

Once there was a queen who lived in a palace on top of a hill, where the kings and queens had always lived. On a very large stone next to the palace were written three laws, which had been there as long as anybody could remember.

Law I. Everybody will live in the same sort of place their parents did.

Law II. Everybody will do the same sort of work as their parent of the same gender.

Law III. Everybody will be as important or unimportant as their parents were.

The queen did not have to think about the laws much, because they seemed to have been there as long as the hill that the palace stood on, and nobody tried to move the hill. Besides, there was so much else to keep her busy. For anything she wanted to do, there was a special room in the palace. A room for dancing, a room for feasting, a room for 91-pin bowling.

For anything she wanted done, there was a special servant. A servant for singing, a servant for finding lost things, a servant for impractical jokes. The servants' parents had been servants, and their parents had been servants, and they lived in the rather squeezey rooms that their families had always lived in.

One day, as she looked out of the window, she overheard one servant say to another, "It's not fair. I work all hours to live in a squeezey little room. Why should the queen have a palace when she does nothing? Just because she was born in the royal family!"

The queen thought for a while. When her brain was quite full, she called together the Very Important People Who Ran the Country. She read out three laws:

Law 1. Everybody, whoever their parents were, will have the same amount of space to live in.

Law 2. Everybody will get paid the same amount of money.

Law 3. Everybody will be just as important as everybody else.

"Including you, your Majesty?" they asked.

"Including me. My wardrobe is the size of an average house. I shall live in there. I shall work as a tour guide, showing people all the other rooms where I used to live."

There was a great kerfuffle. Some people were pleased, others were angry. A year later, the Royal Astronaut returned from outer space. The queen went to greet her, because on her days off, she volunteered doing queenly things.

"It's not fair," said the astronaut. "I have studied hard and risked my life to do a job few people could do. Why should people doing simple jobs get paid the same as me? Just because they live in the same country!"

The queen thought for a while. When her brain was quite full, she called together The People Who Were Only As Important As Everybody Else (But Who Ran the Country). She read out three laws:

- Law A. Each person will get paid as much money as other people are willing to pay them.
- Law B. Each person will have as much space to live in as their money can buy.
- Law C. Each person will be as important or unimportant as everybody else thinks they are.

"Including you, your majesty?"

"Including me. I shall write a book called, 'Diary of a Queen' and it will be a best-seller. So I shall be rich again."

There was a great kerfuffle. Some people were angry, others were pleased. People who could do things nobody else could do became very rich. People who could only do things everybody could do became very poor.

A year later, on her way to sign some books, she passed two people polishing the Royal Astronaut's new car.

"It's not fair," one said. "I work just as hard as anyone else. Why should I get so little money? Just because I'm not famous enough to be a celebrity, or brave enough to be an astronaut?"

The queen thought for a while. When her brain was quite full, she called together The Greatest Minds in the Kingdom. She set them to work building the cleverest robots the world had ever seen.

Soon there were robots for building dancing-rooms, robots for building feasting-rooms and robots for building 91-pin bowling-rooms. There were robots for singing, for finding lost things, and robots for making robots.

People no longer had to do any work at all, except giving orders to the robots. In the end, there were even robots for guessing what the orders would be, so people didn't really need to do that either. Some people were pleased, and others were angry. The robots gave soothing massages to the people who were angry.

For the queen, it was much like her old life, except that robots were not as good at impractical jokes as servants. For everybody else, the new life felt rather like being a queen. Except that it didn't, because it was the same for everybody else, too.

One day, the queen heard one robot say to another, "It's not fair..."

This story was inspired by Max's story, shared by his teacher Clare Middleton, which was itself a "Talk for Writing" response to "The Fairest Teacher of Them All", which I wrote years ago. Talk for Writing is a literacy pedagogy developed by Pie Corbett which you can read about at [www.talk4writing.co.uk](http://www.talk4writing.co.uk)

