



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G2

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1. Childhood

I remember my childhood as being generally happy and can recall experiencing some of the most carefree times of my life. But I can also remember, even more vividly, moments of being deeply frightened. As a child, I was truly - terrified of the dark and getting lost. These fears were very real and caused me some extremely uncomfortable moments.

Maybe it was the strange way things looked and sounded in my familiar room at night that scared me so much. There was never total darkness, but a street light or passing car lights made clothes hung over a chair take on the shape of an unknown beast. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw curtains move when there was no breeze. A tiny creak in the floor would sound a hundred times louder than in the daylight and my imagination would take over, creating burglars and monsters. Darkness always made me feel helpless. My heart would pound and I would lie very still so that 'the enemy' wouldn't discover me.

Another childhood fear of mine was that I would get lost, especially on the way home from school. Every morning, I got on the school bus right near my home—that was no problem. After school, though, when all the buses were lined up along the curve, I was terrified that I would get on the wrong one and be taken to some unfamiliar neighbourhood. I would scan the bus for the faces of my friends, make sure that the bus driver was the same one that had been there in the morning, and even then ask the others over and over again to be sure I was on the right bus. On school or family trips to an amusement park or a museum, I wouldn't let the leaders out of my sight. And of course, I was never very adventurous when it came to taking walks or hikes because I would go only where I was sure I would never get lost.

Perhaps, one of the worst fears I had as a child was that of not being liked or accepted by others. First of all, I was quite shy. Secondly, I worried constantly about my looks, thinking people wouldn't like me because I was too fat or wore braces. I tried to wear 'the right clothes' and had intense arguments with my mother over the importance of wearing flats instead of saddled shoes to school. Being popular was very important to me then and the fear of not being liked was a powerful one.

One of the processes of evolving from a child to an adult is being able to recognise and overcome our fears. I have learnt that darkness does not have to take on a life of its own, that others can help me when I am lost and that

friendliness and sincerity will encourage people to like me. Understanding the things that scared us as children helps us to cope with our lives as adults.

2. Hearing or Listening

It is natural we don't listen to what people say to us. We hear them, but we don't listen to them. Listening is hearing with purpose. When we are sitting in a classroom, we are not only hearing our teacher's voice, we are also listening to them.

Hearing is a physical phenomenon. Whenever somebody speaks, the sound waves generated reach you, and you hear whatever is said to you.

However, even if you hear something, it doesn't always mean that you understand whatever is being said. Paying attention to whatever you hear means that you are listening. Consciously using your mind to understand whatever is being said is listening.

Diving deeper, listening is not only hearing with attention, but it is much more than that. Listening is focussing on and applying our mind to what is being said. Most of the time we listen to someone, but our mind is full of needless chatter and there doesn't seem to be enough space to accommodate what is being spoken.

We come with a lot of prejudice and preconceived notions about the speaker or the subject on which he is talking. We pretend to listen to the speaker, but deep inside, we sit in judgement and are dying to pronounce right or wrong, true or false, yes or no. Sometimes, we even come prepared with a negative mindset of proving the speaker wrong. Even if the speaker says nothing harmful, we are ready to pounce on him with our version of things.

What we should ideally do is listen first with full awareness. Once we have done that, we can decide whether we want to make a judgement or not. Once we do that, communication will be perfect and our interpersonal relationship will become so much better. Listening well doesn't mean one has to say the right thing at the right moment. It is better to speak your mind, but do so with awareness after listening to the speaker with full concentration.

Let's look at this another way. When you listen, you take in not only what is being spoken, but also understand what is not spoken.

3. Rosa Parks Takes a Stand

Rosa Parks was tired. She had worked long hours that day as a sewing worker at a local clothing factory in Montgomery, USA. However, it was not because she was physically tired that she refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man. It was because she was worn out from being pushed around. She was tired of the discrimination in the world around her. Discrimination is when a person is treated differently or judged unfairly by others. Rosa Parks lived at a time and in a place where people were discriminated against based on the colour of their skin. Black people were often treated differently than white people. They could not shop at the same stores, eat at the same restaurants, or even use the same water fountains as white people.

Schools were segregated, or separated, according to a person's skin colour. As a child, Mrs Parks remembered school buses taking white children to their schools. Meanwhile, black children had to walk miles to their often poor-quality schools. Schools for black children did not have enough books, supplies, or even desks; however, there were plenty of learning materials at schools for white children. At a young age, Mrs. Parks understood, but did not accept, that there were two worlds: a world for white people, and a world for black people.

Parks was small as a child, but she was not one to back down from a fight. There were some white children in her neighbourhood who would bully black children. Mrs Parks often stood up to them, sometimes even resorting to using her fists. Even though Mrs Parks saw a lot of hatred and unkindness, she also knew that not all people were like that. Mrs Parks believed in the goodness of all people. She believed in a person's ability to do the right thing.



On December 1, 1955, Mrs Parks took a stand against discrimination by remaining seated on the bus. The rules for who could sit in which bus seat were unjust. At that time, there was a section of the bus for white people and a smaller section at the back of the bus for black people. The white section

could be made bigger according to how many white passengers were on the bus. Even though most of the passengers on buses were generally black people, they often had to stand, or even get off the bus, if there was not enough room for white passengers.

