



B. Proudew, Chapter 1

1. Ask pupils to read the chapter at home and look up any unfamiliar words.

Comprehension:

2. In class: pupils work in groups of 3 people and brainstorm what they remember from the chapter. If they struggle you could ask them these questions:

- Where do Helena's parents work?
- What is her teacher's name?
- What class is Helena in?
- What did Helena get on her school report?
- What happened to the after-school helper?
- What do Helena and her mum feel about the communists?
- What did Helena's mum do as a profession when she was younger?
- What foreign language is Helena learning?
- Who is Olinka and what is mentioned about her?

Vocabulary:

Copy the text into vocabulary.com and pick out the most useful vocabulary for your class. E.g. [intercom](http://vocabulary.com)

1. [ballet](http://vocabulary.com)
2. [kiln](http://vocabulary.com)
3. [satchel](http://vocabulary.com)
4. [swine](http://vocabulary.com)
5. [classmate](http://vocabulary.com)
6. [adult](http://vocabulary.com)
7. [clever](http://vocabulary.com)
8. [applaud](http://vocabulary.com)
9. [clay](http://vocabulary.com)
10. [decoration](http://vocabulary.com)
11. [composer](http://vocabulary.com)



Find the definitions and ask students to match them with the words or create a set of cards using quizlet.com and get them to practise the words and definitions. They can either drill the words or walk around the room showing the definitions to their classmates and they have to remember the words.

Grammar point:

Choose a grammar point to focus on with your students:

e.g. Find examples of the past simple and how it is used.

Yesterday **was** an important day.

Yesterday I **heard** this lovely poem

He **was** very brave and persevered

I **told** myself I **wouldn't** give up

Yesterday I **had** this rather unpleasant matter to deal with

she **called** Hrůza up to the front and **gave** him a choice

Can you use the verbs in the past simple to make some other sentences about yourselves?

Open-ended task:

What do we see Helena is confused about in her everyday life as a teenager?

What differences are there between life for a schoolgirl back then and now?

If you met Helena, what would you like to ask her?

Project:

You decide to write to Helena and tell her what your life is like at school and what you are confused about as a teenager. Write her an email introducing yourself. Why don't you send it to Palava Publishing?

How Olinka was no more

Yesterday was an important day. Yesterday I heard this lovely poem on the school intercom about a certain gentleman called B. Proudew. He was very brave and persevered, even though he had all kinds of difficulties. I have difficulties too, mostly cos I'm fat and everybody laughs at me. But yesterday I told myself I wouldn't give up. I'm going to be like Mr B. Proudew and persevere.

Yesterday I had this rather unpleasant matter to deal



with as well. An unpleasant matter—now that’s what the Director at the theatre always says. I know him cos Mummy acts at the theatre and so does Daddy, so when the Director wants to tell the actors that something’s wrong or something, he says: “Comrades, this is a rather unpleasant matter.”

I don’t actually like him very much, cos he looks like a skull that’s smiling. I’m afraid of skulls and bones more than anything else. I’m quite scared of devils and dogs too, cos I was once bitten on the leg by one, but that was in Zákopy at Grandma’s and Grandad’s. But an unpleasant matter—I do like that. That *is* how they say it.

Yesterday when we got to school, our teacher Mrs Koláčková told us...well, not actually when we got to school, but when school finished, she told us to remain quietly seated, as she had something to tell us. And she was so serious that I thought straight away it would be some unpleasant matter.

Like when she recently said she had something to tell us and she called Hrůza up to the front and gave him a choice and Hrůza looked around oddly, but Hrůza always looks around rather oddly like that. And she said: “Children, your classmate Lád’a Hrůza is leaving us and going to a special school, so we are all going to applaud him nicely.”

And again yesterday she said: “Children, something very sad has happened. Your schoolmate Olinka Hlubinová has died, because she had a very weak heart.” So we all had a fright and then we went home. And now I just keep thinking about it.

Olinka isn’t from 2B like me, she’s from A, but all the same! She has short black hair and she draws awfully well. I don’t even know her very well, but our teacher’s often shown us drawings done by Olinka, cos they’re so nice. Now she’s died, so I don’t suppose I’ll be seeing her again, but our teacher might well keep showing us her drawings. That *is* rather odd.

I told them at home straight away, and I asked how it was that she died when she’s a little girl, cos I already know that some people die and don’t go back home or anywhere, but mostly when they’re old. And I also asked what a weak heart meant, and I was told that a weak heart is the worst illness you can have. If somebody has a weak heart then they will almost certainly die. Then Mummy gave me two biscuits—probably cos I’d been as sad as a dog. So now I am happy... and I’m still sad.

The same thing happened to me before the holidays too. I was happy cos I got an A in my report, so we went out for



some cakes. Other times I'm not allowed to have cakes cos I'm fat, so I was happy, and also because it was the holidays, but then I was sad, cos they told us that our after-school helper Olga Jeřábková had died. But she died all herself. They didn't tell us—I was told at home that she poisoned herself. You see, she poisoned herself with gas and she exploded, and the building where she lived exploded too, so some other people died as well. And I don't know why, cos she was kind and cheerful and I liked her, cos she hid me when I bit Zdena on the hand, cos I didn't want to pair up with Zdena to walk to lunch, and she wanted to, and she wouldn't be told that I didn't want to. And then I was afraid what her mother Mrs Klímová would do to me when she came to the after-school centre and saw the bite mark on her hand. Mrs Klímová is also a teacher at our school, but she teaches the big boys and girls Russian. And Zdena cried and I thought I'd better sit under the table in the afterschool centre and I cried too until the after-school helper hid me.

