



## A Branch In time

It's not often that you get to redo a decision you make in life. Most of the time, when you do something, it stays done. I had the chance to remake a decision today, and I'm still not sure if I made the right call.

It began this morning when I set off to play with my friends in the field at the back of our house. It's been bought by some developers who want to turn it into a massive supermarket. None of us residents want this, and all of the local shops are terrified about how it will affect their business.

Us kids just want to be able to play in the field and we were determined to make the most of it while we still could. So we set off to have a big game of tig. We all got to the gate at about 10 o'clock. I was the last one there. After putting our feet into a circle and going through "eeny, meeny, miny, moe", Sasha was "it". She ducked behind the gate and began to count.

The field is huge. It takes a few minutes to run from one side to the other. It's filled with knee-high crops at the minute, but there's not much else except for a large oak tree in the middle and a dilapidated shed in the far corner.

I headed straight for the shed. It's got loads of signs over it telling people to keep out, but that doesn't usually stop us. The signs were put there by the developers, and none of us wanted to listen to them at all.

That wasn't my plan today, though. I had a higher hiding place in mind. There's an old rusty barrel next to the shed, and I quickly used that to get a leg up onto the roof of the shed. It bowed a bit under my weight, but I nestled down into a corner and lay still.

Sasha was on the hunt by now, circling around the edge of the field, searching for the rest of us. There were about a dozen hiderees out there, so I felt sure she'd get them first. I was wrong. She spotted me from afar and broke into a sprint. I stood up to leap from the shed and felt a sickening lurch as my feet went through the roof. I landed with a crash onto a pile of bones and felt my own bones give way. I was filled with searing pain, and everything went black.

When I came too, I was in the hospital. Both of my broken legs were in casts, and they hurt like nothing I'd ever felt. Mum stroked my hair and kissed my face, reassuring me that



I would be okay. “They found loads of dinosaur bones hidden in the shed,” she said. “The builders had hidden them, but now they can’t build on the site. The council wants to excavate it instead. So, something positive has come from this my love.”

Happy I’d done my part, I fell back into a painful sleep. When I next opened my eyes, my bed and surroundings felt different. I was lying back in my bed at home, and the sun was streaming down on me. I could hear below me that my friends were at the door, asking me to go and play tig in the field.

Somehow, I’d travelled back in time. I’d been given a chance not to have my accident. If I didn’t, then they’d never discover the bones, and the field would be built over. I knew I had to make a choice, so I pulled the quilt over my head and went back to sleep. What would you have done?

## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What is planned to be built on the big field?
2. How did they decide who was “it” in their game of tig?
3. Who ended up being “it”?
4. What did the character use to climb up onto the shed?
5. What did they find inside the shed?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

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|----------|--|
| <b>I</b> | Why might the character have chosen to stay in bed the second time?  |
| <b>P</b> | What do you think you would do in that situation? Do you think he made the right choice? Explain your answers. |
| <b>S</b> | What was the character doing just before they fell?  |
| <b>V</b> | Find and copy a word that describes a sudden movement.   |
| <b>S</b> | Where did the character wake up the first time?  |

Answers - A Branch In time:

1. Supermarket
2. Eeny, meeny, miny, moe
3. Sasha
4. A barrel
5. Dinosaur bones

I: They didn't want to break their legs

S: Trying to jump off the roof

V: Lurch

S: In hospital

Answers - The Adventures of Todd Pawsworth:

1. Human beans
2. Black clothes and with hats pulled down over their faces
3. In their van
4. Rats
5. Sarah

I: He talks about how good looking he is and that he's always saving the world

S: Looking for somewhere to go to the toilet

V: They want to know more about things

V: Passing

Answers - Puddled:

1. Entire
2. Muggy
3. As deep as a toddler's knees
4. It is amazing, wonderful etc. to look at
5. Flopped

I: He keeps asking the scientists questions throughout his letter

R: Crackerjack

R: A steak and kidney pie sandwich

S: The first time, he disappears underwater and sees a whole world down there. The second time, he bellyflops into the gravel

R: Grumpington

## Answers - Roman About The Colosseum:

1. It was half-term
2. She gave Claudia her name badge as a joke
3. It is filled with Ancient Roman gladiators and a crowd. They expected to find it empty and with no floor. It seems that they have gone back in time to actual Ancient Rome
4. The old man who gives them their weapons to fight with

I: She wanted to get there quickly and her parents kept stopping

R: Jed

V: Gawping

R: A lion

P: Accept answers that it might be the special event and it's just very realistic, or that they've gone back in time somehow to Ancient Rome.

