



# Learn English Through Stories

K Series

K5

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## Chapter 3: Treasure

Not long after the tattoo incident, Charlie was in trouble again. Big trouble. And this time Dad wasn't laughing one little.

You need to know that Charlie had become obsessed with pirates. He had books about pirates, DVDs about pirates, even a scratchy pirate costume with an eye patch that he wore to preschool.

He even talked like a pirate. 'More cornflakes, pea hearties!' he'd shout at breakfast. 'Yo ho and a bottle of yum!' he'd yell at lunch.

'I'm burying the treasure!' he'd declare at dinner when Mum caught him trying to push his peas under the baked potato skins.

The sun that had been shining when Charlie coloured Red's back had gone. Day after day the rain tipped down, filling the builders' holes with brown, muddy water.

To Charlie this was just another pirate adventure waiting to happen. As soon as the rain stopped and Mum opened the back door, Charlie rushed into the garden.

'I'm off to find the treasure!' he shouted, his slightly-too-big pirate hat sliding off his head. 'Come on Harry, let's find the treasure!'

'No thanks,' I said. 'It's wet, cold and muddy, and there's no treasure in our garden.'

But he wasn't listening. 'Pirate Charlie cross the bang plank!' I heard him shout. He wobbled his way across the trenches and rushed off up the garden, waving his toy spade.

I went inside to watch telly. A few minutes later I heard Mum in the kitchen. 'Charlie, just look at the state of you! What on earth have you been doing?' Charlie mumbled something I couldn't hear.

'But that's not treasure, darling, it's an old flowerpot.' I laughed. Brothers can be so stupid.

'And that's a bit of glass, you shouldn't even be playing with that... and that's — hang on, what is that?' said Mum. 'Let's give it a wash and see.'

That sounded more interesting. I walked through to the kitchen where Charlie was standing on the stool at the sink. His arms were crusted with brown mud; his shorts were wet right through and he had a big smear of mud on his face, too — probably because he'd been picking his nose.

‘What’s that, Mum’ I asked. ‘Is it money?’

‘It my treasure,’ said Charlie, looking pleased.

Mum was holding a big brown coin, rubbing it and peering closely.

‘Hey Charlie, you’re right, it is treasure. It’s an old penny!’

‘What, one penny?’ I said. ‘Just 1p?’

‘Yes, but it’s nearly 80 years old,’ replied Mum. ‘Charlie, that’s brilliant. Well done!’

‘Wow Charlie that’s amazing,’ I said. ‘You’ve found 1p, you’re so clever. I’ve got 80p in my piggy bank.’

‘If you can’t say anything nice, Harry, then don’t bother,’ said Mum. I went back to the telly.

That evening, Dad made a massive fuss of my brother, telling him he was a tip-top pirate and an expert treasure finder. They rolled around on the carpet shouting, ‘Ha haaaar!’ and being idiots.

I couldn’t stand it.

‘Shush!’ I shouted. ‘I can’t hear the telly!’

‘Oooh,’ said Dad, ‘one of the crew is revolting! Shall we throw her overboard?’

He tried to grab me but I was too quick and ran out of the room. He can be so annoying!

The next day, Charlie rushed out into the garden after breakfast. The builders still weren’t back so he had the whole muddy place to himself. Very soon his pirate outfit was ruined, his hat had fallen into a puddle and he’d lost his eyepatch. He won’t be wearing that again for World Book Day.

But the hunt went on and he poked around with his spade in every nook and cranny, muttering pea hearties’ to himself.

More than once, he ran in excitedly to show Mum his loot.

‘That’s a bottle top,’ said Mum the first time.

‘That’s an old piece of string,’ said Mum. ‘Not sure we’ll get much for that.’

‘That’s... ugh, Charlie, what is that? It stinks!’ she said, taking the next dirty object out of Charlie’s grip. ‘Oh Charlie, that’s an old chicken bone or something. It was probably left by a fox.’

‘Not a chicken bone, is a dinosaur,’ said Charlie. ‘From a pirate dinosaur. Rrrrarrgh.’

'That disgusting thing is not staying in this house a moment longer,' said Mum. I thought she meant Charlie for a moment. 'It's time to come in and get yourself cleaned up.'

That afternoon I played in my room while Charlie stomped around the house. Sometimes I'd hear Mum shout for him and every time he'd be in a different room. I ignored him, especially when he wanted someone to wipe his bottom. Yuck.

After Dad got home, Charlie sneaked back into the garden again. He was back suspiciously quickly.

'I find more treasure!' he declared.

'What've you got there, little fella?' said Dad.

Charlie opened up his grubby fist to reveal a not-very-dirty medal, still with the ribbon attached. I recognised it straight away. 'That's Grandad's!' I said. 'You're not supposed to touch those, is he Dad?' I said.

Mum, who was watching, disappeared into the hall without a word.

'Have you been rummaging in our bedroom, Charlie?'

Charlie stood there, his head hanging down, saying nothing. 'Charlie? This is serious. Tell Daddy what you've been up to.'

I don't know why Dad was asking. Charlie had taken Grandad's medal and pretended to find it. It actually belonged to Dad's Grandad, who got it when he won an aeroplane fight in a war. He's dead now which is why we have it, along with two other medals he won in other fights. He was a good fighter, my Dad says, which is a bit weird because fighters get sent to the head-teacher at my school.

Mum was standing at the door, holding Grandad's blue medal case. She opened it up and showed it to Dad. Empty.

'OK Charlie, let's go. You need to show me where the medals are.'

'Can I look?' I asked.

'No, you stay here,' said Dad. 'I'm sure we'll be back in five minutes, won't we Charlie?'

