

Because of Mr. Terupt

Read the excerpt and then answer the questions.

Peter

It's our bad luck to have teachers in this world, but since we're stuck with them, the best we can do is hope to get a brand-new one instead of a mean old fart. New teachers don't know the rules, so you can get away with things the old-timers would squash you for. That was my theory. So I was feeling pretty excited to start fifth grade, since I was getting a rookie teacher--a guy named Mr. Terupt. Right away, I put him to the test.

If the bathroom pass is free, all you have to do is take it and go. This year, the bathrooms were right across the hall. It's always been an easy way to get out of doing work. I can be really sneaky like that. I take the pass all the time and the teachers never notice. And like I said, Mr. Terupt was a rookie, so I knew he wasn't going to catch me.

Once you're in the bathroom, it's mess-around time. All the other teachers on our floor were women, so you didn't have to worry about them barging in on you. Grab the bars to the stalls and swing. Try to touch your feet to the ceiling. Swing hard. If someone's in the stall, it's really funny to swing and kick his door in, especially if he's a younger kid. If you scare him bad enough, he might pee on himself a little. That's funny. Or if your buddy's using the urinal, you can push him from behind and flush it at the same time. Then he might get a little wet. That's pretty funny, too. Some kids like to plug the toilets with big wads of toilet paper, but I don't suggest you try doing that. You can get in big trouble. My older brother told me his friend got caught and he had to scrub the toilets with a toothbrush. He said the principal made him brush his teeth with that toothbrush afterward, too. Mrs. Williams is pretty tough, but I don't think she'd give out that kind of punishment. I don't want to find out, either.

When I came back into the classroom after my fourth or fifth trip, Mr. Terupt looked at me and said, "Boy, Peter, I'm gonna have to call you Mr. Peebody, or better yet, Peter the Pee-er. You do more peein' than a dog walking by a mile of fire hydrants."

Everybody laughed. I was wrong. He had noticed. I sat down. Then Mr. Terupt came over and whispered in my ear, "My grandpa used to tell me to tie a knot in it."

I didn't know what to do. My eyes got real big when he said that. I couldn't believe it. But that didn't matter. Mr. Terupt just went back to the front board and the math problem he was going over. I sat there with my big eyes. Soon a smile, too.

"What did he say?" Marty asked. Marty's desk was right next to mine.

"Nothing," I said.

Ben and Wendy leaned across their desks to hear. They sat right across from us. Our four desks made up table number three. Mr. Terupt called us by tables sometimes.

"Nothing," I said again. It would be my secret.

How cool was Mr. Terupt? His reaction was better than being yelled at like the old farts would have done. Some kids in my class would have cried, but not me. And somehow, I think Mr. Terupt knew I wouldn't. It was his way of letting me know he knew what was going on without making a huge stink about it. I liked that about Mr. Terupt. He sure could be funny. And I'm a funny guy. This year, for the first time in my life, I started thinking school could be fun.

Jessica

Act 1, Scene 1

The first day of school. I was nervous. Somewhat. The sweaty-palms-and-dry-mouth syndrome struck. This wasn't surprising--after all, I was coming to a brand-new place. My mom and I had just moved all the way from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean, over here in Connecticut. So it was my first, first day in Snow Hill School. My mom came to help me get settled.

We walked through the glass doors and beautiful entryway and stopped in the main office to ask for directions. A red-haired woman who proved to be exceptional at multitasking greeted us with a smile and a slight nod. She did this while the phone rested between her ear and shoulder, allowing her hands to scribble notes from a conversation she was having in her free ear with the brown-haired lady standing next to her. We waited. My fingers dug into the hard cover of my book.

"Hi. I'm Mrs. Williams, the principal." This was the brown-haired lady speaking. She looked serious, all decked out in her business suit. "Welcome to Snow Hill School. Can I help you with anything?"

"We're looking for Mr. Terupt's room," Mom said. "I'm Julie Writeman and this is my daughter, Jessica. We're new in town."

"Ah, yes. It's a pleasure to meet you both. Let me show you the way."

Mrs. Williams led us out of the office. I glanced at the secretary one more time. She'd be a great character in one of Dad's plays, I thought. My dad directs small plays in California, where I still wanted to be.

"How are you today, Jessica?" Mrs. Williams asked.

"Fine," I said, although that wasn't really true.

We followed Mrs. Williams across the lobby and upstairs in search of my new fifth-grade classroom. The halls smelled stuffy but clean, like they'd just been disinfected. I wondered if the custodians had done that on purpose, to make a show of how clean their school was. I followed Mom down the blue-speckled carpet and past the rows of red lockers, where some kids were already unloading new supplies. I could feel all their eyes studying the new girl in town. After the stares came the whispers. My face burned.

"Here you are," Mrs. Williams said. "This is your floor. There are four classrooms up here, all fifth grade, two on each side of the hall with the bathrooms right in the middle." Mrs. Williams pointed as she spoke. "That's your classroom." She pointed again. "Room two-oh-two. Have a good first day."

"Thank you," Mom said. I just nodded.

Act 1, Scene 2

We walked into the classroom. The teacher looked up from his desk and smiled at us. The butterflies in my stomach fluttered as if I were on a Tilt-A-Whirl.

"Good morning. I'm Mr. Terupt," the teacher said as Mom and I walked in. He came right over to greet us.

"Good morning," Mom said back. "I'm Julie Writeman, and this is Jessica. I think she's a little nervous being a new student."

My tongue felt so swollen that I couldn't talk. I settled on returning Mr. Terupt's smile. It was a friendly one.

"Well, this is my first day, too. So I guess we'll try to figure things out together," he said.

My smile grew.

"Your seat is right over there at table two. You're with Natalie, Tommy, and Ryan. Being near the windows should give you some good reading light. That's a great book you have there, Jessica."

I looked down at my book, *A Wrinkle in Time*. I rubbed my hand over the cover.

"I really like happy endings," I said.

"Me too," Mr. Terupt said. "I'll do my best to give you a happy ending this year."

I smiled again. I couldn't believe it. My teacher was new, too. And he liked what I was reading. I don't know why, but somehow he made my butterflies disappear and my tongue shrink. Things were going to be okay.

1. What is the point of view of the book? _____

2. What did you learn about Peter when you were reading his part of the story?

3. What did you learn about Jessica when you were reading her part of the story?

4. How do you think the story would have been different if it had been written in third person? _____
