## POEM

By Hilaire Belloc

Matilda told such Dreadful Lies,

It made one Gasp and Stretch one’s Eyes;

Her Aunt, who, from her Earliest Youth,

Had kept a Strict Regard for Truth,

Attempted to Believe Matilda:

The effort very nearly killed her,

And would have done so, had not She

Discovered this Infirmity\*.

For once, towards the Close of Day,

Matilda, growing tired of play,

And finding she was left alone,

Went tiptoe to the Telephone

And summoned the Immediate Aid

Of London’s Noble Fire-Brigade.

Within an hour the Gallant Band

Were pouring in on every hand,

From Putney, Hackney Downs, and Bow

With Courage high and Hearts a-glow

They galloped, roaring through the Town

‘Matilda’s House is Burning Down!’

Inspired by British Cheers and Loud

Proceeding from the Frenzied Crowd,

They ran their ladders through a score

Of windows on the Ball Room Floor;

And took Peculiar Pains to Souse\*

The Pictures up and down the House,

Until Matilda’s Aunt succeeded

In showing them they were not needed;

And even then she had to pay

To get the Men to go away!

It happened that a few Weeks later

Her Aunt was off to the Theatre

To see that Interesting Play

*The Second Mrs Tanqueray*.

She had refused to take her Niece

To hear this Entertaining Piece:

A Deprivation Just and Wise

To Punish her for Telling Lies.

That Night a Fire *did* break out-

You should have heard Matilda Shout!

You should have heard her Scream and Bawl,

And throw the window up and call

To People passing in the Street-

(The rapidly increasing Heat

Encouraging her to obtain

Their confidence)-but all in vain!

For every time She shouted ‘Fire!’

They only answered ‘Little Liar’!

And therefore when her Aunt returned,

Matilda, and the House, were Burned.

\*Infirmity: A physical or mental weakness

Souse\*: Soak in liquid

## CW Questions:

1. What does the poet mean when they say “stretch one’s eyes”
   1. It means their eyes became big
   2. It means they did not believe the lies
   3. **It means they were shocked by the lies**
   4. It means that they were upset by the lies
2. How is Matilda’s aunt different from Matilda?
   1. **They have opposite opinions about the truth**
   2. Matilda is an awful person compared to her aunt
   3. Matilda gets into a lot of trouble and her aunt is nice
   4. They are completely different in how they look
3. What had saved the aunt’s life?
   1. Discovering that Matilda was weak in someway
   2. **Discovering Matilda couldn’t avoid lying**
   3. Discovering and healing her physical weakness
   4. Discovering that Matilda had a way to heal her
4. Why did Matilda call the Fire Brigade?
   1. She was worn out from playing
   2. She wanted somebody to come home
   3. She did not want to be alone
   4. **She was bored and alone**
5. Which one of these options are true?
   1. The fire brigade took an hour to arrive
   2. **Matilda was left alone in the evening**
   3. Matilda told lies to scare and surprise people
   4. Matilda lives with her aunt
6. Why does the poet call the fire brigade the “gallant band”?
   1. It is a simile
   2. To describe them more accurately
   3. They also play music
   4. **It is more imaginative and rhymes**
7. Which word best describes how the firefighters were feeling before the fire?
   1. **Determined and passionate**
   2. Fierce and loud
   3. Savage and unmerciful
   4. Convinced and powerful
8. Which phrase makes the fire fighters seem like an animal?
   1. “Hearts a-glow”
   2. “The gallant band were pouring in”
   3. **“Galloped and roaring through the town”**
   4. “Immediate Aid”
9. Which description best explains how we know there a lot of firefighters
   1. They were described as animals
   2. The way their movement was described
   3. **The description of where they came from**
   4. The description of how they sounded
10. How were the crowd feeling as they watched the firefighters?
    1. **Excited and wild**
    2. Scared and worried
    3. Interested and confused
    4. Unconcerned and Silent
11. What does it mean when the poet writes “They ran their ladders through a score of windows”
    1. They treated the windows like goals and were ‘scoring’
    2. The windows were tiny and hard to get through
    3. The ladders were all in line with one another
    4. **There were a lot of window to put the ladders through**
12. When did the firefighters go home?
    1. When they realised there was no fire
    2. When they finished soaking the house
    3. **When the aunt paid them to leave**
    4. When the aunt told them there was no fire
13. Which of these statements are true? Choose two options.
    1. The fire brigade came days before the aunt went to the theatre
    2. Matilda was not taken to play for she was too young
    3. **When the fire brigade arrived, Matilda’s aunt was not home yet.**
    4. Matilda wanted to watch The Second Mrs Tanqueray
    5. **The firefighters had not checked to see if there was a fire**
14. Why shouldn’t we tell lies?
    1. Because we can be punished for them
    2. **Because we won’t be believed when we tell the truth**
    3. Because it can lead to people not liking you
    4. Because it can lead to bad things eventually happening
15. What do you think was the poet’s main intention for the poem?
    1. **To teach children a harsh lesson in a memorable way**
    2. To teach children that lying is only ok when it doesn’t hurt anybody
    3. To teach children to not be naughty like Matilda
    4. To teach children how to understand poetry
16. What does the word “Deprivation” (line 37) mean from the way it has been used?
    1. Reaction to an event
    2. A decision to do something difficult
    3. A type of clothing you wear to formal places
    4. **An act to keep something from somebody**
17. What does it mean when the poet writes “but all in vain!”? (line 46)
    1. Matilda did it because she was proud
    2. **Matilda did it but it but it was pointless**
    3. It was Matilda’s last act
    4. Matilda was trying to get revenge on her aunt
18. What technique is used when the poet writes “pouring in” (line 16)
    1. **Metaphor**
    2. Simile
    3. Alliteration
    4. Personification