

## **A day in the life of a student teacher**

My name is Henry Robinson and I'm a student teacher. A very important part of the training course is "teaching practice"; that's when a student teacher goes to a school and teaches for several weeks. This can be a frightening experience, so I was very glad that I was able to do my teaching practice in a school just outside Edinburgh, four hundred miles from my home in London. My college supervisor came to the school once a week to see how I was getting on, but apart from him no one else knew how well or how badly I was doing.

On my first morning the headmaster called me into his study.

**Headmaster:** Now don't forget, Robinson; if there's any boy you can't manage just come and see me.

**Henry:** Thank you very much, sL. As a matter of fact, there was just...

**Headmaster:** Come to my study any time you have a problem you want to talk about.

**Henry:** Yes sir, I will. If I could ...

**Headmaster:** I well remember when I did my first teaching Practice.

**Henry:** I wonder if I...

**Headmaster:** Now in those days, mind you, life was much harder.

**Henry:** Excuse me, sir, but...

**Headmaster:** And as for the pay — but I'm talking too much. I'm sorry. Did you want to ask me a question?

**Henry:** Yes, sir.

**Headmaster:** Well, look, I'm rather busy at the moment, and I expect you want to get started. Come and see me again tomorrow morning. Good luck!

**Henry:** Thank you very much, sir.

I think the headmaster was afraid I was going to ask him whether I could just watch for the first week and start the actual teaching the following week. If so, he was quite right. I was feeling very nervous as I walked to the classroom.

I was introduced to my class of thirty boys by their classroom teacher. "Right, lads, now listen to me," he said. "I don't want any trouble while the student teacher is taking you. Is that clear?" The boys nodded. They all looked very innocent, but I could remember

the way we had treated student teachers when I was at school. As the teacher left the room he drew me to one side. "Watch out for the Welsh boy," he whispered. "Philip Jones. Back row, red hair."

That first lesson was a disaster. The boys behaved very badly and refused to listen to what I was saying. They talked incessantly and threw things at each other while I was trying to write on the blackboard. To my surprise the only boy who sat and listened politely was Jones. Occasionally he even told the other boys to be quiet. When the bell rang for break, he came up to me. "Break lasts for fifteen minutes, sir," he said.

In the staff room one of the teachers came up to me and asked me how Jones had behaved. "Oh," I said, "he was all right. It was the other..." But I wasn't able to finish my sentence.

**Teacher:** Didn't he throw things at you?

**Henry:** No, he didn't.

**Teacher:** Didn't he pretend to be ill?

**Henry:** No.

**Teacher:** I bet he put his tongue out at you, didn't he?

**Henry:** No, not once.

**Teacher:** But surely he was rude in some way?

**Henry:** No, he wasn't rude at all.

**Teacher:** Did he fall down on the floor and pretend that someone had hit him?

**Henry:** No, he didn't.

**Teacher:** Perhaps he isn't feeling well.

**Henry:** He looked perfectly well to me.

**Teacher:** Are you absolutely sure he didn't do anything?

**Henry:** Yes, quite sure.

**Teacher:** Extraordinary! You've performed a miracle!

The rest of the day was as bad as the first lesson, though for one brief moment I thought I had them under control. Suddenly they all stopped talking and there was complete silence. I was delighted, until I turned round and saw the headmaster watching us through the window.

As I was walking back to the staff room after the last lesson, I heard footsteps behind me. It was Jones.

