



# Learn English Through Stories

A1 Stories

Elementary Level

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# The Nightingale

By Hans Andersen

A king lived in a beautiful palace. The palace had a very big garden with a lot of lovely flowers. People walked through the garden and looked at the flowers. Then they walked through a beautiful wood to the sea.

A nightingale lived in a tree in the wood. It sang beautifully! Every night an old man came through the wood to the sea. He wanted to catch fish. He stood and listened to the little bird. 'Oh, that's a pretty song!' he thought, and he cried.

Visitors from many other countries came to see the king. 'We like your city, your palace and your garden,' they told the king. 'They're very beautiful.'

Some visitors heard the little bird. 'Nothing is as beautiful as the nightingale's voice,' they said. They wrote books about the city, the palace and the garden, and they always wrote wonderful things about the nightingale.

Other people round the world read these books, and one day the king saw one. He read and read and he was very happy. 'But nothing is as good as the nightingale's voice,' the book said.

'What's this?' asked the king. 'The nightingale? I don't know this bird! Is there really a bird with a beautiful voice in my garden? Nobody told me. We learn a lot of new things from books.'

So the king called his most important servant.

'People say there's a very pretty bird here,' said the king. 'They say that it sings very beautifully. I want the nightingale to sing to me tonight.'

'I don't know this nightingale,' said the servant, 'but I'll find it.'

But where was the bird? The servant ran everywhere. He asked the other servants, but they knew nothing about it. He went to the king and said, 'There's no nightingale here. I can't find it.'

'A great king sent me this book,' said the king. 'It says there's a nightingale in my garden. Bring it here now or I'll be very angry.'

The servant ran through the palace and its gardens, and the other servants ran, too. Then they found a young girl in the palace kitchen and asked her about the nightingale.

'Oh, yes! It sings in the wood near the sea. It has a beautiful voice! I take some food through the wood to my mother every night because she's very ill. Sometimes I sit down in the wood and then I hear the nightingale's song.'

'Little girl,' said the servant, 'please take us to the nightingale.'

The other servants went with them. On their way to the wood, they heard a cow. 'There's the nightingale,' one man said. 'It sings very nicely.'

'No, that's a cow,' the little girl said. 'We're a long way from the nightingale's home.'

Near a small river in the garden, some toads started to make a noise.

'Now I can hear it,' said a servant.

'No, those are toads. They have ugly voices!' said the little girl. 'But we'll hear the nightingale in these trees.'

Then the small bird started to sing. 'There it is!' the little girl said. She showed them a little bird in one of the trees.

'Is that the nightingale?' asked a servant. 'It isn't very pretty. The other birds are prettier and more interesting.'

'Little nightingale!' the girl called. 'Our king wants you to sing something to him.'

'I'll be happy to sing to the king,' the nightingale said.

'It has a beautiful voice,' said the servant. 'It will make the king and his friends very happy.'

'Where is the king?' the little bird asked. 'Isn't he here in the wood?'

'Pretty little bird, you're going to the king's palace tonight. You'll sing there,' the servant said.

'I live happily in the green trees. Can I sing inside a palace? I don't know,' said the nightingale. 'But the king wants me to sing to him so I'll try.' And the little bird went with the servants to the palace.

The king sat in a great room in his palace, and the nightingale sat on a table. The king's servants and his friends were in the room. They all looked at the nightingale.

The little bird started to sing. It sang beautifully. The king started to cry - and so everybody cried with him.

'Your songs make me happy,' the king said. 'I'll give you some pretty shoes.'

'Thank you,' the nightingale said, 'but I don't want anything. You cry when you hear my songs. And that makes me happy.' Then it sang again.

'Please stay in my palace,' said the king. 'You can go out into the wood every morning and afternoon, and again every night.' He gave the nightingale servants. They went everywhere with the little bird.

One day somebody brought a box to the king. It was another nightingale, but it was wood.

'What's this?' the king asked. 'It can't eat or drink. It can't walk or run. But can it sing?' He looked at his servants. 'Let's hear it!'

Somebody turned the key. The nightingale could only sing one song, but it sang this song many times.

Then the king said, 'I want to hear my nightingale sing. Where is it?'

'It flew out of the open window to its home in the wood,' a servant said.

'It flew away? Why?' the king asked.

'That old nightingale isn't as good as this new bird,' the king's friends said. 'This nightingale will sing all day.'

The people in the city came and listened to the new bird. Its song made them very happy. But the old man from the wood said, 'The new nightingale has a pretty voice, but the little nightingale's voice is better.'

The servants put the new nightingale on a table near the king's bed. People wrote long books about the new nightingale. Not many people could read these long books. But they liked them because the king did.

The new nightingale sang for a year. The king, his friends, and the people in the city knew its song; it always sang the same song in the same way. So now, people could sing with the nightingale. The little boys in the street sang the nightingale's song. The king sang its song, too.

'You sing beautifully,' the servants told him.

But one night there was a noise inside the nightingale. Bang! Now the bird could not sing.

The king jumped quickly out of bed, and called for help. 'Why can't the nightingale sing?' he asked. 'Look inside it.'

A man opened the nightingale and looked inside it. Then he turned the key, and it sang again. But he said, 'This bird can't sing every day now. It can only sing for one day every year.'

Five years later, the king was very ill. People said, 'He isn't going to live. There will be a new king.'

The king looked cold and white in his beautiful bed. 'He's dead,' his friends thought. They went away and visited the new king.

But the king was not dead. A window was open near his bed, and the king looked out at the beautiful sky.

'I'm going to die,' he thought. 'I did many good things in my life... and many bad things, too. I don't want to think about those things.'

He called to the nightingale on the table, 'Sing, little nightingale, please, please, sing!' But the nightingale did not sing.

Then the king heard a sound outside - a beautiful voice. The nightingale from the wood sat on a tree and sang. It sang about beautiful flowers, and woods and gardens.

The king was happy again. 'Thank you, thank you,' he said to the bird. 'You beautiful little bird, you came back and helped me. I won't die now. What can I give you?'

'You gave me something very beautiful when I first sang for you,' the nightingale said. 'You cried. I will always remember that day. But I'll sing now, and you sleep.'

The nightingale sang and the king slept. Later he opened his eyes and saw the sun in the sky.

'Where are my servants?' he asked. 'They aren't in the palace. Do they think I'm dead? Are they with the new king?'

The little nightingale sat next to him and sang.

'Please stay with me,' the king said. 'I'll throw the other bird away.'

'Don't throw the other bird away,' said the nightingale. 'It wanted to make you happy, but it couldn't sing every day. I can't stay inside your palace because my home is in the woods. But I'll come here sometimes. I'll sit in this tree near your window and I'll sing for you.'

Then the nightingale flew away.

The servants came into the room and looked at the dead king. But he was not dead! The king sat up. 'Good morning!' he said.