

## Surf's up - 1

Declan joined Harlyn Surf Club as a Nipper when he was six years old. At the ripe old age of 11 years, he believed himself a key member of the club. His dad was the president and his mum, the social secretary. Everyone knew Greg and Joy Evans and their son, Declan.

Declan knew everything anyone needed to know about the club, from how to store the equipment to who was being nominated for next year's committee. He could have been a perfect asset to the club ... but he wasn't. He could have been a popular 'in' boy ... but he wasn't. With all the training sessions he attended, he could have been one of the club's rising stars ... but he wasn't. You may ask, 'Why was he none of these things?' The answer is, nobody liked Declan.

Because of his parents' status and his 'insider knowledge', Declan liked to 'lord it over' anyone he considered inferior to himself: adult or child. And even though he had the confidence to engage in conversation with anyone, it was rare for him to find someone to talk to. People avoided Declan.

On Sunday mornings and at every other training session he attended, Declan played the fool. He didn't listen to the volunteer coaches who organised the activities and so, in the land activities, they ignored him; and in the water, they ensured he was safe but offered no other advice or assistance.

The result of Declan's behaviour and the coaches' response to it was, that even after five years, Declan was a miserable failure in all the surf club activities. The only person who did not realise this was Declan himself. With his 'key member' status, he believed he had superb natural talent and that everyone else was very poor by comparison.

Each season, all the Nipper squads took part in a swim-board-run triathlon to find the champion boy and girl in each age-group. Although Declan had never achieved any recognition in these competitions, each year he always believed he would be crowned champion. This year was no different.

The event day dawned bright but blustery and the ocean was very rough. The organisers decided it would be safer to reduce the distance for the swimming leg of the competition.

At the sound of the gun, the intrepid competitors bunny-hopped their way into the water before diving into their first wave and swimming straight out to sea. As they reached the first buoy, they all turned to the right and began swimming parallel to the shore. Everyone, that is, except Declan.

Declan had been at the pre-race briefing when the changes to the swimming course were announced, but as usual, he had not been paying attention. As he reached the first buoy, in last place, he carried straight on towards the second buoy, 50 metres away.

Declan was using a lot of energy, struggling to swim in the choppy water. When he stopped to check his direction and sight the second buoy, he was distressed to see that he was way off course. Looking to shore, he was even more disturbed to see swimmers leaving the water and running to collect their board. It was only then that he realised he was alone in the water.



For the first time, Declan felt scared. He realised that if he was as good as he always claimed to be, he could help himself out of this situation. But he knew he couldn't. The tears that began to flow were quickly washed away by the salt water slapping against his face. Declan had never felt so low.

'Now what are you doing all the way out here, young Declan?' What a relief to hear the familiar sound of his coach's cheerful but commanding voice! 'Would I be right in saying your brain wasn't in gear at the briefing this morning? Come on, up on the board and I'll take you back!'

# Surf's up – 2

**RL** 1. To complete the table, write your opinions on:

(a) the story	
(b) Declan	
(c) everyone's response to Declan	

**EL** 2. (a) Tick which applies to your understanding of surf club activities.

no knowledge

some knowledge but no experience

some knowledge and experience

(b) How much do you think the author knows about surf club activities? Explain your answer.

**EL** 3. (a) Describe how you think the competitors in the triathlon might have been feeling just before the gun was fired.

(b) Write words and phrases from the text that helped you form this opinion.

**LG** 4. When do you think this story took place? Explain your answer.

## Surf's up – 3

- EL** 5. (a) How do you think the story might be different if it was written in the first person from Declan's perspective?

- CL** (b) Choose one part of the story to rewrite from Declan's point of view. Imagine what it would be like to be him and how you would have felt in his situation.

- EL** 6. Compare your texts with others. How is Declan's character described by others?