**Jones:** I'm glad I caught you, sir.

**Henry:** Oh, why?

**Jones:** I wanted to thank you for the lessons.

**Henry:** That's very kind of you, Jones.

**Jones:** Not at all sir. It's nice to have you as our teacher.

**Henry:** Are you pulling my leg?

**Jones:** No, sir.

**Henry:** I don't believe you.

**Jones:** It's true, sir. Really it is.

**Henry:** There's something that's been puzzling me, Jones.

**Jones:** What's that, sir?

**Henry:** Why is it that you have behaved so well when all the other teachers think you're the worst boy in the class?

**Jones:** Oh, that's easy, sir. You see, I'm Welsh, you're English, and we're both in Scotland.

**Henry:** No, Jones, I don't see at all. Please explain.

**Jones:** Well, sir, it's what my father says.

**Henry:** Go on.

**Jones:** He says that we foreigners must stick together, sir.

***New words and expressions***

<b>frightening</b>	causing fear
<b>college supervisor</b>	teacher at a teacher training college who supervises the student teachers during teaching practice
<b>getting on</b>	doing, progressing
<b>headmaster</b>	head teacher of a school
<b>manage</b>	deal with, cope with
<b>as a matter of fact</b>	to tell the truth
<b>mind you</b>	remember
<b>pay</b>	salary
<b>lads</b>	boys
<b>innocent</b>	good, harmless
<b>he drew me to one side</b>	he took me to one side (i.e. so the boys couldn't hear what he was saying)
<b>watch out for</b>	be careful of
<b>Welsh</b>	from Wales
<b>incessantly</b>	without stopping, all the time
<b>occasionally</b>	at times
<b>break</b>	free time between lessons
<b>staff room</b>	private room for the teachers
<b>I bet</b>	here means I am certain
<b>miracle</b>	something unbelievable
<b>Are you pulling my leg?</b>	Are you making a joke at my expense?
<b>stick together</b>	take the same side, be allies
<b>There's something that's been puzzling me</b>	There's something I don't understand

**Questions and exercises**

**A.** Comprehension questions

1. Where did Henry Robinson do his teaching practice?
2. How often did Henry's college supervisor visit him?
3. What did Henry want to ask the headmaster?
4. What country does Philip Jones come from?
5. Where was Philip Jones sitting?
6. What did the boys do while Henry was trying to teach them?
7. How did the boys know it was time for break?
8. Why did the boys all stop talking?
9. Why was Henry puzzled by Jones's behaviour?
10. What does Philip Jones's father say?

**B.** Give short answers, both affirmative and negative, to the following questions:

**Example:**

Did you want to ask me a question?

*Yes, I did.*

*No, I didn't.*

1. Is that clear?
2. Has Philip Jones got red hair?
3. Did he throw things at you?
4. Does he pretend to be ill?
5. Has he been ill?
6. Were the boys talking all the time?
7. But surely he was rude in some way?
8. Are you pulling my leg?

- C. Give commands (the imperative) in response to the following instructions:

**Example:**

Tell Jones not to talk so much.

*Don't talk so much, Jones or Jones, don't talk so much.*

1. Tell Robinson to come and see you after the lesson.
2. Tell him not to come to your study before ten o'clock.
3. Tell Henry to watch out for the Welsh boy.
4. Tell Jones not to throw things at you.
5. Tell him not to pretend to be ill.

*Now use the polite form with please.*

6. Tell Jones to explain.
7. Tell Robinson not to talk about his problems in the staff room.
8. Tell the boys to listen to you.

- D. Change the following statements into questions by adding the appropriate tag:

**Example:**

I bet he put his tongue out at you.

*I bet he put his tongue out at you, didn't he?*

1. He was very rude.
2. He didn't do anything.
3. He looked perfectly well.
4. He didn't fall down on the floor.
5. You're not feeling well.
6. You're pulling my leg.
7. I'm late.
8. We foreigners must stick together.

***Keys to exercises***

**A.**

1. In a school just outside Edinburgh.
2. Once a week.
3. He wanted to ask him if he could just watch for the first week and start the actual teaching the following week.
4. Wales.
5. In the back row.
6. They talked incessantly and threw things at each other.
7. The bell rang.
8. Because they saw the headmaster watching them through the window.
9. Because he behaved so well when all the other teachers thought he was the worst boy in the class.
10. He says that we foreigners must stick together.

**B.**

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|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Yes, it is.     | No, it isn't.     |
| 2. Yes, he has.    | No, he hasn't.    |
| 3. Yes, he did.    | No, he didn't.    |
| 4. Yes, he does.   | No, he doesn't.   |
| 5. Yes, he has.    | No, he hasn't.    |
| 6. Yes, they were. | No, they weren't. |
| 7. Yes, he was.    | No, he wasn't.    |
| 8. Yes, I am.      | No, I'm not.      |

**C.**

1. Come and see me after the lesson, Robinson.
2. Don't come to my study before ten o'clock.
3. Watch out for the Welsh boy, Henry.
4. Don't throw things at me, Jones.
5. Don't pretend to be ill.
6. Please explain, Jones.
7. Please don't talk about your problems in the staff room, Robinson.
8. Please listen to me, boys.

**D.**

1. He was very rude, wasn't he?
2. He didn't do anything, did he?
3. He looked perfectly well, didn't he?
4. He didn't fall down on the floor, did he?
5. You're not feeling well, are you?
6. You're pulling my leg, aren't you?
7. I'm late, aren't I? (am I not?)
8. We foreigners must stick together, mustn't we?