

The Number Kid

Written by Eileen Bourke

Illustrated by Dan McGeehan

'Stephen!' shouted Billy from the back of the class. 'What's 160 divided by 7?'

'22.85714,' replied Stephen without looking up.

'Good job! Thanks,' said Billy, copying the number down in his notebook.

'Stephen! When's Thomas's birthday?' asked Mary.

'It's February 16,' said Stephen, 'and he was born on a Tuesday.'

'Wow!' said Thomas, 'How did you know that?'

'You told me,' said Stephen.

'I did?' said Thomas, looking confused. 'When did I tell you?'

'On November 5 last year, at 3.05 p.m. We were in the yard, playing baseball and everyone was shouting about their birthday,' said Stephen. 'Don't you remember?'

'Well, no, I don't,' said Thomas. 'That's nearly ten months ago.'

'It's actually nine months, three days, four hours and sixteen minutes ago,' said Stephen, looking briefly at his watch.

'You did that calculation in your head?' asked Mary, amazed.

'Yes, of course,' said Stephen. 'How else would I have done it?'



‘With the calculator,’ said Thomas. ‘Come on, you’re doing it all on a calculator, aren’t you?’

‘No, I’m not!’ said Stephen. ‘I don’t have a calculator,’ he continued.

‘Everyone has a calculator!’ laughed Ginny from the front of the class.

‘You mean you use a calculator for your homework?’ Stephen stared at Ginny as if he didn’t believe her. ‘Don’t you do it in your head?’ he asked.

‘No way!’ laughed Ginny. ‘I’m no good at math. I always check everything with my calculator.’

‘Stephen, what’s 11987 ... minus 5, divided by 19?’ asked Bart.

‘It’s 630.6316,’ Stephen said.

‘You’re amazing!’ said Bart. ‘OK, let’s try again. When is Carol’s birthday?’



‘It’s July 15. And before you ask, she was born in the Maryland Hospital at 6.00 p.m. exactly, on a Friday.’

Carol was so amazed that she fell off her chair.

‘Wow!’ said Thomas. ‘You know what? We have a real genius here. Right here, in our class!’ He looked at Stephen and gave him a big smile.

Stephen turned bright red, like a tomato. 'I'm not a genius,' he said quietly. 'I'm just Stephen.'

'But you're so good at math and remembering things, surely you must be a genius,' said Bart kindly.

'I can prove I'm not,' said Stephen. He got up very slowly and went to Carol's desk. He picked up a painting of hers from Tuesday's art class. Then he went to Thomas's desk and pulled out Thomas's geography notebook. Next he walked over to Mary's desk and asked her to hand him her history homework. Finally he walked up to Bart and said, 'Can I borrow your English notebook, please?'



Stephen went to the front of the class and stood in front of the board where everyone could see him.

'Tell me what you see,' he said, and he held up Carol's painting.

'A really good picture of a river with houses in the background and a dog barking ...' said Thomas.

‘Right,’ said Stephen.

Next he picked out Thomas’s geography notebook. ‘Listen carefully,’ he said.

‘Test 1, May 7, 10 out of 10. Test 2, May 14, 10 out of 10. Test 3, May 21, 10 out of 10. Test 4, May 28, 10 out of 10.’

‘Good job!’ whispered Mary.

‘Now you, Mary,’ said Stephen. ‘History project last semester – teacher’s comments: an excellent piece of work. History project last year – teacher’s comments: excellent, good job, Mary.’

‘Now listen very carefully,’ said Stephen. ‘I’m going to read you a poem.’ The class fell silent as Stephen read the poem aloud. It was from Bart’s English notebook. When he finished, everyone clapped.

‘What a beautiful poem,’ said Carol.

‘And what a nice way to prove you’re not a genius,’ said Bart. ‘You just showed us all that we’re all geniuses in our special ways, didn’t you?’

‘I hope so,’ said Stephen, and he went back to his desk without another word.

