



Learn English Through Stories

K Series

K4

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

Contents

Cheeky Charlie:

- 1. The Stuff You Need to Know.**
- 2. Tattoo.**

1. Stuff You Need to Know

Hello. My name is Harry. I'm eight years old. But I'll be nine in only ten months. I'm quite clever and quite normal. I can tell the time. I can tie my shoelaces. I don't have two heads or anything. My hair is long and wavy, although it sometimes gets tangly (untidy). My Dad says it's like straw in the morning and honey in the evening, which is half-rude and half-nice — typical Dad.

When the sun shines, I get freckles on my nose. When I was little, I didn't like them. I stood on the chair in the bathroom to look in the mirror. I rubbed them really hard with a flannel (washcloth) until my face was red and sore. I thought I'd got rid of them for a while, but then my face stopped being red, and they came back. Mum came in and found me crying.

'What's the matter, Harry?' she asked.



Freckled face

'I've got spots,' I sobbed, and pointed to my nose. My cousin Freya complains about her spots whenever she comes for a sleep-over although I can never see them.

Mum smiled which I didn't think was very nice because I was upset. But then she gave me a cuddle, which felt better. 'They're not spots, they're summer sprinkles,' she said, 'and they make you look gorgeous.'

And then I started to think about sprinkles: sprinkles on cakes, sprinkles on fairies, and the water sprinkler in the garden. And I decided that having sprinkles on your face is a good thing.

I've just had a thought. You do know I'm a girl, don't you? People are always getting it wrong, and it makes me quite cross. In fact my uncle Mike calls me 'Prince Harry' just to annoy me. He tells me to thump him really hard if I don't like it, so I do, right in his tummy. But he just laughs until I jump on him and scream at him to stop.

My real name is actually Harriet, but everyone calls me Harry. Mum says that I could call myself Hattie if I wanted. But I think that sounds silly so I don't.

Actually not everyone calls me Harry; Granny always calls me Harriet.

Whenever anyone talks about my name, she shakes her head so that her curly white hair wobbles, and she makes a funny sucking noise. There's a crazy story

I want to tell you about Granny but Mum has just reminded me that this book is supposed to be about Charlie, my little brother. So let me tell you about him straight away.

Maybe you have a little brother. Mum says you might, but I bet he's not like Charlie. I'll explain.

Do you have a board at school where they put 'WOW' words? You know, the interesting words that the teachers say you should use in your stories instead of *nice*? We do. It's like Charlie has rubbed himself all over with a glue stick and then rolled along that board because lots of them are perfect to describe him. Words like these:

But there is another way to describe him, and you know it already because it's what I've decided to call this book: *Cheeky Charlie*.

That's what Dad calls Charlie all the time: when he's shouted something rude, when he's done something naughty, when he wants him to budge (move) up on the sofa, or just when he's ruffling Charlie's hair.

He tried that once with me and I went crazy. 'Alright Hattie, keep your hair on,' he said, and that made Mum laugh really loud which made me even angrier. So I stomped upstairs and played on his iPad without telling him, just to teach him a lesson.

But Charlie really is very cheeky, and that's what my book is about: all the naughty things that he has done. My teachers say that it's not nice to tell tales, but you don't know Charlie, so you can't get him into trouble.

But if you ever meet my Mum, don't tell her I've been a secret blabber-mouth, because then *I'll* get into trouble. Do you promise? Proper promise? Pinky promise or pinky swear?

Brilliant, because I've got loads to tell you. Some of it happened ages ago, some of it happened just last week. Some of it is funny, or sad, or even disgusting, because that's what Charlie can be. It might even make you a little bit sick, so get ready.

I once asked Dad to tell me about the naughtiest thing he had ever done.

'Me?' he said, 'I was an angel. I worked hard, did my homework on time, tidied my bedroom, went to bed early, and got up late. Not like your mother. She was a right tear-away (uncontrolled).'

I looked at Mum who was sitting on the sofa, making her eyes roll around in her head and pulling a funny face.

'Don't believe him, Harry,' said Mum. 'Here's what I know about your Dad. He ate his brother's birthday cake. He was sick as a dog. He almost crashed your Grandad's car. He was a right handful.'

'Handful of what?' I asked.

'Trouble,' said Mum.

Next door, where Charlie was watching tele, there was a crash.

'Charlie? Are you OK?' shouted Mum, getting up off the sofa.

'Yes Mummy!' shouted Charlie. I just falldid off the table.'

'Fell, Charlie, not falldid,' shouted Mum back. She sat back down. 'Now you know where Charlie gets it from.'

'Are you talking about my little Charlie?' said Dad. 'He's a goodie two-shoes like me. Although I wouldn't let him drive my car. Or let him near a dog. Or my birthday cake, come to think of it.'

'I think you're safe there, Dad/1 said. 'He'd be scared away by all the candles.'

'Oi!' said Dad, and he threw a cushion at me. It bounced off my arm onto the table and nearly knocked Mum's mug of tea over, the one with *Top Teacher* written on it.

Mum looked at Dad and raised her eyebrows, making her forehead all wrinkly.

'Harry's arm was in the wrong place,' grumbled Dad. 'It wasn't my fault.'

Look, I haven't got long today, because I'm going for a haircut soon and I always get sweets so I don't want to miss it. But come back and I'll tell you lots of stories about what Charlie has done. And they're a lot, lot worse than you think.

2. Tattoo

I told story at school last term in front of the whole class. Mrs Schofield asked if anyone, 'had been up to anything interesting' during the holidays.

After I'd finished Mrs Schofield said, 'You told that well, Harry, but it was supposed to be a true story.'

