

Reading – Major Four Paws

By the time they were ambling home from school, there were “Missing” posters everywhere – on trees, fences and even in shop windows. Identical furry black faces stared back at them with pale green eyes from every angle.

“Major Fourpaws,” scoffed Riley, “What a daft name!”

“Poor old Mr Nash,” said Carla, ignoring her friend, “he must be beside himself with worry. That moggy was his best friend after Mrs Nash ... well, you know.” She didn’t like to think about it. It was hard enough watching her devastated neighbour stagger up to the cemetery every day.

A bit of a loose cannon, Riley had many fine qualities but picking his moment wasn’t one of them. He suddenly grabbed Carla’s tie-string bag and swung it around his head with a mischievous glint in his eye.

“Give it back, Riley,” begged Carla. “I need to get my P.E. kit washed for tomorrow.”

“Come and get it, then,” he taunted and swirled it even faster. So much so, that the cord broke and Carla’s bag sailed over the fence boarding up a piece of wasteland where an old house had been earmarked for demolition.

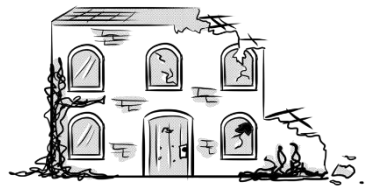
“Oh, well done!” snarled Carla.

“Don’t worry, I’ll get it,” laughed Riley. Despite Carla’s protests that he wasn’t allowed and it could be dangerous, he started climbing the wooden slats and heaved himself over. “Actually, I could use some help here,” he added after a moment or two.

Trying to ignore her nagging conscience, not to mention the accusing stares of Major Fourpaws, Carla bit the bullet and scaled the fence, nimbly dropping down the other side. Before her stretched a dense, green tangle of nettles, buddleia and brambles, competing for fertile ground amidst the crumbling bricks and concrete. A rustling nearby betrayed Riley’s presence.

“It must be here somewhere – I didn’t swing it that hard,” said Riley, sounding slightly resentful that his little joke had gone so spectacularly wrong.

“Shhh!” hissed Cala. “Did you hear that? It’s coming from over here.”



“What, is your bag calling to you?” mocked Riley, crashing through the undergrowth towards her, nonetheless. Carla put her finger to her lips and turned her head, trying to pinpoint the direction from which the sound was coming, before pushing aside some more foliage to reveal an old brick-red pipe.

“Phone! Torch,” said Carla, holding out her hand. Riley passed her his mobile and knelt down beside her. Reflected in the light, two familiar pale green eyes stared out at them pitifully from about a meter along the pipe.

“Hey, it’s all right little one,” cooed Carla. “We’ll soon have you out of there. Riley, go and get your dad – he’ll know what to do.”

“But he’ll kill me for coming in here,” he protested.

“I think both he and Mr Nash will consider this to be more important, don’t you?”

Reading Questions

Vocabulary:

1. ... That moggy was his best friend ... What is a moggy?

2. ... A bit of a loose cannon ... What does this mean in this sentence?

3. ... an old house had been earmarked ... What does the word earmarked mean in this sentence?

Retrieval:

4. Name two places on which “Missing” posters had been placed.

a. _____ b. _____

5. After she had climbed over the fence, how could Carla tell where Riley was?

6. How was Carla able to see inside the pipe?

Inference:

7. Riley had many fine qualities but picking his moment wasn't one of them ... This means:

8. Look at the paragraph beginning *Trying to ignore ...* What do you think *buddleia* could be? Circle one.

a type of plant

fencing

a breed of cat

old rope

9. Look at the paragraph beginning *Trying to ignore ...* How is Carla feeling at this point? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Summarise:

10. Here are some summaries of different paragraphs. Number them from 1 to 4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- Riley swings Carla's bag around his head.
- Carla demands Riley's phone.
- Riley climbs over the fence.
- Carla and Riley are walking home from school.