

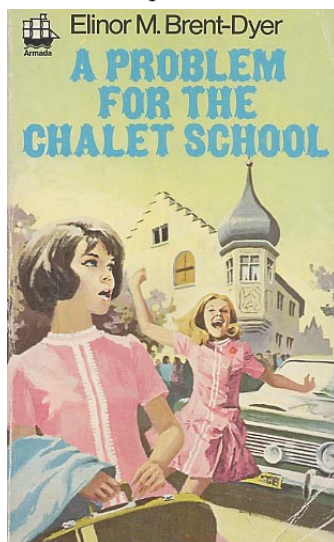


Musical Entertainment and Paper and Parlour Games

Elizabeth Boardman “I enjoyed Christine Woodall’s comments on paper and parlour games and have never come across the game she describes. My family always played games at Christmas, and when we were children, we could hardly wait for the adults to finish their after dinner coffee so that the games could begin. Some involved running all over the house looking for duplicates of playing cards or raffle tickets. Some were ready prepared games from UPL (Universal Publications Limited), courtesy of family games in the 1930s-1950s. *Railway Riot* had us racing around trying to complete a train journey, and *Crazy Post* involved posting ‘letters’ in small cardboard post boxes. As you can see from the photographs, I still have them. Other games were homemade. We would divide into teams, with each one having a copy of the same newspaper. My father would call out a headline or paragraph heading, and you would score a point for your team if you found it first. Or we would play ‘Who am I?’, trying to identify the characters pinned to our backs by asking questions to which only ‘yes’ and ‘no’ were permitted answers. I was the youngest member of my extended family and we were still playing these games at family gatherings when I was in my 30s. By then we had added old group card games like *Newmarket*, *Thirty Ones*, *Follow Me* and *Switch*. Even at today’s quieter Christmases the three of us still play these for pennies. We also play *Desert Islands*. A letter of the alphabet is chosen and we have five minutes to write down things to eat, things to drink and things to wear beginning with that letter. You then read out your efforts, and only get points for items unique to your list. I remember many debates in my youth about whether it was likely that you would eat an aardvark, or whether braised beef/pork/lamb or boiled potatoes/cabbage/ carrots could be regarded as beginning with B.”

private school with only two teachers and twenty-two pupils, where the teaching was not particularly good. The reason that she does not go to Newcastle High School, though, is because her aunt is to have an operation, rather than because they do not approve of the school.

There are still a lot of girls who are educated at home. Gwensi Howell, the MacDonald twins and Lavender Leigh are educated at home, as are Tom Gay and Rosalie Way and the Herbert girls, and the Wintertons. Verity-Anne Carey has a governess and Mary-Lou is taught by her grandmother. It is made very clear in her case that “the village school” is not considered suitable. (“You won’t go *there*,” Len says with some emphasis.) Clem Barrass, on the other hand, has been in and out of many schools, but we do not know of what type. Carola Johnstone went to a prep school in Edinburgh but has since had a governess. Dickie Christie went to a day school in Plymouth, and Annis Lovell went to a conventional high/grammar school, described as a “good day-school”. She is presented as preferring it to the Chalet, although this is because she wants to live with her school friend’s parents rather than her unsympathetic cousin. It’s not clear whether Katherine Gordon has been to school at all before, although it looks perhaps unlikely.



A similar pattern continues in the Swiss years. Barbara Chester, having finally outgrown her childish delicacy, has spent two years at a “small private school near at home” (which mysteriously had not been available for her eldest sister). Prunella Davidson had been at a “quite good preparatory school” when she was 10, although we know nothing about where she went from the age of 12. Jessica Wayne had been a day girl at a big boarding school until her mother’s remarriage, when she became a weekly boarder, before being banished to a full boarding school in Devonshire. Not much sign of a state school there. Rosamund Lilley and Joan Baker, on the other hand, both attended the local secondary modern, but it’s made clear, not surprisingly, that this is a completely different background from any of the other girls. It’s also implied that Rosamund at least is only there because she was ill when she

White Hair Overnight by Kate Eggleston

I know that this topic has been discussed previously, but I should like to raise it once more. Miss Wilson's hair went white overnight when a select group of Chalet folk made a daring mountaineering escape in Austria from the Nazis. I read this incident when I was a child and wondered then if it was possible - but although in a Chalet book, I still had my doubts. Furthermore, I knew the difference between fiction and non-fiction from the library, which supplied the bulk of my reading.

