

## Problem story:



**The teacher reads:  
(about 5 minutes)**

*"Missed the bus"*

*"RIIIING goes the bell over the schoolyard at a primary school in Malaysia. Instantly the schoolyard is full of blue uniforms, children's laughter and a multitude of languages. School is out. Finally! There is a crowd at the bus stop when Stefanie and Thaisa arrive. The first-year pupils wait on the side, somewhat uncertain of what they should do. 'Let's go to the playground,' Stefanie suggests. 'The bus is going to come 20 minutes late anyway, and it's too boring to wait here that long.' Thaisa agrees right away and they run to the swings, laughing. Here it's much better, quieter and they can talk about everything - school, what's going on at home, etc. All of a sudden a strong wind blows leaves over to them and dark clouds start to roll in. Stefanie gets nervous: how long have they been sitting there? 'The bus is probably going to come soon.' The girls run but when they get to the bus stop, it's empty. Everyone else has disappeared! No one is there! Stefanie starts to panic as a gust of wind catches her from the side. She gets tears in her eyes and only with a lot of effort can she stop herself from crying. She turns to her friend for comfort. But Thaisa also has big tears running down her cheeks, and her eyes are full of fear.*

*Then Stefanie sees the public telephone on the other side of the street. They look left and then right and then run across the street. They dig in their pockets for some change to call home. But when they get to the phone, there's a sign: 'Out of order.'*

*Now Stefanie really starts to panic. Once again she looks to Thaisa, who has always been the stronger of the two. But she can already hear her friend's loud sobs, 'She's going to be soooo angry, she's going to be soooo angry,' she repeats over and over, and Stefanie knows Thaisa is talking about her mother. A strong gust of wind blows around the girls' legs, and the sky grows darker. Stefanie takes a deep breath and says: 'I know how to get home.' Her voice sounds more confident than she really is: 'Let's walk!' Thaisa looks at her, crying. 'No, I have to stay here and wait for Mum. And she's going to be so mad,' she sobs. Stefanie looks at her friend, unsure of what to do. Can she leave Thaisa standing there alone and try to find the way home? The sky grows darker, and soon rain is going to come pouring down and soak them. Then they'll be in even more trouble! Helpless, she looks at her crying friend. What should she do?"*





## How the story actually ended (about 5 min)

*“Stefanie decided that there was no way she could leave her friend there crying. And if she didn’t want to be soaking wet when she got home, then they really needed to go, otherwise their mothers would be even angrier. ‘Listen,’ she said with a confident voice, ‘We’re going to walk to my house together. It’s not far, and my mum can call yours and take you home. That will be the fastest way, we’ll only be a little bit late and then your mum doesn’t have to worry as much.’ Thaisa looks thankfully at her friend with eyes that are red from crying and nods. ‘Ok, step one is done,’ thinks Stefanie, and she starts walking.*

*Stefanie knows that it’s not a very long way, and she kind of knows the direction they have to go.*

*They pass a big rice field and have to hold their noses because it has just been fertilised with cow manure. The sky is now dark violet, but it seems to feel sorry for them and doesn’t let the rain come pouring down. In the distance, they can hear thunder. The street seems very long, and Stefanie feels herself growing uncertain. There are trees that she has never seen before. And that house doesn’t look familiar at all. Is she going the right way? When they come to a fork in the road, she’s a little more confident: here she has to turn right. But the pavement looks unfamiliar. Is she on the completely wrong path? And what kind of building is that - she’s never seen it before! But then she keeps going and recognises a friend’s garden, and then a house she’s been to before with her mother. Now they just have to turn left here and right on the little street up there. With every step she grows more confident. And there it is! Her mother is already standing at the front door, worried, as Stefanie runs toward her. Quickly she explains what happened and her mother goes inside to call Thaisa’s mother. KABOOM! The storm arrives with a clap of thunder and the rain drums down on the roofs. The children quickly go into the kitchen, where Stefanie’s mother has made them cocoa. ‘Your mum will be here soon, she’s just waiting for the rain to let up,’ she says to Thaisa and adds: ‘And she’s very happy that you both did so well.’ But her words are very quiet in the pouring rain.*

*Relieved, the two friends smile at each other over the brims of their cocoa mugs. As soon as the rain lets up a little, the doorbell rings. You can see how worried Thaisa’s mother was when she hugs her daughter close. ‘I’m so sorry. We’ll never miss the bus again,’ says Thaisa in her mother’s arms. ‘I certainly hope so, I was really worried.’ ‘I’m sorry, Ms. Kaisa,’ says Stefanie, ‘It was my fault. I talked Thaisa into going to the playground for a while.’ ‘Everything turned out OK,’ says Thaisa’s mother and everyone feels the relief.*

*When Stefanie’s mother gives her a goodnight kiss that night, she says how proud she is of Stefanie. ‘Usually you start to cry right away.’ Stefanie answers: ‘I was just happy that I could help a friend.’”*