But it was a true story!' I protested. 'I can show you the photo... 'But wait a minute. I almost told you the ending and spoiled it.'

So let's go back to the beginning. Mum and Dad decided that their bedroom was too small and that they didn't want to share a bathroom with us anymore because children wee on toilet seats. You can't argue with that. Have you ever looked at the toilet seats at school? Yuck.

So Mum and Dad asked Jim from down the road to help. Jim is a builder. He has crazy curly ginger hair and a very big belly. He wears really old, tight t-shirts that have started to go see-through. Sometimes you can see his belly button through them and it looks like someone's pushed their finger into a balloon.

He drives an ancient white van and that has see-through bits and funny stains on it, too. In the seat next to him there are two other men who work with him, but they're never the same. Maybe they don't like his t-shirts.

So Jim came round to look at our house. He stood outside, pointing at windows and walls, scribbling on a dirty piece of paper, and then he went away again. I forgot all about him until one sunny morning when he walked past the kitchen window while I was eating my breakfast.

'Mum, Jim is in our garden!' I shouted.

'What?' she said, and went outside. She soon came back in, shaking her head.

'What does he want?' I asked.

'He's starting the building work today,' Mum said. 'We just weren't expecting him, that's all.'

And that's how it began. Jim brought spades and pick axes and toolboxes and even an orange cement mixer down the side passage, helped by two men. One wore a blue tracksuit and the other wore a red tracksuit.

Red Tracksuit stared right at me as he walked past. I ducked out of sight behind the washing machine.

When I felt brave enough to take another look I got an even bigger shock. Red and Blue had both taken their tops off and were now digging up the patio. Charlie came in and pressed his nose against the back door.

‘Who dat?’ he asked, pointing at Red. ‘What he doing? Why someone done a dooring on him?’ he continued.

Charlie asks a lot of questions and he doesn’t always get the words right. But sure enough, Red did have a ‘dooring’ on his back: a tattoo of a lady — a lady with no clothes on.

Mum took Charlie out to meet the men. I stayed inside and watched as Charlie pointed at Red’s tattoo. Everybody laughed and Jim picked Charlie up so he could touch it. He traced the outline of the lady with his finger while Red pretended that he was being tickled. Everyone laughed again, except me.

Over the next few days the holes in the garden got bigger and the piles of earth and clay grew higher. Eventually you could only see Red and Blue’s sweaty faces as they worked — Jim never seemed to be around. They put planks of wood across the trenches so that we could get to the trampoline and the garden shed. Every day, whenever Red and Blue stopped for a cup of tea, Charlie would go up behind Red and run his finger over his tattoo. Red soon stopped pretending to laugh though.

I was in the kitchen, helping Mum make pizzas. It was sweltering — that’s another pick from our WOW words — Red and Blue were digging again in the sun. Charlie pulled Mum’s apron.

‘Hungry, Mummy! Me hungry Mummy!’ he said.

‘You could have an apple,’ she said.

‘Don’t want a napple,’ said Charlie.

‘Or an orange?’

‘Don’t want a norange,’ said Charlie.

‘Or a banana?’

‘Don’t want a nana,’ said Charlie.

‘Well there’s nothing else for you to eat, especially when you’re being so rude. Go out and play until lunch is ready.’

Charlie toddled off through the open back door and went straight up to Red and Blue. They were sitting with their legs dangling into a hole, eating their lunch in the sunshine.

‘Why you digging?’ we heard him say. ‘Haf you found any treasure? Why have you stopped? Are you tired? Daddy is always tired. What’s in your sandwiches? They smell yucky,’ we heard him burble.

Red turned away from Charlie and shook his head. Charlie wrinkled his nose, which he does when he doesn’t get what he wants, and stomped off to his den behind the shed. Blue disappeared towards the van; Red stretched out on the grass.

‘Serves Charlie right,’ said Mum, watching through the window. We put the pizza toppings on. Ham first, then cheese, but never mushrooms. Do you like mushrooms? I don’t, they’re weird. Who wants to eat grey food?

Charlie reappeared.

‘Mummy, where my felt tips?’

In the living room,’ said Mum. ‘Harry, keep an eye on him, will you?’

I wondered why he wanted felt tips. Mum didn’t normally allow Charlie to use them on his own because once he drew smiley faces on the wall up the stairs. He sat on each step and got lots of practice because by the top they were really quite good. Dad went loopy crazy. ‘But I did eyebrows and rainbow colours!’ Charlie had said — though for once it didn’t get him out of trouble.

Anyway, Charlie trotted back into the garden with the felt tips, crossed the plank, sat down next to the sleeping Red and pulled out a green pen.

Normally, when Charlie is naughty, I never see it happen. I don’t know why. He’s like a secret little spy who does stuff when you’re not looking. But this time I saw everything. And because Red was grumpy, I didn’t tell anyone. I just let him do it.

A little while later, Charlie and I were playing when we heard someone laughing hard and another man shouting. I couldn’t understand the shouter, but he didn’t sound happy. Charlie gave me a look — a little bit pleased, a little bit frightened.

Mum came downstairs to see what was happening and we went outside. Blue was crouching on the grass. At first I thought he was hurt because tears were streaming down his cheeks. But then I realised that he was the one who was laughing loudly. Red was doing that twisty-turny thing where you try to look at your own back, shouting at the top of his voice in another language.

‘Do you know what’s going on, Harry?’ said Mum.

‘It wasn’t me,’ I said. ‘I didn’t do anything.’

‘Hmm?’ said Mum, ‘that’s not what I asked. Charlie, any ideas?’

'Nuffink,' he said from behind Mum's leg. 'I done nuffink.'