

1. Прочитайте текст и подготовьтесь к пересказу и беседе по его содержанию, ответьте на вопросы по тексту.

STARTING A NEW SCHOOL

(from “The Failure of Friends” by William Saroyan)

Longfellow High was not strictly speaking a high school at all. It was the seventh and eighth grades of grammar school, and its full name was Longfellow Junior High School.

It was at an ancient history lesson that I first made my class feel that I had a truly original mind. It happened that it was the first class of the very first day. The teacher was called Miss Shenstone by the students and Harriet or Harry by other teachers. Ancient-history books were distributed to the class, and Miss Shenstone asked us to turn to page 192 for the first lesson.

I remarked that it would seem more in order¹ to turn to page one for the first lesson.

I was asked my name, and I was only too glad to say honestly “William Saroyan”.

“Well, William Saroyan,” Miss Shenstone said, “I might say, *Mister* William Saroyan, just shut up and let me do the teaching of ancient history in this class”

Quite a blow²

On page 192, I remember it quite clearly, was a photograph of two rather common-looking stones which Miss Shenstone said were twenty thousand years old.

It was at this point that my school of thought and behavior was started.

“How do you know?” I said.

This was something quite new to the old *school of thought* in which the teachers asked the questions and the students tried to answer them. The entire class expressed its approval of the new school. The truth of the matter is that neither Miss Shenstone, nor Mr. Monsoon himself, the principal³, had a satisfactory answer to any question of this sort, for they (and all the other teachers) had always accepted what they had found in the textbooks.

¹ it would seem more in order... – кажется, правильное было бы...

² Quite a blow – Это был удар

³ the principal - директор

Instead of trying to answer the question, Miss Shenstone made me demonstrate the *behavior* of the new school – she made me run. She threw herself at me with such speed that I was hardly able to get away. She caught me by my home knit sweater, and damaged it before I got away. The class approved of the behavior of the new school. Instead of remaining in one's seat in a crisis, it was better to get up and go.

Then I decided to present my case⁴ to Mr. Monsoon himself: “She said the rocks were twenty thousand years old,” I said. “All I said was ‘How do you know?’ If the book can say the rocks are twenty thousand years old, somebody ought to be able to say how the book got that figure. I came here to learn. I don't expect to be punished because I want to learn.”

But I was greatly astonished to find that his sympathies were with Miss Shenstone: “In all the years that I have been connected with the public school system of California,” Mr. Monsoon said, “nobody has ever asked such a question. Well,” he said rather wearily, “I must give you a beating”

“For what?” I said.

I got to my feet, watching the stenographer, whose desk was beside the door.

“Miss Slifo”, Mr. Monsoon said, but that was all I needed to hear, and before Miss Slifo was able to block my way⁵, I was at the door, out of the room, and about halfway across the school grounds.

Once again, the behavior of the new school had been tested and found true⁶.

I went home and found my Uncle Alecksander, who was studying law at the University of Southern California, on a visit at our house. I told him the story. He invited me into his car and we went to Longfellow Junior School.

I don't know what my Uncle Alecksander and Mr. Monsoon said to one another, but a few minutes later my Uncle Alecksander came out to the car and said: “You will spend the rest of the day away from school, but tomorrow you will return to you classes as though nothing had happened.”

⁴ to present a case to – передать дело на рассмотрение

⁵ to block my way – загородить мне дорогу

⁶ true (here) = right

Fortunately, Miss Shenstone taught at Longfellow only another four days, and during that time she did not allow herself to look at me once or to ask me a question. Several new teachers took over the teaching of the ancient-history class, but by now the new school was in full operation⁷ and the teachers were always eager to finish out a day or a week and be gone forever.

After a month Mr. Monsoon left the school too and he was succeeded by a man who was famous for his exploits⁸ in the First World War. It was expected of this man to quickly put down the new school and to restore the old. He tried the method of brute force at first, and then he tried the method of taking the worst boys into his confidence⁹ - but neither of these methods worked, and after the first semester, the man accepted a post at a small country school with only forty or fifty students.

As for myself, I transferred to Tech High¹⁰ in order to learn typing.

TEXT 16

STARTING A NEW SCHOOL

QUESTIONS

1. How did young Saroyan start a new school of thought and behaviour?
2. How did Miss Shenstone try to demonstrate what the old school was?
3. Saroyan presented his case to the principal, didn't he? What was the result?
4. How was the conflict settled?
5. Did anybody manage to put down the new school and restore the old one?
6. What is the old school of thought? What is the new one?

⁷ by now the new school was in full operation – к этому времени законы «новой школы» действовали повсюду.

⁸ was famous for his exploits – был известен своими подвигами

⁹ method of taking the worst boys into his confidence – метод установления доверительных отношений с самыми худшими из мальчишек

¹⁰ Tech High = Technical High – средняя школа с техническим уклоном