

# 10 | Experiments

"I'm confused," complained Andy as the children left their science classroom at the end of the day.

"You're not the only one," wailed Emma. A group of them walked slowly towards the front gate of the school grounds.

"Mr Carey throws so many ideas at us that I never get time to swallow them all." Maeve kicked a pebble as she walked.

"Yeah, experiments!" Andy said with feeling. "All those things we have to remember. I don't know how scientists ever prove anything."

"That's easy." Luigi always seemed to think everything was easy. "They just look at things often enough and then they know. Like, the sun comes up every morning, and they see it, so then they know that the sun will come up every morning in the future."

"Just like you've always known the answer to everything in the past, so you're always gonna know all the answers," muttered Maeve.

"That's a bit unfair. It's not right to mock people," Emma cut in.

"And it's not right to say that just because something has always happened in the past, it always will," said Alex. "Like, my mum always cuts my sandwiches, but I'll bet she won't always cut them."

"Yeah, you're right," Luigi mused. "It's not just seeing something happen again and again. But it does work sometimes, doesn't it? Like with the sun."

"So why does it work sometimes and not others?" asked Jenny. "Is there a rule?"

"I reckon it's got something to do with that fair test stuff," put in Andy. "If we do a fair test, then we *have* to know the answer, don't we?"

"I don't know about that." Emma was looking puzzled. "We say we've made the two things the same in every way, but how do we know that there isn't ...?" A football being kicked around by some bigger boys landed in the middle of their group, causing Alex to drop his books and everyone to jump.

By the time they were walking together again, Maeve had another question. "How do these scientists get to do experiments, anyway?" she asked.

"That's easy," answered Luigi. "They just go out and set up a fair test. You just do the experiment to find out the answer."

"But where do they come from?" persisted Maeve. "All the experiments we do are given to us by Mr Carey. Who gives the scientists their experiments?"

"They would have to dream them up themselves," said Emma.

"Dream?" laughed Alex. "You're not telling me they get them in their dreams?"

"No, of course not, silly," smiled Emma, good-naturedly. "I mean they *think* them up for themselves."

"But a thought can't just pop up out of nowhere," Maeve persevered. "Where do these thoughts come from?"

"I don't know. Some of my thoughts seem to come from nowhere," said Andy. "But," he conceded, "Plenty don't. Most of them come out of stuff I'm already thinking."

"That's got to be it," Jenny asserted. "These scientists have a ...". Just then the sound of a car's horn cut across their conversation. Jenny's mother was waving frantically at her from across the road.

"Oh, I've got to run," she exclaimed. "Mum needs to go into town today and she told me not to be late!" As she dashed off, most of the others noticed the buses had begun loading and wandered off too.

Emma was left standing with Alex. "Well, we didn't decide much. I have just about as many questions now as I started out with," she said.

"Is that all?" Alex asked with a twinkle in his eye. "I reckon I've got ten times more questions. I was confused after that class, but now there seems to be even more to doing experiments than I thought."