



CLASSROOM REBEL by Paul Goodwin.

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

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Classroom Rebel by Paul Goodwin.

I used to teach maths in an inner-city school, one that had more than its share of challenges from the surrounding estate. My student - let's call him Jack - was a little less disruptive than some; sometimes he even handed in his homework, though it was seldom good quality. Very soon, I began to notice that he seemed to get the right answers to hard questions but got easier ones wrong. I kept my own counsel.

On one occasion, Jack and another boy had been particularly boisterous so I held them back as the class left. "Consider this your last warning. Any more of that nonsense and it will be detention." The other lad left but Jack loitered by the door. "Does that mean that I get to stay behind and do more maths, Mrs Platts?" "Exactly," I replied. "Good," he said as he left.

I should point out here that Jack came from a well-known family. Well-known to the police and social services that is. There was usually at least one of the family on remand, serving a sentence or wearing a tag.

Anyway, the very next lesson, right at the end, just before the bell, Jack stood up and threw a paper aeroplane directly at me, bold as brass. "Jack, detention!" was my immediate reaction. He just smiled.

Jack turned up promptly for his detention and worked hard on the exercises I set him. As he left at the end, he thanked me. And as I do with all detention work, I dropped it straight into the bin while he watched. He seemed disappointed but left in silence. On a hunch, I removed his work from the bin and started to look through it. It was good – in fact, it was amongst the best I had seen from his year group, well above the usual standard.

About a week later, Jack was again misbehaving in class, just enough to earn a detention, this time one of several students. At the end of the detention period, I asked him to stay behind and he watched as I removed his newly completed workbook from the bin. "Excellent work last week, Jack. Well done."

Jack soon got a reputation for being the class rebel, earning more detentions than anyone else. His maths improved as I was able to coach him when no-one else was around – and, to the rest of the class, he was the perfect rebel. Jack is now at university – the 'white sheep' of the family.

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