

I grabbed the broom and immediately brushed the little black insect out the door! Crickets! I despise crickets and this summer they're everywhere – even in our little schoolhouse here in the middle of the prairies!

It's another hot summer day and there is no relief from the summer heat. We opened the windows to let the breeze blow in... blow it did, but it's a hot breeze and not refreshing.

The children stirred uncomfortably in their desks in our one room schoolhouse, red-faced and somber. The smothering heat is everywhere – stifling. Only the crick, crick of the crickets in the brown grass, the whirr of the grasshoppers against the dusty windowpanes, and the sound of my chalk on the chalkboard adds to the monotony of this sweltering day in August of 1932. Yes, in the early years, we had school during the summer months!

We'd been without rain for many months and crickets and grasshoppers were everywhere – millions of them – on the roads, in our gardens, in our houses, and yes, inside our little schoolhouse!

I was writing the list of spelling words on the chalkboard when I heard a distinct scritch scritch behind me from an inkwell. I turned and scanned the room, eyeing each of the students with one sweeping glance, and said, "Will the person who is flipping their inkwell, please stop. Get on with your work!" I then continued writing out words on the chalkboard. But there it was again, that scritch sound of someone playing with their inkwell.

"Please stop that noise at once," I said more sternly to the students. As much as I did not want the students in the school during recess, this obstinate insubordination could mean the entire class would work straight through recess!

The room fell silent, and I resumed my writing on the chalkboard.

But then, scritch, scritch– there it was again! That was too much! I was hot under the collar, and it wasn't just about the temperature in this oven of a building!

I studied my students with intensity, their young faces strained as they looked up at me. Clenched teeth tried to hide tiny smirks, while others just stared at me with dancing eyes.

"We'll get to the bottom of this!" I hissed as I marched down each aisle, searching for the culprit!

Again! Scritch scritch... How could any of my students be so bold to openly defy me! There would be no recess for the one who is determined to disrupt my teaching! I heard it again, scritch scritch, right beside me. I sucked in my breath sharply, Hah! The culprit at last!

Oh dear! There he was, a poor tired grasshopper stuck in an inkwell with just his back legs able to move ... scritch, scritch ... I started to laugh and looked around the room, feeling somewhat ashamed of myself for laying the blame on the dear children who were all smiling up at me! And then we laughed! All of us!

"Dear children," I said, "let's help this little fellow out of his predicament and go outside for some fresh air, and shade under the apple tree! It's time for recess!"

*Disturbance in the Classroom was adapted from a story in Vantage Points 4.*

*Vantage Points Flashbacks were written by David Neufeld with help from Betty Sawatzky. They were originally aired on CJRB Radio out of Boissevain, Manitoba in the early 2020s.*