

# Mixed Messages

by Victor Rodger



**Scene:** Classroom. A group of students, including **JESS**, **JOSHIE**, **JUNY**, and **COLIN**, are making flower leis at their desks. They are all wearing masks. Their teacher, **SURITA**, walks around the room, looking at their work.

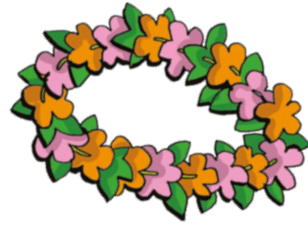
**SURITA.** How's everyone getting on with making their leis?

**JESS** holds her lei up and admires it.

**JESS.** I think I've almost finished.

**SURITA.** That looks great, Jess.

**JESS** (looking proud). Thank you.



**JOSHIE** looks doubtfully at his lei. It doesn't look as neat as Jess's – the paper flowers are all different shapes.

**SURITA.** Everything all right, Joshie?

**JOSHIE.** Um, I'm not sure I did it right.

**SURITA.** Let's have a look.



**JOSHIE** holds up his lei. **SURITA's** eyes widen with surprise.

**SURITA** (politely). Oh, wow. That's a very ... interesting looking lei.

**JOSHIE.** Thanks!

**SURITA** moves off to look at the other leis. The classroom is suddenly filled with the sound of an enormous AAACHOOO.

**JESS** swivels round and looks at Joshie accusingly.

**JESS.** Ewww. Did you just sneeze all over me?

**JOSHIE** (looking apologetic).

Sorry. I always sneeze in spring. It's all the pollen.



**JUNY.** Colin, Joshie said you just did that massive sneeze.

**COLIN** looks at Joshie accusingly.

**COLIN.** No, I didn't, Joshie.

**JOSHIE** (confused). You didn't what?

**COLIN.** Do that massive as sneeze.

**JOSHIE.** I never said you did.

**JUNY.** Yes, you did. You said it was Colin.

**JOSHIE.** No, I didn't. I said it was the pollen. Not Colin.

**JUNY** (realising his mistake). Ohhhhhhhh. The pollen. Sorry, Colin.

**JOSHIE.** Pollen always gives me hay fever.

**JESS** swivels around again to look at Joshie.

**JESS.** Wait. Did you say you've got a fever? Because if you have, you shouldn't be at school. You could be infectious!

**JUNY.** Who has a fever?

**JESS.** Joshie.

**JOSHIE.** I said I've got hay fever. Not like a fever, fever.

**JOSHIE** does another massive sneeze to prove his point.

**JESS.** Ewww.



*There's a knock at the door. A girl enters.*

**SURITA.** OK, class, I'd like you to meet Tayyaba. She has moved here from Bluff.

**JUNY** (*frowning*). Did she say from Fluff?

**JESS.** No, Juny. She said Bluff, not Fluff.

**JUNY.** I'm pretty sure she said Fluff.

**JESS** *sticks her hand up.*

**SURITA.** Yes, Jess?

**JESS.** Miss, did you say that Tayyaba came from Bluff or from Fluff? Because Juny thought you said Fluff.

**SURITA.** Well, when we wear masks, it can be hard to understand what people are saying. And sometimes what we think we hear and what someone is saying are two totally different things.

