

November 2020

Dear Young Person,

*When I was a little girl back in 1956 – a long time ago. I was a very small child aged 5 and went to school in my baby dresses because my Mummy could not find anything to fit me. Classrooms were huge – more than 40 children in some of them, the teacher could not help all of us, and me being very small and quiet went totally unnoticed.*

*When it came to reading time, I would go up to the book box and pick up the prettiest book cover I could find. Not understanding any of the words, I would just look at the pictures and make up my own stories. I could write my name very neatly but could not read at all. We would do spelling tests and I would copy from the nice girl next to me, because if you did well the teacher would give you a sweet.*

*It was one Friday afternoon and our spelling tests results were read out and I was nearly top of the class, the teacher smiled at me and I was given a sweet. My red face of embarrassment was really hiding the fact that I had cheated. Whilst all the other children ate their sweet, I wrapped mine in a tissue (I always had a cold, so I had loads of spare tissues) and took it home. I never ate the sweet because I knew I didn't deserve it.*

*After the Summer holidays we moved classes. The new teacher had spotted that I was trying to read books that were too hard for me and I just couldn't spell for toffee! She took me to one side and gave me a simple reading book and realised I could not read at all. I was so embarrassed when she asked why I hadn't told anyone. I told her that I was afraid of telling the teacher because the other children would know and laugh at me. After this, I was started on the 'Janet and John' books, the easiest books that were ever published but I worked so hard to prove not only to the other children but to myself that I could do it. I read and read and began to enjoy the simple stories of what Janet and John had got up to. My spelling also improved because I was reading, I had learnt the words naturally, without having to cheat.*

*You can let other children think you are the brightest person, but you can never cheat yourself. I learnt to be true to myself and if I couldn't do something, I would ask the teacher to explain it to me. I never wanted to feel dishonest to myself again.*

*I have grown into a successful Businesswomen and I am never afraid to ask for help. Always stay true to yourself and you will achieve so much.*

*Best wishes,*

*from Gillian.*