

## A short story by Larry French

### The very first sentence of the story

Bibs, the janitor, had never killed a man before.

*How might the story go on? Write a short paragraph (4 – 6 sentences).*

### The word 'bib' in a dictionary

1. bib: a piece of fabric or plastic that you put under babies' chins to protect their clothes while they are eating
2. bib overall: a piece of clothing that consists of trousers/pants with an extra piece of fabric covering the chest, held up by straps over the shoulders

### Some more words

1. mum (v.): keep mum (infml) – to say nothing; to stay silent – *If you keep mum about something, you don't tell anyone about it.*
2. ford: a shallow place in a river or stream where you can cross safely on foot

**Larry French:** \_\_\_\_\_**Part 1**

Bibs, the janitor, had never killed a man before. He'd raised rabbits as a boy and killed one now and then for supper. A quick blow to the back of the neck, and it was done. He was not a particularly intelligent man and was not suffering from guilt or any philosophical questions about what he was going to do. He had come to the small southern school as a janitor twenty-seven years ago. On his  
5 first day at school, he had worn a pair of old bib overalls and thus earned the nickname of Bibs. This was the reason he had come to kill the principal who was working late in his office down the hall. Earlier in the evening, Bibs had gone into the equipment room and picked out the largest baseball bat he could find. He then went and hid in a space between the green metal lockers that lined the hallways. At a little past ten the principal walked out of his office, locked it, and started down the  
10 hall. Bibs stepped out in front of him.

“Say, Bibs,” asked the principal. “What are you doing here this time of night?”

1. *Underline the words you do not understand, but only those which are urgently needed to understand the text.*
2. *What do we learn about Bibs? Mark all the relevant information using a red or green pen.*

**Part 2**

Beads of sweat stood out on Bib's forehead, and he clenched the bat with both hands. He was six feet tall, very black, and towered over the principal.

"I come to kill you," said Bibs.

"But why? What have I ever done to you?"

- 5 "Just what you called me is why!" said Bibs. "Nobody in this school, including you, has ever bothered to learn my real name. Onliest person knows my real name is that woman signs my check, and even she puts it in an envelope marked BIBS. The kids should learn my name in four years. Hell, I know more'n half of their names and where they live. This morning I stopped a couple of 'em and asked 'em did they know my real name, and they looked at me like I was crazy. That's why I come to kill
- 10 you!"

The principal was a short man anyway, but now his shoulders slumped even further, and he looked sad and confused.

1. *Underline the words you do not understand, but only those which are urgently needed to understand the text.*
2. *What additional information about Bibs is given? Mark all the relevant information using a red or green pen.*
3. *What do you learn about the principal? Mark all the relevant information using a black or blue pen.*

**Part 3**

“Well,” he said. “Well, what is your name?”

“Ralph Mumsford,” said Bibs.

“Mumsford's a strange name for a black man to have,” said the principal. “It's English, isn't it?”

“I don't know.”

- 5 “You should look it up,” said the principal. “You should go over to the school library and look it up. Say, lookee here, if I promise me and all my teachers call you by your real name from now on, will you not kill me?”

Bibs thought for a moment, seemed to waver, and then said, “Well, that seems fair. You do that, and I won't have to kill you.”

- 10 The principal looked tired.

“You been working too many hours,” said Bibs. “A Christian man ought to always eat the supper meal with his wife.”

The principal sighed and said, “I do believe you're right, Mr. Mumsford. I do believe you have a point there.” Then he turned and walked down the dark corridor toward the green exit sign leading out to

- 15 the playground.

1. *Underline the words you do not understand, but only those which are urgently needed to understand the text.*
2. *Do you like the ending of the story? Why, why not? Give reasons for your answer.*
3. *Find a suitable title for the story.*
4. *In your eyes, what general problem (or conflict) might have been in the writer's head when he wrote the story?*