**JESS.** Tayyaba is from Bluff. Not Fluff. Isn't that right, Tayyaba?

**TAYYABA** *nods her head.*

**JUNY.** Woops.

**SURITA.** Tayyaba, why don't you sit next to Jess?

**TAYYABA** *takes the empty seat next to Jess.*

**TAYYABA.** Hi. I'm Tayyaba.

**JESS.** Tayyaba? That's a cool name.

**TAYYABA.** It's a Muslim name.



**JESS.** What does it mean?

**TAYYABA.** It means lots of different things. But one of the things it means is pleasant.

**COLIN.** Did you say it means pheasant as in a bird?

**TAYYABA** (*sounding confused*). No. I said pleasant.

**JOSHIE.** Did you say present?

**TAYYABA** (*sounding even more confused*). I said pleasant.

**JUNY.** Did you say crescent?

**TAYYABA** (*raising her voice*). I said pleasant!

*Everyone stops talking and looks at TAYYABA.*

**SURITA.** Is everything OK, Tayyaba?

**JOSHIE** (*under his breath*). Yeah, she's just being really pleasant.

**TAYYABA** *swings round and shrugs.*

**SURITA.** OK, everyone, as soon as you finish making your leis, I want you to put them on my desk.

**COLIN** *looks confused. He puts his hand up, but then another teacher comes in.*

**SURITA.** Hold on, Colin, I'll be with you in a minute.

**SURITA** *goes outside to talk to the other teacher.*

**COLIN** (*frowning*). Did she just say to put the leis on Jess or on her desk?

**JUNY.** It sounded like she said to put them on Jess.

**COLIN.** That's weird.



**JOSHIE.** But if that's what she said, then I guess that's what we'd better do.

**COLIN** gets up and puts his lei around Jess's neck.

**JESS.** Um, what are you doing?

Then **JUNY** puts his lei around Jess's neck.