## Answers - When The Grass Grew:

1. Unreasonable
2. Startled
3. She was shocked or surprised. She wasn't expecting it.
4. Reptilian
5. Towered

I: She doesn't mow the lawn when she's asked and keeps making excuses why she can't

R: Her mum

S: She had a school trip, too much homework and wanted to learn the words to her favourite band's new album

R: A millipede

P: Accept answers that somehow reference the leaf blower, either blowing her into the grass or her having to escape it



## Puddled

Dear Scientific Research Team,

My name is Cuthbert Clump, and I'd like to draw your attention to the puddles at the end of Snotdown Lane, Grumpington. I have lived in the village for my entire life, which will be nine years this summer. Every year, the enormous holes at the end of Snotdown Lane fill with water whenever it rains for more than a day.

As you are no doubt aware, we have had a surprising amount of rain this summer. I mean, it's been mental. There has been loads. It's also been really muggy, as my mum says. That obviously means that it hasn't evaporated, leaving behind the deepest, widest puddles that I've ever seen. They're more like ponds than anything. Out of interest, seeing as you're scientists, when does a puddle become a pond, and when does a pond become a lake? I just thought I'd ask.

Anyway, me and my mate "Crackerjack" Keith went to have a look at the puddles this morning. It was really hot, and we'd spent ages biking around, so we were pretty sweaty. We saw an opportunity if I'm honest. The puddles looked gloriously clear and refreshing, and we knew they were only a foot deep or so. My mum always says I'm not allowed to play in the water when she's not there, but I don't think puddles count. They probably should, after today.

You see, there's something wrong with these puddles. When they are empty, you can clearly see that they are only as deep as a toddler's knees. However, when I jumped into the biggest of them all today, I sank down past my head until I was fully underwater. Not only that, but when I opened my eyes in shock, I could see enormous coral reefs and fish swimming past. It was glorious. Real David Attenborough stuff. Crackerjack had a go as well, and he swears he saw the same stuff.

It goes without saying that we needed to investigate further. Unfortunately, Keith had to go home for lunch. He was having a steak and kidney pie sandwich, which sounded amazing. What's your favourite sandwich? I left him at his house and raced home to grab my snorkel. I got it when we went on holiday to Ibiza last year, and I had to blow all of the sand out of the pipe.

When I got back to the puddle, I was glad that it was even warmer. I threw the mask and snorkel over my head and made sure it was tightly sealed. Checking to make sure that nobody was





around, I flopped forward into the water.

All I'll say is that it really hurts when your belly splashes down into a shallow puddle on a gravel road. Somehow, the magical underwater kingdom had disappeared. I know what I saw, though. Also Keith's not a liar (although he can be a bit of a cheeky monkey), and he saw it as well.

I must demand that you divert all of your funds into working out what is going on with the puddles at the end of Snotdown Lane.

All the best,

Cuthbert Clump

## VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find a word in the first paragraph that is a synonym for "whole".
2. Which word in the text means that the air is damp or humid?
3. Find and copy a phrase that describes the holes as being not very deep.
4. If something is "glorious", what impression do you have of it as a reader?
5. Find and copy a word that describes how Cuthbert entered the puddle the second time.

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**I**

What evidence is there that Cuthbert likes to learn about everything?

**R**

What is Keith's nickname?

**R**

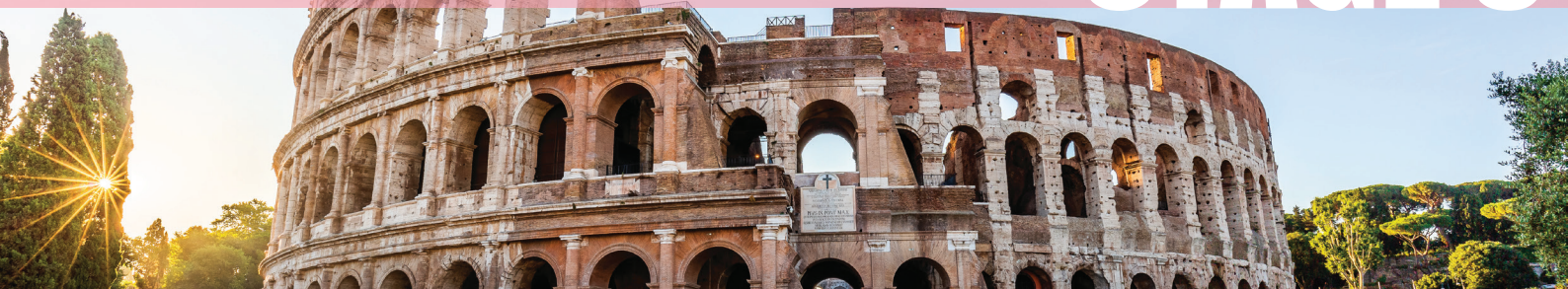
What was Keith having for lunch?

**S**

How was Cuthbert's adventure into the puddle different each time?

**R**

Where is Snotdown Lane?



