



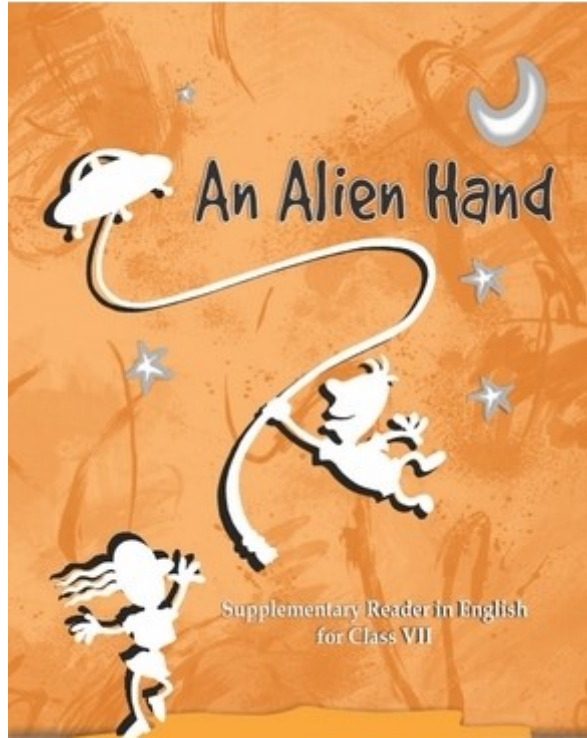
Learn English Through Stories.

A2 Stories

Elementary Plus Level

**Adapted and modified by  
Kulwant Singh Sandhu.**

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# 1. Golu Grows a Nose

By Rudyard Kipling

LONG, long ago the elephant had no trunk. He had only a bulgy nose, as big as a boot. He could wiggle it from side to side, but couldn't pick up things with it.

There was a baby elephant called Golu. He, too, had no trunk but only a bulgy nose, as small as a small boot. Golu was full of questions. He asked his tall aunt, the ostrich, "Why don't you ever fly like other birds?" Then he asked his tall uncle, the giraffe, "What makes your skin so spotty?" He asked his huge uncle, the hippopotamus, "Why are your eyes always so red?" He asked his hairy uncle, the baboon, "Why do melons taste like melons?" The ostrich, the giraffe, the hippopotamus and the baboon had no answers to Golu's questions. "Golu is a naughty baby," they said. "He asks such difficult questions."

One day Golu met the mynah bird sitting in the middle of a bush, and he asked her, "What does the crocodile have for dinner?" The mynah said, "Go to the banks of the great, grassy Limpopo river and find out."

Golu went home. He took a hundred sugar canes, fifty dozen bananas and twenty-five melons. Then he said to his family, "Goodbye. I'm going to the great, grassy Limpopo river. I'll find out what the crocodile has for dinner." He had never seen a crocodile, and didn't know what one looked like.

He met a python and asked him, "Have you ever seen a crocodile? What does he look like? What does he have for dinner?"

The python uncoiled himself from the branch of a tree but said nothing. Golu politely helped him to coil around the branch again and said goodbye to him.

Golu moved on, eating sugar canes, bananas and melons. After a few days he reached the very edge of the great, grassy Limpopo river. On the bank of the river he saw a log of wood.

It was really the crocodile who winked at him. "Excuse me," said Golu. "Have you ever seen a crocodile?"

The crocodile winked again and lifted half his tail out of the mud. "Come here, little one," said the crocodile. "Why do you ask such questions?"

"I want to know..."

“Come close, little one, for I am the crocodile,” and he shed crocodile tears to show it was quite true.

Golu was afraid, but he sat down on the bank and said, “You are the very person I was looking for. Please tell me what you have for dinner.”

“Come here, little one, and I’ll whisper the answer to you,” said the crocodile.

Golu put his head down close to the crocodile’s snout and the crocodile caught him by the nose.

“I think,” said the crocodile, “today a baby elephant will be my dinner.”

“Let me go. You are hurting me, Mr Crocodile,” screamed Golu.

The python, who had been quietly following Golu, came to the bank and said, “If you do not pull as hard as you can, the crocodile will drag you into the stream.”

Golu sat back on his little haunches and pulled and pulled. The crocodile slipped into the water making it all creamy with great sweeps of his tail, and he also pulled and pulled.

Then the python coiled himself round Golu’s stomach and said, “Let’s pull harder.” Golu dug in all his four legs in the mud and pulled. The nose kept on stretching. At each pull the nose grew longer and longer and it hurt Golu. The nose was now five feet long, but it was free at last.

