

The Unluckiest Boy in the World

The Unluckiest Boy in the World tells the story of Nicholas, a boy who becomes cursed after disturbing an old grave. The curse causes disaster to follow Nicholas wherever he goes, so, in this extract, Nicholas' school takes steps to keep him and his fellow pupils safe from the curse.

After that day with Miss Murajee, things did seem to get better, and the number of accidents happening around Nicholas was reduced dramatically.

Mr Fender had panic buttons installed in all the classrooms, connected to the school office. He sent four of his staff on training courses in first aid, and he altered the timetable, as Miss Murajee had suggested, so that Nicholas only had lessons with the more relaxed and easy-going members of staff. Mr Daimon was still away after the mountain-lion incident and Nicholas did science with Mrs Mackintyre, a large, middle-aged woman who never seemed to get upset about anything. His French teacher was replaced by the elderly Mr Dobson, and Mr Fender himself took over the lessons in RE.

Some children were moved out of his class. Two of the noisier and more excitable girls were replaced, for instance, by boys from another form whose hobby was collecting wild flowers, and the effect of these changes was soon apparent. Miss Murajee had said that the energy of the curse depended on the emotions of the people around Nicholas and, when the people around him were, by and large, calm and relaxed, the energy for real disaster was no longer there.

Some accidents still happened. There was an incident with a tarantula in a geography lesson that sparked a certain amount of hasty movement, and the number of light bulbs that failed or computers that crashed when Nicholas was around could still reach highly inconvenient levels but, when they did, he knew what to do. As soon as the accident rate threatened to get out of control or to produce an atmosphere of fear and distrust that the curse could feed on, Nicholas would quietly leave the class and head for the Safe Room. [-]

Nicholas noticed the difference as soon as he stepped through the door. That sense he had carried for the last eighteen months of malevolent forces swirling around him, waiting to pounce, disappeared in an instant. It was as if they could no longer see him. He was hidden from their view and, while he was hidden, both he and the people around him were safe.



An abridged extract from *The Unluckiest Boy in the World* by Andrew Norriss.

- 1 What do you think might have happened at Nicholas' school before this extract?

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1 mark

- 2 What does the phrase "by and large" (line 14) mean?

.....

1 mark

- 3 Fill the gap in the sentence below.

This extract is written in the person.

1 mark

- 4 What does the word "malevolent" (line 24) mean? Check your answer in a dictionary.

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1 mark

- 5 The school has made several changes because of the curse. Do you think they have done enough to keep pupils and staff safe? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

- 6 How do you think Nicholas might feel about the effect his curse has on the people around him? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

- 7 Having read this extract, do you agree that Nicholas is "the unluckiest boy in the world"? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

Total
 out of 10