

“Treasures of wickedness profit nothing.”

– Proverbs 10:2

Tall for His Age

Part 1

What two classes were hard for Jay?

Jay was tall for his age. Mother said he took after Daddy.

His grandmother from out **West** said, “My! How Jay is growing!”

His aunt from the **East** said, “Jay-boy, I can’t believe you are this tall and only seven years old!”

His uncle from up **North** said, “Jay has really shot up since I saw him last!”

His grandpa from down **South** said, “Taking after your daddy, aren’t you? Going to be a beanpole like him, I reckon!”

Jay got a little tired of people talking about how tall he was for his age. He got tired of people asking what grade he was in. He could tell by their faces that they were surprised he was only in second grade. He knew they thought he should be in fourth or fifth.

Sometimes he would say, “I am seven years old,” so they would know that he was in the right grade for his age.

Most of the time he liked being tall for his age.

He found out it was good to be tall in school. He got to help Miss Ramer when

she needed someone to reach high places.
He liked that.

He got to stand in the **middle** of the back row when they sang at the nursing home. He liked that, too.

And he liked having his desk in the back of the room. He could look over the heads of the other children. He could see all that was going on.

Jay found out that the other children wanted him on their side when they played kick ball. He could kick a ball farther than anyone else. He could run faster than anyone else because his legs were long.

He found out the other children wanted to be on his side when they played keep-away. He was tall enough to catch the ball over the heads of the other children.

Yes, he liked being tall in school.

But he found out that being tall for his age did not help in his schoolwork.

Many times he thought, *I may be the fastest runner, but I know I am the slowest reader. I wish I could read as fast as Lottie.*

*I may be the best at keep-away, but I am the **worst** at math. I wish I could add and take away as well as Eli does.*

Miss Ramer tried to help him. She said, “Just do your best, Jay. You do not need to read as fast as Lottie. You do not need to add and take away as well as Eli. Just do your best.”

But Jay still **hated** to read out loud, because he read so slowly. He still hated to tell out loud how many he missed in math. He never got 100 like Eli did.

Then one day Jay found out

something else he could do because he was tall for his age.

It was right before **recess**. He was sitting in his desk looking at his math worksheet. Math class was after recess. Jay did not have his worksheet done. He did not have even one answer written down. He could not remember what 15 take away 9 was.

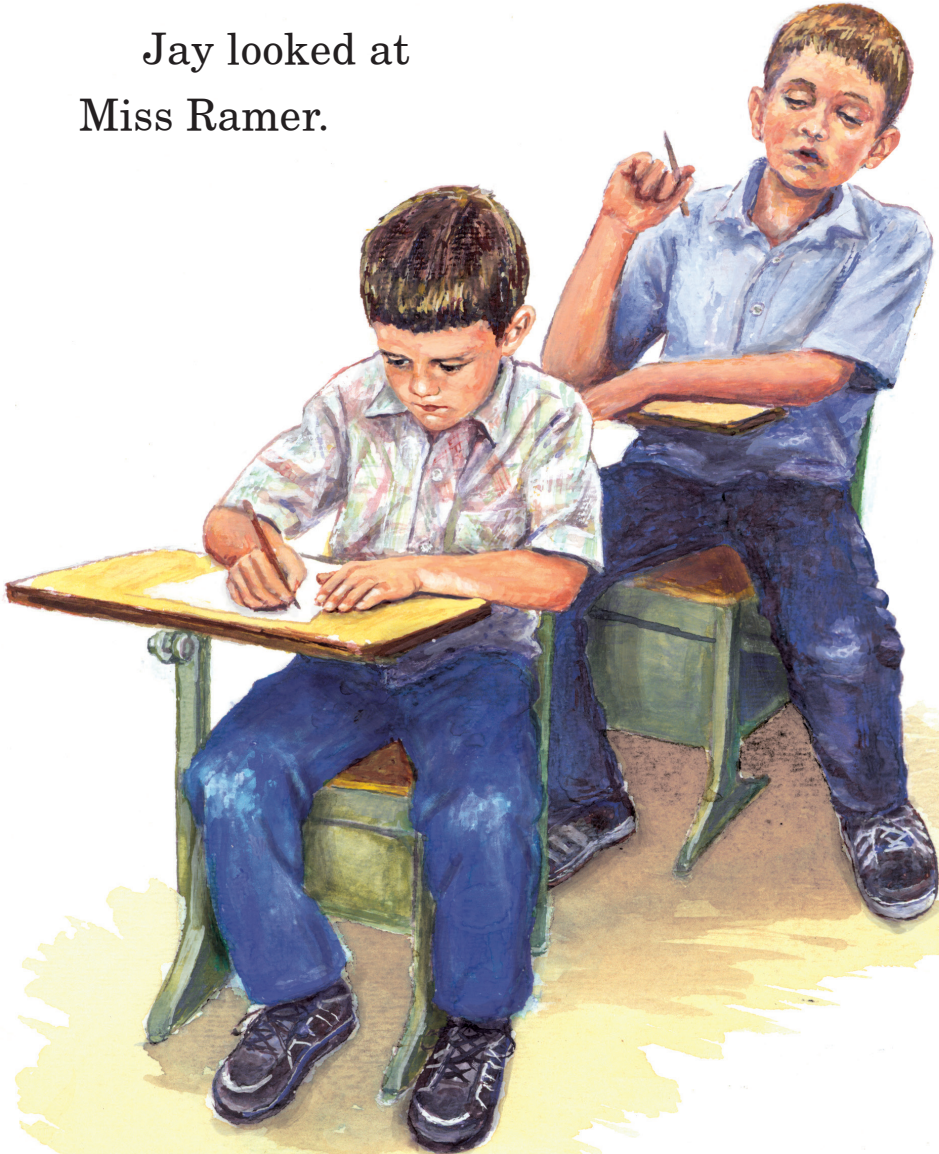
That was when Jay found out that he was tall enough to look down on the desk in front of him.

