

## **Mr Farthing**

- Mr Farthing is the only character who shows any sympathy for Billy. This is because he is a more sympathetic person, with a more humane approach to others, than any adult Billy encounters.
- From the start of the lesson where he is described, Mr Farthing is shown as empathising with the boys who have been caned, suggesting that he does not really approve of physical punishment.
- He uses talk and the boys' own experience as a way into the lessons, and when Anderson is telling his story about the tadpoles he is listening for the interesting content and responding to Anderson rather than looking for errors in vocabulary.
- He does become impatient with Billy when he is not listening, but is willing to listen to Billy's point of view after the fight at break when they talk.
- Mr Farthing is strict and will stand no nonsense: when he calls for quiet and moves towards the boys they are silent. He can break up a fight in a way which suggests that he can easily exert his authority over the toughest of the boys. He is also fair. He will not tolerate MacDowall bullying Billy because he is smaller and more vulnerable. He is forceful in making his point, and showing MacDowall what it is like to be bullied by picking on him physically.
- Though Billy is amongst the least able academically, Mr Farthing learns something from him when he talks about Kes.
- He is happy to admit that he can learn from his pupils as well as the other way round. When he comes to watch Billy flying Kes, he talks to him like an adult with Mr Farthing using the same vocabulary as he would to anyone of equal intelligence and social standing.