## Roman About The Colosseum

Visiting the Colosseum in Rome had been one of my dreams for over a year. We'd learned about Ancient Rome in Year 3, and I'd fallen in love with the idea of it. I could imagine all of those spectators shouting down at me, urging me to defeat a lion or vicious gladiator. I didn't care about the prize money or how dangerous it would be. I liked to dream about the glory and the honour.

Now, we were finally going. Mum and Dad had packed me and my brother Jed into the car and whisked us away to the airport as soon as half-term had started. We had no idea where we were going, so when we landed at Leonardo da Vinci Airport, it was a big surprise.

I didn't even need to ask them if we could visit the Colosseum. They'd already booked us tickets for the day after we arrived. Today. We are going today! They've organised a guided tour, and I can't wait.

We get ready quickly. Jed's a year older than me, but he's still really excited to see it all. He loves the Romans as well. We eat our hotel breakfast so quickly that Mum jokes we aren't even swallowing. "Slow down, Claudia," she says, laughing at me. "Our tour isn't for another hour, so there's no point in rushing."

Our hotel is really close to the Colosseum, so it doesn't take us long to get there. Mum and Dad insist on stopping to look in shops along the way, which drives me insane. There will be plenty of time for that afterwards!

When we finally drag them out of yet another tourist shop, it's time to go in. We make our way to the information office, and they take us to a side door for our tour. Apparently, they have a special event today where you can dress up as a gladiator and take photos in the arena itself. I'm bouncing off the walls at the thought!

A lovely lady joins us and introduces herself as Claudia. I laugh and tell her that's my name, so she lets me borrow her name tag as a joke. She takes Jed and me through to a room filled with armour and costumes, where we quickly get changed into something more suitable for fierce gladiators. Claudia tells us that she'll take our parents out into the arena so that they can get photos of us coming out of the tunnel.



I've never seen Jed smile as much as he is while we wait for our cue. Nothing happens for a while, but I can hear the sound of thousands of people stamping their feet and cheering. "Good speakers!" Jed says, looking around for them.

I know that the floor of the Colosseum is missing now, so I'm not sure what to expect when we walk out of the tunnel. Nobody calls for us, but I'm too excited to wait, so we both sprint along the sand and burst out into the hot sunshine.

For a second, we're blinded by the light, but the roar of the crowd drags us back to reality. The floor of the arena is there in front of us, covered in sand and dark red blood. A gladiator is being dragged away in the distance, and tens of thousands of people are chanting and cheering at us.

While we stand there gawping, an old man steps up to us and thrusts real, heavy swords into our hands. Jed and I look at each other in panic just as we hear a roar on the other side of the Colosseum. As we watch, a trapdoor rises up and an enormous lion steps onto the sand.

## SUMMARISE FOCUS

1. Why were Claudia and her brother not at school?
2. What did the tour guide do when she learned what Claudia's name was?
3. How the arena different to what they expected?
4. Who is the last person they see before they see the lion?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>I</b> | Why was Claudia feeling frustrated on the walk to the Colosseum?   |
| <b>R</b> | What was Claudia's brother's name?   |
| <b>V</b> | Find and copy a word that tells the reader that Claudia was staring around with no idea what was going on. |
| <b>R</b> | What was about to attack them?   |
| <b>P</b> | What do you think has happened? What in the text supports this idea?                                       |

## The Adventures of Todd Pawsworth

Sarah has no idea what I get up to each day. How could she? She's off at school learning to be her best self, whilst I'm stuck here at home saving the world. You see, I'm Todd Pawsworth, and I'm a cat.

I know that sounds ridiculous to you as a human bean. It's true, though. I'm a gorgeous tabby with a coat to die for (if I do say so myself). Sarah named me, obviously. Your human tongues can't pronounce my real name.

Anyway, I save the world. It happens nearly every day, actually. You human beans are off doing your own thing without even realising how close you come to destruction every single day. Just this morning, I saved you all again.

There I was, wandering through people's back gardens, trying to find a nice spot to do my business when I noticed something odd. It was a group of men loading up a lorry at the back of the factory on the edge of town. You might think that's normal, but this was very early in the morning, and I'd never seen them there before. Plus, they were all dressed in black clothing and had hats pulled down over their faces. Suspicious indeed!

Naturally, I wandered over for a better look. They say that curiosity killed the cat, but I've got nine lives to spare. Something about them smelled wrong. They were afraid, but I couldn't figure out what of. All they were doing was loading barrels into the back of their van, but they were shaking in the way that mice do when I get hold of them.

I could hear them talking to each other, using phrases like "nuclear waste" and "bring down the Prime Minister", but it meant nothing to me. They were definitely up to no good, though. I can't stand baddies. Sarah is always watching cartoons on TV, and there is always a villain waiting to be caught.

