The Pond Behind the School (B2 · English B2)

Tekst / Transcript

Miss Halloway had taught science for eleven years, but she had never seen her class as excited as they were that morning. Behind the school lay a small pond, half hidden by willow trees, and the local council had announced plans to fill it in. A supermarket car park was to be built there instead. The students had decided, entirely on their own, to prove that the pond was worth saving. They wanted evidence, not opinions.

They began by collecting samples of water in glass jars. Under the microscope, the first drop revealed a busy world of bacteria moving in every direction, and the class fell silent with surprise. Miss Halloway explained that these tiny organisms were not enemies to be feared. Most of them broke down dead leaves and kept the water clean. One boy asked whether the pond water was dangerous, and she tested it carefully, showing the class that it contained no acid strong enough to harm skin. The results were written neatly on the board.

Over the following weeks the project grew. The students counted frogs, dragonflies and water beetles, and they discovered that eleven different species lived within twenty metres of the water. Two of them appeared on the regional list of protected animals. A retired biologist from the village agreed to help, and he brought equipment that the school could never have afforded. He showed the children how organic material from fallen leaves settled at the bottom and fed everything above it. Nothing in the pond, he said, existed by accident.

The old biologist also talked about time. He described how the newts had slowly come to evolve over thousands of generations until their skin matched the mud almost perfectly. This, he said, was evolution in its simplest form, and it could be observed in any garden by anyone patient enough to look. He explained that each animal carried instructions inside its cells, and that a single gene could decide whether a creature survived a cold winter or not. Some students found this hard to believe at first. Others began reading about genetic research at home and returned with questions their teacher could not always answer.

In March, the class presented its findings to the council. They spoke for twenty minutes without notes. Their report described the pond as a rare habitat in an area where most wetlands had already disappeared, and it included photographs, measurements and drawings. One councillor admitted afterwards that he had expected a children's poster, not a serious biological survey. The decision was postponed, then quietly reversed. The car park was built on a piece of waste ground near the railway instead, and the pond remained. Every spring since then, Miss Halloway has taken a new class down to the willow trees with jars and notebooks.

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