

# The Secret of the Staff Room

## Set A/B

What would her friends say if they saw her? With a quick look over her shoulder, Lily ducked under the barrier. It wasn't that she particularly wanted to go back into school but if her folks got another call from her teacher about her homework, it would be disastrous. So, having left it behind *again*, she just had to go back and get it. Yes, all the children would have left by now, but teachers never went home – everybody knew that.

It would only occur to her later that she should have just gone to the front door and asked – no one would have minded. Besides, she could see that the office was closed. It could take ages for one of the teachers to stop whatever it was they did after school and notice her waiting. So, when she spotted that Mr Khan had left the back door of his classroom open, she grasped the opportunity without really thinking.



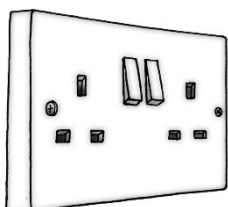
This was beginning to feel like an adventure. Her next challenge was to sneak past the staff room door unnoticed. She was just about to try when Ms Eastwood came around the corner. Ducking behind a storage cupboard, Lily felt a surge of unexpected sympathy, seeing how completely drained the teacher looked. She wasn't ready for what happened next, however. Ms Eastwood simply ground to a halt, a few steps from the staff room door.

Before Lily could decide what to do next, Mrs Cruz, the head teacher, appeared. Tutting quietly, she lightly squeezed Ms Eastwood's shoulder and her eyes immediately reopened. "Looks like you need to recharge your batteries," smiled Mrs Cruz and she guided her still sluggish colleague through the door.

Seizing her moment, Lily crept along the corridor. The staffroom door was still open and an extraordinary sight met her eyes. Mrs Cruz was sitting beside Ms Eastwood, guiding her outstretched hand into a brightly coloured, octagonal container of Treat Selection chocolates – nothing particularly unusual about that except that the container was pulsing with pale blue light and the teacher was clearly regaining her energy.

By the time Lily had reached her classroom, retrieved the homework and made her way back, there was a queue of teachers waiting silently outside the staffroom. She had to wait about five minutes before they had all shuffled in and closed the door so that she could get past and get out again.

As she made her way back around the outside of the school, she couldn't resist having a peak in at the staff room window. By the faint light of the chocolate box, she could see that all the teachers were sitting stock-still in rows with one shoe off and Mrs Cruz was crawling around the floor. Straining her eyes, Lily could just make out that she was plugging charging leads into a socket in the soles of their feet. When the last one was done, she picked up her coat and bag, flicked a switch on the wall and left. All the seated teachers remained still but began to glow gently.



With her head still swirling, Lily just about managed to duck back under the car park barrier and around the corner when she heard Mrs Cruz's car coming. She turned out of the school drive and the barrier closed behind her, leaving her "staff" to revive overnight.

# Questions for *The Secret of the Staff Room*

## Set A

### Vocabulary:

1. Look at the first paragraph. **Find** and **copy** a word meaning *especially*.

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2. Look at the paragraph beginning: '*This was beginning...*'

... *Lily felt a surge of unexpected sympathy* ... What does *sympathy* mean in this sentence?

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3. Look at the third paragraph.

... *she guided her still sluggish colleague through the door* ... What does the word *sluggish* mean in this sentence?

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### Retrieval:

4. Why did Lily feel she had to go back into school?

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5. Which teacher ground to a halt outside the classroom?

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6. How did Mrs Cruz make Ms Eastwood's eyes open?

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### Inference:

7. Why did Lily have a quick look over her shoulder?

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8. How did Mrs Cruz feel when she first saw Ms Eastwood? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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9. Why had Ms Eastwood *ground to a halt*? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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**Summarise:**

10. Here are some summaries of different paragraphs. Number them from 1 to 4 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- ☐ Ms Eastwood comes around the corner.
- ☐ Mrs Cruz drives out of the school.
- ☐ Lily goes into Mr Khan's room.
- ☐ The teachers began to glow.

**Predict:**

11. What do you think will be one of the first things Mrs Cruz does when she returns to school the following day?

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**Compare:**

12. Think about Lily's feelings when she goes back into school at the beginning of the text and when she is leaving at the end. How are her feelings different?

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# Questions for *The Secret of the Staff Room*

## Set B

### Vocabulary:

1. Look at the first paragraph. **Find** and **copy** a word that means *terrible*.

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2. Look at the third paragraph.

... *seeing how completely drained the teacher looked* ... What does *drained* mean in this sentence?

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3. ... *she guided her still sluggish colleague through the door* ... What does the word *colleague* mean in this sentence?

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### Retrieval:

4. Who had left a door open? Circle **one**.

**Mr Khan**

**Mrs Cruz**

**Lily**

**Ms Eastwood**

5. Where did Lily hide when Ms Eastwood appeared?

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6. How long did Lily have to wait before all the teachers had gone into the staff room?

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### Inference:

7. What do you think would have happened if Lily had not done her homework that night? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer.

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8. Why didn't Lily just go in through the front door?

