



Learn English Through Stories

F Series

F2

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

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1. Going Home

By Ruskin Bond

The train came panting through the forest and into the flat brown plain. The engine whistled piercingly, and a few cows moved off the track. In a swaying third-class compartment two men played cards; a woman held a baby to an exposed breast; a Sikh labourer, wearing brief pants, lay asleep on an upper bunk, snoring fitfully; an elderly unshaven man chewed the last of his pan and spat the red juice out of the window. A small boy, mischief in his eyes, jingled a bag of coins in front of an anxious farmer.

O! Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way.
Fun, fun, train shuk-shuk
Goes on the railway.

Daya Ram, the farmer, was going home; home to his rice fields, his buffalo, and his wife. His brother had died recently, and Daya Ram had taken the ashes to Hardwar to immerse them in the holy waters of the Ganga, and now he was on the train to Dehradun and soon he would be home. He was looking concerned because he had just remembered his wife's **admonition** about being careful with money. Ten rupees was what he had left with him, and it was all in the bag the boy held.

"Let me have it now," said Daya Ram, "before the money falls out." He made a grab at the little bag that contained his coins, notes, and railway ticket, but the boy shrieked with delight and leapt out of the way.

Daya Ram stroked his moustache; it was a long drooping moustache that contributed a certain sadness to his somewhat kind and foolish face. He reflected that it was his own fault for having started the game. The child had been down in the mouth – sullen and gloomy. To cheer him up, Daya Ram had begun jingling his money. Now the boy was jingling the money, right in front of the open window.

"Come now, give it back," pleaded Daya Ram, "or I shall tell your mother."

The boy's mother had her back to them, and it was a large back, almost as **forbidding** as her front. But the boy was enjoying his game and would not give up the bag. He was **exploiting** to the full Daya Ram's easy-going tolerant nature, and kept bobbing up and down on the seat, waving the bag in the poor man's face.

Suddenly the boy's mother, who had been engrossed in conversation with another woman, turned and saw what was happening. She walloped the boy over the head and the suddenness of the blow (it was more of a thump than a slap) made him fall back against the window, and the cloth bag fell from his hand on to the railway embankment outside.

Now Daya Ram's first **impulse** was to leap out of the moving train. But when someone shouted, "Pull the alarm cord!" he decided on this course of action. He plunged for the alarm cord, but just at the moment someone else shouted, "Don't pull the cord!" and Daya Ram who usually listened to others, stood in suspended animation, waiting for further directions.

"Too many people are stopping trains every day all over India," said one of the card players, who wore large thick-rimmed spectacles over a pair of tiny humourless eyes, and was obviously a post office counter-clerk. "You people are becoming a menace to the railways."

"Exactly," said the other card player.

"You stop the train on the most trifling excuses. What is your trouble?"

"My money has fallen out," said Daya Ram.

"Why didn't you say so!" exclaimed the clerk, jumping up. "Stop the train!"

"Sit down," said his companion, "it's too late now. The train cannot wait here until he walks half a mile back down the line. How much did you lose?" he asked Daya Ram.

"Ten rupees."

"And you have no more?"

Daya Ram shook his head.

"Then you had better leave the train at the next station and go back for it."

The next station, Harrawala, was about ten miles from the spot where the money had fallen. Daya Ram got down from the train and started back along the railway track. He was a well-built man, with strong legs, and a dark, burnished skin. He wore a vest and dhoti, and had a red cloth tied round his head. He walked with long, easy steps, but the ground had been scorched by the burning sun, and it was not long before his feet were hurting. His eyes too were unaccustomed to the glare of the plains, and he held a hand up over them, or looked at the ground. The sun was high in the sky, beating down on his bare arms and legs. Soon his body was running with sweat, his vest was soaked through and sticking to his skin.

There were no trees anywhere near the railway lines, which ran straight to the hazy blue horizon. There were fields in the distance, and cows grazed on short grass, but there were no humans in sight. After an hour's walk, Daya Ram felt thirsty; his tongue was **furred**, his gums dry, his lips like **parchment**. When he saw a buffalo wallowing in a muddy pool, he hurried to the spot and drank thirstily of the stagnant water.

Still, his pace did not slacken. He knew of only one way to walk, and that was at this steady long pace. At the end of another hour he felt sure he had passed the place where the bag had fallen. He had been inspecting the embankment very closely, and now he felt discouraged and dispirited. But still he walked on. He was worried more by the thought of his wife's attitude than by the loss of the money or the problem of the next meal.

Rather than turn back, he continued walking until he reached the next station. He kept following the lines, and after half an hour dragged his aching feet on to Raiwala platform. To his surprise and joy, he saw a note in Hindi on the notice board: "Anyone having lost a bag containing some notes and coins may inquire at the stationmaster's office." Some honest man or woman or child had found the bag and handed it in. Daya Ram felt, that his faith in the goodness of human nature had been justified.

He rushed into the office and, pushing aside an indignant clerk, exclaimed: "You have found my money!"

"What money?" snapped the harassed-looking official, "and don't just charge in here shouting at the top of your voice, this is not a hotel!"

