

Poems by Allan Ahlberg

Please Mrs Butler

Please Mrs Butler  
This boy Derek Drew  
Keeps copying my work, Miss.  
What shall I do?

Go and sit in the hall, dear.  
Go and sit in the sink.  
Take your books on the roof, my  
lamb.  
Do whatever you think.

Please Mrs Butler  
This boy Derek Drew  
Keeps taking my rubber, Miss.  
What shall I do?

Keep it in your hand, dear.  
Hide it up your vest.  
Swallow it if you like, love.  
Do what you think best.

Please Mrs Butler  
This boy Derek Drew  
Keeps calling me rude names, Miss.  
What shall I do?

Lock yourself in the cupboard, dear.  
Run away to sea.  
Do whatever you can, my flower.  
But don't ask me!

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Make a list of all the things Derek Drew does.

If the poem was longer, what other things might Derek Drew that are typical in a classroom?

Why do you think Derek Drew does all these things?

Would you recommend this poem?

Why? Why not?

What does Mrs Butler tell the children, who are complaining, to do?

Do any of these things surprise you?

Why/why not?

Would you like Mrs Butler to be your teacher?

Why? Why not?

Do you think Mrs Butler is a good teacher?

Why? Why not?

Why do you think Mrs Butler suggests all the things the children could do, but finishes with

'But don't ask me!'

## The Supply Teacher

Underline the things the new teacher does that the children say are different.

What else might a new teacher do that the children could say was different?

Here's the rule for what to do  
If ever your teacher has the flu  
Or for some other reason takes to her bed  
And a different teacher comes instead

When the visiting teacher hangs up her hat  
Writes the date on the board, does this or that  
Always remember, you have to say this,  
OUR teacher never does that, Miss!

When you want to change places or wander about  
Or feel like getting the guinea pig out  
Never forget, the message is this,  
OUR teacher always lets us, Miss!

In a different colour, underline all the things the children might say their teacher usually lets them do.

What else might they say there are usually allowed to do?

Why do you think Allan Ahlberg wrote this poem?

Do you think there is any truth in it?

Why/why not?

Then, when your teacher returns next day  
And complains about the paint or clay  
Remember these words, you just say this:  
That OTHER teacher told us to, Miss!

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Do you think supply teachers are treated fairly by children?

Explain your thinking

How do you think the supply teacher feels before going into a new class?

How do you think he/she feels at the end of the day?

Explain your answers

What sort of things might make a class teacher proud of the class when he/she comes back to school after a supply teacher has been there?

Explain your answer

## It's a Puzzle

Why has the poet  
fallen out with  
his/her friend?

My friend  
Is not my friend any more  
She has secrets from me  
And goes about with Tracy Hacket

What does this poem  
have in common with  
the first two?

What is different?

I would get her back,  
Only do not want to say so.  
So I pretend  
To have secrets from her  
And go about with Alice Banks

But what bothers me is,  
Maybe she is pretending  
And would like me back  
Only does not want to say so.

How do you think the  
poet is feeling?

What advice would you  
give the poet?

Do you think this poem  
has the same  
'feel/atmosphere' as the  
first two?

Explain your answer

In which case  
Maybe it bothers her  
That I am pretending.  
But if we are both pretending,  
Then really we are friends  
And do not know it.

On the other hand,  
How can we be friends  
And have secrets from each other  
And go about with other people?

This poem's title is

'It's a Puzzle'

Why do you think Allan  
Ahlberg chose this title?

My friend  
Is not my friend any more,  
Unless she is pretending.  
I cannot think what to do.  
It is a puzzle.

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