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Long, long ago, in the time of valiant knights and gallant teachers, the town of Bonus Points built a school that was as grand as any castle. The wide stone school stood in the center of town. A high stone wall with four lookout towers at each corner surrounded the school grounds. For the students to enter each morning, a strong wooden drawbridge had to be lowered across a watery moat filled with starving crocodiles.

A week after the completion of Bonus Points School, the headmaster held a staff meeting in the Great Hall.

“Now that we have a grand school we need the grandest teachers to teach here,” he said. “We must select noble teachers of the highest order. Only those of the

greatest valor and skill will be permitted to teach at Bonus Points.”

“Why not hold a first-class teacher tournament,” suggested the deputy head. “We will invite the top teachers in the land to compete for our six classrooms.”

“We’ll hold contests in assignment writing, passing out papers, desk arranging, bulletin board decorating, and homework correcting,” said the vice deputy head.

“The teachers will compete in playground games such as four-square and kick ball,” said the assistant vice deputy head. “We’ll have a championship spelling bee and flash card speed races.”

“Grand idea,” said the headmaster. “And the grand prizes will be teaching jobs at our school.”

“Let the best teachers win!” the head, the deputy head, the vice deputy head, and the assistant vice deputy head said as one.

The next day, Herald, the school secretary, rode his horse through every village in the countryside. “Hear ye! Hear ye! Bonus Point Teacher Tournament!” he cried. “Friday at the Bonus Points school grounds. Win a chance to teach at Bonus Points School! Hear ye! Hear ye!”

Many bold and chivalrous teachers heard the call and started training for the competition. They practiced their tetherball skills and attendance-taking techniques. They

reviewed the times tables and spelling lists. They sharpened their pencils and polished their pointers.

Meanwhile, the Bonus Points Parents Club also prepared for the big day. They decorated the school grounds with bunting, banners, and long waving flags. They set up brightly colored tents to sell cupcakes and lemonade. Finally, on the day before the tournament, they erected a giant billboard on the outskirts of town. It read:

**BONUS POINTS
TEACHER TOURNAMENT!
MEN AND WOMEN TEACHERS WELCOME!**

“This is the grandest event ever to be held in Bonus Points,” said the headmaster.

“What pomp!” said the deputy head.

“What pageantry!” said the vice deputy head.

“What thrills, spills, and chills!” cried the assistant vice deputy head.

“Bring on the teachers!” the head, the deputy head, the vice deputy head, and the assistant vice deputy head said as one.

That night a fierce storm ripped through the town. Blasts of wind whipped the banners and fluttered the flags. Thunder boomed and zigzags of lightning split the sky. But in the morning, the sun shone brightly. It was a perfect day for a teacher tournament.

Soon after breakfast, every citizen of Bonus Points lined the street leading to the school grounds. They sang songs and waved handkerchiefs in anticipation of the first teacher's arrival.

Shortly, a small boy announced, "I see one! I see a teacher! A teacher is coming."

Bells rang and whistles blew as the first teacher appeared on Main Street. Mounted on a tall dappled stallion, rode Lady T. Collywobbles, known throughout the land as an expert dodgeball player. Her coat of arms, printed on the arms of her leather coat, showed three red rubber balls. Her squire followed on a pony with a large bag of balls hanging from its saddle.

Children surged forward begging Lady Collywobbles for autographs, but the woman waved them off with a gloved hand.

"Isn't she wonderful, mother?" said a girl in the crowd. "She's my bet for being one of the winning teachers."

"It takes more than playing dodgeball to be a good teacher, dear," her mother replied.

Next, Lady Curlicue Quills rode down Main Street on a bicycle with a giant front wheel. Lady Quills was famous far and wide for her beautiful handwriting. A tall goose feather stuck out of the purple tri-cornered hat that she wore at a stylish slant on her head.

“I love your cursive M’s, ma’am,” a boy shouted to her. “Your capital D’s are divine.”

“Thank you! Thank you!” Lady Quills replied. “I hope to soon be teaching every Bonus Points student fine handwriting.”

