

heartless

smiles....

Fumbling through the pages of her book, she tried to memorize the theorems she hadn't looked at the night before. The **laughter** at the back of the room **rang in her ears.** Also those smiles those **heartless smiles....** A bell buzzed in the corridors; students **scrambled** to their places. "We will now have the national anthem," said the voice on the loudspeaker. Laura shifted her weight from one foot to the other. It was **so false, so pointless.** How could they sing of the land of the free, when there was still discrimination. **Smothered laughter** behind her. Were they all **looking at her?** And then it was over. **Slumping in her seat,** she shuffled through last week's half-finished homework papers and **scribbled** flowers in the margins. "Now this one is just a direct application of the equation." The voice was **hollow, distant, an echo beyond the sound of rustling papers and hushed whispers.** Laura sketched a guitar on the cover of her notebook. Someday she would live in the village and there would be no more algebra classes and people would **accept** her. She turned towards the back row. Diane was passing around one of her cards. Terri leaned over, smiling. "Hey, can I do the next one?" "... by using the distributive law." Would the class never end? Math was **so dull, so painfully dull.** They made you multiply and cancel and factor, multiply, cancel, and factor. Just like a machine. The steel sound of the bell **shattered the silence.** Scraping chairs, cries of "Hey, wait!" The crowd moved into the hallway now, a thronging, jostling mass. **Alone in the tide of faces,** Laura felt someone nudge her. It was Ellen. "Hey, how's that for a smart outfit?" She pointed to the other side of the hall. **The gaudy flowers** of Rachel Horton's blouse **stood out** among the fluffy sweaters and pleated skirts. What a **lumpish, awkward creature** creature Rachel was. Did she have to dress like that? Her socks had fallen untidily around her heavy ankles, and her slip showed a raggedy edge of lace. As she moved into the English room, shoelaces trailing, her books **tumbled to the floor.** "Isn't that something?" Terri said. **Little waves of mocking laughter** swept through the crowd.