



# Learn English Through Stories

F Series

F1

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## 1. The curtains

Mr James Smith's greatest love in life was books, old ones most of all. His collection grew bigger and bigger every year, but he lived in his aunt's house, and she was not very happy about this.

Mr Smith was in London one day to buy furniture for the new house which he and his aunt were building, and he was on his way to a shop to choose the curtains. His way took him, quite by chance, past one of the best bookshops in London, and he could not stop himself from going in, just for a quick look, as he told himself.

He was just walking around the shop, looking at all the different books, when he noticed a small collection of books on the part of England that he came from, Warwickshire. He spent the next half an hour looking through these and finally decided to buy one that really interested him, called - The Diary of Mr Poynter, 1710. He paid for the book and then, looking at his watch, he realized that he had very little time before his train back to Warwickshire left, and he had to rush to the station. He just caught the train.

That night, his aunt questioned him about his trip to London and was very interested to hear about the furniture which was going to arrive soon. Her nephew described everything in detail, but still, she was not satisfied. "And what about the curtains, James?" she asked. "Did you go to ...?" Suddenly James remembered. "Oh dear, oh dear," he said, "dial's the one thing I missed. I am so sorry. You see, I was on my way there when, quite by chance, I passed Robins.

"Not Robins the bookshop, I hope," cried his aunt. "Don't tell me you've bought more horrible old books, James."

"Well, only one," he said, feeling a bit guilty, "and it's a very interesting one, a diary of someone who used to live not far from here . . . "But he could see that his aunt was not really listening.

"You can't go to London again before next Thursday," she was saying, "and really, James, until we decide on the curtains, there's nothing more we can do.

Luckily, she decided to go to bed soon after that and James was left alone with his new book, which he read until the early hours of the morning. He found his diary, with its stories of everyday life at that time, very interesting. The next day was Sunday. After church, James and his aunt sat in the living room together.

“Is this the old book that made you forget my curtains?” asked his aunt, picking it up. “Well, it doesn’t look very good . . . The Diary of Mr Poynter. Huh!” But she opened the book and looked at a few pages. Suddenly, much to his surprise, she began to show some interest. “Look at this. James,” she said. “Isn’t it lovely?” It was a small piece of paper, pinned to one of the pages of the diary. On it was a beautiful drawing, made up of curving lines, which somehow caught the eye. “Well, why don’t we get it copied for the curtains if you like it so much?” he suggested, hoping that she would forgive him for his bad memory of the day before in London. His aunt agreed and the very next day, James took the piece of paper to a company in the nearest town, who agreed to copy it and make it into curtains.

About a month later, James was called in to inspect the work and was extremely pleased with the result. “Was it a difficult job?” he asked the manager.

“Not too difficult, sir. But, to tell you the truth, the artist who did the work was very unhappy about it - he said there was something bad in the drawing, sir.” James was thoughtful but still, he chose the colours for the curtains and then returned home. A few weeks later, the curtains were ready and a man came to hang them in several rooms of the new house, one of which was James’s bedroom. That night he found that he could not stop looking at them and, although it was a still night, he was almost sure that the curtains were moving and that someone was watching him from behind them. He told himself that this was impossible and not to be so stupid. He explained to himself that the effect was caused by the curving lines on the curtains, which looked just like long, curling black hair.

The next day, a friend of James’s came to stay and after dinner they sat up late, talking and laughing. At last, they decided to go to bed and James showed his friend to the guest room, which was just along from his own. James, though, did not want to go to bed immediately and sat in the chair by the fire in his room, reading. He fell asleep for a few minutes and, when he woke, he realized that something was in the room with him.

Putting out his hand, he felt something covered in hair and thought it was his dog, who always followed him everywhere. “How did you get in here? I thought I left you downstairs,” he said, looking down. To his horror, he found it was not his little dog. But something almost human. He jumped and screamed and, as he did, the face of the thing came up towards him: no eyes, no nose, no mouth. Only hair. He screamed again and rushed to the door, but was so frightened that he could not get it open.

He felt the thing touch his back and start to tear at his shirt. At last, the door flew open and he rushed to his friend's room, terrified and breathing hard.

