



Learn English Through Stories

E Series

E8

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1. The Enchanted Scorpions

What an exciting morning the children had had that day! Granddad had asked for their help in cleaning up his old storeroom. Granddad loved to keep all kinds of old things in that room, much to Grandma's annoyance. She firmly believed the room was the principal attraction for all the cockroaches, mice, termites and other such bugs in the house. Every summer holiday the children spent a day clearing out the room, exclaiming over all the treasures they had unearthed. Granddad even let them keep some of the odds and ends they found. That didn't please their mothers too much though! Today they found an old wooden box. It was a big box, beautifully carved all over with flowers, and vines and leaves. Inside, it had little compartments to keep all manner of things. Now these compartments were empty, but Raghu, who had been reading *Treasure Island*, imagined that once these were full of gold and silver coins, gems as big as eggs and all kinds of fantastic jewels. After examining the box thoroughly, the children decided that the day's story had to be about lost treasure. Grandma, who knew a story about anything under the sun, started right away.

Siddharth was a young, good-natured merchant. Looking for work, he arrived in a village. He liked the people of the village so much that he decided to use all his savings, buy a house and live there forever. While searching for a house, he met Uday.

Uday was a poor man. His family had once been extremely wealthy landowners but were now not so well off. Uday was looking to sell his old family mansion in order to pay off his family's loans.

Siddharth loved the house Uday showed him and bought it immediately. Then he set about repairing the mansion, which was in ruins. As he dug out the old flooring, he found a sealed box buried underground. When he opened it, to his surprise, he saw it was filled with scorpions. He flung the box away in fright.

That evening, he went to visit the wisest man in the village and asked him about the box of scorpions. The wise man thought for a while, then said, "Perhaps Day's ancestors hid some money in that box and buried it, to be used when someone in the family needed the money. Over the years they must have forgotten about the existence of the box."

Siddharth was still puzzled. "But the box contained scorpions," he said, "not money."

The old man smiled. "The box is protected by an old spell. If it is opened by anyone other than a family member, it will appear as if it is swarming with scorpions. Only a true family member will be able to see that the box contains money." Siddharth was sad to hear this story. He remembered the tears that had sprung up in Day's eyes as he looked back at his ancestral house for one last time before leaving the village. If only he had known about the hidden treasure, he would not have had to sell the house. When Siddharth reached home, he decided to keep the box safely till someone from Day's family came to claim it. To make sure that the box was taken only by a true descendant of Day's family, he took four scorpions from the box and hung them in four corners of his newly opened shop.

All his customers would comment when they entered the shop. "Siddharth, are you mad? Why have you hung dangerous insects in your shop? Do you want to scare away shoppers?"

Siddharth would only smile. He knew his goods were the best for miles around, and people would come to shop at his store, scorpions or not. Gradually the shop came to be known as the Scorpion Shop and the villagers laughed at him behind his back. But Siddharth did not care.

Many years passed. Siddharth was now a middle-aged man with a wife and children and enough money. But he had one regret. No one had come to claim that box.

One day, a young boy walked into the shop and said, "Sir, I have heard from many people in the village that you are wealthy and often help those in need. I had to stop going to school because I could no longer pay my fees. Could you please lend me some money so I can finish my studies?"

Siddharth shook his head sadly. "The villagers have exaggerated about my wealth," he said. "Yes, I am earning enough, but not so much that I can help you or lend you money, though I would have loved to do so."

The boy flared up in anger when he heard this. "Sir, if you do not want to help me, please say so openly. Why do you lie? You have so much money that you don't know what to do with it. Why else have you hung gold coins in the four

corners of your shop? Surely you can spare some coins to help a poor student like me.”

Siddharth stared at him in astonishment. “Wh-what? What did you just say?” he asked, his eyes bulging in excitement.

“I said if you don’t want to help . . .” the boy repeated.

“Yes, yes, I heard that,” Siddharth cut him short. “But what did you say after that, about the gold coins in my shop?”

The boy now looked at Siddharth doubtfully, afraid that perhaps this excited old man was a bit mad. “I said you are so wealthy that you have hung gold coins in the four corners of the shop. There they are, for the world to see!” And the boy pointed to what appeared to Siddharth as four writhing scorpions.

Siddharth gave a happy whoop of laughter. He rushed forward and hugged the boy.

“Are you related to Uday Kamalakar? Did your family ever live in this village?” he nearly shouted into the boy’s ears.

The young man stepped back in alarm. Perhaps this rich man was mad and dangerous after all. “Y-yes, my name is Uday. I was named after my grandfather. His family lived here for many generations. Then, when they fell on hard times, my grandfather sold his old house and moved. He never recovered from the grief of having to sell his ancestral property and died heartbroken.”

Siddharth wiped away the tears from his eyes. “Wait here, my son,” he said. Rushing to his house, he came back with the old box and gave it to the young boy. “Go on, open it and tell me what you see,” he chuckled.

The boy opened the box and his eyes nearly fell out of his head. For he held in his hands more treasure than he could dream about in his wildest fantasies. The box was filled with gold and silver coins and jewels!

He looked up in astonishment at Siddharth, who was grinning broadly. “Yes, it belongs to you,” Siddharth explained. “I have held it safe for many years, hoping someone from Day’s family will come to claim it. Your troubles are now over. Go home, use the wealth of your ancestors judiciously and do well in life.”

Then he told the boy the story of how he had found the box which appeared to be filled with scorpions to anyone who did not belong to Day's family.

Uday was amazed when he heard the story. He offered Siddharth half his wealth in gratitude. But Siddharth would hear none of it. "This is yours," he insisted. "Go, enjoy your life."

