

THE BALLAD OF BILLY BELL

There was a boy named Billy Bell
Who didn't guard his words too well,
And so I'll tell, before you tire,
How his tongue set the world on fire.
Young Billy lived across the seas
Amongst the eucalyptus trees.
He was at school one sunny day
When all the kids came in from play,
And swapped the joys of being free
For half an hour of chemistry.
But as Bill sat down on his chair,
He found his ball-pen wasn't there.
He searched the desk; he searched the floor;
The path he'd taken from the door;
He looked behind... and Michael Mace,
A saintly smile upon his face,
Sat staring. Getting angry, then,
Bill yelled, "This thief has nicked my pen."
Now it is true – I'll tell the worst –
Mike *was* once caught with someone's purse
But that was in the olden days
And now he had reformed his ways.
The teacher made an earnest plea,
She said, "How do you know 'twas he?"
"I saw him, Miss, with my own eyes!"
But that was just a pack of lies.
So search was made of Michael Mace,
But of the pen was found no trace,
And so upset he made no sense,
The lad declared his innocence.
Then Bill – and all for vengeance' sake –
Said, "Miss, he stole it during break.
He left while I was playing soccer –
It must be hidden in his locker!"
The teacher said, "If this be true,
Then Michael Mace, you're in the stew.
But so that justice comes to pass,
We'll search the bags of *all* the class,
Until we find young Billy's Schaeffer,
For theft's a sin someone must pay fer."
So as she seethed at wasted time
Brought on by this imagined crime,
The whole form left, at gloomy pace,
To search each locker in the place.
It's tragic, but you have to know,
That as it came to Billy's go
He took the door key to unlock it,
And found his biro in his pocket.

Meanwhile, a dunce whose name was John
Had left his Bunsen burner on,
And as downstairs they searched the bags
It set light to some cleaning rags.
And soon, before you could say "Liar",
The classroom was a cheerful fire.
I s'pose you haven't yet been told
That Billy's school was rather old,
And like the whole town where it stood
Was all constructed out of wood.
And so the fire could spread unhindered –
In minutes, school *and* kids were cindered.
And since the sparks were flying round,
The town was soon burned to the ground.
Worse still! I told you all that country
Was the province of the gum tree,
And as they'd had such sunny days
The forest was soon well ablaze,
Till in the end six weeks had passed
Before the thing went out at last.
And even now the ground's all black,
And all the people live in sacks.

So if, young friends, you wonder why
You shouldn't tell a little lie,
Or if you're tempted to attack
And say something you should hold back –
Remember Bill, that's my desire –
Your tongue can set the world on fire.