Eli sat in front of him. Eli was working on his math too. He was going across the page writing the answers one right after the other. Jay could see all the answers.

*He is on the third row, thought Jay.
And I am stuck on the first **problem**.*

I will never get my worksheet done before recess!

Jay looked at
Miss Ramer.



She was writing at the board.

Then he began to **copy** the answers from Eli's paper to his own. He wrote fast. He **copied** every answer in every row. He copied the answer to the last problem on his paper just after Eli wrote it down.

It was so easy! He couldn't believe it! His math was done in just about one minute! He was sure the answers would be right. Eli hardly ever missed any math problems.

Just then Eli turned around. Jay quickly slapped both hands on his paper.

"Don't you look at my paper," he whispered.

Eli turned back to his desk again. As Jay put his paper away, he felt his face getting red.

Why did I do such a silly thing? If Eli

wanted to cheat, he would not try to copy my paper! Anyway, my answers are the same as his. Why should I try to keep him from seeing them?

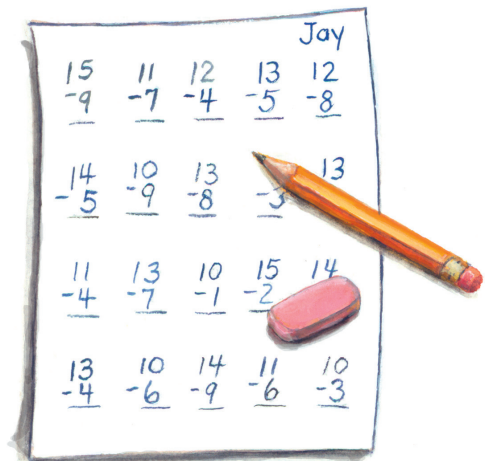
Then he thought, *Eli does not need to cheat to get his answers right. I am the one who did that!*

Jay's thoughts went on and on. *I am the **cheater**, not Eli. I cheated only this one time, but now I am a cheater.*

God saw me, even if no one else did. What if the others find out!

“Cheater! Cheater! Cheater!” That is what they would say. They would not like him anymore. No one liked a cheater!

—Ruth K. Hobbs



"I said, I will confess my transgressions."

– Psalm 32:5

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Part 2

What did Jay do that was harder than math?

What if Miss Ramer found out! thought Jay. Teachers never liked cheaters. What would happen if she told his mother and father?

Suddenly Jay felt very lonely. He was a cheater and no one liked him anymore.

Then he thought, *Only God knows what I did. I have not handed in my paper yet. I could erase Eli's answers and do the problems myself.*

Jay got the worksheet from his desk. He took his pencil and tried to erase the answers.

It was not going to work. He rubbed as hard as he could, but he could still see the numbers he had first written. And it was almost recess time!

By this time Jay felt he would gladly do anything if he could get his own answers on his worksheet. What could he do now?

Well, he could pray. He shut his eyes, and in his heart he said, "Dear God, I am sorry I cheated. Please help me to know what to do now."

Right then he knew he would have to show his worksheet to Miss Ramer. He would have to tell her he had copied Eli's answers.

He would have to ask her



how he could fix things right.

It was very hard for Jay to take his paper to Miss Ramer and tell her all about it.

His teacher was very kind. She said, “I am glad you told me about this before math class.

“I will paste strips of paper over Eli’s answers. Then you cannot see them. You can write your answers on the strips.

“You must stay in at recess to do them. Those you don’t get done will just be wrong.”

“I will be glad to do that,” said Jay. And he really was.

Jay worked as fast as he could after the others went out to play. He didn’t get the problems all done because they were take-aways. Take-aways were so much

harder for him than adding problems.

But he was glad, glad, glad, that they were his own answers. He was not a cheater anymore!

When math class came, Miss Ramer said, "Today we will not trade papers. You may check your own."

Jay gave the teacher a thankful smile. She had done this for him. Now no one would see his sheet with the strips of paper pasted over Eli's answers.

Miss Ramer read the answers. She got out her grade book and said, "When I call your name, tell me how many you missed."

Jay had missed quite a few like he always did. But somehow he did not mind telling the number out loud this time. He smiled as he said it.

When the teacher called Eli's name, he began to laugh. "I missed them all, Miss Ramer. I added them and they are all take-away problems. I just forgot to look at how we were to do them." He laughed again.

The other children laughed too.

All but Jay. He was looking at Miss Ramer with his eyes and mouth wide open.

Miss Ramer was looking at him, too. Then she smiled a big smile.

Then Jay, who was tall for his age, smiled a big, big smile back at her over the heads of all the other children.

-Ruth K. Hobbs