

Home Time

Watch the clock but wait for the bell. Chorus "Goodbye" to Mrs Preece. Grab your Mackintosh. Do up one button. Go back for your P.E. kit. Bet it needs a wash. "Walk, don't run down the stairs, missy". Pride comes before a fall. Watch for ice on the path. Mr Keene ran out of salt last week. Turn right out the gate. Swing your bag, round in a circle. Shout "Hello, Mrs Watson" to the lollipop lady who knows all your nicknames. Winks. Even if you've never told her. Straight down roads named after those chopped down trees. Take your time at the first road you cross alone. Wave to the bus driver coming up the hill. Stare at the air raid siren that went off a year ago. Remember how your mum dropped the tray? Cross the darkling sunken lane. Watch out for the ghost of the no-tor-ee-us highwayman Old Tom the Reaver. Wave to Mr Dean at the scout hut, if the gates are open. Say hello to the cat from number six, it never claws or spits. Cross the next road carefully. It's where your dad had, 'just a scratch'. Creep past Mr Christmas' house. He's not as friendly as his name. Check for milk under the flowerpot. Fumble for the hidden key. Let yourself in or ring the bell. Hang your coat on the proper peg. Shout "Hello? Mam? What's for tea?" Empty your bag. Wash your hands. Sit at the table. You're finally free.