

MAKE HEADS OR TAILS OUT OF SOMETHING

By Carole L. Cooney

This saying comes from England in the 1600s. The head is the top or front of something. The tail is the end or bottom of something. So if you can make heads or tails out of something, you can understand it from beginning to end, from top to bottom. This expression is usually used in the negative (I can't make...) because there are a lot of things in the world that are difficult to understand.

Setting: Miss Smart's classroom

Characters:

Narrator

Max

Aurora

Royce

Milena

Miss Smart, the teacher

Narrator: It was testing day at school. All of the students were nervous because this test was the most important one of the whole year. Miss Smart is passing out the test booklets.

Miss Wolfe: Now students, remember to keep your test booklet closed until I tell you to open it. I will first read the directions, tell you to open your booklet and begin. Is that clear?

All: Yes, Miss Smart.

Miss Smart: You will have five minutes to complete the first test. When you reach page five, please stop and close your booklet.

Narrator: Miss Smart read the first set of directions, then the test was begun. She walked up and down the aisles to see how the children were doing.

Max: (raising his hand) Miss Smart. Miss Smart.

Miss Smart: (in a whisper) Yes, Max. Please speak softly. (walking to his desk)

Max: Page two is blank.

Miss Smart: Oh! Let me see. Well, ah... I don't have anymore booklets. (sighs) Oh, dear. Well, you may skip that section for now. There are only three minutes left. Just do the rest.

Aurora: (raising her hand) Miss Smart, Miss Smart.

Miss Smart: (walking to her desk) What is it, dear?

Aurora: I can't find page two.

Royce: I don't have it either.

Milena: My page is missing too.

Miss Smart: (Whispering loudly and motioning with a turn-the-page gesture) Students just... (gesture).

Narrator: The students quickly turn the page and let out a groan.

All: Oh, no!

Narrator: The students have very little time left so they work as fast as they can. Miss Smart continues down the rows when she spots Milena looking at Aurora's paper.

Miss Smart: (Whispering) Milena. (She motions for Milena's eyes to look at her own paper.)

Milena: Miss Smart, I wasn't *doing* anything!

Miss Smart: (eyes glaring as the beeper sounds) Time is up. Close your booklets. That is the end of the first section of the test. Tomorrow we'll do section two. Please pass your booklets to the front.

Narrator: The students pass their booklets forward. Miss Smart collects them.

Miss Smart: Students, you may now leave for recess.

Narrator: The students leave the classroom with confused looks.

Max: Hey, Royce. Did you have all the pages?

Royce: I had page one but I couldn't find page two. My booklet was all mixed up.

Aurora: Yes, when I turned page one over, there was page three. It's crazy.

Milena: I didn't like Miss Smart accusing me of cheating. That's mean. I was just looking to see what page Aurora was on.

Max: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Narrator: Miss Smart begins to examine the test booklets in the teacher's lounge.

Miss Smart: Why, all of these booklet pages are mixed up. The pages are not in order. I can't make heads or tails out of the page order. I've got to report this right away.

Narrator: Miss Smart walks to the Principal's office to make her report. The students stand around the school yard talking.

Royce: Do you think Miss Smart can make heads or tails out of those booklets?

Max: It beats me!

Milena: Hey! If the booklets are all mixed up, maybe we won't have any test tomorrow.

All: (big smiles) All right! Way to go!

Narrator: The students walk back to class grinning from ear to ear.

Miss Smart: Students, I afraid I have to tell you *no one* can make heads or tails out of the test booklets. So, there will not be any more testing until they are corrected.

All: (cheering) Yes! All right!