The next morning, early, James went away to the seaside for a few days to try to forget about his horrible experience. He took with him, 'The Diary of Mr Poymer'. He wanted to read it again carefully to find out anything he could about the pattern pinned onto the page. When he turned to that part of the book he found that there were several pieces of paper stuck one on top of the other. He carefully pulled off the first two and found this story, written by Mr Poymer in 1707.

"Old Mr Casbury of Accrington told me this day of young Sir Everard Charlett, at that time a student of University College. The young man drank too much and broke the law many times, but because he was from an important family, the university never did anything about it. He used to wear his hair very long and curling down his neck and he wore unusual, colourful clothes. His behaviour made his father very unhappy. One day, they found young Sir Everard dead in his room, with all his hair pulled out. No one could explain why or how he died, but the strangest thing was that, the day after he died, the body disappeared completely, leaving only a pile of long, curling black hair on the floor of his room. His father kept some of this hair and had drawings made of it, part of which I have pinned to this page."

This is the strange story behind the curtains. Before he returned home, James Smith ordered his servants to take them all down and burn them.

## 2. My Daily Routine



Some of my friends think I have a boring daily routine, but I like it. I usually get up at about 6:15 or 6:30 in the morning, after my alarm clock wakes me up. First, I brush my teeth, shave, and wash my face. Then I get dressed and go downstairs to have breakfast with my family. I always have coffee, cereal, and lots of fruit. That's me in the picture with my wife. I take a bus to work because I don't like to drive, and I always arrive at my office before 8 00. I'm never late for work.

Five o'clock is my favourite time of the day because I finish work and go back home and see my wife and children again. I have two boys, Thomas, who is six years old and Patrick, who is eight. We eat dinner together in our dining room at around 6:00, and after that, I hang out with my wife and kids at home. We really enjoy watching our favourite TV programs together.

We like to watch shows about travel. However, two or three times a week I do exercise in the evening, so I can stay strong and healthy. I think that this is very important! Finally, at about 9:30, I go to bed, read for a while, and then fall asleep. Sure, some people think my daily routine is a little boring - but on weekends and holidays, I love to fly aeroplanes, for fun! It's my favourite hobby.

### 3. English Language in India

English is one of the most spoken languages in the world. There is no continent in the world where it is not spoken. It has become the lingua franca of the present age. In India, it was introduced by the British government in the nineteenth century and was supported by many eminent Indian personalities of the time. Even today, despite India being independent, the supremacy of English is visible. It is widely used in Government offices, in higher education, by media, and high courts and in the business sector.

The British introduced it to create cheap labour for their government administration and business purposes. The Indian leaders thought that the English language would help them to spread their message of the national struggle for independence. Despite its popularity, some people speak against the use of English.

Many people, who speak Hindi or languages, which are close to Hindi, oppose the use of English in India because they think that English is a symbol of British legacy or elitism. Their claim is justifiable to a certain extent: some people who wear modern clothes and speak some English think that they are more advanced. Often these people are deluded and live in vanity and self-conceitedness. However, the importance of English is indisputable. To keep India as a unified country, no other language can match English. For this reason, the constitution of India enshrined English as an associate official language alongside Hindi.

English is widely used in inter-state affairs and acts as a linking language. In particular, in the communication between Northern and Southern states, no language other than English will suffice. After independence, the states of India were reorganised according to the language spoken in the region and Hindi was declared as a national language. But this imposition was not accepted by the southern states and they fought against it tooth and nail, and succeeded. If you travel to the southern states, say Kerala, you would be able to converse in English with more people compare to the northern state U.P.

There is no doubt about the importance of English in India. It is a must if you want to build a career. However, can you imagine living in a country, where you can converse fluently with most people, even with those who have a slightly different vernacular dialect, and you are not illiterate either because you can read the newspapers in the local languages?

Now you bring a cough medicine for your grandchild from a chemist but you cannot read the label because it is in English. So you don't know how much and how often you should give this 'Calpol' to the little one. Your son is educated to the 10+2 level but cannot fill the application form for a passport so he goes to an agent for help.

India is the third largest 'English books' producing country after U.S. and U.K. But 80% of people in India speak no or very little English - 20% of them are illiterate, anyway this is another issue. How ironical! The majority of government schools don't teach English to a good standard but government documents are in English. Even only a small proportion of private schools teach English efficiently and these schools charge hefty fees, which only can be afforded by the higher middle class or upper class. India has been suffering a long time from caste system and discrimination and now this English and non-English is creating a new caste or class system. The majority of people in India are oppressed because of this lack of English language knowledge.

