Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G1

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1. The Doctor Who Saved London

In the city of London about 150 years ago, many people started to get very sick. The sickness they had was called ‘cholera’. The disease caused panic among Londoners because nobody knew how to prevent it, or how to cure it. Lots of doctors tried to figure out how to prevent people from getting cholera. Most doctors thought that people got cholera from breathing in polluted air. They told their patients to open their windows and breathe in fresh air as much as possible. However, this advice did not seem to work as more and more people contracted the disease. Doctors also struggled to help the patients who already had cholera. Some doctors told their patients to drink lots of water, but that did not help. Some told their patients to take certain medicines, but those did not help, either. The doctors did not know what to do.

John Snow was a doctor and scientist who had a different idea. He thought that cholera might have been spreading through the water that people were drinking. Maybe polluted water was making everyone sick. At first, other doctors and scientists disregarded Doctor Snow’s idea. They believed that cholera was spread through the air and that water was not the problem. Nobody paid much attention to Dr Snow. When scientists have an idea that is not proven, it is called a ‘theory’. Scientists then create experiments to test whether their theories are true or not. Dr Snow developed a plan to test his theory about polluted water causing cholera.

Dr Snow went to different neighbourhoods in London and tested their water. He also counted the number of sick people in each neighbourhood. It was just as he had thought! The neighbourhoods with the cleanest water had the fewest sick people. The places with the dirtiest water had the greatest number of sick people. This proved his theory that cholera was spread through dirty water.

Dr Snow showed the results of his study to the mayor of London and the other doctors. They examined the evidence and realized that Dr Snow was right. All over London, people stopped drinking water that might be polluted. Almost immediately, people stopped getting sick, and the whole city was overjoyed. Doctors knew how to stop cholera now. All it took was clean water. Thanks to Dr John Snow, we also know how to stop many other sicknesses that can be spread through dirty water. Cities are now designed to make sure everyone has a supply of clean water.

We would not know about the risks of dirty water if it were not for Dr John Snow's scientific training, hard work and discovery. Dr Snow may not be as famous as football or cricket players, but he is a hero.

2. Banda Singh Bahadur

Banda Singh Bahadur was born Lachman Dev on October 27, 1670, at Rajauri, Poonch in present-day Jammu and Kashmir. Since he was born into a Rajput family, Lachman Dev learned skills like hunting, horse riding, martial arts, and handling weaponry at a very young age. Having familiarity with bow-and-arrows, he began hunting in his early teens.

When he was 15, he shot and killed a doe (female deer) during one of his hunting expeditions. Moments after killing the doe, Lachman Dev realized that he had made a grave mistake as the arrow, which had pierced the doe's body, revealed unborn twin calves that died right in front of his eyes. Upon witnessing the butcherly death of the unborn twin calves, Lachman wandered in search of consolation to his shocked and saddened mind. This forced him to leave his home and abandon worldly pleasures at the age of 15.

Lachman Dev was no stranger to saints and holy men, as his father Ram Dev had often provided food and shelter to holy men. He soon became a follower of a sadhu named Ram Daas and then followed another sadhu named Janaki Daas, who changed his name from Lachman Dev to Madho Das. Since he was a Bairagi sadhu (ascetic saint), he came to be known as Madho Das Bairagi.

Like a true wanderer, Madho Das started moving from place-to-place, before reaching Panchavati in present-day Nashik, Maharashtra. In Panchavati, he became a disciple of Aughhar Nath and started serving his master with utmost devotion. After serving Aughhar Nath for five years, Madho Das was blessed by Aughhar Nath, post which he developed the skill sets to perform sorcery (magic), according to many records.

Madho Das Bairagi went on to establish a monastery at Nanded in present-day Maharashtra. He made Nanded his home and was visited by many holy men. In September 1708, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, visited his monastery, post which Madho Das became Guru Gobind Singh's disciple. Guru Govind Singh convinced Madho that he was a Sikh and even baptized him, before giving him his new name, Gur Bakhsh Singh. Over a period of time, Gur Bakhsh Singh became famous as a military commander, earning his new name Banda Singh Bahadur, which would remain his most famous name. The name 'Banda' was given to him as he called himself a 'Banda' (slave) of Guru Gobind Singh when he first met the Guru.

Guru Gobind Singh convinced Banda Singh Bahadur to give up on his ascetic lifestyle to achieve something greater. He assigned Banda Bahadur an important task of freeing the innocent people of Punjab from the clutches of the Mughals as people belonging to any religion other than Islam were subjected to constant persecution by the Mughals. Also, the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah had earlier promised Guru Gobind Singh that he would punish Nawab Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind for committing various crimes against commoners in Punjab, but the emperor was reluctant to fulfil his promise. This enraged Guru Gobind Singh, who sought Banda Bahadur's help to teach Wazir Khan a lesson and thereby succeed in saving many innocent lives in the process.