As more white passengers boarded the bus that day, the bus driver demanded that Mrs Parks and three other passengers in the “black” section give up their seats to four white passengers. Mrs Parks thought of how her people had been abused and mistreated because of the colour of their skin. The three other passengers moved, but Parks refused. The bus driver started to become angry. “Are you going to stand up?” he asked Mrs Parks. “No, I’m not,” she replied.

“Well, if you don’t stand up, I’m going to have to call the police and have you arrested,” he went on. “You may do that,” Mrs Parks responded. Mrs Parks was duly arrested. The next day, when she went to court, her trial lasted 30 minutes. She was found guilty and fined, but Mrs Parks continued to fight for her rights in the courts. Rosa Parks became a spark that helped ignite the fight against segregation. After her arrest, over 40,000 black people boycotted riding the bus. They carpooled together, used cabs operated by black drivers, and some even walked as far as 20 miles to get to work.

While that type of segregation no longer exists in America today, there is still inequality, and there are wrongs that need to be righted. Rosa Parks fought for racial, criminal and social justice for her entire life. She showed that even ordinary people can take a stand for what is right and make a change. Sometimes, all it takes is a simple act of courage.



“Freedom is never given; it is won.”

A. Philip Randolph, civil rights leader

4. Importance of Dragon in Chinese Culture



Dragons in Chinese culture symbolize great power, good luck and strength. They represent power and authority, particularly control over typhoons, water, rainfall and floods. Emperors were assumed to have descended from the dragons. That is why, out of the twelve zodiac signs, the Dragon is the most popular one.

The **dragon** played an influential and beneficial role in Chinese culture. An **amalgam** of several creatures, including monitor lizards, pythons and the Chinese alligator, the dragon was a water spirit, responsible for bringing rain and thus ensuring the survival of crops. The dragon was a symbolic guardian to the gods and was the source of true wisdom.

The dragon represented two of the **ancient** elements. Earth and Water **endow** the creature with powers of magic and strength. Shaolin Buddhists saw him as a vision of enlightened truth, to be felt, but never to be held. Certain very old men were called dragons, being **well-versed** in the life-supporting skills of herbal medicine, agriculture and kung fu. In early China, these skills were surely a matter of life or death, and those so educated were held in high esteem.

Southern Dragon kung fu is essentially an internal, qi cultivating method, but initial training is far more like a hard, external style. In learning the moves, the student will strike hard, block hard and **stomp** into each position, with the idea of learning the proper place to be, once each movement is complete.

Eventually, the method of transmitting power is **retained**, and the physically strengthened body is able to make transitions in the proper, fluid manner. In turn, this dragon-like smoothness helps disguise the attack, making it extremely difficult for an adversary to effectively counter. Once a purely physical semblance to flow has been mastered, the disciple incorporates the deep hissing sounds to train qi flow.

At the highest level, an opponent is allowed to tire himself out, **evasion** becoming the Dragon's key defence. **Qi** control is highly developed and the degree to which the body must be moved to redirect or avoid impact is under greater control.

Vocabulary

1. Amalgam: mixture; 2. Ancient: very old; 3. Endow: give
4. Dragons: (imaginary) aggressive creatures with wings and tails;
5. Well-versed: skilled or full of knowledge; 6. Stomp: walk or move with heavy steps;
7. Retained: kept or preserved; 8. Evasion: an act of avoiding; 9. Qi: energy

5. Grammar Page

Unit 2

Present simple (I do)

A Study this example situation:



Alex is a bus driver, but now he is in bed asleep. He is not driving a bus. (He is asleep.)

but He **drives** a bus. He is a bus driver.

drive(s), work(s), do(es) etc. is the *present simple*:

I/we/you/they	drive/work/do etc.
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he/she/it	drives/works/does etc.
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B We use the present simple to talk about things in general. We use it to say that something happens all the time or repeatedly, or that something is true in general:

- Nurses **look** after patients in hospitals.
- I usually **go** away at weekends.
- The earth **goes** round the sun.
- The cafe **opens** at 7.30 in the morning.

We say:

I work	but	he works	you go	but	it goes
they teach	but	my sister teaches	I have	but	he has

For spelling (-s or -es), see Appendix 6.

C We use **do/does** to make questions and negative sentences:

do	I/we/you/they	work?	I/we/you/they	don't	work
does	he/she/it	drive?	he/she/it	doesn't	drive
		do?			do

- I come from Canada. Where **do** you **come** from?
- I **don't go** away very often.
- What **does** this word **mean**? (*not* What means this word?)
- Rice **doesn't grow** in cold climates.

In the following examples, **do** is also the main verb (do you **do** / doesn't **do** etc.):

- 'What **do** you **do**?' 'I work in a shop.'
- He's always so lazy. He **doesn't do** anything to help.

D We use the present simple to say how often we do things:

- I **get** up at 8 o'clock **every morning**.
- How often do** you **go** to the dentist?
- Julie **doesn't drink** tea **very often**.
- Robert usually **goes** away **two or three times a year**.

E I promise / I apologise etc.

Sometimes we do things by saying something. For example, when you promise to do something, you can say 'I **promise** ...'; when you suggest something, you can say 'I **suggest** ...':

- I **promise** I won't be late. (*not* I'm promising)
- 'What do you **suggest** I do?' 'I **suggest** that you ...'

In the same way we say: I **apologise** ... / I **advise** ... / I **insist** ... / I **agree** ... / I **refuse** ... etc.