he has underlined, ticked or indicated his/her choice in some other ambiguous way then the responses should be scored as indicated above.

**up to 8 marks**

2 The correct order is as follows:

on the way home the children discussed what they would bring in	<b>2</b>
the next day the class showed their objects	<b>4</b>
the class was in uproar	<b>7</b>
Mrs Cooper told the class to bring in interesting objects	<b>1</b>
the children looked at a gerbil, a spider, a fossil, snail shells and conkers	<b>5</b>
at home, Malcolm thought about what he could bring to show	<b>3</b>
then it was Malcolm's turn	<b>6</b>

Award **1 mark** for getting the start and end points correctly (that is, getting **2** and **7** in the right place).

Award **2 marks** for correctly ordering all stages.

**up to 2 marks**

3 Accept any answer which conveys that Malcolm's purpose was deception, eg:

- it had to be one that he could 'accidentally' open upside down

1 mark

4 Accept either of the following

- edging away
- moved rapidly away

1 mark

(a) Accept any of the following:

- sad / embarrassed / misunderstood / lonely / foolish / disappointed / hurt / upset
- felt that **he** must be boring / no one was interested in him
- felt that the class was wrong
- felt that the stone was still interesting / was not as interesting as he had believed

1 mark

(b) Award **1 mark** for simple answers which indicate that Malcolm's feelings were unambiguous / straightforward, eg:

Yes because:

- all his friends said it was boring
- he put it back in the garden

No because:

- he kept seeing it in his back yard
- it was still his favourite stone

Award **2 marks** for more elaborate answers which show evidence that his feelings were ambivalent, or that attempt to explain Malcolm's feelings more fully, eg:

Yes because:

- he put the stone back in the garden; this was not such an important place as his window sill; that meant that he had downgraded it.
- he took the stone off the shelf with all the important things and put it in the garden, but he still went to see it every now and again.

No because:

- even though he was embarrassed, he still liked it, even if he hid it from his friends so that they wouldn't tease him

up to 2 marks

6 (a) Award **1 mark** for simplistic answers. These usually focus on the most obvious aspect of Malcolm's character, eg:

- he liked collecting things

- he collected interesting things

Award **2 marks** for answers which display insight by making an appropriate deduction about the character. These usually focus on the fact that Malcolm collected strange / unusual / odd things, eg:

- he liked strange-looking things
- he liked collecting and had a weird sense of what was interesting.

Award **3 marks** for answers which develop ideas yet further, attempting to draw out more than one aspect of the character or to draw quite fundamental conclusions about the character, eg:

- it shows that he was an unusual person because he found something interesting in even the simplest things; to him things were important because they were unusual and not because they were valuable

**up to 3 marks**

(b) Award **1 mark** for simplistic answers which focus on one aspect of Malcolm's character, eg:

- he was a good actor / a joker / cunning
- he likes pretending

Award **2 marks** for answers which display more insight by making a deduction about the character, eg:

- he was a good actor because he really threw himself into the part

Award **3 marks** for answers which develop ideas yet further, attempting to draw out more than one aspect of the character or to draw quite fundamental conclusions about the character, eg:

- he could be the class joker when he wanted to and he had the guts to pretend that there was something in the box in front of his teacher and the whole class

**up to 3 marks**

7 Award **1 mark** for any of the following answers up to a maximum of **2**:

- *the gerbil was moving fast*
- *was making a noise / huffing and puffing*
- *moving all over the cage / around and around / in all directions*

**Do not accept:** *around the cage* (just lifted from the text)

**up to 2 marks**

8 Award a total of **1 mark** for up to 3 correct words. Award a total of **2 marks** for between 4 and 6 correct words.

The following are acceptable:

threw (himself) (a book)	edging away
cried	overturned
pounced	ran
squeaked	shrieked

climbed	moved
yelled	rapidly
jumped (up and down)	shouted
beating	

**Do not accept** words not from the text, eg *banging* instead of *beating*. You may, however, accept accidental tense substitutions, eg *pouncing* instead of *pounced*.

**up to 2 marks**

9 Award **1 mark** for answers along the following lines:

- *no one had actually seen it*
- *it didn't exist*
- *there was nothing to see*

**Do not accept** because no one knew what it was.

**1 mark**

10 Award **1 mark** for a simplistic answer, eg:

- *it was good / it was funny*
- *it was boring*

Award **2 marks** for a more elaborate answer, possibly involving reference to the text or personal preferences, eg:

- *I liked / did not like the way it was written*
- *it had a good plot*
- *I did not like the other children in the class*
- *I liked the part where Class Four brought their objects in*

Award **3 marks** for a well justified answer revealing close reference to the text, eg:

- *I liked the way the writer leaves you unsure about whether there was really an insect in Malcolm's box*

**up to 3 marks**

11 (a) an insect / spider/ creepy-crawly / an ant / a creature etc

**1 mark**

(b) nothing

**1 mark**

12 Award **1 mark** for answers along the following lines:

- *Malcolm pretended that his object had got away*
- *Class Four thought that the insect had got away*
- *to make you think that something got away*

Award **2 marks** for answers along the following lines:

- *Malcolm 'got away with' fooling the class*

**up to 2 marks**

- 13 Award **1 mark** for a simple answer or a valid explanation, even if based upon a misunderstanding of the story.

Yes because:

- *it was fun / chaos / exciting*
- *then I could help find the insect*
- *I'd like to go to the front of the class to show something*

No because:

- *I don't like spiders*
- *I don't like the story*

Award **2 marks** for fuller answers which are rooted in the text as requested; for example,

Yes because:

- *it looks like everyone had fun in the class, even though some of them were a bit scared*
- *it would have been fun to see everybody's reaction*

**up to 2 marks**