

THE BARTON SERIES

# IT'S FUN TO BE WITH BARTON



BY

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(Ages 8 and over)

# IT'S FUN TO BE WITH BARTON

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## THE WALL OF INTEREST

Friday evening at school seemed to drag slowly on. It was not that Barton or the members of his class didn't like school. They were all keen and enthusiastic students and they simply adored their Miss. Often, students would be heard to say, "Miss is like our Mom at school."

Indeed, Miss was a loving and caring person and always engineered novel ways to make her children learn and enjoy learning. She made them thirst for knowledge and always do their best. Her praises were bestowed only upon the deserving and students looked forward to receiving them when their efforts were worthy.

The students of Miss' class were always amazed to realise that Miss seemed able to know their thoughts and feelings. She knew when they were hesitant or uncomfortable and she knew when her class felt tired. She looked at them and immediately knew when they were sad or unwell. Miss would easily figure when her little students were confused or bothered and would always reach out to them.

It was not unusual for her, especially at a break time, to place her arm around their shoulders and lead them to her table or even sit next to them. Sometimes students referred to her as 'Miss the Mystic.'

"And what bothers you today?" she would ask in her soothing, motherly tones.

There was no problem that Miss could not solve and so for these reasons and more, Miss was loved and adored by each member of her class.

"Class," said Miss, sensing the slight uneasiness of her young wards, "I have something interesting for us to do."

The students immediately perked up and all waited, rather curious, to listen to their Miss' proposal.

"Let us complete a long and hard week with anyone who wants to give us a talk on something odd and interesting. It may be on any topic," she suggested, "and there is no time limit."

She looked at her eager students as they began to think and look at each other for someone to begin.

“I am sure that we all have really interesting facts that we may have heard or read about somewhere and at some time,” she coaxed.

Many of the students were indeed avid readers and often, in casual conversation, would tell each other about interesting facts of which they became aware. Soon, hands began to be raised and the first raised one, which belonged to the smiling Kwame, was chosen.



Kwame was a plump, lovable, and jovial boy. When he laughed, his eyes would close and disappear in his pudgy face and his body would jiggle. All liked the sociable Kwame, and he was indeed much fun to be with.

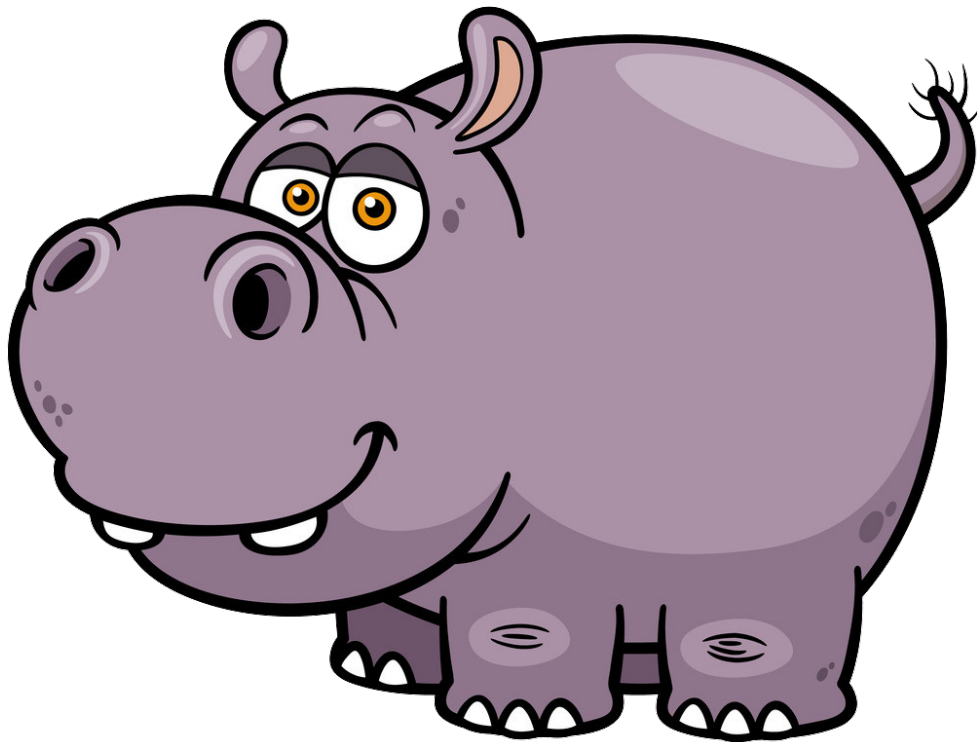
And so Kwame, with his soft voice, which would become high-pitched when he spoke louder, got up. He slowly walked to the front of the class, smiling all the while, to present his short topic of an interesting fact.

“My dear Miss and classmates,” began Kwame, after bowing, “I shall commence this exercise with a few amazing and interesting facts about animals.”

The class sat up with interest, especially as Kwame held no paper or notes. Miss would tell her class that such delivery was called ‘ad lib.’