Except that Kačenka—that's what I call my mother—Kačenka didn't know why the after-school helper did it either. Then in the kitchen she said to Daddy that those swines had hounded her to death. I think she meant the Russians or maybe the Communists, cos the Russians and Communists are swines, though you aren't allowed to say so. But Kačenka and Andrea Kroupová keep saying it anyway, they sing the anti-Russian song, *I'm Lenin on a lamppost*, and Kačenka doesn't want to let me go to the Sparkies, cos the Sparkies and the Pioneers are supposed to be little Communists. So I don't know, out of our class the whole class goes and I'd like to go too. I already go to German, drawing and ballet, cos I'm fat, so I have to exercise. But I'd like to go to the Sparkies too.

Nobody except me goes to German, to Mrs Freimannová, who taught me last year in the first form and then retired or something. She stopped teaching us at the school and now she only teaches me at her home.

Lots of children go to ballet, mostly girls, but they're all very pretty and nobody there is fat except me, so they laugh at me when I practise, and all the time. I have a friend there too, but she's the woman who teaches us dancing, cos Kačenka knows her from the theatre, where she says who should go onstage on the intercom. She's what's called a stage manager. Before her, there was a proper ballet dancer, but now she's fat too.

Best of all is the art circle with Mr Pecka in the House of



Culture. I like it there, drawing and painting and especially making models. I fire things in the kiln and make them into statues. Other kids went there too, but Mr Pecka liked what I said and painted, and he persuaded Kačenka to let me go in the evening, when the adults go. So now I do statues with the adult painters instead of with the kids, and with Nečka Pacák—he's another kid who Mr Pecka wanted to join us. Mr Pecka has a record player and when we're painting, he plays Mozart. They say he's the best music composer in the whole world. Something like Bedřich Smetana, but much better even than him. And it really is very nice. Even though Andrea Kroupová, who's another actress from Kačenka's theatre and Kačenka's friend, said it isn't true and that the very best is someone else beginning with b. Bachoven, I think. They talk about interesting things there and I think *I'll* be a sculptor when I grow up.

Yesterday Mr Pecka said he'd heard that people are going to start wearing trousers that look like bells, narrow and thin at the top and broad and very colourful at the bottom. He also said that he wouldn't make a fool of himself, and that he'd only wear those trousers over his dead body. I don't like the idea either and Mr Pecka *is* from Prague *and* he's a sculptor.

Andrea Kroupová is already wearing these trousers and she's very nice, but Kačenka is a lot prettier. Andrea told me that women can't be sculptors, but Mr Pecka says that a clever woman can be anything she wants to be.

I think that Mrs Freimannová, who taught me in the first form and now teaches me German, is very clever. Mainly cos she can speak German and also cos she can say things that help me when I have troubles in my head, like yesterday with Olinka. In the first form, Kačenka wanted to enrol me at the church for religion, but Mrs Freimannová put her off, saying that I'm going to have enough troubles as it is. She was thinking about the troubles in my head and they might *well* be something that I do have.

As I was coming home from German yesterday, it was already dark, and the weather was really lovely, cos an awful lot of snow was falling, and the wind was blowing and all the shop windows were lit up, and there were Christmas decorations inside them. So I walked along very slowly to enjoy it all and I ate a little snow—I can do that as it's not a sweet at all, and I made tracks. And then I stopped for a while at the stationer's, cos that's what I like best of all, and I looked at all those nice-smelling crayons and the sheets of paper and all the different colours and things I love. The bottom of the



shop window was all frosted over with flowers and stars, so I took my gloves off and wrote with my finger on the glass: Dear Santa, please bring me the felt-tip pens that they have such a lot of, even pink and orange and modelling clay if you can. I'll be really good. Thank you, Helena Součková, 429 Antonín Zápotocký Street, Ničín 5. And I wanted to look for a little while longer and sniff the snow, but all of a sudden I saw Olinka Hlubinová standing behind the shop window and frowning at me. She had a long white dress on and a white face, and she was holding a piece of paper with no picture and it was all white too. And I wanted to run away, but I couldn't.

Olinka said, "Give me my watercolours back or I'll haunt you until you're a dead body too." And I said, "Olinka, I'm really sorry. I haven't taken any watercolours from you. I'm not even in your class. I only have the old ones that Kačenka gave me for the first form."

"Someone has stolen my watercolours and I can't paint any more," Olinka said and she was quite cross. "So I'll give you mine if you want," I said and I took off my satchel and gave them to Olinka. "All right," Olinka said, "and promise you'll never draw as nicely as I do." "I promise," I said and ran off home, cos now I was able to. And I fell twice.

Kačenka got very cross with me and used some foreign words: "Helena, you look like a Polish Jew again. Your coat buttons are all askew, your scarf's trailing on the ground, your cap's in your pocket and you're soaked through. A clever girl like you, going around like somebody from a special school!" But that was nothing. When a lady came and brought my overshoes in a bag, my gloves and the watercolours that I'd given to Olinka, it got a lot worse. I'm told I'm going to have to think very hard about myself, but I'm thinking awfully hard as it is.

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