"The money I lost on the train," said Daya Ram. "Ten rupees."

"In notes or in coins?" asked the stationmaster, who was not slow in assessing a situation.

"Six one-rupee notes," said Daya Ram. "The rest is in coins."

"Hmmm . . . and what was the purse like?"

"White cloth," said Daya Ram. "Dirty white cloth," he added for clarification.

The official put his hand in a drawer, took out the bag and flung it across the desk. Without further **parley**, Daya Ram scooped up the bag and burst through the swing doors, completely revived after his fatiguing march.

Now he had only one idea: to celebrate, in his small way, the recovery of his money. So, he left the station and made his way through a sleepy little bazaar to the nearest tea shop. He sat down at a table and asked for tea and a hookah. The shopkeeper placed a record on a gramophone, and the shrill music shattered the afternoon silence of the bazaar.

A young man sitting idly at the next table smiled at Daya Ram and said, "You are looking happy – as pleased as **Punch**, brother."

Daya Ram beamed. "I lost my money and found it," he said simply.

"Then you should celebrate with something stronger than tea," said the friendly stranger with a wink. "Come on into the next room." He took Daya Ram by the arm and was so comradely that the older man felt pleased and flattered. They went behind a screen, and the shopkeeper brought them two glasses and a bottle of country-made rum.

Before long, Daya Ram had told his companion the story of his life. He had also paid for the rum and was prepared to pay for more. But two of the young man's friends came in and suggested a card game and Daya Ram, who remembered having once played a game of cards in his youth, showed enthusiasm. He lost sportingly, to the tune of five rupees; the rum had such a benevolent effect on his already genial nature that he was quite ready to go on playing until he had lost everything, but the shopkeeper came in hurriedly with the information that a policeman was hanging about outside.

Daya Ram's table companions **promptly** disappeared. Daya Ram was still happy. He paid for the hookah and the cup of tea he hadn't had, and went lurching into the street. He had some vague intention of returning to the station to catch a train, and had his ticket in his hand; by now his sense of direction was so confused that he turned down a side alley and was soon lost in a labyrinth of tiny alleyways. Just when he thought he saw trees ahead, his attention was drawn to a man leaning against a wall and groaning wretchedly. The man was in rags, his hair was tousled, and his face looked bruised.

Daya Ram heard his groans and stumbled over to him. "What is wrong?" he asked with concern. "What is the matter with you?"

"I have been robbed," said the man, speaking with difficulty. "Two thugs beat me and took my money. Don't go any further this way."

"Can I do anything for you?" said Daya Ram. "Where do you live?"

"No, I will be all right," said the man, leaning heavily on Daya Ram. "Just help me to the corner of the road, and then I can find my way."

"Do you need anything?" said Daya Ram. "Do you need any money?"

“No, no just help me to those steps.”

Daya Ram put an arm around the man and helped him across the road, seating him on a step.

“Are you sure I can do nothing for you?” persisted Daya Ram. The man shook his head and closed his eyes, leaning back against the wall. Daya Ram hesitated a little, and then left. But as soon as Daya Ram turned the corner, the man opened his eyes. He transferred the bag of money from the fold of his shirt to the string of his pyjamas. Then, completely recovered, he was up and away.

Daya Ram discovered his loss when he had gone about fifty yards, and then it was too late. He was puzzled, but was not upset. So many things had happened to him today, and he was confused and unaware of his real situation. He still had his ticket, and that was what mattered most.

The train was at the station, and Daya Ram got into a half-empty compartment. It was only when the train began to move that he came to his senses and realized what had befallen him. As the engine gathered speed, his thoughts came faster. He was not worried (except by the thought of his wife), and he was not unhappy, but he was puzzled. He was not angry or resentful, but he was a little hurt. He knew he had been tricked, but he couldn't understand why. He had really liked those people he had met in the tea shop of Raiwala, and he still could not bring himself to believe that the man in rags had been putting on an act.

“Have you got a beedi?” asked a man beside him, who looked like another farmer.

Daya Ram had a beedi. He gave it to the other man and lit it for him. Soon they were talking about crops and rainfall and their respective families, and although a faint uneasiness still hovered at the back of his mind, Daya Ram had almost forgotten the day's misfortunes. He had his ticket to Dehradun and from there he had to walk only three miles, and then he would be home, and there would be hot milk and cooked vegetables waiting for him. He and the other farmer chattered away, as the train went panting across the wide brown plain.

Vocabulary

Admonition: warning.

Forbidding: threatening.

Exploiting: misusing.

Impulse: sudden strong wish.

Furred: covered with white stuff.

Parchment: dry skin of animals used for writing in the olden days.

Parley: discussion.

Punch: alcoholic drink with fruits.

Promptly: quickly.

2. Grammar Page



GRAMMAR STUDY: A or AN ?

Use 'a' or 'an' with a singular countable noun.
Do not use 'a' or 'an' with a plural or uncountable noun.
Use 'a' with a noun that starts with a consonant sound.
Use 'an' with a noun that starts with a vowel sound.

