

**Spirit**  
By Sally Christie

'I saw a real live fairy,' he said, 'and I took it home in a bag.'

Well, what would *you* think if someone said that? If it was someone you knew – a friend – you might say they were joking. But nobody knew Matt Barker. No one could guess why he'd said what he'd said. Was he attention-seeking? Was he a show-off? He didn't look the type.

They wanted to laugh, but that was against the rules. You had to respect what anyone said. And yet they felt *he* was laughing at *them*. Was he trying to make them look stupid? Taking advantage?

The one thing they knew for certain was he wasn't telling the truth.

And that was the problem. In the Truth Game, you had to. If you chose to open your mouth (and you might well not, but if you did) the rule was that any words that came out of it had to be true. If people broke that, then they'd better not play. As Mr McGann was fond of saying, he could equally well have called it the Trust Game – because truth and trust are so closely connected.

When Mikey Maloney had told them last term he'd done seventy-nine keepy-uppies, round the back of his house, they'd all had to trust that he really had (he had) because no one – not even Dip Jay or Joe Black – had been there. And when Angela Poole had chosen to say that she'd watched her grandpa actually die, she was trusting them to be understanding and ask only sensitive questions. They did, but even so Ange started crying and Mr McGann stopped the game.

He had a right to do that. He could do that now. But he didn't want the new boy to think that that was all there was to it. He could feel the anger around him, and several people had put up their hands.

Joe Black, a nice enough lad, thought Mr McGann, but sparky: what would he ask? Something challenging. Something to show he was nobody's fool. *This fairy, where did you find it, then? How did you catch it?*

Retrieval questions

1. What was the name of the game they were playing?
2. What did Matt Barker say he had done?
3. Who was Matt Barker?
4. What did Mikey Maloney say he had done?
5. What question did Mr McGann think Joe Black would ask Matt Barker?