**JUNY.** There you go.

**JOSHIE** puts his lei around Jess's neck too. **SURITA** returns and sees Jess with all the leis around her neck.

**SURITA** (looking surprised). What on earth ...?

**COLIN** (looking innocently at Surita). You said to put the leis on Jess when we were finished.

**SURITA.** No, Colin – I said to put the leis on my desk. Not on Jess.

**COLIN** (looking horrified). Ohhhhhhhh. Your desk.

**SURITA** bursts out laughing. Soon everyone else is laughing too, even Jess. The bell rings for lunch.

**SURITA.** Time for lunch.

**JOSHIE.** Yus!

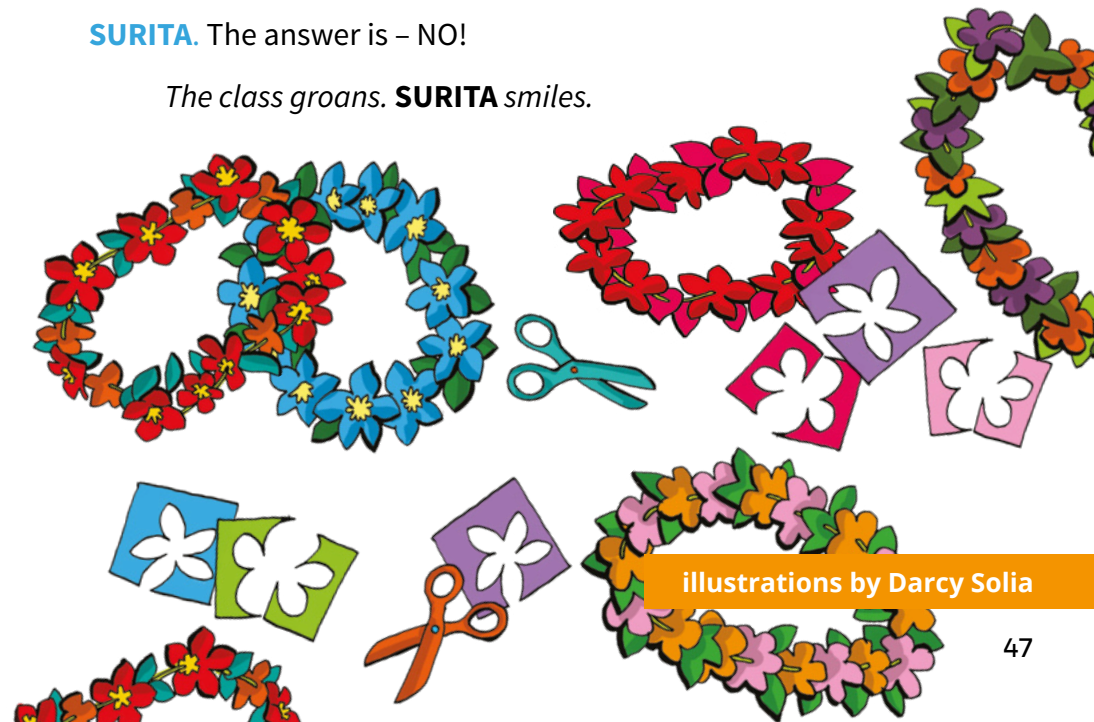
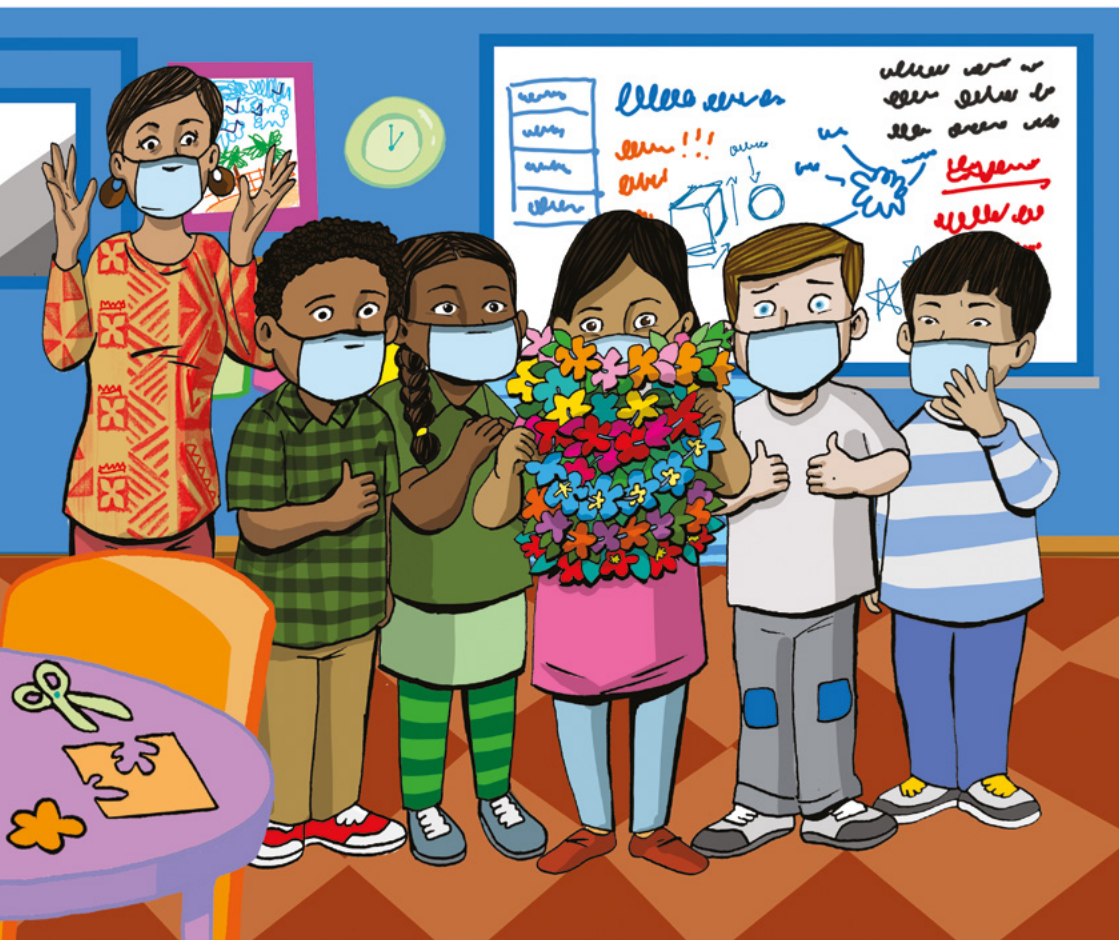
**COLIN.** Did you say you're going to buy us all lunch, Miss?

**SURITA** (looking amused). Is everyone listening?

The class listen hopefully.

**SURITA.** The answer is – NO!

The class groans. **SURITA** smiles.



illustrations by Darcy Solia

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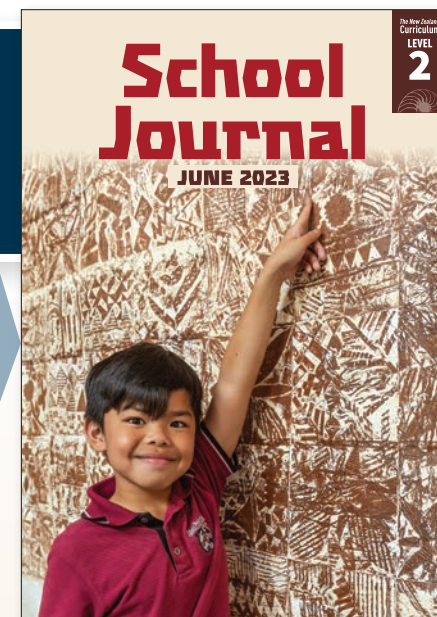
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