

TIRÉ À PART

# Stories to Ponder

## 2

for Reading and  
Understanding English

MARTHE BLANCHET



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## **Stories to Ponder 2**

*for* **Reading and Understanding English**

Révision linguistique :  
Jean-Marie Jot

Correction d'épreuves :  
Doris Lizotte

Page couverture :  
Louis-Philippe St-Laurent

Mise en page :  
Hubert & Carrière

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## STORY 4

### Have a Heart

“Now, now Sebastian, boys don’t cry!” he recalled his mother often telling him.

“What’s wrong in crying?” he shouted to himself and also to the students who were laughing at him because he was. Sebastian had just discovered that his wallet and everything in it was missing from his back pocket and, out of sheer desperation, simply slumped to the ground and had started to cry. Who had written this fixed set of rules where a person’s acceptable behaviour is determined by the sex he or she belongs to? At this very moment, he felt totally devastated and couldn’t understand why his emotions should be kept silent.

He got up and walked over to Wendy who had witnessed the whole scene and was admonishing the teasing students.

“Let him be! He’s not doing anything wrong!”

They were losing interest in Sebastian anyway and, though still giggling a bit, they walked away. Wendy wasn’t the outgoing type, but when she sensed a situation was getting out of hand, she could never remain a silent observer.

“Feeling better?... about your problem I mean.”

“I will get over the loss of my wallet sooner or later, but I can’t bear people making fun of me because I show my feelings... just because I’m human.”

“I can relate to that,” Wendy added.

“Can you really? I mean you’re not exactly a boy Wendy.”

“I have feelings too Sebastian. I am a person too. I have the right to laugh, cry and... and make mistakes. It’s just that others don’t always seem to understand that.”

Wendy had moved to Canada only one year before and already, her Chinese origins had automatically destined her to become the top student in the class... or so did most of her classmates think. She was a good student but Carla Anderson was by far better than she. Why did she have to take on the reputation of being so flawless?

“Every time I make a mistake, the students in my class look at me as though I have committed a crime. Can’t they adjust to the fact that I’m a student too? Students do make errors you know... but they never give me the opportunity to make a mistake without making me feel ashamed and guilty. Sometimes I’m so high strung that I’m afraid I won’t be able to cope with school much longer.”

Sebastian listened in disbelief. He was not the only person who was feeling bad because he couldn’t act according to his personality and just be himself.

“And there’s Raymond over there,” Wendy added, “did you know that because he’s Haitian he’s classified by many students as being slow and lazy? How can people possibly think that way?”

Sebastian had listened to all Wendy had to say. Now it was his turn to talk, “We’ll just have to stick together Wendy. Let’s hope that one day they’ll understand!”

## CONTENT ANALYSIS

### Have a Heart

1. Why were the students laughing at Sebastian?

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2. Why was Sebastian crying?

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3. Was losing the wallet Sebastian's real problem? Explain.

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4. Who first taught Sebastian that boys shouldn't cry?

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5. Does he believe this to be right? Explain.

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6. Is it justifiable to state that boys shouldn't cry? Develop your answer.

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7. Why would Sebastian's mother teach this to her son?

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8. Who was watching Sebastian?

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9. What did Wendy do to prove she sided with Sebastian?

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10. Do the onlookers leave just because she told them to?

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11. Why did Wendy feel she had to help Sebastian?

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12. Why does Wendy understand Sebastian?

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13. What kind of student do many people expect her to be? Why?

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14. Is she really the best student?

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15. How does Wendy react to what people expect her to be?

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16. What makes Wendy angry?

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17. How do people's high expectations for her school performance affect Wendy?

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18. How would you describe Wendy's personality?

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19. Who is Raymond?

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20. In what way are Raymond's and Wendy's situations different?

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21. Does Sebastian think the situation will ever change?

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## FINISHING THE STORY

Choose two of the following topics to help finish the story you have just read:

- 1) Sebastian has a talk with his mother and exposes his views on everybody's right to show emotion.
- 2) It is now Sebastian's turn to take Wendy's defense when a few students comment on the low score they can't believe she got on a math test.
- 3) Sebastian, Wendy and Raymond become friends. They support each other and find a way (or ways) to help change the students' prejudiced ways of thinking.

Write a 12- to 15-line text for each topic and edit both. Read them to the class to see how they like your endings.

## INFORMAL CLASS DISCUSSION

A preconceived judgment or opinion on someone without just grounds is what a prejudice is all about. A person is judged not on what he/she is but on what he/she is believed to be. Any false judgment, whether it lowers (*as in the case of both Sebastian and Raymond*) or heightens (*as in Wendy's case*) the person's status is detrimental either way because it disregards who the person really is and so is completely disrespectful of him/her.

Put yourself in Sebastian, Raymond and Wendy's shoes for a moment. How is it they were made to feel so miserable?

What specific action could they take to make the prejudiced people understand and eventually change?

### Sharing your experience with the class.

As a young person, you probably suffered from prejudice yourself without really knowing what it was. Think about how you might have been made to feel unimportant (because of your age) in stores, restaurants, etc.... when you were not accompanied by an adult. Have you witnessed others being mistreated in similar circumstances?

- How did you feel?
- How did you react?
- Is it justifiable to be treated that way? Why or why not?
- What can you do to change people's preconceived opinions on teenagers?