



Trouble at the Old Canal

"Now Mitch, don't go playing down by the old canal," my parents had warned me often enough. Anyone who lived within a few miles of the canal had all been told the same stories about how dangerous it was. Did we listen? Of course not. This made the prospect of the canal even more thrilling and so that's where we hung out most of the time. Parents worry too much.

The canal they warned us about ran along the back of Steiner Street and into the fields beyond. Apparently it used to play an important role in transporting goods from Bowbeck to the bigger cities, at least that's what we were told in class when we studied our local area. Looking at its sludgy brown surface and knotted overgrown pathways, it was hard to see the former glory lurking beneath.

After school on Friday, we all headed down to the canal as usual: me, Polly, Sam and Imran. We sat on the bank chatting and making plans for the weekend when Polly spotted something different. "Hey guys, there's a ladder in the bushes!" she cried excitedly. We dragged it out of the undergrowth and Sam announced that he had a great idea. He laid it across the canal and stepped back with a grin on his face. Pointing at it he issued the challenge, "Dare you!" Imran's face fell and he peered over the edge, "I don't think that's a good idea guys, we don't know what's down there if we fall in."

"Well that's ok because I don't plan on falling in," announced Polly confidently as she stepped up to the ladder. Holding her arms out like a tightrope walker, she edged along the ladder with her teeth clenched, placing her feet on each rung. We all watched with baited breath, half terrified and half in awe.

She was halfway along when it all went wrong. The ladder, which was balanced precariously on the edges, wobbled as she took a step and she lost her balance. Before we could even react she had fallen in. That's when we all remembered a horrifying fact: Polly couldn't swim! She flapped her arms in desperation and her eyes were wide with fear. Instinct took over and I spun around frantically searching the banks for something to help. I grabbed a large stick and held it out towards the murky water. Imran and Sam grabbed me round the waist to stop me falling in too and we screamed at Polly to grab the stick. After losing her grip a couple of times, I could feel my panic rising but I pushed it down and leant forwards even further stretching my arms until they burned with the effort. Finally, she managed to get hold of the stick and we yanked her out of the water. We all lay on the bank panting and in shock. It had been a close-call.

Back home, we told our parents what had happened and they were obviously furious. We all had a huge lecture about how stupid we'd been and how Polly could have died. We knew we deserved it so just sat there and listened. Our parents had been right all along – the old canal was not a place to play. We had certainly learned our lesson.



Purpose: To entertain the reader whilst also giving a message about ignoring warnings

Key features



Structural:

- Paragraph 1: characters are warned not to do something
- Paragraph 2: the dangerous place is described
- Paragraph 3: the characters go to the dangerous place and do something dangerous
- Paragraph 4: something awful happens but the characters survive and reflect on their choices
- Paragraph 5: the characters get told off

Language:

- Adverbials: of time, of frequency, of manner
- Use adjectives so the reader can visualise the danger
- Burger sentence to give extra information
- Dialogue to convey character
- Dramatic language to heighten the danger



Writer's toolbox

Apostrophes:

- For contraction, e.g. couldn't
- For possession, e.g. Imran's face

Alan Peat:

Burger sentence. *Example:*
Cakes, **which taste fantastic**, are not so good for your health.

Dialogue:

Use dialogue to convey character. Remember the rules of speech:

"CL PM" *Example:*

"Dare you!"

Vocabulary:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| Prospect | Thrilling |
| Apparently | Important role |
| Sludgy | Knotted |
| Former glory | Lurking |
| Baited breath | Awe |

Recommended reads

