

Traffic Jammin'

It's a hot sunny day,
And the cars and the buses,
And the trucks and the vans,
Are all stuck in long traffic jams.
Drivers are yawning.
The minutes creep.
Babies are bawling.
My sister's asleep.

Then the DJ plays a brand new song,
And it's wild and it's free,
And it's rhythm gets right inside of me
... and everyone else in that jam.
All of sudden fingers drum,
Feet tap,
And everyone is ready to rap!

Then a car door opens wide,
And four lively people step outside,
Their radio is blaring ... and so is ours,
And the four start dancing between the cars.
In no time at all others join in,
There's singing and dancing and beeping horns,
And everyone is happy for a while.
A jiving woman shouts at me
'Hey kid, I like your style!'

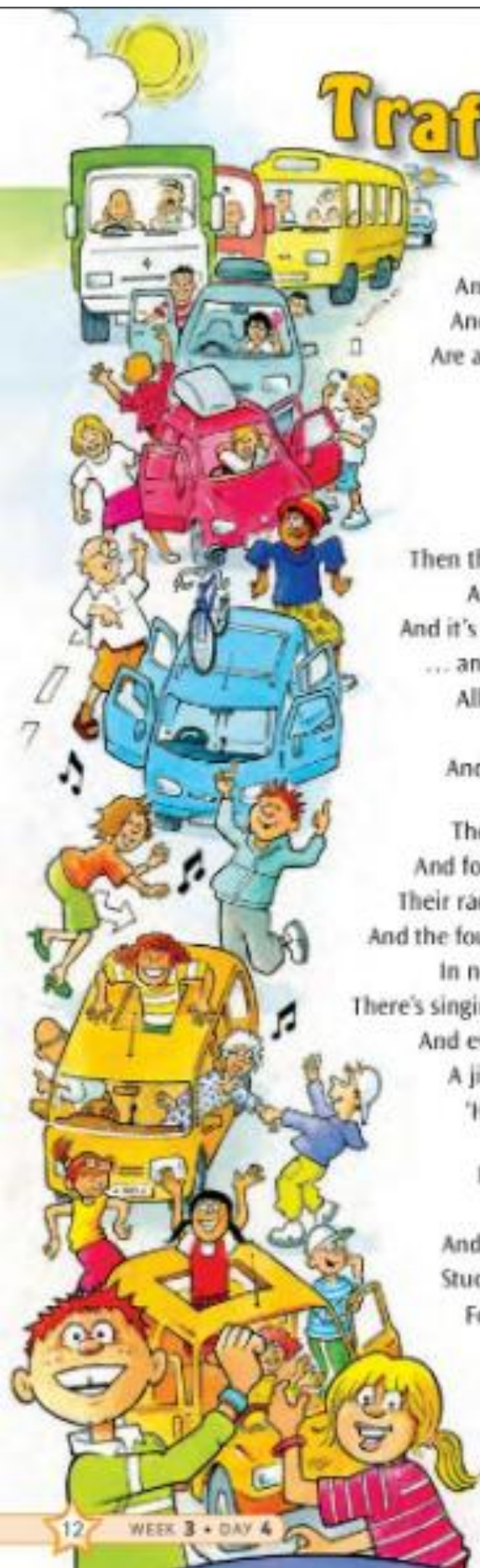
But the song ends soon
As all songs must,
And now we're back in the car
Stuck in this boring traffic jam
For at least another hour!

By John Newman



CHECK-UP

- 1 What was the weather like?
- 2 Why were all the vehicles going nowhere fast?
- 3 What was the poet's sister doing?
- 4 Why were the minutes creeping?
- 5 List ten ways to pass the time in a traffic jam.



Running

The puddle fills a hollow in the muddy ground. It is a perfect mirror of the sky above. The reflections of far distant clouds glide across its surface. Blues, greys and whites shimmer on the water. Then ...

Splat! A muddy foot shatters the perfect image of the sky into a thousand streaks of dirty water.

He stops for a moment, his foot still in the puddle, his breath ragged and rasping from the effort. A moment – that is all he can allow himself to rest. His heart is beating like a drum. He can feel it thumping rapidly in his chest and pounding in his ears. Sweat trickles down his forehead onto his nose and cheeks. He wipes the sweat away brusquely with a torn sleeve. He glances around, trying to get his bearings. There is no time to lose. No time to waste.

His lungs are burning. His legs are aching. He lunges onwards through the bushes. He does not notice the thorns that tear viciously at his skin. The bushes thin out into open ground to his left. He veers off, glad to be able to move with more speed. His feet hardly touch the uneven ground that slopes gently downwards towards the river. More than once he stumbles but somehow manages to recover and keep running.

A ditch looms before him. Sobbing with the effort, he half jumps, half clambers up onto it. His legs tremble as he crouches on top of the ditch, ready to leap down onto the soft, green grass on the other side. Using all of his self-control, he forces his breath to quieten as he listens.

His heart sinks as he hears the sound he dreads – the baying of the bloodhounds and the urgent voices of their handlers. They are still on his trail.

No time to rest. He leaps off the ditch and bolts across the open field. He heads towards the river. It is his last hope. ■

CHECK-UP

- 1 What colours are mentioned in the story?
- 2 How do you know that it has been raining before the story takes place?
- 3 How do you know that the runner is exerting himself?
- 4 Where does he stop to listen?
- 5 What does he run towards? Why do you think it is his last hope?

I TAKE MY HAT OFF TO YOU!