“It means without previous preparation,” she told them. In exercises of this type, Miss would encourage her class to ‘ad lib.’ Kwame began:

- (i) “The huge, fat and heavy hippopotamus, native to Africa, may appear slow and clumsy. However, the animal becomes enraged and dangerous when threatened, and can easily outrun the fastest human.

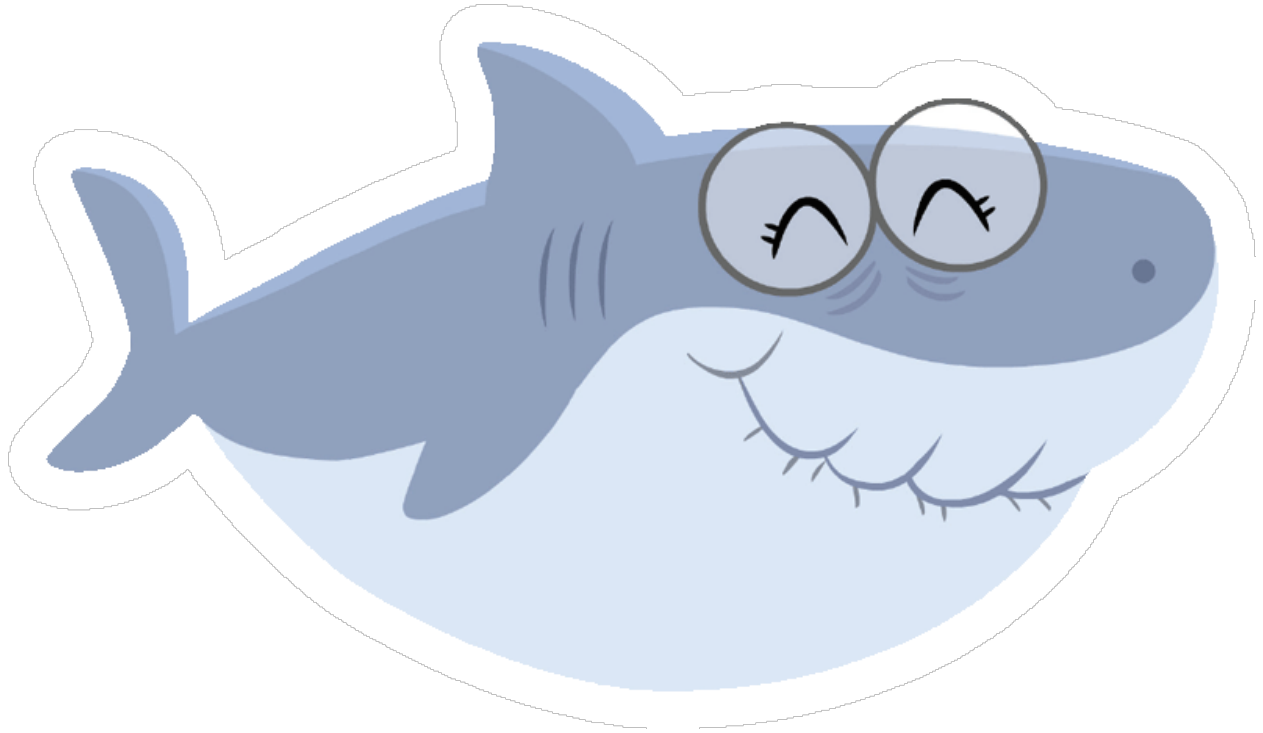


- (ii) Butterflies taste their food by standing on it. Their taste receptors are in their feet, unlike us humans, who have most of them on our tongue.”



“Simply fabulous,” exclaimed the class in amazement. Kwame raised his hands for immediate silence, as he continued.

