

Chapter 3

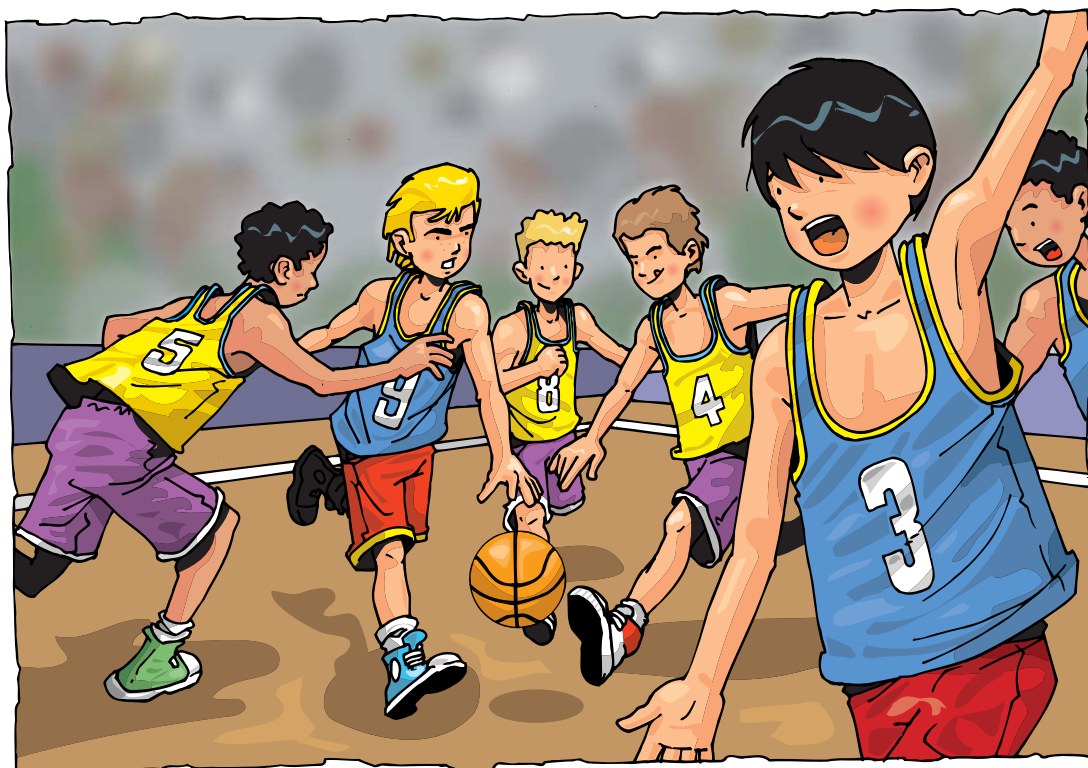
The Gold Mine

"Boy, talk about diversity," said Patrick, indicating Mark with a jerk of his thumb. "Look at that weirdo!"

Charlie hoped Mark hadn't heard Patrick. Patrick was really good at sport. Today it was basketball—he was best of all at that. The trouble was that he was kind of arrogant about it. He looked down on boys who weren't so good—like Mark.

People thought Mark was a nerd. He was small, skinny and clever. He wore delicate-looking glasses that looked like one basketball in the face would snap them. He was afraid of the ball, too.

"How did he ever make the team?" asked Patrick. Popular, handsome, and powerful, he seemed upset that Mark was even a substitute. "He's such a zero!"



Charlie sighed heavily. He respected Patrick, but he didn't want to see Mark hurt. He hoped Mark couldn't hear Patrick's remarks.

The team depended on Patrick's goal-scoring abilities to win. He liked to run dramatically all the way down the court and shoot for a three-pointer just to show he could do it. The Coach would yell, "Pass the ball! Pass it, Patrick!" but Patrick just sank basket after basket. The rest of the boys felt that without Patrick they were hopeless.

Every Child Is Gifted

Carla Hawkins, of Chicago, Illinois, is known as "Mama Hawk" because of her work reaching and teaching inner city students. "Mama Hawk" believes that every child has tremendous gifts inside, and she hates to see those gifts go to waste through lack of education, poverty, or kids getting into drugs and crime.

Some educational scientists agree that every person is gifted. If that is true, then the 6 billion plus people in the world are like 6 billion goldmines of information, creativity, and talent that could make our world better!

