

End of term

The text below is from 'The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler' by Gene Kemp. The extract is taken from towards the end of the book where the children in the story are about to leave their school.

We emptied our desks and took the pictures off the wall. Miss came back for the end of term concert, where we stood up and the school clapped and cheered us. The back of our classroom was full of costumes and scenery heaped into boxes. We didn't think about it being the end of term. We thought about the play. Patsy and Miss and me, we sat behind the curtains and the others got ready to go on the stage while we told the story of the quests, of the legend of the Grail and of Lancelot and Guinevere.

Danny was fantastic as Galahad. Everyone was fantastic and the school stood up and clapped and cheered us. The Headmaster said a prayer for the school and a special one for those leaving. Then we sang, 'Lord Dismiss Us With Thy Blessing' while Linda and Lorraine sobbed and wailed in the back row.

We cheered the Staff and the Headmaster, and then the school. That cheer nearly lifted the roof off.

And it was over.

We went to get our shoebags out of the cloakroom.

'Good-bye. Good-bye.'

'See you.'

Danny and Pithead had disappeared so I wandered into the playground to wait for them. Already the school was emptying. Tonight we would go down to the river and count all the weeks of glorious summer ahead of us. All the long days of nothing to do. Summer holiday days. I stared at the old building and the tall tree in the playground. It was the last time I should be here. No more Sir, gloom. No more Mrs Somers, FANTASTIC. I'd come here, holding Berry's hand, when I was four, and now I was twelve. Eight years had gone somewhere. And I didn't want to go to a new school. And I didn't want to grow up. Growing up seemed a grotty sort of thing to have to do. I felt empty, strange, restless.

I looked up at the bell tower. The bell tower I'd never climbed. There it was, unrung since the war. What a waste. What a pity it was never rung. A bell like that was meant to be rung. It winked at me in the sunlight, full of invitation. What an end to eight years. I could guess where Thomas Tiler had climbed up, ages ago. There was an easy route. Perfectly simple. Simply perfect. I walked up to the wall and walked away again.

