

Miss Newton's new laws

Lynné Schoeman

This story challenges our preconceived ideas of what a school should look like and how it should function. Be prepared to be surprised.

VOCABULARY	
microdosing:	taking very small doses of popular psychedelic hallucinogens or other drugs
red flags:	signs of danger

gaslighting:	a form of psychological manipulation in which the abuser attempts to sow self-doubt and confusion in their victim's mind. Typically, gaslighters are seeking to gain power and control over the other person by distorting reality and forcing them to question their own judgement and intuition.
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QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be “up in arms”? (1)
2. What did Miss Newton do to cause this reaction? (1)
3. Why did Miss Newton feel her drastic step was necessary? (1)
4. Comment on the fact that neither the students nor the teachers applauded Miss Newton's new rule. (3)
5. How could Miss Newton get away with her new rules in the face of complaints to higher authorities? (2)
6. List the other changes Miss Newton introduced to the school. (6)
7. How did the school nurse disrupt Miss Newton's plans? (2)
8. Comment on the fact that Miss Newton set up therapy groups run by senior students. (3)
9. Explain why Trevor circled the “Neutral” emoji. (3)
10. Discuss how Laura's personality differs from Trevor's. (3)
11. Discuss why Brandon thrived in the new system. (3)
12. Why would schools hold prize-giving ceremonies at the end of every year? (2)

13. Comment on what you think the effect would be if the prize-giving ceremonies are cancelled. (3)
14. Discuss whether the students (Trevor, Laura and Brandon) really benefited by the Newtonian mantra adopted by the school and why. (5)
15. Which emoji would you have chosen had you been at Miss Newton's school? Motivate your answer well. (2)

Miss Newton's new laws

(Lynné Schoeman)

1. To protest vehemently. ✓ (1)
2. She abolished all tests and exams at the school. ✓ (1)
3. She felt that she could lessen the anxiety and stress that causes depression in so many students. ✓ (1)

4. The teachers would feel that they have lost a critical instrument to test accumulation of knowledge and insight ✓ while the hard-working students will feel that they have no way to show their acumen and superiority in academics. ✓ The lazy students would feel they got a ticket out of jail, but wouldn't like to be identified by applauding. ✓ (3)
5. The national government (Minister of Basic Education) couldn't be bothered to react ✓ while the provincial education department put a task team together to investigate and everyone knows that that will take a long time. ✓ (2)
6. Uniforms were made optional; ✓ each day started with a yoga session and a chant; ✓ the prefect badges were taken away; ✓ the stage in the hall was demolished; ✓ students could lock their phones in a safe on their desks during class; ✓ students were encouraged to attend therapy groups. ✓ (6)
7. She did not feel she could manage a personal health plan for each student ✓ and refused to administer microdosing to students. ✓ (2)
8. It is rather irresponsible because senior students are still working on their maturity and should not be expected to take on such a responsibility. ✓ They have no psychological training and would not be qualified to handle such sessions. ✓ If anyone in the groups would try to commit suicide, they could be held responsible. Miss Newton is therefore quite irresponsible. ✓ (3)
9. Any THREE:
 - The changes did not affect him much – he liked yoga. ✓
 - He just had his school uniform to wear. ✓
 - He was not going to study further, so the group mark did not bother him. ✓
 - He did not want to explain why he was “sad”. ✓ (3)
10. While Trevor seemed laid back, Laura is competitive. ✓ She liked to be the best-dressed student in her designer

clothes and winning at netball. ✓ She was also bossy and enjoyed the status of being first-team netball captain and keeping “things under control”. ✓ (3)

11. Any THREE:

- Brandon did not have to face his academic failures on a daily basis. ✓
- He had therapy sessions to help him with his bullying behaviour. ✓
- The therapy groupwork would give him academic support. ✓
- As a potential “weakest link”, he could happily ride the system. ✓ (3)

12. It is to celebrate outstanding performances and leadership. ✓ This is believed to motivate students to perform better. ✓ (2)

13. It will have a negative influence ✓ on the performance of the students because top performances require extra-hard work ✓ and if they are not celebrated for their work, there is no reason to do it. ✓

OR

It will be a good thing because the same people get prizes and cups every year ✓ because they have been born with talent and do not have to work as hard as less-talented students to achieve good marks. ✓ Even prizes for “greatest improvement” pales in significance against prizes for top marks. ✓ (3)

14. Award marks for well-formulated motivations:

- Trevor is not motivated to do anything more than is necessary and no effort is made to motivate him to do something with his life. ✓
- Laura’s motivation to perform has been frustrated since all that is expected of her is that she performs in a way so as not to make others feel inferior. Also her leadership aspirations are frustrated. ✓
- Brandon’s motive to hurt others has been taken away which makes him a more palatable persona and feel

better about himself, but his school performance does not seem to have improved. ✓

- The big question, therefore, is whether the school is preparing them to benefit society. ✓
- In a socialist system with a dictator leading, they should do well – except for Laura. ✓

(5)

15. Award marks for sound reasoning.

(2)

[40]