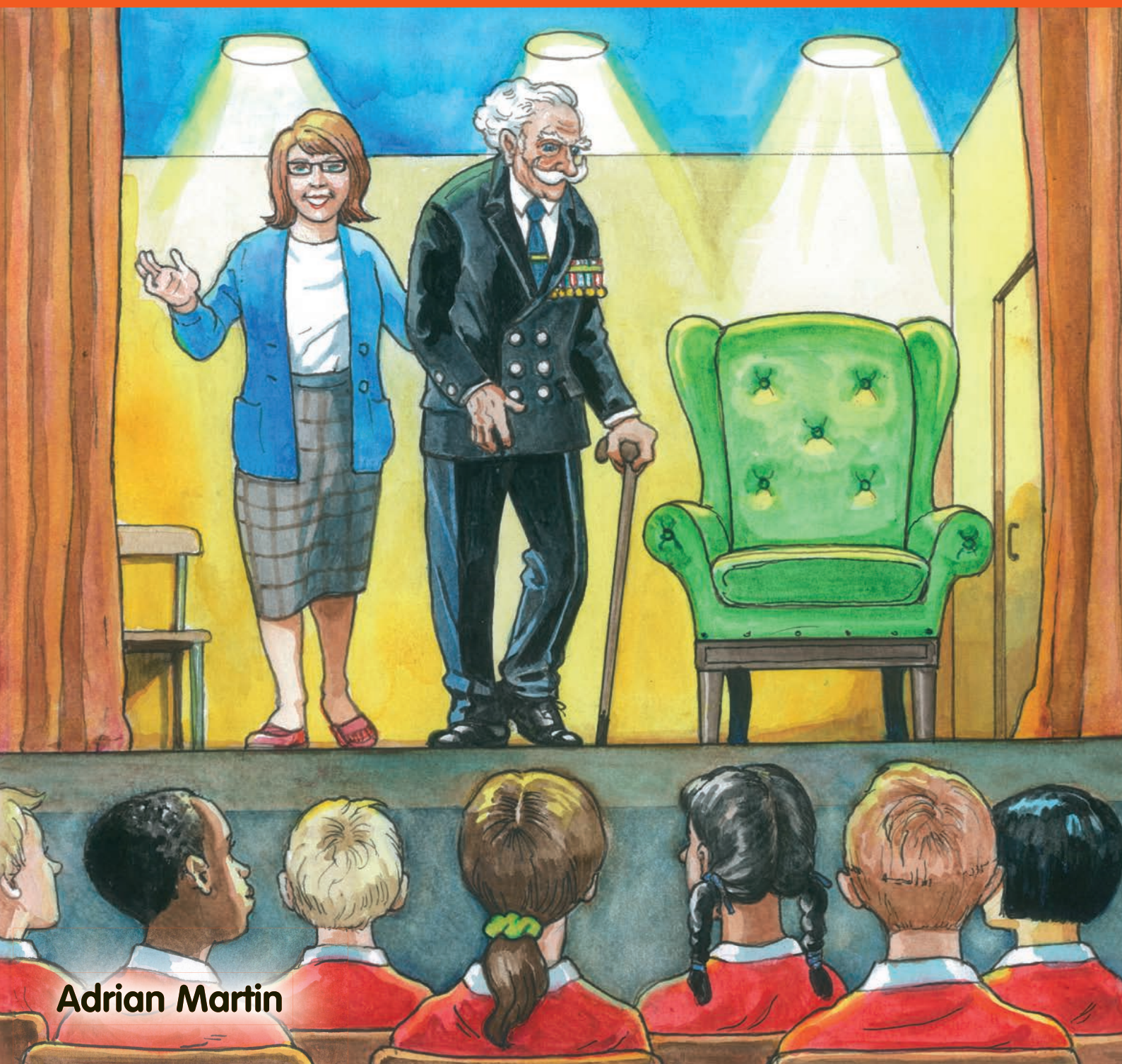


Ages: 7–11yrs


Brilliant
PUBLICATIONS

50 Fantastic Assembly Stories for KS2



Adrian Martin

William Accepts Kofi for What He Is

It was a very special day for Kofi Cuban. For today was his first day at his new school. But Mill Lane Junior School wasn't just his new school; it was the first school he had ever attended in England. Kofi's family had recently moved to England from Ghana. He had only ever known his school in Africa and for Kofi, this was the start of a completely new life.

'This is Kofi, everyone,' announced Mr Lee, 5L's teacher.

Kofi was standing nervously by Mr Lee's side. He could almost feel the thirty pairs of eyes staring at him, multiplying his nerves further. But as the teacher continued, explaining to the class how difficult it must be for Kofi, starting a new school in a new country and how everyone needed to be especially kind to him, Nathan Gibson had stopped listening and so, it seemed, had the rest of the children. There were no other African children at Mill Lane Juniors and despite trying really hard not to, Nathan just couldn't stop himself from staring. Kofi's skin was a deep brown colour, his hair a mass of tight black curls.

Mr Lee was coming to the end of his speech:

'So, Nathan,' he said.

The mention of his name shook Nathan from his hypnotic state.

'Yes Mr Lee?' he stammered.

'Nathan, I'd like you to look after Kofi today. Make sure he knows where everything is, make him feel welcome.'

'Yes, of course Mr Lee,' Nathan replied, putting on his most responsible voice.