Charlie didn't look sure at all but they put on their wellies and went out into the garden. By now it was almost dark. I watched them walk up and down with Dad pointing at holes and piles of mud and Charlie plodding along, looking down.

They weren't back in five minutes, or ten, or fifteen.

‘No joy,’ said Dad when they reappeared. ‘Guess what I’m doing tomorrow.’

Next morning, Dad was out in the garden with a spade, searching. At first, Charlie was with him, poking at the soil with a garden cane. I watched from the doorway.

‘Maybe I putted it here,’ he said. ‘Or here. Or here. Or...’

‘That’s enough, Charlie,’ said Dad. ‘Time to go in, please.’

‘But I...’

‘No. Inside. Now.’

When Dad uses that voice even Charlie knows it’s serious.

Dad hadn’t been out there very long when we heard him shout. ‘Bingo!’

Through the window we saw him grinning, holding up a medal. ‘One more to find!’

But the last one didn’t want to be found. He was out there while we went swimming. He was out there until Mum called him in for lunch. And he went out again afterwards.

I found him later at the table, drinking tea. ‘What you been doing Daddy?’ said Charlie.

Looking for Grandad’s medal, silly,’ I said. ‘Did you find it, Dad?’

‘Nope,’ he said. ‘Not a sniff.’

Charlie sniffed, loudly, and started to laugh. But it didn’t last long because Mum gave him one of her strict looks. ‘I wonder if there’s another way,’ said Mum.

‘How’s that then?’ said Dad. ‘Get a digger in?’

‘Not exactly,’ said Mum. ‘Didn’t Alan say he used to go metal detecting?’

Slowly, Dad put down his tea. ‘You’re right,’ he said. ‘You’re a genius. I’ll call him now.’

Alan is one of our neighbours. He lives with his wife, Sheila, and they are always in their front garden when I walk to school, planting flowers or mowing the lawn.

Alan came round and brought his metal detector. Have you seen one? They look like a plate on the end of a stick. You put these headphones on and wave the stick around and it helps you to find stuff underground.

'Thanks for coming, Alan,' said Dad. I couldn't live with myself if we lost his Aircrew medal.' Aye, that's a good'un,' said Alan.

Once, when I was walking past Alan and Sheila's house, I asked Mum why Alan says 'I' instead of 'yes'. But I must have said it too loud because Alan smiled, put down his trowel, and told me that's how they talk where he comes from, in 'God's own country'.

'God's country? What, heaven?' I asked. 'Have you been dead?'

'I come from Yorkshire and it is a lot like heaven, only it's a bit handier for the motorway.'

I had no idea what he was talking about.

'I'm from up north,' he said. 'Where the people say gr-ass instead of gr-arse.'

Now then. Mary rode on an ass in the Bible, I know that because they told us at school. An ass is a type of donkey, but arse is a rude word for bottom. Why was Alan talking about donkeys and grass and bottoms? I gave up trying to understand.

Very soon Alan was out in our garden with his headphones on. I wondered if he was listening to Taylor Swift. She's my favourite.

Just like Dad, he was out there for ages. Charlie and I sat on the step watching him. Just as I was getting bored he bent down, dug about a bit with a spade and picked something up.

It didn't look like a medal. It looked like a bit of old shoe. 'It's probably from a fox,' I shouted. 'We have loads of them.'

'Not this one, lassie,' said Alan. 'Give your Dad a shout, will you?'

I fetched Dad while Alan kicked off his muddy wellies and came into the kitchen. 'Have you found it, fella?' asked Dad.

'Can't say that I have,' said Alan, 'but it's still worth a gander.'

Here we go again. A gander is a boy goose. Mrs Schofield told us that. But if this dirty thing was worth a gander, like Alan said, how much is that? One pound? Twenty pounds? I've never tried to buy a goose, have you?

Dad and Mum gathered around while Charlie and I stood on chairs for a better look.

The dirty object he'd found was a bag. Alan used his thumbs to push bits of soil off it and unpicked a piece of cord that tied it closed.

He tipped the bag and a handful of coins slid out onto the table. 'TREASURE!' shouted Charlie.

‘Easy there flower,’ said Alan. ‘Let’s see what we’ve got.’

‘Penny... 1914,’ he said, peering at the first coin. ‘Another penny...1922. They’re all pennies,’ he said.

I counted quickly. One, two, three... ‘Nine pennies!’ I said. ‘That’s not even enough for a finger of fudge!’

‘Steady on now,’ said Alan. ‘Some of these are worth a few quid, I reckon. We’ve got some here from Queen Victoria and a couple older than that. You should get them valued, Tom. You might be a happy man.’

‘Well, well,’ said Dad. I can’t say I’m happy about losing the medal but this is a bit of a result, isn’t it, gang?’

Later, after Alan had left carrying his metal detector and a pack of beer that Dad had given him to say thanks, we all looked at the coins again and Dad gave them a wipe with a cloth.

‘Where are we going to keep them?’ asked Mum. ‘That leather bag is falling apart. We need to put them somewhere out of harm’s way.’ She looked hard at Charlie.

‘Stick ‘em in the medal case for now,’ said Dad. ‘They’ll fit where that missing one should go.’

Mum opened the medal case. She frowned and looked a little more closely. I leaned over. There, sticking out between the case and the shiny blue medal holder inside, was a small piece of black, blue and yellow ribbon.

Mum used her fingernail to hook it out from behind the holder. Attached to the ribbon was Grandad’s missing star medal. Mum swung it gently from her finger until Dad noticed.

‘You have got to be kidding me,’ he said. He walked up behind Charlie, and put his arms around him.

‘Looks like the booty was right under our noses all along. And we found a little bit more along the way, didn’t we Charlie? Maybe I won’t throw you to the sharks just yet, my little pirate friend.’