

Bill's New Frock

SECTION

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About the book

Bill's New Frock was written in 1989 by Anne Fine and revised in 2002. The hero of the story, Bill Simpson, wakes one morning and finds he has suddenly and inexplicably become a girl. The story is written with a lot of humour and vivid description about Bill's predicament, embarrassment and horror in seven chapters. It raises the issue of how girls are sometimes treated differently to boys, and what is fair and unfair about people's assumptions about boys' and girls' behaviour and abilities.

Plot summary

In the opening chapter, the light-hearted tone of the story is established by Bill's parents' lack of reaction to the discovery. They don't notice anything strange, in fact, his mother insists he wears a pink frock to school and his father calls him 'poppet' and tells him he looks sweet.

On the way to school, Mean Malcolm whistles at him instead of kicking him, which Bill finds even worse. During the day, Bill is expected to be neat and gets into trouble for messy handwriting. In the playground, he discovers boys dominate it with their football game, leaving no room for the girls.

As the day progresses, Bill finds dresses impractical as his begins to get very dirty. When Bill is left with only girls' comics to read during a wet lunchtime he gets angry and fights a boy. However, at this point Bill realises that there is an advantage to wearing a frock when the boy is blamed for the fight.

After break, the rain stops so the class go outside for races. Three girls hatch a plan to let Paul, who is disabled, win the final race. Bill is included in the plan but finds he wants to win.

The girls are furious with Bill, but Paul is so thrilled at coming second they forgive Bill.

Both Kirsty and Mrs Collins tell Bill he doesn't look quite right today. Then, on the way home Bill sees Mean Malcolm who whistles at him again. Bill stands up for himself and teaches Malcolm a lesson about respect.

At home, his mother is horrified by the state of his dress, sending him to get changed and declaring never again to send him to school in a dress. Bill gets changed, looks in the mirror and is relieved and delighted to discover he is a boy again.



About the author

Anne Fine was born in the Midlands and studied history and politics at university. She had various jobs before writing her first book in 1971, when her eldest daughter was a baby. She has written over 25 books for all ages, from young readers to adults. She mostly writes humorous books and, particularly for younger readers, books

that raise fairly serious social issues.

Anne was the Children's Laureate between 2001 and 2003. She was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2003 for Services to Literature.

Facts and figures

Bill's New Frock won the Smarties Prize in 1989.

Other award-winning books by Anne Fine include: *Flour Babies*, winner of both the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year Award and the Carnegie Medal; and *Goggle-Eyes*, which as well as winning the Carnegie Medal and the Guardian Children's Fiction Award, was adapted for BBC television.

Madame Doubtfire has also been made into a film.

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