



Here we go. All aboard. This is Bert, on his bus. He's been driving the same bus on the same road for ten long years. Ten years! That's longer than some of us have been alive! And for the ten years before that he drove another bus along another road on the other side of town. I know some folk would love to drive a bus. Mebbe you would. Mebbe Bert did when he started, way back in the distant days when he was young and bright and full of hope. But not now. Oh no, not now! Mr Bertram Brown has had quite enough. What a way to spend a life! Start stop start stop start stop start stop. Brakes sighing, doors creaking, engine throbbing. Traffic lights, traffic jams, hold-ups, roadworks, glaring sun, fog and puddles, ice and bloomin' snow.

And bus stops! What's the point of bus stops? All them people waiting, all them bloomin' hands held out. "Stop here, Bus Driver! Let us onto your cosy bus!" Passengers! Who invented passengers?

Old ladies with their sticks; smelly old blokes with their wobbly hands and dribbly gobs; dippy mothers with their screaming toddlers and babies puking in their arms. Wheelchairs and shopping bags and pushchairs and parcels. Lads with their lasses and lasses with their lads making lovey-dovey eyes and going *coo coo coo* and holding bloomin' hands.

And kids! Kids! Don't get Bert started about kids! Who on earth invented *them*? Cheeky snotty-nosed creatures. "Let us off with ten pence, Mister! I dropped me money in the gutter, Mister! I'm not fifteen, I'm only eight! Look out! Your back wheel's catching up with your front wheel! Stop the bus I want a wee-wee! Stop the bus I want a—" Kids! What's the point of them?

Oh heck, here he is at St Mungo's yet again. And here they come, the little brats. "One at a time! Keep in order! Sit down! Stop that giggling! Stop that screeching! Stop that racket!" Kids! Lock them up and chuck away the bloomin' key! Kids! "Shut up! Sit down! Sit *down*!"

At least it's nearly over. Bert's getting on. Look at him. Hardly any hair at all. It'll soon be time for retirement. Freedom at last! No more driving for

old Bert. No more bus stops! No more passengers! No more kids! No more rotten cheeky kids!

1. How long has Bert been driving a bus?
2. Does Bert like being a bus driver? How do you know?
3. Give 3 examples of the things that make driving difficult.
4. The narrator asks question "Who invented them?" "What's the point of them?" Why does the author introduce these questions?
5. The descriptions are all very negative as if Bert hates everything to do with his job. What do you think he dislikes the most and why?
6. What do you think the worst sort of kids are for Bert? Give evidence for your answer.
7. Would you like to be a bus driver. Think of two reasons why you might like it and two why you might not.
8. The author uses words like gobs, mebbe, bloomin'. Suggest reasons why he does this.

Answers:

1. He has been driving this bus for 10 years and another one for 10 years before that – 20 years in all.
2. Bert no longer enjoys driving. He is bored by it - it says stop start stop start - and he doesn't like the unpleasant passengers.
3. Any 3 things from the list that start traffic lights, traffic jams...
4. Questions like this engage the reader – you find yourself trying to answer the questions.
5. He seems to hate children the most – he has the most to say about children and the narrator says “Don't get him started..” as if it would be hard to stop him. He also says “No more kids! No more rotten cheeky kids right at the end as if this is the most important, over riding good thing about retirement.”
6. School kids are the worst. They are badly behaved and won't do as he tells them to do. He repeats sit down as if he is having to say it over and over again.
7. You can drive around all day and you are not stuck inside; you are in charge of your own bus; you might like to help people and see different people every day; you might get to go to places you never visited; **BUT** you might have rude passengers; you might get stuck in bad traffic; you have to sit down a lot; someone might be sick or make a mess you have to clean up.
8. These are words which show someone is talking and it sounds like conversation. It gives the narrator a sense of being a character.