

BRAINTEASER

I looked over at the clock and sighed. The year was 2011 and when I'd planned this practical, I was certain we'd have time to finish it and reflect on our results. Sometimes you just can't get the pace right though.

Now with some students still heating their copper carbonate before even starting the reduction step, I knew the copper would have to wait until next time. The Bunsen burners were extinguished and once I had all eyes on me, I instructed the class how to take a label, mark their boiling tubes and leave them in the designated place for next time.

A few minutes later a girl approached me, somewhat confused, to protest the fact that her name had disappeared. She wrote on the label again and sure enough – the ink vanished before our eyes. I thought for a moment she had one of those erasable pens and some prankster had scribbled the label with an eraser pen before she got to it, but when she showed me her pen to try it on a fresh label, the penny dropped and I knew this wouldn't be necessary.

But what did I realise at that moment had caused her ink to vanish?

