

Chapter 2

On Saturday morning Tom appeared on the sidewalk<sup>•</sup> with a bucket<sup>•</sup> of white paint and a brush<sup>•</sup>. He looked at the thirty metres of wide fence<sup>•</sup>. Sighing<sup>•</sup>, he painted one little piece. Tom sat down, feeling bad. He thought of the fun he had planned for the day. Soon the free boys would be going off on lovely adventures, and they would make fun of<sup>•</sup> him for having to work. He felt even worse. Suddenly he had an idea. He took his brush and started painting calmly.

Soon Ben Rogers appeared, eating an apple. Tom ignored him and continued painting. He stopped and looked at his work like an artist.

‘Hello, Tom. I’m going swimming. Don’t you wish you could? But of course, you have to work.’

Tom looked at Ben, then said:

‘What do you call work?’

‘Isn’t this work?’

Tom continued painting, and answered:

‘Well, maybe it is, and maybe it isn’t. All I know is, I like it.’

‘Do you really like it?’

‘Why not? Does a boy get a chance<sup>•</sup> to paint a fence every day?’



- **brush:** you use this to paint (see illustration)
- **bucket :** container (see illustration)
- **chance:** possibility; opportunity

- **fence:** wooden barrier around a garden
- **make fun of:** laugh at
- **sidewalk:** (US) footpath
- **sighing:** taking deep breaths because he is sad

That made it sound different. Ben stopped eating his apple. Tom moved his brush carefully backwards and forwards and stepped back to look. Ben watched every move, getting more interested. Presently, he said:

'Hey, Tom, let me paint a little.'

Tom thought, and then said:

'No, I don't think so, Ben. Aunt Polly wants this fence painted carefully because it's on the street. It's difficult to do it right.'

'Come on, let me try.'

'I'd like to, Ben. But Aunt Polly won't even let Sid do it.'

'I'll be careful. I'll give you my apple.'

Tom gave Ben his brush with reluctance in his face, but with happiness in his heart. While Ben worked and sweated in the sun, Tom sat in the shade eating the apple and thinking how to catch more boys. And there were lots of them. Boys came to make fun, but stayed to paint. By the time Ben was exhausted, Tom had exchanged the next go with Billy Fisher for a good kite; and then Johnny Miller, and so on. By the time he had no more paint, he had lots of toys and treasures, and the fence had three coats of paint. He had learnt that to make someone want something, you only have to make it difficult to get.

## TOM'S LESSON

What did Tom learn that day?

With a partner think of ways you can use this in your life.

### Glossary

- **catch:** (here) get
- **coats:** layers; coverings
- **exhausted:** very tired
- **go:** (here) turn
- **kite:** toy that flies (see illustration)
- **presently:** after a period of time
- **reluctance:** when you don't want to do something
- **shade:** out of the sun
- **sweated:** his skin got wet because it is hot