Chullos



Sombrero



Shapkas



Ghutra

People lose a lot of heat through their heads. Therefore, people who live in countries with a cold climate wear warm hats. Russians wear hats called **shapkas** made from sheepskin to help them stay warm during the bitterly cold winters. In fact, hats are very often made out of the skin of animals that live close by. Inuit people who live in Arctic regions wear hats made from the fur of caribou, seals and even polar bears. People who live high in the Andes Mountains of South America keep warm by wearing hats called **chullos**, which are made from llama or sheep's wool.

In countries with a hot climate, hats serve a different purpose. They are used to protect people from the heat of the sun. The Tuareg men who live in the Sahara Desert cover their heads and faces with **turbans**. A sign of adulthood, these also protect them from the harsh sun and the gritty sand blowing in the wind. Some Arab men wear a headress called the **ghutra**, which is made of cotton woven in a check pattern. Wide rimmed hats, such as the **sombrero** worn in Mexico, and Chinese straw hats are worn to give shade from the sun.

Helmets are a type of hat worn for protection by anyone whose job or sport is dangerous. Hurlers, jockeys, bikers, firefighters, builders and many others wear helmets. Nurses, Gardaí, soldiers and chefs are just some of the people who wear hats as part of their work uniform. Kings and queens, popes and bishops, tribal chiefs and judges all wear hats or some other type of headgear to show their authority. Many people also wear hats and caps just to look good! ■

CHECK-UP

- 1 Why do people in cold countries wear hats?
- 2 Why do people in hot countries wear hats?
- 3 What are Inuit peoples' hats made of?
- 4 Why do sombreros have a wide rim?
- 5 Why do people wear helmets?



SPLASHDOWN!

Before the beginning of the Space Shuttle programme in 1981, American astronauts had an interesting way of returning to Earth after their flight into space. The capsule containing the crew would hurtle back to Earth at such speed that the outside of the capsule would scorch and burn as it pushed its way through the atmosphere. Parachutes would open to slow the capsule down. Landing, however, was still really tricky.

The mission controllers had to ask the question: how could the capsule be slowed down enough for the final descent? The answer was simple. Water. It was decided that the capsules should splashdown into the Pacific Ocean.

Questions on the Pictures

- 1 Something has inflated around the base and the top of the capsule. What do you think these are? Why are they there?
- 2 The capsule was once a shiny silver colour. What colour is it now? Why do you think this happened?
- 3 What job do you think the navy divers in the inflatable dinghy are there to do?
- 4 What are the divers wearing for their own safety?
- 5 What do you think is going to happen next?

The water would be able to absorb much of the force of the landing speed. Inside the capsule, the astronauts still felt like they were hitting a brick wall. However, the seats and straps were specially designed to protect them.

The pictures show the *Apollo 11* capsule after its return from mankind's first landing on the moon. A team of divers from a nearby aircraft carrier has come alongside the capsule to help the astronauts.

The *Apollo 11* capsule is now on display in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, USA. Close to it, there is a slice of moon rock that the astronauts brought back on *Apollo 11*. Visitors can touch this piece of the moon.

If splashdown sounds like a risky way to return to Earth, spare a thought for the Russian **cosmonauts** (astronauts). They have to land their capsules in the deserts of Siberia. They call it 'dustdown'! ■

CHECK-UP

- 1 Where did the American space capsules 'land' on Earth?
- 2 Who was inside the capsules?
- 3 Where is the *Apollo 11* capsule on display today?
- 4 What are Russian astronauts called?
- 5 What was so special about *Apollo 11*?

The Babysitter Calls

- ☎ Hello? Sarah? ...
- ☎ Slow down, slow down! I can't understand you. Is everything OK?
- ☎ Speak slowly. Are Tom and Kate alright?
- ☎ Good. Now calm down and tell me what's ... Is the house OK?
- ☎ What do you mean by *most of it*?
- ☎ The parrot? What about her? Calm down! What's that horrible noise in the background?
- ☎ Well, who let her out of the cage?
- ☎ I've told Tom 100 times never to mess with the door on that cage. What happened?
- ☎ So you were upstairs with Kate when the bird got out ... She bit you where?
- ☎ You poor thing! Did you put a plaster on your thumb? Polly is normally very friendly. I'm so sorry ... Right ... and the children are upstairs in their rooms? ... Good. Where are you now? ... OK, so you've locked yourself in the bathroom? ... But where's Polly?
- ☎ Yes, of course we'll come straight home, but can you ...? Sarah, parrots *don't* kill people! Calm down. Can you take a peep out the door and see what ... Good girl ...
- ☎ Right, where is she now? ... The sitting room, right ... she did *what* to the sofa? Ew!
- ☎ Oh my ear! ... Sorry, Sarah but that was a very loud scream. What happened?
- ☎ So, she shot past you into the kitchen ... What was that bang?
- ☎ Well, I suppose that's what happens when a parrot perches on a lightshade ... No, I'm *not* making jokes about this. I understand you must be very upset. No, the fire brigade don't have a special killer parrot unit! ... What? ... So she's eating stuff out of the fruit bowl in the kitchen. Good, she's a greedy guts and that will keep her busy until we get back.
- ☎ Look, just get yourself upstairs to the kids and stay there until we arrive ... About ten minutes ... Don't cry. We'll be as fast as we can.
- ☎ Bye! Waiter. The bill please!



CHECK-UP

- 1 What is the babysitter's name?
- 2 What are the children's names?
- 3 From where did the babysitter make the phone call?
- 4 How did the babysitter feel?
- 5 Where do you think the parents were? Explain.