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Welcome to **ATTACK!** a two-page occasional publication. Most of **ATTACK!** will be concerned with the holistic curriculum which, if acted on, is a fundamental way to undermine the present undemocratic education system. Don't be discouraged if opportunities to teach holistically are limited, do your best, be a guardian, and act as a witness to this culturally significant and inspiring way of teaching and learning. **ATTACK!** is a partner to <https://networkonnet.wordpress.com>

Attack! 45 Reuben and WALTs Part 1

'Why do I write Wednesday?'

'Here we go,' she thought.

The rest of the children thought so too, looking up from their writing, their faces alight with the prospect of what could follow.

'Because it is Wednesday.'

'Just write it at the top of the page. You don't have any problem with that do you?'

Reuben hadn't picked up from her tone that things had changed; not surprising, though, given that a hint of her usual teasing manner with him persisted. But to Reuben's mind, what she'd said, and how she'd said it, would still act like a red rag to a bull, perhaps a Red Bull to his whizzing thought processes.

'But it might be Sunday.'

She tried to ignore him.

'Has everyone written "Wednesday" at the top of their page? And the date?'
'If it's Sunday, the date won't be right either.'



The principal's office again; she had moved out from behind her desk – always a bad sign because it meant she was going through her official counselling process for the occasion. Her face had the form of a smile, but her round smoky-blue eyes, enlarged by the silver-rimmed spectacles, were unblinking and stern. The principal framed the matter as she often did, with a hint in the direction of her vocational vulnerability: 'advice' to be given was related to her position as a beginning teacher. This was only a ploy, though, because she had made all teachers come in behind on this one, as in most others.

'This is a high-performance school,' she said, 'and central to that is the use of WALTs and success criteria.'

'And not only must the WALTs and success criteria be set out in planning, they must be adhered to in practice.'

'Above all, as previously discussed, you must crack down on Reuben; bring him into line; he's distracting the other children; throwing your lessons off course.'

She moved to protest, but the futility of doing so sank in, and she sat there mutely.

The principal had walked in while Reuben had been on one of his mental excursions, which might have been all right, except the rest of the class had become involved and were contributing enthusiastically.

'How do we know,' he had said, 'that the sky isn't an umbrella and the stars just chinks of light coming through?'

The effect on the class had been electric, and she was about to veer away from the planned lesson to an impromptu one on the night sky. But the principal's face was frozen in disapproval as she moved to the table where she looked down at the planning.

The principal was speaking again: 'WALTs,' she said, 'were evidence-based focused learning; they gave children control by informing them in advance what they were going to learn, then the success criteria informed them and everyone else what they had learnt.'

She resigned herself (though inwardly groaning) to hearing the references she knew would follow about how the school was committed to providing feedback and feed forward, and to the exciting new techniques of scaffolding and nesting.

The principal then returned to Reuben, her voice lower and slower, 'I'll be watching the Reuben situation carefully.' She was indicating it was a test for her.

While the principal was willing to play something of a waiting game with her style of teaching, there was a definite urgency in the demand to do something about Reuben. Perhaps there was a degree of justification for it. He had learned how to manipulate people to ensure attention became centred on himself, and he sometimes crossed the line from spirited to cheeky, especially with some of the other teachers.

And then there was the other side of the coin: Her being accepted in the school was dependent on making some progress in the matter.

'Just put Wednesday and today's date, Reuben. At the top of your page.'

Reuben turned back a page and began rubbing out 'Tuesday' which headed the previous day's 'News'. If today is Sunday he reasoned, then yesterday must have been Saturday. He would write Saturday there.

'No rubbing out, Reuben.'

Reuben took no notice; after all she had never worried about rubbing out before. As well, he was still picking up on her lack of conviction in attempts to ground any new flights of fancy.

'Reuben,' her voice was calm but it did have a different tone. 'No rubbing out. Just ...'

'But Miss, if today is Sunday, yesterday must have been Saturday. I'm going to change it.' There was a higher pitch to his voice.

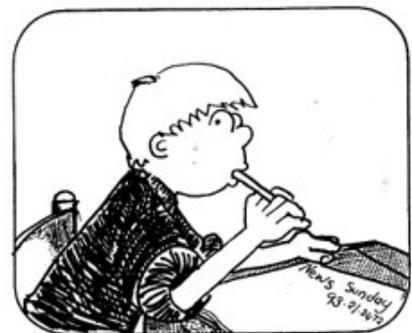
'And all the other days.'

'What do you mean?'

'I need to change all the other days. And the dates.'

'Write your "News" Reuben.'

Reuben's neck reddened.



Nevertheless, he returned to his scoring out. She darted across the room plucking the rubber from between his fingers as neatly and as swiftly as a hawk swooping on a mouse. She was turning it into a confrontation. Reuben's body tensed but he barely paused. Licking the tip of his forefinger he used the wetted end to complete the erasure. A hole appeared in the paper. Unsure how to overcome this procedural calamity, Reuben shot a quick look at her from under his downcast brows then, regaining assurance, hurriedly flicked a few pages forward and, finding an untouched leaf, began his heading: 'News. Sunday 93.21.2472'.

It was just a routine turn-of-events for starting the day, but it meant the challenge was already being laid down. Reuben was absorbed in his task of writing. 'I have put Sunday becors no won nows what day it really is. It cood be Friday but I am putting Sunday becors I like Sundays and that is a good reason.'

He then continued in less and less reliable spelling to hypothesise that as the 'teecha' had no explanation it was equally possible that his assertion was correct. 'Furthermore' (he'd added that new word to his dictionary last week and used it regularly ever since): 'Furthermore, who nows what the dates are.' He expanded on his proposition at some length, detailing the unusual numbers that he had recorded at the top of his page as a new phenomenon where a week had a hundred days if you wanted it to be so. Usually, when Reuben had his thoughts, she would get him to share them with the class, and animated discussion would often follow; but to dampen him down, which was the policy now in operation, he was left alone with his 'thoughts'.

