

The Fruit Roll

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 21 September 2012 14:59 -



Most of the information was relayed through whispers. Some of it was scribbled on paper, folded into notes and passed around.

But the word spread throughout our third-grade classroom at Bryan Elementary and Mrs. Gillan didn't have a clue.

My face stung with shame as I took an orange—without asking my mother— and shoved the fruit deep in the pocket of my jacket before leaving for school.

Before the bell rang, a slow burn crept up my neck when I imagined that every teacher standing outside knew about the hidden contraband.

Those were the days when most of us never questioned anything teachers did or said.

We obeyed like boot-camp trainees.

Teachers were goddesses and gods and we knew what happened if we didn't respect them.

A trip to the principal's office. Gasp! Or banishment to a coat room. Oh my!

On this day and without their permission, my classmates and I were sneaking apples, oranges and bananas into the school.

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Once we found our seats in Mrs. Gillan's classroom, we suffered through roll call and the raising of hands to see who planned to eat in the cafeteria.

We twitched. We fidgeted.

Finally, David Long raised a clenched fist and dropped a pencil on the linoleum floor.

Ping.

We jerked open the tops of our desks and shoved our smuggled goods forward.

Apples rolled, oranges careened and—I couldn't believe it—a watermelon waddled down the aisle.

The commotion caused Mrs. Gillan to turn from the chalkboard to face us.

Silence.

Debbie Earl started to whimper and I wanted to wet my pants.

Then Mrs. Gillan smiled. And she asked for volunteers to help her load the fruit into her car.

We cheered. We danced around our desks, giddy that we could shower our teacher with fruit and she didn't get mad.

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And show us she didn't live on Mount Olympus all of the time.