Uday went away with the box, and all his life he remembered the funny, honest old man who had kept his wealth safely for him.

"How lovely, Grandma!" Krishna gasped. "If only we had such a shopkeeper in this town!" All the children agreed that that would have been such fun. Grandma laughed at their dreamy faces. Then she shoed them out to play in the garden. And do you know what they played till late in the evening? Treasure hunt, of course!

2. Sand and Stone



Banta and Santa were best friends. They went to the same school. They played together. They cried together. They laugh together. Many things together, together...

They fought for many reasons. But they never gave up their friendship. Now they both were unemployed. They couldn't find a job in their village or the village next to it. They couldn't even find a job in the nearby town. So they decided to go in search of a job no matter how far it may be.

They passed through various places. They went through villages, towns, cities, forests, and beaches. They had been supporting each other all the way throughout their journey.

One day they reached a desert. They had very little food and water with them. Banta suggested that they should only eat half the quantity of food and save the other half for later use, and leave water till they would be extremely tired and thirsty.

However, Santa disagreed. He wanted to drink water at that point because he was very thirsty. They got into a big argument about the water. Santa said, "I am very thirsty and I want my water now."

Banta replied, "Please wait we can drink it at the next stage."

After some more exchanges of words, Banta slapped Santa right in the face. Santa didn't say anything and they kept walking in silence. After a while, Banta opened the food tiffin and passed the water flask to Santa. They shared some food and water. Santa wrote in the sand, "**My best friend slapped me!**"

After walking some more distance, they shared the remaining food and water and started walking again. Finally, they reached an oasis.



Then, they were very tired after passing through the dry and desert. Santa was extremely happy to see the oasis. They both went into the water and started enjoying the coolness in the water. Santa became a little careless and went into the deeper end and suddenly started drowning. When Banta saw Santa drowning, he rushed to him and saved him.

Santa hugged his friend and thanked him. Then they went to a tree and had a little nap there. When Banta got up he saw Santa carving something on the rock.

It was, "**My best friend saved my life!**"

Banta asked Santa, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now, and now you are carved on a stone, why?"

Santa replied: "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in sand where winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

Learn To Write Your Hurts in the Sand, And To Carve Your Benefits in Stone

3. Rattling Sound and Thirsty Horse



A man was going somewhere on a horse. After a long journey, his horse became very thirsty. The man didn't have any water left with him. He started looking around. He saw a well far away. A farmer was watering his fields using the Persian Wheel.

The traveller came to the well and asked the farmer to let his horse drink water from the well. The farmer agreed.

Now, the traveller bought his horse near the well so that it could drink water. But as soon as the horse tried to drink water by bowing down, it would go back fearing the sound of the Persian wheel.

The horse would again go ahead and try to drink water but then again it would move away fearing the sound of the Persian wheel.

The traveller kept watching this for a few moments. Then he asked the farmer to stop his ox for a while. So the sound of rattling would stop and the horse could drink water.

The farmer smiled and replied that as soon as the ox stops, water will stop coming from the well and that's why if the horse has to drink water then it will have to drink it while bearing with the rattling sound from the machine.

4. Grammar Page

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are words that refer to the noun or pronoun that is the subject of the verb. The words **myself**, **yourself**, **himself**, **herself**, **itself**, **ourselves**, **yourselves** and **themselves** are reflexive pronouns.

My brother built this computer **himself**.

Be careful not to cut **yourself** with that knife.

John was looking at **himself** in the mirror.

Kate fell and hurt **herself**.

Our cat washes **itself** after every meal.

We baked the cake by **ourselves**.

Come in, everybody, and find **yourselves** a seat.

The children cleaned their room all by **themselves**.

Bears like to rub **themselves** against a tree.

The bird washed **itself** by splashing in a puddle.

The players train every day to keep **themselves** fit.

Have **yourselves** a good time.

Here is a table to help you remember which reflexive pronoun to use with which personal pronoun.

singular personal pronoun	reflexive pronoun	plural personal pronoun	reflexive pronoun
I (subject pronoun)	myself	we (subject pronoun)	ourselves
me (object pronoun)	myself	us(object pronoun)	ourselves
you (subject/object pronoun)	yourself	you (subject/object pronoun)	yourselves
he (subject pronoun)	himself	they (subject pronoun)	themselves
him (object pronoun)	himself	them (object pronoun)	themselves
she (subject pronoun)	herself		
her (object pronoun)	herself		
it	itself		

Possessive Pronouns

Possessive pronouns are used to talk about things that belong to people. The words **mine**, **yours**, **his**, **hers**, **ours** and **theirs** are possessive pronouns.

This book is **mine**.

Have you lost **yours**, Tom?

This pen is **mine** and that one is **his**.

Sarah has lost her cat. Is this cat **hers**?

I can see our car, but where is **yours**?

We've had our lunch, but they haven't had **theirs**.

Here is a table to help you remember which possessive pronoun to use with which personal pronoun.

singular personal pronoun	possessive pronoun	plural personal pronoun	possessive pronoun
I, me	mine	we, us	ours
you	yours	you	yours
he, him	his	they, them	theirs
she, her	hers		

Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns are used for pointing out things. The words **this**, **that**, **these** and **those** are demonstrative pronouns.

This is my desk.

This is the Mings' house.

That is my friend's house.

That's my mother's car.

You'll have to work harder than **this**.

We can do better than **that**.

It's raining again. **This** is awful!

Who is **that** knocking at the door?

Hi, Kathleen. **This** is Michael.

These are my pets.

These are sheep but **those** are goats.

Those are horses.

Notes

- Use **this** and **these** when you are talking about things near you.
- Use **that** and **those** when you are talking about things farther away.