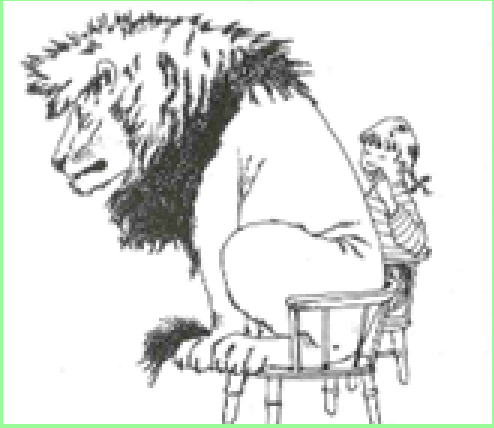
Reading!

LO: To use inference skills to answer questions about a text.



Extra information: In lots of stories, lions are often considered to represent courage and being brave. The lion in our story is brave and strong, and scares away the bullies for the little girl.

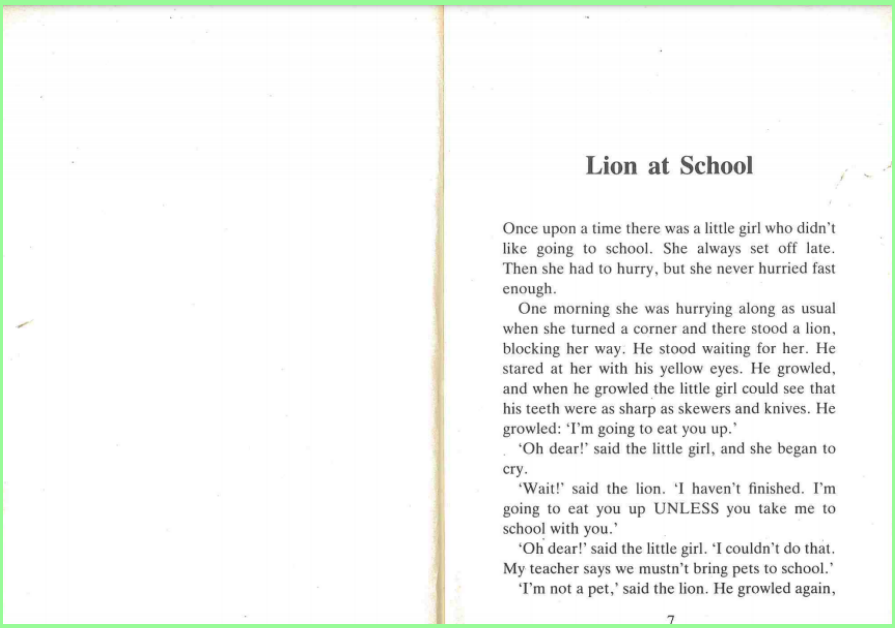


Questions:

1. Why did the little girl not like school? How do you know?
2. Do you think the lion was real? Discuss.

Glossary:

- skewers – sharp metal sticks used to pierce food
- mane – ring of fur around a lion's neck
- shan't – won't or will not.
- throat – inside of your neck



Lion at School

Once upon a time there was a little girl who didn't like going to school. She always set off late. Then she had to hurry, but she never hurried fast enough.

One morning she was hurrying along as usual when she turned a corner and there stood a lion, blocking her way. He stood waiting for her. He stared at her with his yellow eyes. He growled, and when he growled the little girl could see that his teeth were as sharp as skewers and knives. He growled: 'I'm going to eat you up.'

'Oh dear!' said the little girl, and she began to cry.

'Wait!' said the lion. 'I haven't finished. I'm going to eat you up UNLESS you take me to school with you.'

'Oh dear!' said the little girl. 'I couldn't do that. My teacher says we mustn't bring pets to school.'

'I'm not a pet,' said the lion. He growled again,

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and she saw that his tail swished from side to side in anger – *swish! swash!* 'You can tell your teacher that I'm a friend who is coming to school with you,' he said. 'Now shall we go?'

The little girl had stopped crying. She said: 'All right. But you must promise two things. First of all, you mustn't eat anyone: it's not allowed.'

'I suppose I can growl?' said the lion.

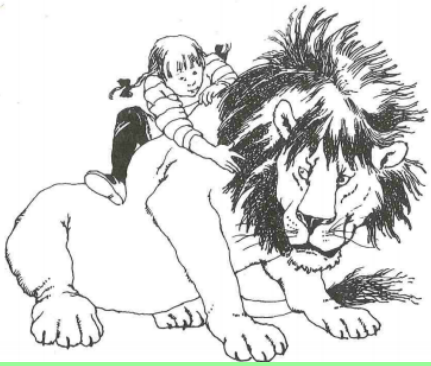
'I suppose you can,' said the little girl.

'And I suppose I can roar?'

'Must you?' said the little girl.

'Yes,' said the lion.

'Then I suppose you can,' said the little girl.





'And what's the second thing?' asked the lion.

'You must let me ride on your back to school.'

'Very well,' said the lion.

