

How Embarrassing

by Hilton Ayrey

Marcus was a tormented boy. Most of the time, you would think he was a typical everyday kid. But when people talked to him, or asked him questions, his face would turn as red as a beetroot. There was no reason why this should happen. But once it started, there was nothing he could do to avoid it. His stupid body would pump blood to his face and his cheeks would glow like red light bulbs. It made him feel very foolish. He couldn't think of anything sensible to say. He just wanted to disappear.

So he spent his days avoiding conversations that would cause this to happen. A great strategy was to quickly shift attention to something else. He called this 'Sounding the fire alarm'.

"Look... there's a mouse...it just ran under the teacher's desk."

That was a great one when girls were present because it always resulted in shrieking and leaping onto pieces of furniture. However, you couldn't use it more than once on any one group of people. He had made that mistake and got called 'Marcus Mouse Boy' for way too long.

There was one very positive outcome from this. Marcus was top of his class in all school subjects. He hung on every word the teacher said and made sure he understood every scrap of information and all the instructions. This wasn't because of his interest in the topic. He was just trying to avoid those horrible moments. He prepared himself for every question the teacher could possibly ask so that when it was his turn, he had the answer ready. His speedy answer meant that the teacher would move on to someone else before the big blush happened.

But being great at school was not what Marcus was after. He wanted to be free of this horrible thing. And then one day it happened. Because of a nasty virus, everyone had to wear masks. Many people were upset about that, but for Marcus, it was wonderful! With his mask hiding most of his face, no-one saw his blushing cheeks. After months of mask-wearing, he realised he had stopped worrying about it, and because of that, it had stopped happening. When the masks finally came off, he was free.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Make up your own title for this story.
2. Make a flow chart for the story.
Characters - Setting - Problem - Feelings - Action - Outcome
3. Write your own ending to the story.
4. Story Map - draw a map of the settings in this story showing where all the action happens.
5. Design your own face mask to hide red cheeks.
Draw diagrams with labels to explain your great ideas.