Today, though, Patrick was off form, and they weren't winning. "Maybe it's because I'm surrounded by losers!" he thought, jostling past everyone. He sneered at Mark, inviting the others to laugh at him. But the other guys didn't like being labelled losers, and they weren't laughing.

"I know why you're losing," said Mark. (The kid had guts, you had to hand it to him, speaking to Patrick like that!)

Patrick sneered, "Oh, yeah? Why?"

Mark said, "Terry is much better at three pointers than you are, so you should let him take the long shots. Half the time when you go all the way down the court with the ball, you get stopped for travelling, so why don't you pass more often? Jimmy here is about five inches taller than you, so he could make some of the shots, too."

All the boys looked flabbergasted and were about to laugh at Mark, when the coach said, "I couldn't have said it better myself, Mark."

The boys looked from the coach to Mark and back to the coach.

"Take his advice!" said Coach. "He knows what he's talking about—he's a mine of information!"

The boys did as Mark suggested. The tide of the game began to turn and they came back, step by step, from their losing position until the scores were even. They were so happy, they ran to Mark and hugged him.

The coach laughed. "Come on, Mark. Finish the game for us!" he shouted.

Mark pulled out a notebook and quickly sketched a strategy. The players crowded around him to study it. Then they cheered, ran onto the court—and won!



"Guess he's good for something after all," Patrick muttered to Charlie.

"Yeah, everybody is," said Charlie softly.

Famous 'Nerds'

Bill Gates is the world's richest man. When he was young, you might have thought he was a 'nerd' or a 'geek'—all he cared about was computers. He wore glasses. He wasn't handsome and he didn't stand out. But he revolutionised the world by creating and marketing software.

Computers now have a huge impact on every aspect of modern life. You have grown up with computers. But before the 1980s, computers were huge, robot-like things that very few people knew how to use. Now, almost everyone has seen and many people own a computer. We live in the 'information age'. In large part, this is due to Bill Gates—a 'nerd' who will go down in history as a visionary and whose personal wealth is greater than that of many countries of the world.

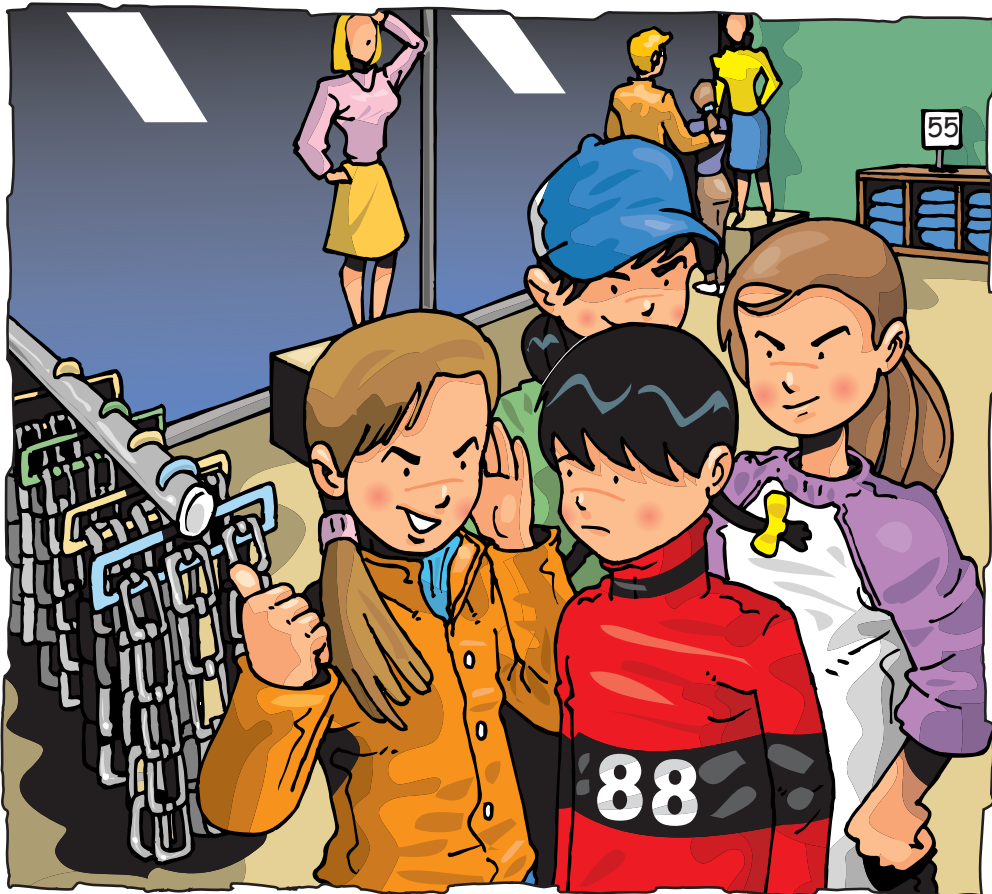
"I tried to be as normal as I could," says Bill Gates, who admits he was a misfit at school—he even tried getting lower grades so as to be 'cool'. But he couldn't be ordinary. He was extraordinary. He and his friend all but took over the school computer room, they were so fascinated by it.

