

One Little Can

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Read the story and check your answers.

One Little Can (adapted from the story by David La Rochelle)

Part 1

Rachel felt sad as she walked to the school bus stop. Her neighborhood looked so dirty. There were old newspapers and garbage all over the sidewalk. She walked on. The door to Lee's Grocery Store was covered with ugly graffiti. It was spring, but the yards were all covered with garbage instead of grass and flowers.

"Yuck!" Rachel said as she began to kick a soda can off the sidewalk. Then she stopped herself and picked it up. She threw the soda can into a garbage can on the corner of the street and then she rushed to meet her friends at the bus stop.

Mr. Lee watched Rachel as she walked by his store. He didn't like children as they were always making trouble in the neighborhood. "Hmph," he said as the girl passed by. "She's probably another troublemaker," he thought, "one of those kids who spray-painted graffiti all over my door. Kids today are just no good." He saw Rachel get ready to kick the soda can, but then he was very surprised when instead she stopped, picked it, up and threw it into the garbage can. "There's a change!" he thought to himself.

All morning as Mr. Lee worked in his store he couldn't stop thinking about the girl. In the middle of the day he walked to the corner of the street to mail a letter. He saw that there was a lot of garbage in front of his store. He thought about the girl again. Then he took a broom and began to sweep up all the garbage outside his store.

Part 2

Mrs. Polansky looked out of her window. Her yard was full of plastic bags and old newspapers. She hated living in front of Mr. Lee's store because people were always throwing their garbage on the street outside the store and then the wind blew it into her yard. Maybe. I should write a letter to the mayor to complain about Mr. Lee and his store," she thought. Just then, Mr. Lee started to sweep the sidewalk outside his store. "That's a change!" Mrs. Polansky thought to herself.

A few minutes later Mrs. Polansky went to let her cat out. She looked at all the mess in her yard and then she thought about Mr. Lee. "Well, Fluffy," she said to her cat, "Mr. Lee isn't the only one who can do a bit of spring cleaning!" and she began to clean up her own yard.

In the afternoon Rachel got off the school bus. The first thing she saw was a woman planting flowers in her yard. A fat gray and white cat was trying to catch a yellow butterfly among the red flowers. Then she noticed that all the yards looked clean and she could see grass and flowers.

When she passed by Mr. Lee's store she saw that he was painting the door a bright blue. She smiled at him and he smiled back.

"My neighborhood doesn't look so bad after all," Rachel thought as she picked up the only chocolate bar wrapper on the sidewalk and threw it into the nearest garbage can. Then she sang to herself the rest of the way home.

REACT

Discuss the following questions in class.

- 1 What was the problem in the neighbourhood? What did Rachel do about it?
- 2 How did Rachel's action change the people in her neighbourhood?

Did you notice?

The sequence of events in a story is very important. It shows how one thing happens because of another.

- 3 Why is the story called One Little Can?

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