There is another delusion: some people think they know the language – an auto driver knows the numbers in English and says, "Two hundred and forty rupees please"; a clothes shop assistant knows the numbers and colours and some other terms and says, "Black and red, lovely colours, nice coordination (though it's not a coordination but a contrast) and very smooth material"; an order is given in a restaurant, "four chapattis, rice and mutton hot and spicy."

Four year-old-child spends a whole year learning the English alphabet. What is the point?

New fever: learn English as a first language.

All said and done, the fact is that the popularity and upsurge of the English language in India are unstoppable. It would be of great folly for Indian states to neglect or ignore this trend. For this reason, many states in India are trying to introduce English as early as primary schooling. Even some people in India are anticipating that English may become the national language of India – wishful thinking – more than 20% of people in India are illiterate and it is a major issue in India – set aside the English language.



## 4. Grammar Page

### Section: A GRAMMAR

# Articles

Read the news-story and circle 'a', 'an' and 'the'.

### World's Largest Motorcycle

Gregory Dunham is from California, a US state on the Pacific Ocean. California has the largest population of all the states. Its largest city is Los Angeles and the capital is Sacramento.

Dunham is an intelligent engineer. He is an enthusiast of motorcycle. He built a huge motorcycle. The Guinness Book of World Records says that Dunham's motorcycle is the biggest one in the world. It took Dunham three years to build it.



Dunham built the monster motorcycle because his friends said it was impossible. He wanted to prove that he could do it. It was a giant project, but he accomplished it.

Dunham named his motorcycle 'The Monster' or 'Dream Big'. It stands 3.4 meters tall, measures 6.2 meters in length, weighs 2948.3 kilograms and relies on an 8226.3 cubic centimetre engine to power it to 104 kilometres an hour.

Dunham would like to take the motorcycle on a tour of the country so that more people can see it. However, he would need a corporate sponsor to help pay for the tour.

◆ Read the above news-story again and write down the articles that come with the following nouns. Remember some nouns do not take any articles. Use a cross (✗) for such nouns.

.....California	.....US state	.....Pacific Ocean
.....largest population	.....Los Angeles	.....intelligent engineer
.....enthusiast	.....huge motorcycle	.....biggest one
.....giant project	.....8226.3 cubic centimetre engine	.....hour

The words 'a', 'an' and 'the' are called articles. 'A' and 'an' are called the **indefinite** articles and 'the' is called the **definite** article. They are always followed by a noun or noun phrase.

→ The use of 'a' and 'an' with a noun or noun phrase makes it *indefinite*.

He built a huge motorcycle.  
He is **an** intelligent engineer.

→ The use of 'the' with a noun or noun phrase makes it *definite*.

He built **the** monster motorcycle.  
Dunham's motorcycle is **the** biggest one in the world.



**Listening Practice:** Repeat these words after your teacher.

a/an → /ə/ → a dog, a book, a bench, a hat (*before consonant sounds*)  
 → /ən/ → an apple, an egg, an owl, an insect (*before vowel sounds*)

the → /ðə/ → the pot, the mat, the ticket (*before consonant sounds*)  
 → /ði/ → the axe, the ox, the umbrella (*before vowel sounds*)

Remember 'a', 'an' and 'the' are usually pronounced as /ə/ in connected speech.



**Grammar Practice:** Work in pairs and discuss.

Gregory Dunham is from California.

Why is there no article?  
 Can we use 'the' with it?  
 Can you list out some nouns that do not take any articles?

California has *the largest* population of all the states. Its *largest* city is Los Angeles and the capital is Sacramento.

Why has 'the' been used here, not there?

Dunham would like to take the motorcycle on *a tour* of the country so that more people can see it. However, he would need a corporate sponsor to help pay for *the tour*.

Why has 'the' been used here, not there?

The Guinness Book of World Records says that Dunham's motorcycle is *the* biggest one in *the* world.

Why is 'the' used with these words?

.....and relies on *an* 8226.3 cubic centimeter engine to power it to 104 kilometers *an* hour.

Can we use 'a' with these words?  
 Do you use 'an' with '...4226.3 cubic meter' and '...hat'?