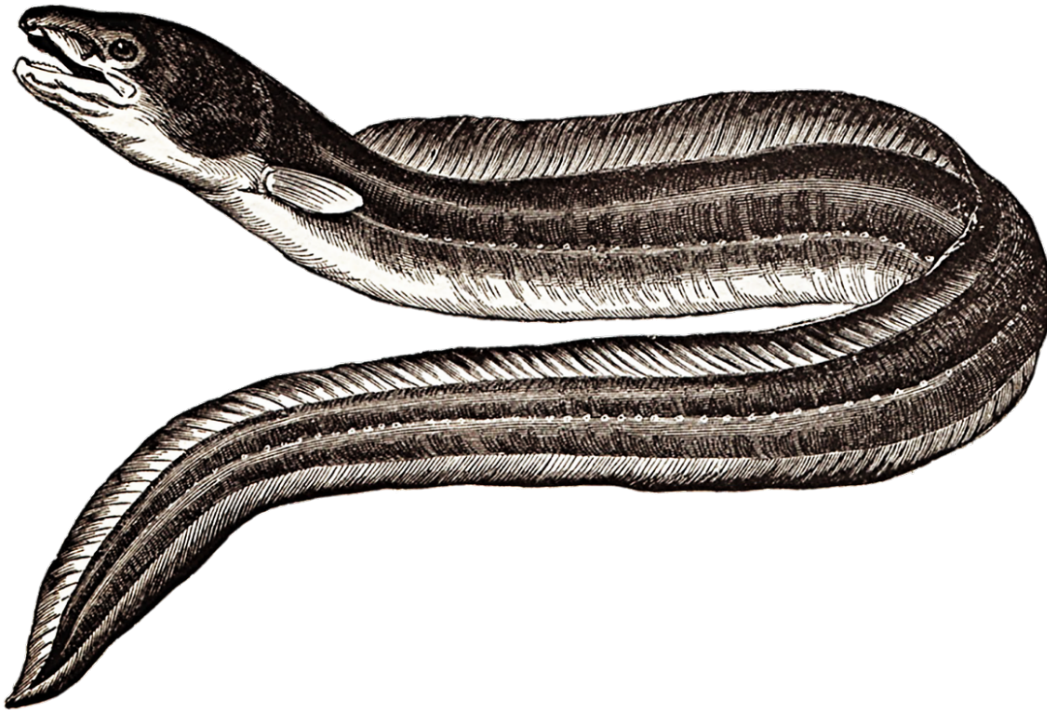
- (iii) “The shark is considered one of the healthiest known animals on Earth. It is immune to all known diseases.



- (iv) A common myth is that bulls see red and are teased into anger by the waving of a red sheet of cloth. Factually, bulls are colour blind and can only see in black and white.



- (v) The electric eel can produce enough electricity to light up 10 ordinary light bulbs.



“I hope you have enjoyed my little presentation,” said Kwame as he bowed again. The class loudly applauded their friend and Miss was very pleased. She liked her students to speak without prior preparation and this was a good example of it.

The next person who had had their hand raised was Malaika. Upon Miss’ invitation, the young girl walked briskly up to the front of the class and readied herself for her contribution. The class had forgotten how tired they were as they became all ears. Some even took their pencils and notebooks out.

They loved Malaika and affectionately called her ‘Malikes.’ She was helpful and kind and showed signs of great brilliance. Malaika wished one day to be a teacher and often demonstrated these qualities when any of her friends asked for help or explanations on a topic. The members of the class often called her ‘Little Miss,’ a name which she enjoyed.

Malaika began with her first fun-filled fact.



“When the Spaniards landed on the Caribbean island of Haiti, a few years after Christopher Columbus did, they found a new practice of cooking among the Haitians. The Haitians would roast animal meat over a raised metal framework, with a fire built underneath. The smoke and flames would rise, cooking the meat and giving it a distinct flavour. The Haitians called the cooking device a ‘barbacoa.’ Over the years, the word was, as they say in language, corrupted to ‘barbecue,’ the form which is still used today.”



The class loved Malaika’s story and Kwame was seen smacking his lips as he applauded.

Malaika had another story to relate. She raised her hand for silence. Then, she began.

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“For hundreds of years, people celebrated the new year over a period of eight (8) days. They would begin on March 25th and end on April 1st.

But in the year 1582, Pope Gregory introduced a new calendar, in which all the Christians of the world must start the New Year on January first. Up to today we still use this day as the first day of the New Year and we refer to our regular calendar as the Gregorian calendar, so named after Pope Gregory.



However, at that time when the order was given, not all the people were aware of the change and some would still celebrate the New Year on April first. People called them April fools and played tricks on them. This is the story and the beginning of April Fools’ Day.”

Malaika concluded her informative and well-appreciated presentation.

“That is really beautiful,” said Miss.

As Malaika returned to her desk, a small boy in the front row raised his hand to speak.

“Miss,” he started, “I am sure that each one of us thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful fun-filled presentations by Kwame and Malaika.”

All readily agreed with the little boy as he looked around the class and then finally focused his eyes on Miss.

“I would like to suggest that we have a small board placed on the wall. Then, on each day, one of us can be scheduled to write a similar one of these wonderful, interesting and informative facts. We can all read it at our convenience and in so doing, increase our general knowledge.”

No one said a word as the little boy spoke and he sat down suddenly, thinking that the silence indicated that everyone thought his suggestion was not sound.

“I think it is a wonderful idea,” said Miss.

But before Miss could continue, the little boy got up and looked rather excited. He raised his hand after he had already gotten up.

“Miss,” he continued, “often there are students who get A-grades for their work in the various subjects. Is it possible that we can also place their papers on the same board for a short period before returning them to the achiever? In so doing other students would also be able to view works that are of an A-standard, thereby improving their own.”

The little boy then sat down as he and the entire class looked inquiringly at Miss.

“A fabulous thought,” said Miss. “We will place this board on the wall and it shall be ‘The Wall of Interest.’ That is indeed a great idea, Malvin, absolutely fabulous.”

## **THE WALL OF INTEREST**

