

The golden boys

Mr and Mrs Hamilton had two sons, Richard and Philip, who were both taller and friendlier than me. My parents liked them a lot. ‘Why can’t you be more like Richard and Philip?’ I hated them.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercise.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. a thief (thieves)
2. a stranger
3. a deckchair
4. to pretend
5. a purse
6. to scream
7. to pat
8. eventually

Definition

- a. a folding chair that you use outside
- b. someone who steals things
- c. someone that you don’t know
- d. in the end
- e. a small container for money, usually used by a woman
- f. to behave as if something is true when you know it is not
- g. to cry out suddenly in a loud and high voice
- h. to touch something with your hand to show affection

The golden boys

Every August. Every August for twelve years. Every August for twelve years we went to the same small town on holiday. Every August for twelve years we went to the same beach. Every August for twelve years my parents rented the same small house in the same small town near the same beach, so every morning of every August for twelve years I woke up and walked down to the same beach and sat under the same umbrella or on the same towel in front of the same sea.

There was a small café on the beach where we sat every day, and every day Mr Morelli in the café said ‘Good morning!’ to my parents, and then always patted me on the head like a dog. Every day we walked down to our red and white umbrella. Every day my father sat on his deckchair and read the newspaper then went to sleep. Every day my mother went for a swim in the sea and then went to sleep. Every lunchtime we ate the same cheese sandwiches which my mother made, and then every afternoon we went up to the café and ate an ice cream while my parents talked to Mr Morelli about the weather. Every summer for twelve years I sat there and read books and sometimes played volleyball with some of the other boys and girls who were there, but I never made any friends.

It was so boring.

Every August for twelve years the same family sat next to us. They were called the Hamiltons. We had a red and white umbrella, they had a green one. Every morning my parents said 'Good morning!' to Mr and Mrs Hamilton, and Mr and Mrs Hamilton said 'Good morning!' to my parents. Sometimes they talked about the weather.

Mr and Mrs Hamilton had two sons. Richard was the same age as me, and his brother Philip was two years older than me. Richard and Philip were both taller than me. Richard and Philip were very friendly and both very handsome. They were much friendlier and more handsome than me. They made friends with everyone and organised the games of volleyball on the beach or swimming races in the sea with the other children. They always won the games of volleyball and the swimming races. My parents liked Richard and Philip a lot. 'Why can't you be more like Richard and Philip?' they said to me. 'Look at them! They make friends with everyone! They are polite, good boys! You just sit here reading books and doing nothing!'

I, of course, hated them.

Richard and Philip, Richard and Philip, Richard and Philip – it was all I ever heard from my parents every August for twelve years. Richard and Philip were perfect. Everything about them was better than anything about me. Even their green beach umbrella was better than our red and white one.

I was sixteen years old the last summer we went there. Perfect Richard and perfect Philip came to the beach one day and said that they were going to have a barbecue at lunchtime. They were going to cook for everyone! 'Forget your cheese sandwiches,' they laughed. 'Come and have some hamburgers or barbecue chicken with us! We're going to cook!'

My parents, of course, thought this was wonderful. 'Look at how good Richard and Philip are! They're going to do a barbecue and they've invited everybody! You couldn't organise a barbecue!'

Every summer for twelve years, on the other side of my family, sat Mrs Moffat. Mrs Moffat was a very large woman who came to the same beach every summer for twelve years on her own. Nobody knew if she had a husband or a family, but my parents said that she was very rich. Mrs Moffat always came to the beach wearing a large hat, a pair of sunglasses and a gold necklace. She always carried a big bag with her. She never went swimming, but sat under her umbrella reading magazines until lunchtime when she went home.

Richard and Philip, of course, also invited Mrs Moffat to their barbecue.

Richard and Philip's barbecue was, of course, a great success. About twenty people came, and Richard and Philip cooked lots of hamburgers and chicken and made a big salad and brought big pieces of watermelon and everyone laughed and joked and told Mr and Mrs Hamilton how wonderful their sons were. I ate one hamburger and didn't talk to anybody. After a while, I left, and made sure that nobody saw me leave.

Mrs Moffat ate three plates of chicken and two hamburgers. After that she said she was very tired and was going to go and have a sleep. She walked over to her umbrella and sat down on her deckchair and went to sleep. When she woke up later, everybody on the beach was surprised to hear her screaming and shouting.

'My bag!!!! My bag!!!!' she shouted. 'It's gone!!! It's GONE!!!' Everybody on the beach ran over to Mrs Moffat to see what the problem was. 'Someone has taken my bag!!!!' she screamed. 'Someone has stolen my bag!!!!'

'Impossible!' said everybody else. 'This is a very safe, friendly beach! There are no thieves here!' But it was true. Mrs Moffat's big bag wasn't there any more.

Nobody had seen any strangers on the beach during the barbecue, so they thought that Mrs Moffat had perhaps taken her bag somewhere and forgotten it. Mr Morelli from the café organised a search of the beach. Everybody looked everywhere for Mrs Moffat's big bag.

Eventually, they found it. My father saw it hidden in the sand under a deckchair. A green deckchair. Richard and Philip's deckchair. My father took it and gave it back to Mrs Moffat. Everybody looked at Richard and Philip. Richard and Philip, the golden boys, stood there looking surprised. Of course, they didn't know what to say.

Mrs Moffat looked in her bag. She started screaming again. Her purse with her money in it wasn't in the big bag. 'My purse!' she shouted, 'My purse has gone! Those boys have stolen it! They organised a barbecue so they could steal my purse!'

Everybody tried to explain to Mrs Moffat that this couldn't possibly be true, but Mrs Moffat called the police. The police arrived and asked golden Richard and golden Philip lots of questions. Richard and Philip couldn't answer the questions. Eventually, they all got into a police car and drove away to the police station.

I sat there, pretending to read my book and trying to hide a big, fat purse under the sand on the beach.

That was the last summer we went to the beach. My parents never talked about Richard and Philip again.

Chris Rose

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. The narrator likes going to the same place on holiday.	True	False
2. Mr Morelli is rude to the narrator.	True	False
3. The narrator thinks his holidays are boring.	True	False
4. Richard and Philip are popular.	True	False
5. Richard and Philip invite the narrator to their barbecue.	True	False
6. Mrs Moffat screams and shouts because she can't find her bag.	True	False
7. Everybody thinks the narrator stole the bag.	True	False
8. Richard and Philip stole the bag.	True	False

Discussion

How do you think the narrator will feel about what he did ten years later?

Answers

Preparation task

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. f
5. e
6. g
7. h
8. d

Task 1

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. False