



Learn English Through Stories

A1 Stories

Elementary Level

**Adapted and modified by
Kulwant Singh Sandhu**

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

HONEYSUCKLE

TEXTBOOK IN ENGLISH FOR CLASS VI



1. A Different Kind of School

By E.V. LUCAS



I HAD heard a great deal about Miss Beam's school, but not till last week did the chance come to visit it.

When I arrived there was no one in sight but a girl of about twelve. Her eyes were covered with a bandage and she was being led carefully between the flower-beds by a little boy, who was about four years younger. She stopped, and it looked like she asked him who had come. He seemed to be describing me to her. Then they passed on.

Miss Beam was all that I had expected—middle-aged, full of authority, yet kindly and understanding. Her hair was beginning to turn grey, and she had the kind of plump figure that is likely to be comforting to a homesick child. I asked her some questions about her teaching methods, which I had heard were simple.

"No more than is needed to help them to learn how to do things — simple spelling, adding, subtracting, multiplying and writing. The rest is done by reading to them and by interesting talks, during which they have to sit still and keep their hands quiet. There are practically no other lessons."

"The real aim of this school is not so much to teach thought as to teach *thoughtfulness* — kindness to others, and being responsible citizens. Look out of the window a minute, will you?"

I went to the window which overlooked a large garden and a playground at the back. "What do you see?" Miss Beam asked.

"I see some very beautiful grounds," I said, "and a lot of jolly children. It pains me, though, to see that they are not all so healthy and active-looking. When I came in, I saw one poor little girl being led about. She has some trouble with her eyes. Now I can see two more with the same difficulty. And there's a girl with a crutch watching the others at play. She seems to be a hopeless cripple."

Miss Beam laughed. "Oh, no!" she said. "She's not really lame. This is only her lame day. The others are not blind either. It is only their blind day." I must have looked very surprised, for she laughed again.

"This is a very important part of our system. To make our children appreciate and understand misfortune, we make them share in misfortune too. Each term every child has one blind day, one lame day, one deaf day, one injured day and one dumb day. During the blind day their eyes are bandaged absolutely and they are on their honour not to peep. The bandage is put on overnight so they wake blind. This means that they need help with everything. Other children are given the duty of helping them and leading them about. They all learn so much this way—both the blind and the helpers.

"There is no misery about it," Miss Beam continued. "Everyone is very kind, and it is really something of a game. Before the day is over, though, even the most thoughtless child realises what misfortune is.

"The blind day is, of course, really the worst, but some of the children tell me that the dumb day is the most difficult. We cannot bandage the children's mouths, so they really have to exercise their will-power. Come into the garden and see for yourself how the children feel about it."

Miss Beam led me to one of the bandaged girls. "Here's a gentleman come to talk to you," said Miss Beam, and left us.

"Don't you ever peep?" I asked the girl. "Oh, no!" she exclaimed. "That would be cheating! But I had no idea it was so awful to be blind. You can't see a thing. You feel you are going to be hit by something every moment. It's such a relief just to sit down." "Are your helpers kind to you?" I asked.

"Fairly. But they are not as careful as I shall be when it is my turn. Those that have been blind already are the best helpers. It's perfectly ghastly not to see. I wish you'd try." "Shall I lead you anywhere?" I asked.

"Oh, yes", she said. "Let's go for a little walk. Only you must tell me about things. I shall be so glad when today is over. The other bad days can't be half as bad as this. Having a leg tied up and hopping about on a crutch is almost fun, I guess. Having an arm tied up is a bit more troublesome, because you can't eat without help, and things like that. I don't think I'll mind being deaf for a day—at least not much. But being blind is so frightening. My head aches all the time just from worrying that I'll get hurt. Where are we now?"

“In the playground,” I said. “We’re walking towards the house. Miss Beam is walking up and down the garden with a tall girl.”

“What is the girl wearing?” my little friend asked.

“A blue cotton skirt and a pink blouse.”

“I think it’s Millie?” she said. “What colour is her hair?”