His friends looked on enviously. Mr Lee told Kofi

to sit at Nathan's table and for the whole of the first lesson, Nathan enjoyed the responsibility of helping his new, interesting friend to settle in. A highlight for Nathan was watching Kofi's eyes widen in amazement when Mr Lee activated the interactive whiteboard with his remote control pad. It was becoming clear to Nathan just how different Mill Lane Juniors must be to Kofi's school in Ghana.

Mr Lee had shown great trust in Nathan, choosing him, from everyone else in the class, to look after Kofi and he was determined not let him down. However, he wasn't quite prepared for what was about to happen and more importantly, neither was Kofi. It was about to become very clear that Nathan wasn't the only one to be fascinated by Kofi's appearance. The bell for playtime rang loudly and Mr Lee dismissed the class, reminding Nathan to take good care of his new pupil. Nathan quickly led Kofi out of the classroom and down the corridor before all the other children filed out of their classrooms. It was a dry day and the door to the playground was wide open. Nathan stepped outside, closely followed by Kofi. The second they set foot onto the playground, the majority of the children in 5L surrounded them. They only wanted to say 'Hello' and to introduce themselves to their new classmate but Kofi wasn't used to this level of attention; his school in Ghana had only 34 pupils in total. There were only six in Kofi's class. As the children got closer and closer, smiling and telling Kofi their names, he began to panic and try as he might, Nathan could do little to calm him down. Things became even worse when the children began touching Kofi's hair. 'It's so springy!' Nathan could hear them saying.

Tears began to well up in Kofi's eyes and thankfully, when they realised he was becoming upset, the children immediately backed away, leaving Nathan standing beside him, his arm on

Kofi's shoulder. They hadn't meant any harm, but Mr Lee gave a firm and clear message to them all when they returned to the classroom.

'I know you were only being friendly,' he said. 'But it would be a very good idea if you gave Kofi some 'space' for the rest of the day (and stop touching his lovely hair).'

As the weeks passed Kofi became more accustomed to his new school and to his new classmates and got on especially well with Nathan. But it was no longer Kofi who Nathan was worried about. Ever since Kofi's arrival at Mill Lane, Nathan had noticed a change in one of his closest friends, Will. Will loved football but ever since Kofi had arrived, he hadn't played once. At lunchtime, Will always sat with Nathan to have his lunch but since Kofi had arrived, he had chosen to sit somewhere else to eat. Nathan thought back to Kofi's first day – Will was one of the few children in 5L not to surround Kofi to say 'hello'. In fact, the more he thought about it, Nathan could not remember one occasion when Will had even talked to Kofi and he had been at the school

nearly half a term now.

It was playtime and the Year 5 football game was in full swing. Kofi, who was brilliant at football, had just scored from the half way line and was being swamped by the rest of his team. Once again Will wasn't playing and Nathan scanned the playground for his friend. There were groups of children everywhere; some were skipping, some were running, chasing each other, laughing. But there was one child sat on a bench on his own, playing with nobody and very clearly not enjoying himself; Will. Nathan went over to him.

'All right?' he asked.

'Fine,' Will replied, coldly.

'Wanna play footy?' Nathan ventured.

'Nah. Gone off it,' Will lied.

'What?' gasped Nathan. 'You love football. You're football crazy! I've never known anyone more obsessed with football.'

'It's just ...' Will's voice trailed off.



But Nathan wasn't stupid. He had worked out exactly why Will had taken a sudden dislike to the sport he loved so much six weeks ago and he wasn't going to let him avoid the issue any longer.

'It's Kofi isn't it?' he said. 'Ever since he arrived you've been like this. Why don't you like him?'

Will didn't speak to begin with. He'd never actually said the words out loud before.

'He's ...' he began.

'What?' asked Nathan. 'He's what?'

'Different. Not like us. He's from ...' Will tailed off again.

'Africa?' Nathan completed Will's sentence. 'So what? What difference does that make? He's exactly the same as us.'

Nathan couldn't believe what Will was saying. They had been friends even before they had started school and had never disagreed on anything before but Will's attitude had really made Nathan angry. He just couldn't understand why he was behaving like this.

'And he's never spoken to me,' Will continued.

'That's because you've never made the effort to speak to him!' Nathan said, astonished by Will's attitude. 'You didn't even say 'hello' to him on his first day.'

But Nathan had had enough and decided it was time to take charge of the situation. He called Kofi's name and beckoned him over.

'What are you doing?' asked Will.

'I'm going to introduce you,' Nathan said.

But before Will could answer Kofi was standing in front of them both, slightly out of breath as he'd just been swamped by his team mates again after scoring another great goal.

'What's up?' he asked.

Will didn't know what to say. He didn't want to admit it to Nathan but unlike everyone else in the class, he hadn't been excited by Kofi's arrival at the school. From the moment Kofi had arrived Will had got it into his head that he was different – he was from Africa and he looked different and because of this Nathan liked him more than Will. This, of course, was not true at all but it was what Will thought and the only way he could cope with the situation was to be on his own. And now of course he realised he was wrong but he didn't know what to do to sort it all out.

Fortunately Kofi had absolutely no idea what all the fuss was about and rescued Will from his dilemma. He pulled Will's sleeve. 'C'mon,' he said. 'There's only five minutes of playtime left and we're losing.'

Will followed Kofi to the football pitch and Nathan followed, smiling to himself.

Five minutes later Mr Lee blew the whistle for the end of playtime. Will had just scored the goal that won the game for his and Kofi's team, but for once, Nathan didn't mind losing one bit. He watched his two friends laughing as they walked into the line together.

'Mission accomplished,' he thought to himself.