

Reading aloud.

Practise reading the text aloud.

One morning, during my first week at school, I sneaked into Mum and Dad's bedroom, opened the top drawer of the duchesse, where the coins "brought back from the war" were kept, and helped myself to a handful. I then went to Dad's best trousers hanging behind the door, put my hand in the pocket, and took out two coins. Later, on my way to school, I stopped at Heath's store to buy some chewing gum.

Mr. Heath looked sternly at me. "This money won't buy anything," he said, "It's Egyptian."

"I know," I lied. Then handing him the money from Dad's pocket, I asked, "Will this buy me some chewing gum?"

"That's better," he said.

Armed with a supply of chewing gum, I waited at the door of the Infant Room and as the children went into the room, I gave each a "pillow" of chewing gum. Later, Miss Botting, a woman in a blue costume, suddenly stopped her teaching and asked, "Billy Delamare, what are you eating?"

"Chewing gum. Miss Botting."

"Where did you get it?"

"From Jean Frame, Miss Botting."

"Dids McIvor, where did you get your chewing gum?"

"From Jean Frame, Miss."

"Jean Frame, where did you get the chewing gum?"

"From Heath's, Miss Botting."

"Where did you get the money?"

"My father gave it to me."

Evidently Miss Botting didn't believe me. Suddenly she was determined to get "the truth" out of me. She repeated her question.

"Where did you get the money? I want the truth."

I repeated my answer, substituting Dad for father.

"Come out here."

I came out in front of the class.

"Go up on the platform."

I went up on the platform.

"Now tell me where you got the money."

Determinedly I repeated my answer.

Playtime came. The rest of the class went out to play while Miss Botting and I grimly faced each other.

"Tell me the truth," she said.

I replied, "Dad gave me the money."

She sent for Myrtle and Bruddie, who informed her with piping innocence that Dad did not give me the money.

"Yes he did," I insisted, "he called me back when you had both gone to school."

"He didn't."

"He did."

All morning I stayed on the platform. I stayed on the platform through lunchtime and into the afternoon, still refusing to confess. I was beginning to feel afraid instead of defiant, as if I hadn't a friend in the world, and because I knew that Myrtle and Bruddie would "tell" as soon as they got home. I felt I never wanted to go home. I held out obstinately until mid-afternoon when finally in a small voice I answered Miss Botting's repeated question: "I took the money out of my father's pocket."

From then on, at home and at school I was called THIEF.

To the Is-Land by Janet Frame