

Junior Secondary
Oxford English Writing Competition

Whodunnit?

Read **Mr Jasper Tsang's** beginning of the detective story below.

It was the last lesson of the day, an English lesson. The teacher, Mrs Wu, had been talking non-stop in front of the class for the last twenty minutes, oblivious to the noise of the many private conversations going on in the classroom.

Tommy looked around at his classmates. Then he looked at his wristwatch. The school bell would ring in fifteen minutes. 'Fifteen more minutes,' he thought, 'and I'll be safe.'

The minutes passed like hours. A big man suddenly appeared at the classroom door, silhouetted against the afternoon sunlight. Tommy could not see the face clearly, but he knew it was Mr Lee, the Deputy School Principal. Tommy's heart missed a beat.

Mrs Wu went over to the door, and Mr Lee said something to her in a subdued voice. Tommy could not hear what was said, but he saw the serious look on Mrs Wu's face.

Mrs Wu stepped aside and Mr Lee walked into the classroom. 'Boys and girls,' he said aloud, 'one of your bags contains something that should not be there. We have to take a quick look in each of your bags.'

'What are you looking for, sir? Has someone reported a theft?' asked a little boy in the front row.

'Can't tell you yet, sonny,' replied Mr Lee. 'Now, boys and girls, put your bags on your desks and open them.'

Tommy's heart stopped as the teachers drew closer to his desk. His hand rested on top of his bag as he debated whether to open it. Mrs Wu frowned at him, 'What's the matter, Tommy? Open up your bag!'

'Uh... I uh...' A cold shiver ran down Tommy's spine as Mr Lee came over too, a cloud of suspicion hanging over his head, 'Open the bag, Tommy, NOW!' he ordered.

Tommy decided to tell the truth. 'This isn't what it looks like,' he declared, 'I've been framed.'

'Just open the bag,' grunted Mr Lee.

Tommy took a deep breath and pulled the zipper. The school's most prized trophy shone before everyone's eyes. Mr Lee grabbed his arm. 'That's all the proof we need. Come on, you've got detention. CLASS DISMISSED,' he barked.

After being detained for a week, Tommy vowed to get whoever framed him back. When he got home, he made himself a list of suspects:

List of suspects

- *Rebecca – I ratted on her once when she cheated in an exam
- *Dennis – I beat him by one millisecond on Sports Day
- *Alvin – We both have a crush on Sylvia, the cheerleader

Tommy's detective mind kicked in. He found the trophy in his bag during lunch, at around one thirty. He had left for lunch thirty minutes before, so the person who set him up could only have done it between one and one thirty.

During recess, Tommy sneaked a peek at Rebecca's timetable:

<i>Timetable for Friday</i>
...
<i>12:25 – Music lesson</i>
<i>1:00 – eat lunch with Miss Ho</i>
<i>1:30 – volleyball team practice</i>
<i>2:00 – Art lesson</i>
...

So she couldn't have done it. She was having lunch with Miss Ho at the time! Quickly, Tommy crossed off her name. Next suspect: Dennis

'Hey, Mark!' Tommy beckoned Mark to an empty corridor urgently. Mark was Dennis' best friend, but he and Tommy were quite close too.

'Mark, do you have any idea where Dennis was at one o'clock last Friday?' Tommy asked eagerly.

Mark froze before replying stiffly, ‘That’s none of your business.’ With that he spun around and left.

Tommy was left stunned on the corridor. ‘Now that’s plain weird,’ he thought, ‘something fishy is going on.’

The next recess Tommy walked up to Dennis, ‘I know what you did last Friday during lunchtime at one o’clock, and I’m telling.’ He was bluffing and Dennis knew it. ‘Even if I did it, you can’t prove it,’ he sneered, ‘after all, no teacher would trust you, the “bad boy”.’

Tommy felt red hot anger bubbling inside him. ‘I have proof,’ he blurted out before he could stop himself, ‘I hid in a corner and taped the whole thing.’ Dennis stopped in mid-stride, panic taking over his face, ‘Please don’t tell anyone, that kid owed me money! I punched him just to teach him a lesson.’

Tommy was dumbfounded, ‘You beat the crap out of a kid at one o’clock... never mind then, sorry.’ He hurried away from the glowering Dennis before he himself got pounded.

Tommy looked at his list:

List of suspects

*~~Rebecca~~...

*~~Dennis~~...

*~~Alvin~~...

It’s got to be Alvin! Wait, Alvin had been sick for a whole week and was still staying home! Then it dawned on Tommy: Rebecca’s schedule he had looked at was for TODAY, not LAST Friday!

He rushed to the principal’s office, only to find Rebecca already standing there. It turned out that she was so eaten up by her own guilt that she confessed to the principal. Tommy felt bad for her but he was relieved that his name was finally cleared.