He crouched down on the pavement and the little girl climbed on to his back. She held on by his mane. Then they went on together towards the school, the little girl riding the lion.

The lion ran with the little girl on his back to school. Even so, they were late. The little girl and the lion went into the classroom just as the teacher was calling the register.

The teacher stopped calling the register when she saw the little girl and the lion. She stared at

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the lion, and all the other children stared at the lion, wondering what the teacher was going to say. The teacher said to the little girl: 'You know you are not allowed to bring pets to school.'

The lion began to swish his tail – *swish! swash!* The little girl said: 'This is not a pet. This is my friend who is coming to school with me.'

The teacher still stared at the lion, but she said to the little girl: 'What is his name, then?'

'Noil,' said the little girl. 'His name is Noil. Just Noil.' She knew it would be no good to tell the teacher that her friend was a lion, so she had turned his name backwards: LION – NOIL.

The teacher wrote the name down in the register: NOIL. Then she finished calling the register.

'Betty Small,' she said.

'Yes,' said the little girl.

'Noil,' said the teacher.

'Yes,' said the lion. He mumbled, opening his mouth as little as possible, so that the teacher should not see his teeth as sharp as skewers and knives.

All that morning the lion sat up on his chair next to the little girl, like a big cat, with his tail curled round his front paws, as good as gold. He





didn't speak unless the teacher spoke to him. He didn't growl, he didn't roar.

At playtime the little girl and the lion went into the playground. All the children stopped playing to stare at the lion. Then they went on playing again. The little girl stood in a corner of the playground, with the lion beside her.

'Why don't we play like the others?' the lion asked.

The little girl said, 'I don't like playing because some of the big boys are so big and rough. They knock you over without meaning to.'

The lion growled. 'They wouldn't knock ME over,' he said.

'There's one big boy – the very biggest,' said the little girl. 'His name is Jack Tall. He knocks me over on purpose.'

'Which is he?' said the lion. 'Point him out to me.'

The little girl pointed out Jack Tall to the lion.

'Ah!' said the lion. 'So that's Jack Tall.'

Just then the bell rang again, and all the children went back to their classrooms. The lion went with the little girl and sat beside her.

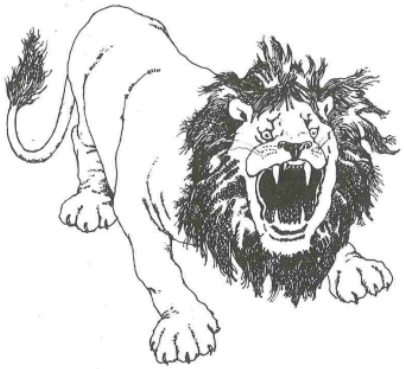
Then the children drew and wrote until dinner-time. The lion was hungry, so he wanted to draw a picture of his dinner.

'What will it be for dinner?' he asked the little girl. 'I hope it's meat.'

'No,' said the little girl. 'It will be fish fingers because today is Friday.'

Then the little girl showed the lion how to hold the yellow crayon in his paw and draw fish fingers. Underneath his picture she wrote: 'I like meat better than fish fingers.'





Then it was dinner-time. The lion sat up on his chair at the dinner-table next to the little girl.

The lion ate very fast and at the end he said: 'I'm still hungry; and I wish it had been meat.'

After dinner all the children went into the playground.

All the big boys were running about, and the very biggest boy, Jack Tall, came running towards the little girl. He was running in circles, closer and closer to the little girl.

'Go away,' said the lion. 'You might knock my friend over. Go away.'

'Shan't,' said Jack Tall. The little girl got behind the lion.

Jack Tall was running closer and closer and closer.

The lion growled. Then Jack Tall saw the lion's teeth as sharp as skewers and knives. He stopped running. He stood still. He stared.

The lion opened his mouth wider – so wide that Jack Tall could see his throat, opened wide and deep and dark like a tunnel to go into. Jack Tall went pale.

Then the lion roared.

He roared and he ROARED and he **ROARED.**

All the teachers came running out.

All the children stopped playing and stuck their fingers in their ears. And the biggest boy, Jack Tall, turned round and ran and ran and ran. He never stopped running until he got home to his mother.

The little girl came out from behind the lion.



'Well,' she said, 'I don't think much of *him*. I shall never be scared of *him* again.'

'I was hungry,' said the lion, 'I could easily have eaten him. Only I'd promised you.'

'And his mother wouldn't have liked it,' said the little girl. 'Time for afternoon school now.'

'I'm not staying for afternoon school,' said the lion.

'See you on Monday then,' said the little girl. But the lion did not answer. He just walked off.

On Monday the lion did not come to school. At playtime, in the playground, the biggest boy came up to the little girl.

'Where's your friend that talks so loudly?' he said.

'He's not here today,' said the little girl.

'Might he come another day?' asked the biggest boy.

'He might,' said the little girl. 'He easily might. So you just watch out, Jack Tall.'

Questions:

1. Why did the little girl not like school? How do you know?
2. Do you think the lion was real? Discuss.