

Billy Elliot

Melvin Burgess

Context Work

1. Friendship

“Look at me. I’d run a mile to get out of a fight, it’s a waste of time. But people are always picking on me anyhow. If there was something I could give up that would stop people picking on me, I’d do it. But there’s not. You can’t give up being just yourself. My dad always says that I’m different and I should be proud of it, but round here being different isn’t such a good thing at all. It’s a bloody problem. In infants I was always getting picked on. In primary I was always getting picked on. We’re going to be starting high school soon and I’m going to be picked on there and all, I bet you.

But Billy’s always been a good friend to me. He never minded me being different. I don’t know why, I always thought he wasn’t at all different himself, he always seemed to be exactly the same as everyone else except that he stood up for me instead of picking on me. I always thought he could have got on with any of them, except that he stood up for me instead of picking on me. I always thought he could have got on with any of them, except for some reason he’d ended up with me, like a sort of accident. Like he’d made friends with me before he realized how weird I was and then just stuck with me. It always used to worry me that one day he’d realize I was all wrong and drop me, but he never did. And then he took up ballet and after that he was just as weird as I was, and I stopped worrying about it.” (Michael, p. 63)

Find the phrasal verbs in the text which mean the same as:

1. escape: _____
2. tease; mock: _____
3. stop: _____
4. have smooth relations with someone: _____
5. defend: _____
6. _____:
7. start a friendship with: _____
8. _____:
9. stop seeing or being friends with (someone): _____
10. begin something new: _____

Discuss: Would you like to have a friend like Michael?

Are you a good friend?

Use the phrasal verbs to complete the questionnaire. Then take the quiz to find out how good a friend you are!

1. Lately some of your classmates have been saying bad things about your friend behind her back. You:

- a. _____ your friend
- b. join in
- c. say nothing at all

2. When you make a new friend do you:

- a. Introduce him to your old ones?
- b. _____ your old _____, telling them you have found a new friend?
- c. Tell your new friend he's not as important as your old ones?

3. How well do you _____ people whose opinions about music, clothes, free time activities, etc. are different from yours?

- a. Not well at all. My friends have to agree with me about everything.
- b. I seek out people who are different from me because I like to have a reason to argue with them.
- c. I expect my friends to share some of my opinions and differ on others. Everyone is entitled to her own views.

4. What is the best way to _____ people in a new setting?

- a. Tell lots of jokes and sing songs loudly to try and attract attention
- b. Start a conversation with someone who seems nice by asking him questions about himself
- c. Tell everybody all about yourself and how well you can do things

5. Some of your classmates _____ you during lunch and recess hours at school. They laugh at you and call you names. You:

- a. Tell the teacher
- b. Ignore them and hope the problem goes away
- c. Approach the leader and tell her firmly that you are not intimidated

6. Some of your friends are thinking of joining a sports club but you have never tried the sport. They want you to join too. You:

- a. Tell them your parents won't let you.
- b. _____ the sport because you have been wanting to try something new anyway
- c. Try to convince your friends to join a different sports club where you already belong

7. Your best friend always tries to get out of doing his homework by asking you for all the answers. Not only are you tired of doing all the work, your friend is also failing some of his classes. You:

- a. Don't do anything. It's your friend's problem if he fails all his classes.
- b. Explain to your friend that you think he should do his own homework so his marks will improve.
- c. Tell the teacher about the problem, and ask the teacher to talk to your friend.

Use the remaining three phrasal verbs to complete the descriptions below. Then use the chart to work out how you score as a friend!

1-5: You are not the greatest of friends. If you're not careful and don't change your ways, you will _____ no friends at all! Try to think a bit more about how you like to be treated, and treat others that way. You'll see—you will be happier, and so will your friends!

5-10: Most of the time you are a reliable friend, however sometimes you have a problem with being honest. Be careful or your friends will _____ you if they think they can't trust you. Don't be afraid to say what you think but remember to take your friends' feelings into consideration as well!

11-14: You are a true friend, the friend everyone should like to have. Your sensitivity and integrity will make your closest of friends _____ you until the end. Keep doing what you do, and don't change anything!

- 1--a-2, b-0, c-1
- 2—a-2, b-0, c-0
- 3—a-0, b-1, c-2
- 4—a-1, b-2, c-0
- 5—a-1, b-1, c-2
- 6—a-0, b-1, c-1
- 7—a-0, b-2, c-1

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2. The Miners' Strike

Look at the following footage from a BBC report about the 1984 Miner's Strike.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUapdl7_KCg

What do you see? Circle the words.

Road blocks	the pit	horseback	motorbikes	bricks
little wooden shed	long sticks	gangs	picket lines	firewood

The whole bloody town was under siege. You'd have thought we were trying to attack the Houses of Parliament rather than just be out on strike. The police were everywhere.

When it started off they were just down by the pit. They were OK at first, they used to chat with the miners, everything was fairly friendly. But then miners from other place were coming to picket our pit, and that's when they started. There were road blocks and all sorts. They were everywhere. Gangs of them wandering around all over the place. On horseback. In cars. On motorbikes. All over town.

It wasn't getting them anywhere, though, we were running rings around them. The miners always found a way to get to the pit no matter how hard the police tried to stop them. They hid on the school buses and lorries taking goods to the shops. We had people from all over, not just miners, coming in to fight for the mines. Young people, old people, all sorts, all gathered round the pit chanting, "Here we go, here we go, here we go" and "Maggie Maggie Maggie—out out out!" Tony reckoned we were going to bring the government down, but we had no money left at all. People were chopping down anything you could burn just to keep warm. We pulled our little wooden shed in the yard to bits for firewood. We were—well, I never went hungry but I was getting really sick of sliced bread and marge. I'd have died for a bacon buttie. There was nothing to spare, no treats, no money for anything. They were trying to starve us out, see. And frighten us and all, with the police. It was scary.

It was the ones on horseback that scared me the most. They were so big, and the policemen had these long sticks to hit people with. You know? Galloping up behind one of the miners and whack! Right across their backs or round the head. There was blood and everything. I've seen it. You'd never ask a policeman the time again if you'd seen them do what I have." (Billy, pp. 70-1)

Now read Billy's account of the strike. What similarities/differences do you note between his description and the BBC newscast?