Guru Gobind Singh initiated him into a community of Sikh warriors called 'Khalsa' and appointed him as his new military commander. In October 1708, Banda Bahadur and his men started marching towards Punjab to wage a war against Wazir Khan. Before reaching Punjab, Banda Bahadur had managed to gather a powerful army with substantial artillery. In 1709, he defeated the Mughal forces, led by Wazir Khan, in the Battle of Samana.

After capturing the city of Samana, the Sikhs gained access to the city's massive wealth, which helped them become financially stable. Banda Bahadur then captured many places. Later, Wazir Khan returned with reinforcements, which led to the 'Battle of Chappar Chiri' in 1710. On May 12, Wazir Khan was killed in the battle and Sirhind, which was an important Mughal territory in Punjab, was captured by the Sikhs. The territory, which extended from River Sutlej to River Yamuna, was now under Banda Bahadur's control. He went on to establish his capital at Mukhlisgarh, which was later renamed by him as Lohgarh.

Banda Bahadur started issuing his own mint (currency) at Lohgarh. He even sent his men to places like Saharanpur, Jalalabad, and Muzaffarnagar to bring relief to the oppressed population there. Banda Bahadur continued to expand his territory by emerging victorious against the Mughals in the 'Battle of Rahon,' in 1710. Banda Bahadur's actions and bravery inspired many Sikhs to stand up and fight for their rights in places like Jalandhar and Amritsar.

Using their new-found power, the Sikhs removed corrupt officials from important positions and replaced them with upright officials. Banda Bahadur also put an end to the zamindari system and bestowed complete ownership on farmers, which made him very popular.

He was approached by the people from the neighbouring city of Sadaura for his help. This led to the 'Battle of Sadhaura,' in which the Sikhs overpowered the Sayyids and Shaikhs to free hundreds from the clutches of their evil landlords.

When Punjab came under the control of the Sikhs, the route between Delhi and Lahore was obstructed, which did not go down well with the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah. Hence, he decided to deal with Banda Bahadur himself but could not succeed.

After Bahadur Shah's death on February 27, 1712, Farrukh Siyar became the Mughal Emperor after killing Bahadur Shah's successor, Jahandar Shah. Farrukh Siyar gave charge to Abdus Samad Khan. He and his army were successful in driving Banda Bahadur and his men into a village called Gurdas Nangal. They then laid siege to the entire village for eight consecutive months, which weakened Banda Bahadur and his army. Abdus Samad Khan, who had been waiting for the right moment, decided to lead his forces into the village on December 7, 1715 and managed to capture Banda Bahadur and his men.

Banda Singh Bahadur and his men were locked up and tortured by the Mughal soldiers. The torturers gave Banda and his men two options – convert to Islam or face death. When Banda's men refused to convert, they were tortured and killed in public. After undergoing various torture and humiliation during his confinement period of three months, Banda Singh Bahadur was executed on June 9, 1716. Various records state that Banda was tortured beyond imagination before his death. These records state that his eyes were gouged out, his limbs severed, and his skin peeled using red-hot pincers. Banda's only son Ajai Singh was also killed brutally by the Mughals.

The death of Banda Singh Bahadur enraged many Sikh warriors, who vowed to carry forward the legacy of Banda Bahadur by standing up for their rights. Warriors like Sardar Budh Singh, Nawab Kapur Singh, and Baba Deep Singh kept the torch of the Khalsa burning, which played a major role in Sikhs dominating the region of Punjab. Years later, Fateh Burj, which is India's tallest minaret, was built to honour Banda Singh Bahadur and his sacrifice.

3. Leisure Time

Leisure time means free time. During this time, we can choose to do whatever we like and enjoy. Some people chose to rest their minds while others want to improve their minds by doing various activities, such as reading and doing puzzle games.

It is widely accepted that purpose of life is to maximise happiness. What we all need is to switch off our boring, stressful routines and get a change. This change is highly dependent on our occupations.

If you're a computer programmer or a lecturer, your leisure activities are going to be different from somebody who is a labourer or a post-person. People who spend all day doing something which involves thinking would benefit from physical activities such as going to the gym or gardening. Those who spend all day doing physical work would benefit from reading, watching television or puzzle games. Regardless of how we all need to recharge our bodies physically and mentally.

Another aspect of life is socialising. Spending time with our loved ones is vital. When we share memories, joke and laugh, it helps us to improve our health physically and psychologically. As they say: health is wealth. Even though wealth rarely brings happiness but it helps. On the other hand, what does poverty bring? Lower standard of education – low-nutrition diet – poor health – low self-esteem…

However, for an idle person, leisure time is not needed.