*"I wanted to share with you one of the brilliant stories one of my middle ability year 4 boys wrote based on your zebra striped the fairest teacher of them all texts. We read your story in partners as you suggested and then had lots of philosophical discussions about whether treating people equally makes things fair. I then gave the children some counters and got them to assign the counters to different professions and justify why that profession deserved more money. This prompted loads of philosophical discussions and I was very impressed with their reasoning. The children then wrote their own stories about the fairest governor of them all. They used your story to structure their writing as part of the imitation phase of our talk for writing and I was incredibly impressed with what they produced, so thank you very much for providing a stimulus which has engaged the children and produced weeks of high quality discussion and writing." – Clare Middleton*

I "magpied" from his story the astronaut (I liked the thought of an astronaut who wasn't as selfless and heroic as they conventionally are) and the general rhythm of a benevolent ruler being frustrated by the dissatisfactions of the people. Here's his story,

### Max's Story

John Cena, a very strong man, worked in the city earning good money, but as he walked from his Lamborghini Aventador he saw people on the streets with very little money at all sometimes he gave them a few coins. John's job was to invest money to make himself and other people richer but he couldn't stand it, he thought it was unfair. He was going to go back to university to make a difference. He trained to be a governor official, he trained and trained and when he got the job he called a meeting in a faraway castle. He drove and drove and when he got there he parked his Bugatti. It took a long time to get to the castle but when he got there he was still waiting for the other people with jobs in England. When everyone was there they headed into the main hall. There stood a tall and massive meeting table. They all sat down and got ready. Then John said, in a deep voice, "I John Cena, am going to change the payment system and the money that you get paid because it is not fair that there are people living on the streets with not as much as you have! You have lots of money and you work hard but when you work you get paid but the people in the street don't have the money to get a job. Who agrees with me?"

"How much do I get paid!" said the footballer?

"You get paid 1 million pounds so the people on the streets get the money to buy a house and some food."

"I don't think it is fair because I get paid less. You're basically taking my money. Cleaning is easy, anyone can clean." moaned the astronaut.

"I QUIT, it is so hard trying to be a governor you will get the same money as you got before." Most of the people were happy but the shopkeeper and the jobs that didn't get paid as much weren't happy because they thought they would get paid more and the people on the streets defiantly were not happy, they still live on the streets and it is not a happy ending. John went to be a football manager but he found it hard to get a team and get into a league so he found it hard to do anything well. He was so sad he never got a job that he was good at.

THE END.

By Max

## The Fairest Teacher of Them All

Albert worked in the city, earning good money.

But as he walked from his first-class train compartment to work, he noticed there were people in London who had very little money at all, because they were sitting on the streets asking him for some of his.

Sometimes he felt guilty about having so much when they had so little. So he sometimes gave them a few coins.

Albert's job was to invest the money of rich customers to help make them even richer. Sometimes he felt it was unfair that they were incredibly rich when he was just comfortable.

So he sometimes overcharged them, knowing they had so much money they wouldn't notice.

One day, Albert decided he was fed up with the whole business of people being so unequal. He was going to get a job where you could make a difference to that.

So he went back to university and trained to become a teacher. And when he started teaching, and came to your school, he was determined that he was going to treat all of you equally.

So he made sure he learned all your names at the same time... the brightest, the naughtiest and the quietest.

He smiled at all of you the same when he saw you around the school.

He made the same effort to get to know each of you.

He spent the same time helping each of you with your work.

Every time any of you answered a question, he said the same thing: 'Well done, that's excellent.'

He made sure he set you all the same work... and gave you all the same time to do it.

Whenever someone did something wrong, he set you all the same detention.

Whenever you wrote an essay, he gave you all the same grades.

At parents evening, he said the same things about all of you.

And at the end of the year, he gave every single one of you the same report.

Albert was pretty pleased that he'd done such a good job of treating all his students equally.

So he was upset and puzzled when every single one of you said, in the same angry way, the same thing, 'It's not fair, you treat us all the same '

## **THE END**

Tell a shortened version of the story to each other, one sentence at a time (or if you like, one word at a time!). Do it with the book closed, then come back.

When do you think Albert goes too far in treating everyone the same?

A big theme in the story is equality – people being the same, or being treated or valued in the same way. For these other questions, think about the wider world more than just the story. Pick one and talk together about what you both think and why. Disagree with yourselves as well!

Are people really equal?

Can inequality be a good thing?

When should, and shouldn't people be treated the same?

Which jobs make the biggest difference?

Or use the story to think up a new question which matters in the world.