



## Introduction

"Do not judge another until you have walked a mile in his moccasins" – so says an old Native-American proverb. The idea of *Walking in the Shoes of Another* is to stimulate and practice the idea of trying to see things from another person's perspective.

How often do we quickly judge a person and what they stand for, and then later, when we find out more, realise that the picture is much more complex than we had originally thought?

Many misunderstandings and preconceptions could be avoided if we just try to communicate more with each other. History has shown us that conflict, and perhaps even war, can be avoided as long as dialogue is maintained. The parties involved may be angry and hostile but as long as there is discussion there is no fighting.

*Walking in the Shoes of Another* aims to stimulate discussion, discussion that, it is hoped, will encourage and develop young people's ability to view events from different perspectives.

Using *Walking in the Shoes of Another* should prove to be fun and stimulating. Working with this material will help young people to be more curious about what lies behind a situation, and instead of rushing to judge they may perhaps look for what is hidden behind peoples' opinions, behaviour and reactions and this will encourage discussion instead of leading to conflict.





This resource is intended for use with young people aged from eight to twelve, with some stories being more suitable for younger pupils and some for older. However, all groups are different and the book is flexible enough to be adapted as appropriate.

In this book, ten social situations are depicted. Each chapter consists of two stories describing the same event from two different perspectives. Following each of the two stories is a set of questions designed to stimulate lively discussion, and a final set of questions to answer after both stories have been read will allow groups to compare the experiences of both characters.

### **Suggestions for Use**

These sets of stories can be used in whole-class groups, small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

Read one of the stories to the group and then discuss the relevant questions. Now read the second story, does the picture change? Discuss the questions relating to the second story and then the questions for both stories. It is not until both stories have been read that the complete picture is revealed. What can we do to be better at seeing the whole picture in life generally?

Questions can be answered individually or used as a basis for groupwork and whole-group discussions. Groups could be divided into two, and each given one of the stories to read and discuss. Then each small group could prepare answers to the questions relating to their story for a whole-group presentation and discussion.





## The Sweet Shop

### *Oliver*

As always during the lunch break there were loads of people in the sweet shop, but Oliver wasn't in a hurry, he wasn't even sure if he was going to buy anything. You weren't really allowed to go there during school hours, but no-one really cared – not even the teachers. The little shop was so nice to be in, it was cool in the summer and warm in the winter and it smelt so good. It always put Oliver in a good mood when he took a deep breath and filled his nostrils with the sweet smell. Sometimes he bought something, sometimes he didn't, depending on how much money he had.

It was just nice to walk around and see what they had. The whistles made of caramel looked really good, he hadn't seen them before. He wondered if they actually made any sound when you blew them. Without thinking he picked one up and went to put it into his mouth to try but stopped himself just in time. Of course, you weren't allowed to try them out before you bought one! He looked at the whistle in his hand and was just about to put it back when a huge pair of hands grabbed him by the shoulders.

"Don't touch the sweets!"

Oliver froze.

Panic shot through his body until he realised that it was just the old man who owned the shop. Then he was insulted. What had got into the old man? He was usually so kind and friendly.





### *The Sweet Shop*

"I'm tired of you shoplifters!", shouted the shopkeeper. "You never buy anything, you just hang around and fill your pockets. Well, now I've had enough!"

Even though he was totally innocent Oliver felt guilty, but he couldn't understand why. He hadn't tried to blow the caramel whistle, he'd just picked it up and held it in his hand. That couldn't be a crime, and he definitely hadn't decided to steal it – he certainly wasn't a thief! Even so, he felt like a thief who'd been caught red-handed. He tried unsuccessfully to squirm loose.

"Leave me alone", he said. "I haven't done anything, it's OK."

Then the old man really started to have a go. "Oh, so it's OK, is it?", he mimicked, "It's OK for a load of horrible kids to steal from me! It's OK for you to stand there and eat my sweets and fill your pockets when you think I'm not looking, and ... and ... of course it's OK isn't it? Well, let me tell you that it's **not** OK. I saw what you did and now it's time to call the police. That's how OK it is!"

A little ring of spectators had gathered round them.