The next teacher to enter the town was Lady Wilhelmina Whatnot. She rode in a buggy drawn by two long-horned oxen. Many parents in the crowd nodded approvingly for Lady Whatnot was known for her strict classroom discipline. The teacher cracked a whip above the oxen’s heads and the beasts trotted faster.

“I do hope she’s one of the top six at the tournament,” said a mother in the crowd.

“It takes more than being strict to make a good teacher,” said her daughter.

Teacher after teacher entered the town, some on horseback, some on foot, some on roller skates, some on pogo sticks, and even one riding a unicycle while juggling. But it wasn’t until the fiftieth teacher had passed that a young boy noticed something wrong.

“There’s no men teachers,” he cried out. “All the teachers are women. Where are the men?”

Perhaps the parents would have also wondered about the absence of men, if not at that moment trumpets blared from the top of school ground wall. The drawbridge

lowered and the headmaster's voice called through a giant megaphone, "Let the grand teacher games begin!"

The procession of teachers rode through the school ground gate. The crowd of people swarmed through after them. While the teachers did warm up drills, the spectators filled wooden grandstands that encircled the vast tournament playing field.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the first event at the north end of the field will be a freeze tag match," the headmaster announced. "At the south end will begin round one of the story telling contest."

The crowd roared as the first teachers stepped onto the grass. The cheering was so thunderous that no one heard a girl in the grandstand ask, "But where are all the men teachers? What happened to the men?"

A bell on the ramparts rang and the games commenced. Never before had the citizens of Bonus Points seen such a thrilling spectacle. The competition--whether in hopscotch, Chinese jump rope, report card writing, relay races, clay pot making, coloring, or recorder playing--was fierce and tense.

A giant scoreboard tallied the points each teacher earned. The headmaster, deputy head, vice deputy head, and assistant vice deputy head, sitting in the long judges box, served as judges. They awarded bonus points to the

teachers for participation and good sportsmanship. After the grand finale, a brutal game of capture the flag, the six teachers with the most points were the winners.

Now came the award ceremony. The school headmaster began by tapping each of the six winning teachers on the shoulder with a yardstick.

“I dub thee an official Bonus Points teacher,” he said one after the other. The headmaster was about to proclaim the games over, when a boy at the top of the bleachers cried, “How come no men teachers came to the tournament?”

“Yeah, how come there are only women?” asked a girl.

The crowd began to rumble.

“Those kids have a point,” a father called out.

“Wouldn’t it be fair to have some males teaching at our school?”

“Where *are* the men teachers?” asked a mother.

The judges in the judging box shrugged. They tried not to look toward the stands.

As the protests grew, Herald, the school secretary, rode his horse onto the school grounds.

“Headmaster!” he cried out. “I’ve just come from the road outside of town. I discovered the reason why no men teachers attended this tournament.”

“Speak, Herald,” the headmaster said. “Tell the crowd the answer to this mystery.”

Harold turned toward the grandstand. “It was the storm last night,” he said. “A bolt of lightning struck the welcome billboard we put up at the side of the road. It split the sign in two. My pages are bringing the broken billboard to the school grounds now.”

On cue, two teenagers came running across the drawbridge and through the school gate. Between them, they carried a plank of wood with words painted on it. The instant the crowd saw the sign, it became clear what harm the lightning had done. The bolt had split the sign at the letter W in the word WOMEN. The left half of the billboard must have flown away with the wind. The pages held the right half.

The deputy head stood up in the judges’ box. “Yep, we’re seeing what the traveling teachers, both men and women, saw when they arrived this morning at the outskirts of town.”

“It’s now obvious why no men teachers rode into Bonus Points,” said the vice deputy head.

“This is embarrassing,” said the assistant vice deputy head.

“And I’ve already dubbed the six teachers, so we can’t redo the tournament,” said the headmaster.

The people in the stands remained silent as they stared at the cracked billboard. Here's how the sign with the split W read:

**BONUS POINTS
TEACHER TOURNAMENT!
NOMEN TEACHERS WANTED!**

In following years, more schools were built and more teacher tournaments were held to fill the classrooms. But men teachers, having had their feelings hurt at Bonus Points, rarely participated in these events. Instead, they chose to teach in high schools and middle schools. Today more men teachers instruct in grades K-5, but they are still far outnumbered by women. Now you know why.