**View from the Other Side**

# **Unit 13**

Brian couldn’t believe his luck. When he had informed his parents of his desire to receive a new bicycle for his birthday, he felt certain it was just wishful thinking on his part. No matter, here he was cruising the neighborhood on his very own candy-apple red throwback bicycle with high rise handlebars and a banana seat. The only feature that made it not entirely retro was the fact that it had three speeds controlled by a grip on the handlebars.

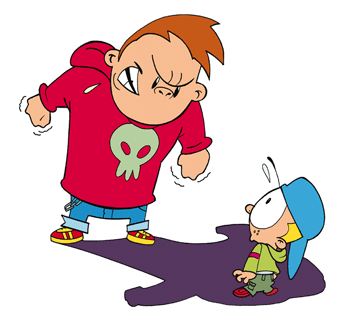
His dad hadn’t been too excited about him wanting this particular bike. His mother’s **maternal** instinct must have saved the day, however. She knew that if he received this bike for his birthday, she and Dad could count on Brian being on his best behavior for most of the year. To her that would be a win-win situation.

Brian’s dad could be a little **stodgy** and old-fashioned, in contrast to his mom’s more modern way of thinking. He really didn’t believe in buying or paying for good behavior. He expected the good behavior to come first. He wanted Brian to earn rewards he received. His mom must have won the debate this time.

Brian wasn’t going to worry over the details. He had a lot of ground to cover so that all of his friends could see him riding his new bike. He wasn’t going to let a worry like what his dad thought **diminish** the pure adrenaline rush he felt every time he passed one of his neighbors or friends and gave them a smug little head nod.

He was so wrapped up in his own revelry that he almost didn’t notice his arch-nemesis, Clyde, standing in the middle of the next intersection. Brian slammed on his brakes and skidded to stop a good thirty yards from Clyde. While he was fumbling to turn his bike around, he heard Clyde yelling at him.

“Hey, Pipsqueak! Where do you think you’re going? Get over here with that sissy bike/”

 Brian knew better than to get anywhere near Clyde. Clyde was the neighborhood bully -- and the schoolhouse bully as well. Brian had often seen Clyde make kids smaller than him **grovel** on their hands and knees to avoid a beating. So far, Brian had been able to steer clear of Clyde and avoid any embarrassing run-ins.

Clyde was a mystery to almost everyone. Not the fact that he was a bully, everyone recognized that. The mystery was in just what would **ignite** his wrath next. In that, Clyde was not consistent at all. What sparked his **agitation** one day, he completely ignored the next. Brian could tell, though, that his new bike and the way he was flaunting it really had Clyde irritated.

“You don’t scare me, Clyde Baxter,” Brian yelled back.

Clyde clenched his **massive** fists (some said they were the size of bear paws) and the veins in his neck began to bulge, making his face go crimson.

“Come over here and say that, Pipsqueak,” Clyde bellowed.

Brian could not figure out why we had **blurted** out that last statement. He definitely had not thought before speaking. He felt a **pall** fall over the whole area; it was as if a blanket of fear and silence had dropped from above. All people within earshot were waiting to see what would happen next. Brian didn’t need to think twice. He hopped on his bike and began peddling toward home as fast as his legs would take him. Even two blocks away, he could still hear Clyde bellowing like a wounded elk.

Brian raced into the driveway and didn’t even attempt stopping until he had entered the garage. As he skidded to a stop, leaving a long, black tire mark on the concrete, he ran right into the latest piece of his father’s **handicraft**.

His dad, who was in the process of sanding the small nightstand he was making, quipped, “Good thing I wasn’t painting! What has you in such a blind rush?”

“Dad, I think I just let my mouth create a problem for my body—of a **magnitude** that I can’t handle by myself,” Brian blurted out.

“What?” his dad asked, smiling. Brian’s dad then noticed that Brian’s **countenance** revealed a seriousness he rarely saw in Brian. Brian’s facial expression **fluctuated** between one of excitement to one of insurmountable fear. In fact, he thought Brian might begin to cry. “Okay, I am sorry about taking this lightly. What has you so upset?”

“I – I just told Clyde that I’m not afraid of him. If this all were happening to someone else, I would find the whole scenario **hilarious**, but right now, I’m not finding it even the least bit humorous. What can I do, Dad?”

Although Brian thought of his dad as old-fashioned and a bit boring, he did **revere** his opinions on things and his problem-solving skills. He often asked his advice and even shared his dad’s wisdom with his friends.

“Brian, you and your friends need to realize that Clyde is deliberately trying to **foster** the picture you all have of him as a bully. He does all that he can to encourage that impression of him to continue. In that way, he can mask his own insecurities and fears.”

“What could he possibly have to be fearful of?” Brian asked.

“Without knowing him, I can’t be sure, but usually these things happen in a **chronological** progression.”

“What does that mean?”

“It happens or builds over a period of time. Could be that his dad bullies or abuses Clyde, and because Clyde feels weak and inept, he pretends he’s strong and bullies others. If things continue, Clyde will do the same to his son, and he will become a bully too. It’s like a continuing **saga** of abuse and bulling, abuse and bullying. The story continues on and on.”

Brian had never really understood bullying this way before. Suddenly, he felt sorry for Clyde, and he wished he could take back what he’d said. Clyde could probably just use a good friend. Brian just didn’t know if he was the kid for the job. There was still the very real possibility of getting pounded into the dust.

“I kind of wish I could be a magician for a day, so I could **enchant** Clyde’s dad into loving and caring for his son, so Clyde could become a normal person,” Brian mused.

Brian’s dad chuckled to himself. Leave it to Brian to come up with that kind of solution. At least he was concerned for the other boy, and he sounded sincere in his desire to help him change.

“Brian, I don’t think magic is what is called for, but I do believe there is help for Clyde. It’s going to take an extremely **reputable** person—someone who makes the right choices for the right reasons. Clyde needs a friend who wants to see Clyde change for Clyde’s sake, not his own safety. It won’t be easy to help Clyde see that is worth something. Clyde will surely resist any attempt to be befriended because he doesn’t know how to trust anyone. The person who befriends Clyde will have to be persistent and determined. Do you know anyone who fits that description?”

A big smile spread across Brian’s face as he hopped back on his bike and headed back to the intersection where he had last seen Clyde.

--Ronald Powers

**UNIT 13 VOCABULARY**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WORD** | **DEFINITION in your own words from context clues** | **MEMORY TRIGGER** |
| maternal |  |  |
| stodgy |  |  |
| diminish |  |  |
| grovel |  |  |
| ignite |  |  |
| agitation |  |  |
| massive |  |  |
| blurt |  |  |
| pall |  |  |
| handicraft |  |  |
| magnitude |  |  |
| countenance |  |  |
| fluctuate |  |  |
| hilarious |  |  |
| revere |  |  |
| foster |  |  |
| chronological |  |  |
| saga |  |  |
| enchant |  |  |
| reputable |  |  |