"So you got caught then", said an older boy with a superior look, "anyway, those whistles taste really disgusting."

Oliver felt sick and ready to cry all at once, but he wasn't going to show it. He wasn't going to give them that pleasure. He bit his lip and tried to look as cool as he could. After all, he hadn't actually done anything wrong.





### *The Sweet Shop*

"But I haven't done anything", he repeated again and again. "It's the truth. I was just looking at the caramel whistles."

"Are you going to buy one then?", shouted the old man angrily.

"Disgustingly horrible", said the older boy again.

"No, I don't think so", whispered Oliver, but unfortunately he sounded really pitiful.

"Then get out of here!", screamed the old man. "And never come back again if you're not going to buy anything!"

Oliver stood uncertainly in the middle of the shop. The owner had let go of his shoulders and had obviously forgotten his threat to call the police. Or maybe he wasn't so sure any more. How could he be, Oliver hadn't actually done anything. Maybe the old man had begun to realise that it was all a misunderstanding.

"I didn't do anything. I'm telling the truth", mumbled Oliver. He felt he had to say it. He felt someone pushing him out of the shop and he tripped and fell on the doorstep. Quickly he picked himself up and rushed out into the street.

Once he was outside, Oliver felt the tears and hate rushing through his body.

How he hated that disgusting, horrible old man. He would never go back into the stinking shop ever again!





### *The Sweet Shop*

Oliver felt sick. For a moment he wondered if he should go back to the shop and be sick right into one of those boxes filled with chocolates, raspberry jellies and wine gums. That would serve the old man right. But of course he didn't. He just walked slowly back to school. His stomach ached and he hated the old man in the sweet shop as much as an ten-year-old boy can hate anyone!





## The Sweet Shop

### Questions for Oliver's story

- 1** Do you know an old fashioned sweet shop like this? What's it like?
- 2** Which is worse, being accused when you're guilty or being accused when you're innocent?
- 3** Is it possible to feel guilty if you're accused of something, even though you aren't guilty?
- 4** Is it important to pretend that you're not affected when someone shouts at you? Does it affect you?
- 5** Why is it so important to Oliver that the shopkeeper believes what he says?
- 6** Can young people really feel hate? When? How does it feel?
- 7** Why do you think the old man was so angry?
- 8** Should Oliver just try to forget his bad experience or can he do something about it?





## The Sweet Shop

### *Alfie*

The attack last night hadn't been that dangerous really!

Alfie had been standing behind the counter of the sweetshop as usual. He liked it there. He liked talking to the customers, and the fact that there was a school just over the road wasn't a bad thing either. Children like sweets and every break time a whole crowd of pupils would flock over to the shop. Not everyone bought something, but lots of them did and there was life and movement in the little shop. Alfie liked that. But that was before the attack!

He had come in just before closing time, a small, long-haired boy. Even though there was just him and Alfie in the shop the boy began filling his pockets with sweets. Was he stupid or something?

"Hey! You boy! What do you think you're doing?", Alfie had said, and laid a heavy hand on the boy's shoulder, in a firm but not completely unfriendly manner. Alfie was a friendly man at heart.



But then the boy pulled out a knife and lunged at Alfie's chest right at his heart! In a reflex action Alfie quickly flung up his arms in front of himself and the knife just caught his jacket and gave him a small cut on his arm. Then the boy rushed







out of the shop and Alfie was left holding his injured arm and looking confused. A young lad, who couldn't have been more than fourteen or fifteen, probably on drugs or drunk, and he had lunged straight towards Alfie's heart. What was the world coming to?

Alfie calmed down and called the police. Eventually, a police car came and they took down the evidence and even drove Alfie to casualty. One of the policemen had advised Alfie to ask the hospital for an appointment with a counsellor, the shock of the attack would probably hit him a bit later, the man said.

Well! Alfie didn't think much of counselling and after all it was only a little cut. Even if the boy had aimed for his heart – and he had – Alfie had managed to get his arms up really quickly, pure reflex, and the worst damage had been done to his old jacket.

After three hours of waiting in casualty Alfie was fed up with sitting there. He left the hospital and made his way home where he bandaged the cut himself. So really, it had been no big deal. Nothing serious anyway, thanks to Alfie's quick reflexes.