'an' + vowel sound

an apple
an egg
an inkpot
an orange
an umbrella

'a' + consonant sound

a ball
a dark room
a gold ring
a strong person
a pilot

an English newspaper
an English newspapers

In most cases, the letters 'e', 'o' and 'u' are pronounced as vowels but sometimes they are pronounced as consonants.

an engineer
an ox
an ugly girl
an urgent message
an uncle

a ewe, a European, a eucalyptus,...
a one eyed man, a one way ticket,...
a utensil, a unicorn, a union, a uniform,...
a usage, a university, a unit,...
a user, a useless car , a U-turn,...

an ewe
a turn

An abbreviation whose first letter has a vowel sound comes with 'an'.
An abbreviation whose first letter has a consonant sound comes with 'a'.

an SOS message
an MA
an SDO
an MLA
an NTC staff
an ELT textbook
an SEE candidate

a UFO
a BA
a VIP
a WHO officer
a BBC reporter
a TOEFL score
a UNESCO office

What is the difference?
a SAT score
an SOS message

a M.Sc. student

Abbreviations that start with A, E, F, H, I, L, M, N, O, R, S and X often give vowel sounds.
Abbreviations that start with B, C, D, G, J, K, P, Q, T, U, V, W, Y and Z often give consonant sounds.

Singular countable nouns that start with the 'h' letter come with 'a' when it is pronounced but they come with 'an' when it is silent.

'h' is silent

an hour
an honest person
an honourable teacher
an heir
an heiress
an hourglass
an hour's delay
an heirloom

'h' is pronounced

a hamburger
a horse
a hunter
a hammer
a hat
a house
a half yearly meeting
a hall

an half day leave
a honest man



GRAMMAR STUDY: Uses of A/AN

We use 'a' or 'an' with a singular countable noun:

- *in the sense of 'one':* Robin has a cat and a dog. (one cat and one dog)
Yesterday I bought a shirt. (one shirt)
She bought a new dress. (one dress)
Suman has an ox. (one ox)
- *with jobs or professions:* Milan is a doctor and his wife is a nurse.
Anjali is a photographer.
He is a successful English teacher.
Deepak is an engineer.
- *in 'such + singular noun':* I want such a dress.
Such a book is essential for children.
Such a boy cannot solve the puzzle.
- *with singular exclamations:* What a beautiful picture!
Such a boring party!
What a fine day!
What an adorable child!
- *to mean 'each' or 'every':* They come here once a week.
She earns six thousand a month.
I brush my teeth twice a day.
He comes here once a year.
- *with units of uncountable nouns:*

a piece of wood	a piece of bread	a piece of cake
a piece of chalk	a cup of tea	a glass of milk
a drop of dew	a bar of soap	a bar of chocolate
a grain of rice	a lump of sugar	a bottle of oil
a tube of toothpaste	a plate of rice	a pinch of salt
- *with some phrases:*

a few friends	a little salad	a kilo
a metre	a dozen	a hundred
a thousand	a million	a billion
- *with these expressions:*

have a drink	have a wash	have a bite
have a laugh	have a look	have a try
have a rest	have a pity	have a say
have a bath	have a cold	have a pain
take a rest	take a look	in a low voice
in a whisper	in a hurry	in a fix
on a diet	make a complaint	in an accident
in an instant	as a result	as a rule
at a loss	on an average	in a bad temper
make a profit	make a loss	light a fire
a nightmare	a small salary	pay somebody a visit
give an answer	a short time ago	take an interest in
a cold/a headache	have a holiday	at a glance
get a high fever		



Grammar Practice: Fill in the blanks with 'a' or 'an'.

With words:

.....ewe	.....insect	.....uniform
.....hour	.....airport	.....school
.....carpenter	.....doctor	.....orphanage
.....hotel	.....owl	.....union
.....European	.....ball	.....engineer

With phrases:

.....angry person	.....small insect	.....honest man
.....interesting story	.....useful dress	.....good boy
.....very clever boy	.....hourly bus service	.....boiled egg
.....dishonest man	.....brave boy	.....old car
.....beautiful doll	.....small inkpot	.....clean shirt
.....large elephant	.....very good boy	.....ugly girl
.....half-yearly meeting	.....UN declaration	.....FM radio

With sentences:

- This is.....BBC documentary.
- He bought.....pen,pencil and.....eraser.
- She is doing.....part-time job in.....restaurant.
- Mona is.....university student.
- It rained for.....whole week.
- I saw.....man with.....dog and.....cat.
- They meet me once.....month.
- That is.....ugly dress but this is.....beautiful dress.
- Hem has.....aunt in Biratnagar.
- This is.....arrow and that is.....knife.
- Aryan has finished.....unit.
- They have received.....SOS message.
- There is.....flag high atop.....pole.
- Mina is wearing.....red skirt and.....white shirt.
- Mr. Rai is.....very genuine person.
- She is wearing.....expensive uniform.
- Anita is.....announcer and her sister is.....nurse.
- This is.....ultra-violet ray.
- Do you have.....TOEFL score?
- Milan has bought.....expensive bike.
- Pokhara is.....very beautiful city.
- Archi has got.....attractive sari.
-pen is.....thing you use for writing with.