So, my interest in Miss Wilson's hairdo was stimulated once more by Dr. Michael Mosley's comments. I should explain that Dr. Mosley is a regular contributor on all aspects of health to *The Daily Mail* (27 February 2021). I am indebted to him for all the following technical details. He, too, had originally been influenced on reading that Queen Marie Antoinette's

hair had gone white when she was captured and imprisoned during the French Revolution. Initially he had concluded that this white hair had been a wild exaggeration, but later experienced second thoughts. Hair could not go grey overnight, but certainly within weeks.

There is no such thing as grey hair! When people start going grey, what is happening is that the normal-coloured hairs are replaced by white or translucent ones. It is this mixture which produces the illusion of grey. The reason that more white hairs are growing is that the follicles that produce the pigment, melanin, are dying off. This is largely due to the genes which are inherited.

When we become stressed or frightened our body produces adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol. These make our

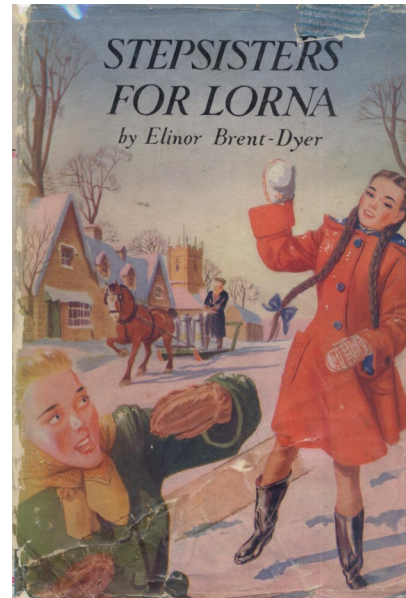
hearts beat faster - blood pressure rises and aids our escape from danger.

Research from Harvard University showed that increased stress triggered premature greyness and that this can happen very quickly. Although this experiment was carried out on mice, there seems no doubt to consider that the same mechanism would occur in humans (I sincerely hope that no mice were too traumatized during this experiment). But when the mice were initially stressed,

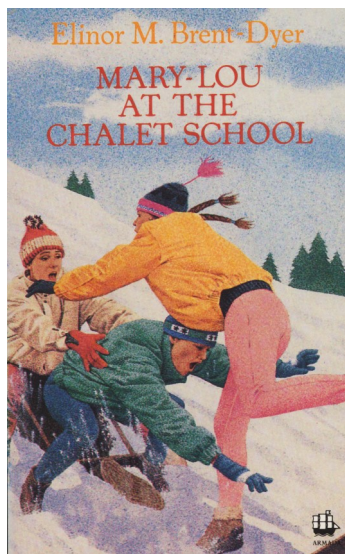


corrections!), which was published in 1954, that the term “sisters by marriage” was used: Verity-Anne is introduced by EBD as “...claim[ing] the distinction of being Mary-Lou’s ‘sister-by-marriage’, since the latter’s mother had married her father that summer.” Vi Lucy also introduces Mary-Lou and Verity-Anne to Barbara in the same way: “Here’s my chum Mary-Lou Trelawney—Oh, and her sister-by-marriage, Verity-Anne Carey.”

Thinking that EBD was confused about the usage of “stepsister” was an easy solution, until I remembered *Stepsisters for Lorna* (1948), in which Lorna’s widowed mother marries a widower with two daughters of his own. The book’s title makes it clear that EBD wasn’t confused with the terminology, and this is an earlier book.



So, what was going on in EBD’s mind, or is this confusing terminology just another EBD-ism? When I started looking into this, I discovered that to confuse matters further, Mary-Lou refers to Verity-Anne simply as her “sister” in *Mary-Lou at the Chalet School* (1956)



I did wonder if emphasis on Mary-Lou and Verity-Anne being sisters by marriage, rather than stepsisters, was because of the stigma attached to divorce then, and the usage of stepbrother and stepsister in that context. My understanding is that divorce was uncommon at that time and seen as shameful. In my family we have a story of a relative who was divorced twice during the 1950s-1960s, and never wanted anyone – in the family and outside of it – to know. She treated it as something to be ashamed of, even in the early 21st century, and although one marriage had been abusive. Maybe the term ‘stepsister’ became a negative term for EBD?

In *Mary-Lou of the Chalet School*, Joey tasks Mary-Lou with untwisting the jealousy and bitterness Jessica Wayne feels towards her stepsister, Rosamund Sefton. Though the fact that the two girls both have stepsisters isn’t given as the reason for asking for Mary-Lou’s understanding and involvement, this similarity is brought up by Jessica, who asks about Verity-Anne and her relationship to Mary-Lou. Who replies; “She isn’t actually any relation to me—