

“What have you been doing in lessons this morning?” asked Granddad as he took off his gardening boots in the back porch. He had been planting out some young lettuce plants while Tommy was busy doing his maths and English. Tommy had been able to see him working his way down the neat rows of the vegetable plot if his attention wandered or his eyes strayed to the window.

What had he been doing? Tommy usually had to think hard about that question; lessons so easily went right out of his head as soon as they were over. However, today he had been very interested in something and was eager to tell his grandfather all about it. “I learned how to read italics, Granddad,” he said.

Grandfather washed his hands at the kitchen sink and put the kettle on. Then he sat down in the chair by the stove. Mot the old dog ambled over from his basket and sat down by his feet. “So how do you read italics, then?” asked Grandfather when he was settled down, “What did Mummy teach you about it?”

“You do it like this,” began Tommy, “well, perhaps I’d better get you my book and you can see.” He hurried off to the old wooden school desk in the next room where he kept all his lesson books and came back quickly into the kitchen. Climbing up onto his grandfather’s lap he settled himself comfortably and then open his book at the right place. “It’s to do with words that are important,” he explained “and when you read them you emphasise them - say them louder. Look at this page and I’ll show you how it goes.

“*I* told him to fetch that hat – it was not you that told him.
I *told* him to fetch that hat – but he would not listen.
I told *him* to fetch that hat – I did not ask you to fetch it.
I told him to *fetch* that hat – but he threw it to me.
I told him to fetch *that* hat – not the other one.
I told him to fetch that *hat* – not the scarf.”

When Tommy finished reading, Grandfather looked pleased. “Well done, Tommy!” he said “how nicely you read! Italics are very useful aren’t they? They show us which words are most important.”

Tommy was glad he had been able to remember what he had done and tell Granddad all about it. He was just going to slide down from Granddad’s lap and find a ball to take outside to play in the sunshine when he remembered something. “Granddad,” he said “there are italics in the Bible too aren’t there?”

“Yes, Tommy there are,” replied Granddad “but they are there for a very