

Too Big to Ride

A bicycle you cannot sit on is still a bicycle.

4 min read

Before you read

- **saddle** — the seat on a bicycle
- **gravel** — small loose stones
- **wobbled** — moved from side to side
- **slope** — ground that goes downhill
- **grazed** — scraped the skin



The green bicycle on the red dust road, under the jacaranda trees

¹ The bicycle belonged to my brother first. It was green, and it was far too big for me.

² “Your feet do not reach,” said Juma. “Wait one year.”

³ I did not want to wait one year.

⁴ On Saturday I pushed the bicycle out to the road. The road was red dust and gravel. Jacaranda flowers lay on it like purple snow.

⁵ I could not sit on the saddle and reach the pedals. So I stood up instead. I pushed one pedal down, then the other.

⁶ The bicycle wobbled. Then it went straight. Then it went fast.

⁷ The road had a slope I had forgotten about.

⁸ I went down the slope very fast. I did not know how to stop. I shouted. A goat moved out of the way. Then the front wheel turned by itself, and I was on the ground.

⁹ My knee was grazed and the handlebars were bent.



Standing on the pedals, and a goat stepping aside



Juma sitting down in the dust beside the bent bicycle

¹⁰ Juma found me sitting in the dust. I waited for him to be angry.

¹¹ He looked at the bicycle. He looked at my knee. Then he sat down beside me.

¹² “The first time I rode it, I fell too,” he said. “Nobody told you about the slope.”

¹³ We walked home together, pushing the green bicycle between us.

¹⁴ On Sunday, he taught me how to brake.

Part A Choose the best answer

Circle the letter next to the right answer.

1. Who owned the bicycle before the storyteller?
A a neighbour down the road
B Juma, the older brother
C nobody — it was new
D the storyteller's mother
2. Why could the storyteller not sit on the saddle?
A the saddle was broken
B the saddle was wet
C their feet could not reach the pedals
D Juma was sitting on it
3. What made the bicycle go so fast?
A a slope in the road
B a strong wind behind it
C the goat pushed it
D Juma gave it a push
4. What did Juma do when he found the storyteller in the dust?
A he shouted at them
B he took the bicycle away
C he walked home without them
D he sat down beside them

Part B Write your answer

Answer in one or two sentences.

5. The storyteller was told to wait a year. Why do you think they rode the bicycle anyway?

6. How do we know Juma was not angry about the bent handlebars?

Part C

Think deeper

There is no single right answer here. Say what you think, and say why.

7. On Sunday, Juma taught the storyteller how to brake. Why do you think he chose to teach that first? What in the story makes you think so?

8. Have you ever tried something you were told you were not ready for? What happened, and why did you try it anyway?

Answer key

For parents and teachers

Part A

1. B — Juma, the older brother | 2. C — their feet could not reach the pedals | 3. A — a slope in the road | 4. D — he sat down beside them

Part B

5. They wanted to ride now, not in a year — they were impatient, and they wanted to do what their older brother could already do. Accept any answer showing the child understood the wanting, rather than thinking the bicycle had become the right size.
6. He sat down beside them instead of shouting, and he said he had fallen the first time too. Accept also: he walked home with them, he taught them to brake the next day.

Part C

These answers vary. Mark the reasoning, not the answer.

7. A strong answer links braking to the crash — they could not stop, so stopping is the thing that was missing. A weaker answer gives a reason with no link back to the text. Prompt with: what went wrong on the slope?
8. Any honest personal answer counts, as long as it gives a reason. The skill being practised is because — the child should be able to finish the sentence 'I tried it because...'. Prompt rather than correct.

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