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9. What were the teachers? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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**Meaning as a whole:**

10. Draw lines to match each part of the story with the correct quotation from the text.

Past events

*... the container was pulsing with pale blue light ...*

Setting

*Before Lily could decide what to do next ...*

Dilemma

*It would only occur to her later that she should have just gone to the front door and asked ...*

Character

*... if her folks got another call from her teacher ...*

**Authorial intent:**

11. "Looks like you need to recharge your batteries," smiled Mrs Cruz ... Why did the author use this choice of words?

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**Compare:**

12. Lily's opinion of teachers changes throughout the text. Describe one change.

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## Answers for *The Secret of the Staff Room*

### Set A:

#### Vocabulary:

1. particularly
2. pity / empathy / concern (or similar)
3. sleepy / slow-moving (or similar)

#### Retrieval:

4. to get her homework (task)
5. Ms Eastwood
6. lightly squeezed her shoulder

#### Inference:

7. She wanted to make sure her friends didn't see her (going back into school).
8. She felt a little annoyed or frustrated because she tutted when she saw Ms Eastwood.
9. She had run out of charge/electricity. She seemed to start regaining her energy when she put her hand into the glowing box. Then, Mrs Cruz plugged a charging lead into her foot, flicked a switch and she started to glow, like an appliance recharging.

#### Summarise:

10.

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 2 | Ms Eastwood comes around the corner. |
| 4 | Mrs Cruz drives out of the school.   |
| 1 | Lily goes into Mr Khan's room.       |
| 3 | The teachers began to glow.          |

#### Predict:

11. Accept answers that draw on the text, such as unplugging the staff or switching the staff back on so that they can get ready to teach again.

#### Compare:

12. At the beginning, Lily is a little frustrated that she has to go back into school but worried about what might happen if she doesn't do her homework and anxious not to be seen by any of her school friends. At the end she is amazed by what she has seen because the text says that her head was still swirling.

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## Answers for *The Secret of the Staff Room*

### Set B:

#### Vocabulary:

1. disastrous
2. exhausted / tired out / lacking energy
3. someone who works with you / co-worker

#### Retrieval:

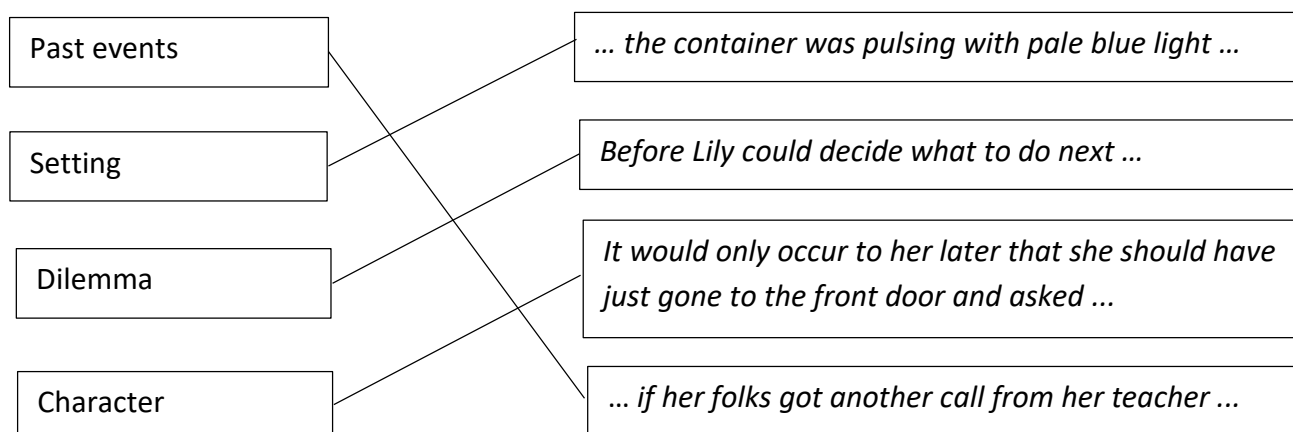
4. Mr Khan
5. behind a storage cupboard
6. (about) five minutes

#### Inference:

7. She would have been in trouble, both with the school and her parents. The text says that *if her folks got another call from her teacher about her homework, it would be disastrous*. Therefore, we can guess that this had happened before and they would not be pleased if it happened again.
8. She saw the office was closed / she didn't want to wait until a teacher saw her waiting to get in / she spotted that Mr Khan had left his door open.
9. The teachers were robots/androids (or similar). We know this because they ran out of energy at the end of the day and had to be plugged in to recharge overnight.

#### Meaning as a whole:

10.



#### Authorial intent:

11. The author was playing on the different meanings of the phrase *recharge your batteries*. In most cases, it just means that someone has to rest and regain some of their natural energy but here, because the teachers are powered by electricity, they *literally* needed to recharge their batteries at the end of the day.

#### Compare:

12. At the beginning, Lily is probably a little scared of teachers because she doesn't want them to call her parents, nor does she want them to see her in school. However, when she sees Ms Eastwood grind to a halt, she feels *unexpected sympathy*, which means she feels sorry for them, probably because Ms Eastwood looks so tired. Alternatively, accept answers that suggest she feels sympathy for them, but this turns to amazement, confusion or even fear when she realises that the teachers in her school are actually robots.

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