So next time you think someone is a nerd, show a little respect. Even a nerd has something to offer. In fact, you may be looking at the next Bill Gates!

"Count me in!"

Suzy was a good leader in some ways. During break time she would seek out each member of her group and have a chat and a laugh with each one. Suzy slipped Alice notes and sweets in class. She made Alice feel special and cared for. Life was pleasant, Alice thought. She didn't know how she had managed to get through school without Suzy.

Charlie, meanwhile, was meeting with Cubs and older Scouts during his breaks. Their purpose was clear—they were all learning how to be leaders one day. They encouraged Charlie to buy his uniform himself.



"It'll mean more to you if you've earned it yourself," they told him. He already had the scarf. It felt very special because he'd been given it when he made his Scout Promise.

After school, Alice went with Suzy and her group to the shops. They found Suzy's brother, Martin, working. Alice was excited to be taken into the stock room and shown all the boxes of goods.

"See how much they have?" said Martin. "Nothing's ever missed!"

Suzy led them back into the shop. She turned to Alice. "Now, I did it for you, so you do it for me," she said.

"What?"

"I want that belt over there."

It was a really cool chain belt.

"Buy it, then," said Alice.

"Go on, you know what I want you to do. Martin said it was OK," said Suzy. "He works here. He knows. Don't be a baby!"

Alice felt that Martin was an authority in the store. If he said it was all right, maybe it was. Maybe it wouldn't be missed... besides, all the girls were looking at her and Suzy was getting angry. Alice slipped the belt round her waist. She could return it later, with the sweater. But for now...

Feeling nervous but brave, she removed the tags and put them in her pocket. "See you, Martin!" Suzy cried, as she led the way out.

"See you," said Martin casually, keeping the other shop assistant's eye on him.

Alice walked out. She saw the admiring faces of her new friends in front of her, just beyond the door.

Suddenly—BUZZZZ! The metal belt had set off the door alarm!

Alice broke into a cold sweat.

The sales assistant Martin had been talking to hurried over. Alice felt her knees tremble as he marched her to the Manager's office. She looked round. The others had vanished! Where was her leader now, when she needed her?

The rest was like a bad dream—her shocked parents coming to pick her up, the policeman, the store manager shaking his head and saying he would not press charges...the fumbling, shaky return of the belt and how horrified her parents had been to see that she really did have it...

"And where was that friend of yours?" her mother asked bitterly on the way home. "The one Mr. Sebastian said was a leader?"

Alice whispered, "She deserted me."

"Some leader!" said her father, bitterly. When they got home, he added, "We will deal with this when we've all calmed down. Go to your room, Alice. Here." He selected a book called 'Great Leaders in History'. "Why don't you do a little reading on the subject so next time you follow a true leader?"

Alice took the book miserably and went to her room.



Shoplifting

It is true that some of the costs of theft are passed on to the customer, making everything more expensive, but it is also true that some stores, even big retail chains, have gone out of business because of losses due to theft.

Millions of pounds a year are lost due to shoplifting in the UK, which the public pays for in higher prices. Some stores estimate that they lose one third of their goods to theft.

Because of shoplifting, retailers have to pay for expensive security devices such as buzzers and alarms, goods tags, store detectives, and legal expenses. They pay for this by charging higher prices—otherwise, they would go out of business.

The answer isn't for everyone to become dishonest, as Suzy seems to think! That would just put costs up even more. A better solution would be for people to be honest. If shoplifting cost the shops less, they could lower prices—then everyone would win!