

1. It is an important idea to know that the chameleon flicked out its long tongue and whisked a fly back into its mouth. O'Dell had the students take detailed notes on each animal or insect they were observing. When Luther first came from New York to live with his grandparents in Florida, Chip showed him Florida wildlife such as finding the birds' nests built so low to the ground and watching the eggs hatch and how to tell the difference between slow land turtles and snapping turtles. The students stared at him, either wondering what he was talking about or marveling at the fringe of reddish brown hair surrounding his shiny bald head. Mr. O'Dell answered by asking another question, "What common substance can take the form of a liquid, a solid, or a gas?" Nobody answered, and the class just sat there, waiting for Mr. O'Dell to explain. Then, Chip got it. Mr. O'Dell meant that he was likely to throw out questions about things that weren't in the book and expect students to figure out the answers for themselves. To Chip, the question seemed more like a puzzle.

3. Chip thought of water as a first liquid, and then he thought of ice. Ice is a solid. And when water gets super-hot, it turns to steam. He wasn't sure if steam was a gas or not, but when nobody else spoke, Chip blurted out, "Water?" Once when a student pointed out an anthill, Mr. O'Dell put his nose down so close to watch that, Chip expected an ant to climb right onto the anthill and march up through his freckles to stare back at him through his glasses. Another time, Mr. O'Dell had the whole class sit cross-legged in a circle to watch a chameleon change from brown to bright green. While they were waiting soundlessly, they got to see it let down a flap of bright red skin under its chin to attract insects. Out where Chip lived there wasn't a lot of wildlife in the plowed fields. It started when Mr. O'Dell announced how students could get a good grade in his class, not by memorizing a lot of facts but by thinking. But during any science session, Mr. O'Dell practically exploded with energy and enthusiasm. Once or twice a semester, but Mr. O'Dell had special permission to take his class once a month to a big vacant lot down the street to study biology. The principal usually allowed outdoor field trips only.

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