But that night he couldn't sleep! He didn't want to admit it to himself but he was afraid, really afraid. In his mind, he went over what had happened again and again. Then he went over and over what might have happened if he hadn't had such quick reflexes. Most of all he couldn't stop thinking about what might happen in the future.





### *The Sweet Shop*

He might be stabbed at any time by any kid who happened to come in. Every time the bell on the door jingled it could be an attacker walking into the shop and Alfie wasn't sure he would manage to get his arms up in time if it happened again. Your reflexes don't work as well when you're frozen with fear. And he was! Alfie hated to admit it, but it he was simply petrified.

When the alarm clock went off the next morning, without him having had a wink of sleep, his first thought was to stay at home. He was his own boss and he could afford to take a few days off until he felt a bit better again. Then he began to think of the Biggles books he had read as a child, and how a pilot who crashed should always get straight back into a plane and fly, right away, otherwise he'd never fly again. So Alfie trudged off to the sweet shop.

This is good he thought to himself, Biggles therapy, much better than a counsellor. But the hours dragged. Shouldn't he be feeling better soon? Surely his legs shouldn't still be shaking. When will my body realise that I'm not afraid, he asked himself?

The morning dragged by. Alfie started shivering and then sweating.

"I don't care", he whispered to himself, "I'll be like Biggles and start again, but shouldn't this blasted plane be taking off soon?"

Then it was afternoon and lunch break at the school. The sweetshop filled up with pupils and Alfie was still feeling a bit shaky. When would everything start feeling normal again? It wasn't like this in Biggles.

Then Alfie saw him – the little knife-wielding kid.





### *The Sweet Shop*

He was standing by the new caramel whistles and picked one up and hid it in his hand. Now he would put it straight into his pocket. Alfie was feeling faint. He wanted to shout at them all, "take anything you want! Just don't hurt me!" Then, finally, the plane took off. The weight and the fear disappeared and he felt his courage come back to him. He flew across the shop helped by a wonderful release of anger. No little kid, with or without a knife, would ever scare him again! As soon as he put his hand on the boy's shoulder, Alfie realised it was the wrong boy but his anger didn't disappear, the boy was a shoplifter and now he'd learn his lesson!

Alfie stormed about shouting for a long time before he threw the boy out of the door. His arm was aching a bit, but he actually felt quite good. Now he was back to his old self again. He had conquered the most dangerous enemy of all, his own fear. He had recaptured the sweet shop and, at the same time, control of his own life.





## The Sweet Shop

### Questions for Alfie's story

- 1** Alfie wasn't afraid until the night after the attack. Have you ever been in a dangerous situation where you haven't felt afraid until afterwards?
- 2** Do you think it's true that a pilot who crashes should fly again as soon as possible?
- 3** What do you think would have happened if Alfie had taken a few days sick leave?
- 4** Is it possible to overcome fear by defying it? Have you ever tried this? How did you do it and what happened?
- 5** It is good to be brave if you aren't afraid, but what is bravery?
- 6** Alfie conquers his fear with anger. Do you think people often show anger to stop themselves from being afraid? Is this a good thing?
- 7** Was it a good thing that Alfie threw the boy out of the shop? Why?
- 8** Are you sure that the boy really was a shoplifter?





## The Sweet Shop

### Questions for both stories

- 1** Do you think that Alfie has any idea what Oliver is thinking and feeling? Does he realise how angry and confused Oliver is?
- 2** Would it help if Oliver could explain this to him? Would it be best if he explained straight away or later when everything has quietened down?
- 3** Could the opposite be true? Would Oliver be able to understand how Alfie felt if Alfie tried to explain to him?
- 4** Why is it so difficult to talk about our feelings? Would both Oliver and Alfie would have difficulty explaining how they felt inside?
- 5** Could Alfie and Oliver both be feeling the same thing? If so, what might it be?
- 6** Why do you think the shoplifter had a knife with him?
- 7** What is a fair way to deal with a shoplifter?
- 8** Do we have the right to be angry? How angry? Are there different rules for children and adults?
- 9** Is there any chance that Oliver and the shop keeper can be friends? How might that be possible?

