

Bill's New Frock

Bill's New Frock tells the story of Bill Simpson, a boy who wakes up one morning to find that he has become a girl. Bill is surprised to discover that boys and girls are treated very differently. In this extract, Bill realises that he has turned into a girl, but no one else seems to notice...

When Bill Simpson woke up on Monday morning, he found he was a girl. He was still standing staring at himself in the mirror, quite baffled, when his mother swept in.

'Why don't you wear this pretty pink dress?' she said.

5 'I *never* wear dresses,' Bill burst out.

'I know,' his mother said. 'It's such a pity.'

And, to his astonishment, before he could even begin to argue, she had dropped the dress over his head and zipped up the back.

10 'I'll leave you to do up the shell buttons,' she said. 'They're a bit fiddly and I'm late for work.'

And she swept out, leaving him staring in dismay at the mirror. In it, a girl with his curly red hair and wearing a pretty pink frock with fiddly shell buttons was staring back at him in equal dismay.

'This can't be true,' Bill Simpson said to himself. 'This cannot be true!'

15 He stepped out of his bedroom just as his father was rushing past. He, too, was late in getting off to work.

Mr Simpson leaned over and planted a kiss on Bill's cheek.

'Bye, Poppet,' he said, ruffling Bill's curls. 'You look very sweet today. It's not often we see you in a frock, is it?'

20 He ran down the stairs and out of the house so quickly he didn't see Bill's scowl, or hear what he muttered savagely under his breath.

Bella the cat didn't seem to notice any difference. She purred and rubbed her soft furry body around his ankles in exactly the same way as she always did.

25 And Bill found himself spooning up his cornflakes as usual. It was as if he couldn't help it. He left the house at the usual time, too. He didn't seem to have any choice. Things, though odd, were just going on in their own way, as in a dream.

30 Or it could be a nightmare! For hanging about on the corner was the gang of boys from the other school. Bill recognised the one they called Mean Malcolm in his purple studded jacket.

An extract from *Bill's New Frock* by Anne Fine.

1 What does the word "baffled" in line 2 mean? Use a dictionary to help you.

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1 mark

2 What do Bill's mother's comments about wearing dresses tell us about her attitude towards girls?

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1 mark

3 Why do you think Bill doesn't argue with his parents when they start treating him like a girl?

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2 marks

4 How is Bella the cat's behaviour towards Bill different to his parents' behaviour?

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2 marks

5 Explain why Bill says that what he's experiencing "could be a nightmare" (line 28).

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2 marks

6 How might the children at Bill's school treat him differently now that he's a girl?

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2 marks

Total