

The Five Step Lesson Plan: Karl Vasey

Richard rubbed the condensation and grime from the windowpane to enable him to peer through into the early morning mizzle outside. There was no distinction between the leaden sky and the cold black Victorian buildings. Turning to face the large staff room, Richard was startled by the contrast. The room was vast, fetid, and chaotic with books piled up on ancient 'hot' desks. Smug locals who arrived early occupied these desks, drank instant coffee and bantered about their weekend traumas. The 'old guard' took up the old lounge chairs around the tepid open fire. A member of the group said, 'Not long to retirement then?'

'No mate, just one thousand two hundred days (looking at his watch) six hours, twenty-two minutes.'

Suffering from a hangover, Richard moved slowly to the kitchen to retrieve his mug. Names like 'Roger the Dodger' or 'Teacher's Pet' had been printed on the mugs. A smile came over his face when he remembered a scene from an Alan Ayckbourn play when one teacher was having problems finding his mug. Another said, 'You should put your name on it.'

'Very dangerous,' said the teacher, 'I spit in yours every morning!' The bitter, scoldingly hot coffee briefly warmed Richard and calmed him down. Why did he allow James to persuade him to go for a drink last night? He was ahead with all his marking but the lesson plan for Lower Fourth was scant indeed.

His pained expression was noticed by the 'old guard.' One called over, 'What's up mate?' Richard outlined the problem of lack of prep for the lesson coming up in twenty minutes. One lag said, 'So you haven't heard of the Five Step Lesson Plan then?' Richard was intrigued and asked for a demonstration. The old lag, picked up a small bundle of papers from a pile on the desk nearby, took five large steps and with a flourish he swung the staffroom door open and loudly said into the void, 'Good morning Lower Fourth, today we're going to learn about!' At that point everyone burst into laughter, knowing looks were exchanged and Richard's face burned.

At morning recess, the old lag asked Richard how his lesson went. Richard responded by saying it had been one of the best lessons he'd ever delivered. The lag said, 'Sometimes lad you have to fake it until you make it!'