4. Sport Science

What is sports science?

Sports science applies the study of science to sporting activities. The focus of sports science is to help maximise performance and endurance in preparation for events and competitions while lessening the risk of injury.

It's used to help identify strengths and weaknesses so that a training program can be individualised for everyone from athletes to the elderly, and everyone in between.

Sports Scientists ensure that athletes are up to date with current training protocols, testing, and preparation.

Sports are no longer limited by unknown factors. Researchers are studying every **aspect** of sportspersons and their responses during performances. With real-time **monitoring**, the data collected is analysed and feedback provided to the athlete and their coaches opening new avenues for them to minimise their drawbacks and achieve peak performance.

Seeing a gymnast **pirouette** across the turf or on a narrow beam or wielding bars or rings is a visual treat. If ever you wondered how they could perform these mind-boggling bends and twists, which seem to get more and more complicated by the day, the answer may lie with strong scientific data to master the moves. With tech support, several biomarkers are placed on the gymnast's body to monitor the muscle movements, angles and the extent of stretch in the ligaments and tendons.

The all-new, exciting and emerging field of sports science **incorporates** psychology, physiology, medicine and rehabilitation into sports. With tech and science support, researchers are now able to study and analyse how muscles respond to intense activity, how the body copes and recovers, how nutrition and diet models affect performance, along with neuro-psychological responses. This invaluable data is helping the players to **sharpen** their skills, and perform with knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses.

This form of visual analysis gives **inputs** to the athlete on where they go wrong and how to correct them in time. It is invaluable for trainers who can review, advise improvement in angling and posture and correct errors while training their wards. Often, comparative analysis with the best in the field gives a reference to the athlete to improve on the technical aspects of the sport.

This smarter, scientific approach to sports has seen **tremendous** demand in the last couple of decades. Just about every sport is **embracing** science and tech support to maximise their performance. Now, every team has a scientific team working behind them, carefully monitoring their movement, response and **threshold** with the help of technology.

It is no longer a surprise to find sportspersons receiving inputs from Exercise Biologists, Sports Psychologists, Physiotherapists or Sports Scientists.

Vocabulary

1. Aspect: particular part or feature; 2. Monitoring: tracking

3. Pirouetee: a pirouette is a movement in ballet dancing. The dancer stands on one foot and spins their body around fast.

4. Incorporates: include; 5. Sharpen: improve; 6. Tremendous: great

7. Embracing: accepting; 8. Inputs: tips or suggestions for success;

9. Threshold: the highest power an athlete can sustain without short-term fatigue.

5. Grammar Page

Unit 1

Present continuous (**I am doing**)

A Study this example situation:

Sarah is in her car. She is on her way to work.
She**'s driving** to work. (= She **is driving** . . .)

This means: she is driving *now*, at the time of speaking.
The action is not finished.

am/is/are + -ing is the *present continuous*:

I	**am**	(= I**'m**)	**driving**
he/she/it	**is**	(= he**'s** etc.)	**working**
we/you/they	**are**	(= we**'re** etc.)	**doing** etc.

B **I am doing** something = I started doing it and I haven't finished; I'm in the middle of doing it.

- Please don't make so much noise. I**'m trying** to work. (*not* I try)
- 'Where's Mark?' 'He**'s having** a shower.' (*not* He has a shower)
- Let's go out now. It **isn't raining** any more. (*not* It doesn't rain)
- How's your new job? **Are** you **enjoying** it?
- What's all that noise? What**'s going** on? *or* What**'s happening**?

Sometimes the action is not happening at the time of speaking. For example:

Steve is talking to a friend on the phone. He says:

Steve says '**I'm reading** . . .' but he is *not* reading the book at the time of speaking.
He means that he has started reading the book, but has not finished it yet. He is in the middle of reading it.

Some more examples:

- Kate wants to work in Italy, so she**'s learning** Italian.
  (but perhaps she isn't learning Italian at the time of speaking)
- Some friends of mine **are building** their own house. They hope to finish it next summer.

C You can use the present continuous with **today** / **this week** / **this year** etc. (periods around now):

- A: You**'re working** hard **today**. (*not* You work hard today)
  B: Yes, I have a lot to do.
- The company I work for **isn't doing** so well **this year**.

D We use the present continuous when we talk about a change that has started to happen. We often use these verbs in this way:

getting, becoming **changing, improving**
starting, beginning **increasing, rising, falling, growing**

- Is your English **getting** better? (*not* Does your English get better)
- The population of the world **is increasing** very fast. (*not* increases)
- At first I didn't like my job, but I**'m starting** to enjoy it now. (*not* I start)