“Very light,” I said.

“Yes, that’s Millie. She’s the Head Girl.”

“There’s an old man tying up roses,” I said.

“Yes, that’s Peter. He’s the gardener. He’s hundreds of years old!”

“And here comes a girl with curly red hair. She’s on crutches.”

“That’s Anita,” she said.

And so we walked on. Gradually I discovered that I was ten times more thoughtful than I ever thought I could be. I also realised that if I had to describe people and things to someone else, it made them more interesting to me. When I finally had to leave, I told Miss Beam that I was very sorry to go.

“Ah!” she replied, “then there is something in my system after all.”

2. All but Blind

All but blind

In his chambered hole

Gropes for worms

The four-clawed Mole.

All but blind

In the evening sky

The hooded Bat

Twirls softly by.

All but blind

In the burning day

The Barn Owl blunders

On her way.

And blind as are

These three to me,

So, blind to Someone

I must be.

3. Who I Am

Many Voices

Radha

My favourite activity is climbing trees. Just outside our house, there is a mango tree which I love to go up. Its branches spread out, so it is simple to climb up the tree, and I can sit comfortably in the fork of two branches. My mother tells me it is not sensible for girls to climb trees, but one afternoon she climbed up too, and both of us sat there talking and eating raw mangoes. When I am high up in the tree, I feel like I can rule the whole world.

Nasir

When I grow up, I want to become a seed collector. We have cotton fields in our village and every year, my father spends a lot of money on buying new seeds to grow our cotton plants. My grandfather told me that many years ago, he could collect the seeds from his own plants which could be sown to grow new plants during the next year. But today that doesn't work so we have to spend money to buy new seeds every single year. I want to find out why that is so. I want to learn how to preserve seeds so that we can use them again and not spend money every year.

Rohit

If I had a huge amount of money I would travel and travel. I want to see the mountains of New Zealand because they looked beautiful in a magazine picture. I wish I could sail down the Amazon river in South America on a raft. I want to live on the beaches of Lakshadweep and dive down to see coral. I suppose I should go to the Konark temple in Orissa or the old city in Beijing in China and the Pyramids in Egypt too, but what I actually enjoy is seeing nature more than old buildings.

SERBJIT

What makes me very angry is when people don't believe me when I am telling the truth. For example, if I tell my teacher that I couldn't do my homework because Ravi borrowed my book and forgot to return it. Or I tell my parents that it wasn't me but my little brother who started the fight. Or if I tell my teacher that I really did study for the test even if I have got bad marks. They all look at me as if they think I am telling lies. The look on their faces really angers me. Sometimes I have to look down at my shoes and count to ten so that I do not show that I am angry.

DOLMA

When I grow up, I am going to be the Prime Minister of India. People always laugh when I say that, but I am sure that I will do it. Everyone in my class asks me what to do when they have a problem, and my teacher always trusts me when something needs to be done in school. I want to make things better for everyone. I want us to have good hospitals and roads and schools. I want to make sure that there are many good scientists in India who will invent cures for diseases and send a spaceship to Mars.

PETER

My favourite day is the second Sunday of every month. On this day our whole family always goes to the cinema hall to see a film. My father gets the tickets in advance and all of us — my grandmother, my parents, my two brothers and I — take the bus there. In the interval my father buys us peanuts and I love to sit in the darkness of the hall eating and watching the film. Afterwards we always stop to eat ice cream. Everyone is in a good mood and we all feel very lucky that we are such a happy family.

3. The Wonderful Words

*Never let a thought shrivel and die
For want of a way to say it
For English is a wonderful game
And all of you can play it.
All that you do is match the words
To the brightest thoughts in your head
So that they come out clear and true
And handsomely groomed and fed—
For many of the loveliest things
Have never yet been said.*

*Words are the food and dress of thought
They give it its body and swing
And everyone's longing today to hear
Some fresh and beautiful thing;
But only words can free a thought
From its prison behind your eyes
May be your mind is holding now
A marvellous new surprise!*