The last time I saw something bad happening, I tried to tell a passing policeman. He just scratched me behind my ear and wandered off. It was a lovely scratch but not very helpful. This time, I knew I had to do it myself.

One cat on its own wasn't going to scare these people away. I had to think bigger. Luckily,



I'm incredibly clever, so a plan formed quickly. It was painful, but I struck a deal with a family of rats that live underneath the factory car park. I promised not to eat any of them for a year in exchange for their help. All three hundred of them agreed. After that, it was just a matter of them scrambling over the van and the men and sending them packing. The men were so scared that they locked themselves inside their van. The factory security guards found them later on, and they were arrested for trying to blow up the houses of parliament!

I didn't get any credit, obviously. I don't do it for fame and glory. It's just nice to know that Sarah is safe when she goes out. You human beans don't know how lucky you are to have us cats around!

## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. What does Todd refer to humans as throughout the text?
2. What were the thieves wearing?
3. Where were they storing the stolen goods?
4. Who did Todd talk to, to help him?
5. What is the name of his owner?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**I**

How do you know that Todd is very confident?

**S**

What was Todd doing just before he noticed the thieves?

**V**

If somebody is "curious", what does it mean?

**V**

Which word tells you that the policeman was walking past when Todd stopped him?

**P**

What other crimes do you think might be stopped by a cat? How would it stop them?



## When The Grass Grew

“Kelsey, get out there and mow the lawn! I can’t believe how quickly it’s growing since we added that special feed.” Kelsey rolled her eyes and lay back on her bed. Her mum and dad had been moaning at her to mow the lawn for weeks. She knew she’d get to it soon. Her mum’s latest order was just the last in a long line.

“On it,” she yelled back down, pulling her blanket over her.

The next few weeks passed in a blur. Kelsey had a school trip followed by an unreasonable amount of homework. Once that was out of the way, her favourite band released a new album that she just had to learn all the words to. Every day, her mum or dad told her to mow the lawn. Each time, she told them she would.

The thing about their lawn was that it was entirely at the side of their house. There were no windows that looked out onto it, and it was the middle of winter so nobody had been outside to check on it for a while. When Kelsey finally dragged the lawnmower from the shed and saw how high it was, she was startled. It easily reached her waist. It took her an hour to cut it down to a reasonable size, but she did it and then went in to play on her computer.

That night, Kelsey woke, certain that she could hear something slithering or hissing in the garden. She wasn’t particularly concerned and fell easily back to sleep but decided to check it out the next morning. What she saw left her flabbergasted. The grass had regrown, only now it was taller than her head. It swayed gently in the early morning breeze. Even as she stood and watched, she could hear the hiss of it growing slowly.

Kelsey was rarely scared, so she stepped beyond the threshold. The green blades tickled her nose and poked her eyes, but she brushed them aside and crept forwards until she was surrounded. Even a few steps in, the world was silent. None of the noise from the road next to the garden reached her. She couldn’t hear her mum or dad, nor the sound of the neighbour’s music. All she could hear was the same slithering sound that she heard in the night.

She edged further into the green world. The smell of dew and damp mud clung to her nostrils. Something long, large and with many legs scurried past, almost out of sight. She caught a



glimpse of its scaly body and pointy legs just as it disappeared. Then something moved behind her, and she spun around. She caught sight of the tip of a reptilian tail before it, too, vanished.

Now, she was scared. She turned around, trying to remember which way she had come, but she was lost. There was no sound to guide her, and she had no idea which way was home.

Out of nowhere, an enormous millipede, as long as Kelsey was tall, sprung from the darkness. It knocked her to her knees and fled past her. Behind it and hot on its heels, was a snake, twice as long and as thick as an elephant. Kelsey stood and ran in the opposite direction.

Her lungs were burning when she eventually burst from the grass and onto the patio. Everything was wrong. Her house towered above her. Even the plant pots were gargantuan. Kelsey, meanwhile, was no taller than a woodlouse. She screamed to her dad as he stood over her, but he couldn't hear her.

Just as she thought things couldn't get any worse, her dad pulled out the leaf blower and turned it on.

## VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word in the text tells you how Kelsey felt about how much homework she had?
2. Find and copy a word that tells you how Kelsey felt when she first saw the grass.
3. What does the answer to the previous question tell you about how she felt?
4. Find and copy a word that describes something as being "like a reptile".
5. Which word does the author use to tell the reader how tall the house is compared to Kelsey at the end of the text?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**I**

How does the reader know that Kelsey is quite lazy?

**R**

Who told her to mow the lawn first in the text?

**S**

Why hadn't Kelsey found time to mow the lawn in the week before she did?

**R**

What was the first thing that Kelsey saw that was bigger than it should have been?

**P**

What do you think happened next? Use information from the text to help explain your answer.