



## Mid July and story time

It is mid July, there are ten days left of the school year. I am ten years old, soon to be eleven at the end of the month, a youngster in my year group. It is my first day in a new school in a new town and I have no friends. I will only join this school for these last ten days before the summer break and moving to secondary school, but my parents hope that by joining the school I will find play mates for the summer.

It is the first lesson after lunch, and I have come in from the lonely ordeal of playtime, the noise of the other children's happy play ringing in my mind. I have been the object of a game of dare, where younger children had clearly been dared to go and touch the new girl only to run off giggling to their friends afterwards. Vulnerable and alert to more humiliation, it is now story time and we are asked to sit on the mat to listen to a story.

As I sit listening to the teacher read the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, I enter a magical world of Narnia. In my mind's eye I too step through the wardrobe, through the fur coats and into the snow. I switch into this snowy world of permanent winter seeing it through little Lucy's eyes. I too carry her little healing potion, her love and faith in Aslam the lion and feel a safety in my imaginary world. I am quietly safe sat on the mat with the other children in my class, silently held in our joint imagination in this other land. The power of the teacher's story binds us and my own inner world is free to open to a mystery that lies beyond the shameful suffering of the playground and my isolated sense of difference and newness.