Golu sat down, with his nose wrapped up in a big banana leaf and hung it in the great, grassy Limpopo river to cool.

Golu sat there for two days waiting for his nose to cool and to shrink. It grew cool but it didn’t shrink.

At the end of the second day, a fly came and stung Golu on the shoulder. Golu lifted his long nose (trunk) and with it hit the fly dead.

“Advantage number one,” hissed the python. “You couldn’t have done it with a small nose. Try and eat a little now.”

Golu put out his trunk and plucked a large bundle of grass. He dusted it against his forelegs and stuffed it into his mouth.

“Advantage number two,” hissed the python. “You couldn’t have done it with a small nose. Don’t you think the sun is too hot now?”

Golu scooped up some mud from the bank and slapped it on his head.

“Advantage number three,” hissed the python. “You couldn’t have done it with a small nose.”

“Thank you, Mr Python,” said Golu gratefully. “I’ll remember all this and now I’ll go back to my family.”

## 2. I Want Something in a Cage

By L E Greeve

Mr Purcell did not believe in ghost. Nevertheless, the man who bought the two doves, and his strange act immediately thereafter, left him with a distinct sense of the uncanny. As though, behind his departed customer, there had lingered the musty smell of an abandoned, haunted house.

Mr Purcell was a small, fussy man; red cheeks and a tight, melon stomach. Large glasses magnified his eyes so as to give him the appearance of a wise and genial owl. He owned a pet shop. He sold cats and dogs and monkeys; he dealt in fish food and bird seed, prescribed remedies for ailing canaries, and displayed on his shelves long rows of ornate and gilded cages. He considered himself something of a professional man.

A constant stir of movement pervaded his shop; whispered twitters, sly rustling; squeals, cheeps, and sudden squeaks. Small feet scampered in frantic circles—frightened, bewildered, blindly seeking. Across the shelves pulsed this endless flicker of life. But the customers who came in said, “Aren’t they cute? Look at that little cage! They’re sweet.” And Mr Purcell himself would smile and briskly rub his hands and emphatically shake his head.

Each morning, when the routine of opening his shop was completed, it was the proprietor’s custom to perch on a high stool, behind the counter, unfold his morning paper, and digest the day’s news. As he read he would smirk, frown, reflectively purse his lips, knowingly lift his eyebrows, nod in grave agreement. He read everything, even advice to the lovelorn and the detailed columns of advertisements.

It was a rough day. A strong wind blew against the high, plate-glass windows. Smoke filmed the wintry city and the air was grey with a thick frost. Having completed his usual tasks, Mr Purcell again mounted the high stool, and unfolded his morning paper. He adjusted his glasses, and glanced at the day’s headlines. Chirping and squeaking and mewing vibrated all around him; yet Mr Purcell heard it no more than he would have heard the monotonous ticking of a familiar clock.

There was a bell over the door that jingled whenever a customer entered. This morning, however, for the first time Mr Purcell could recall, it failed to ring. Simply he glanced up, and there was the stranger, standing just inside the

door, as if he had materialised out of thin air. The storekeeper slid off his stool. From the first instant he knew instinctively, unreasonably, that the man hated him; but out of habit he rubbed his hands briskly together, smiled and nodded.

“Good morning,” he beamed. “What can I do for you?”

The man’s shiny shoes squeaked forward. His suit was cheap, ill-fitting but obviously new. He had a shuttling glance and close-cropped hair. Ignoring Purcell for the moment, he rolled his gaze around the shadowy shop.

“A nasty morning,” volunteered the shopkeeper. He clasped both hands across his melon-like stomach, and smiled importantly. “I see by the paper we’re in for a cold spell. Now what was it you wanted?”

The man stared closely at Mr Purcell, as though just now aware of his presence. He said, “I want something in a cage.”

“Something in a cage?” Mr Purcell was a bit confused, “You mean—some sort of pet?”

“I mean what I said,” snapped the man. “Something in a cage. Something that is small.”

“I see,” hastened the storekeeper, not at all certain that he did. His eyes narrowed gravely and he pursed his lips. “Now let me think. A white rat, perhaps? I have some very nice white rats.”

“No,” said the man. “Not rats. Something with wings. Something that flies.”

“A bird!” exclaimed Mr Purcell.

“A bird’s all right.” The customer pointed suddenly to a suspended cage which contained two snowy birds. “Doves? How much for those?”

“Five-fifty,” came the prompt answer. “And a very reasonable price. They are a fine pair.”

“Five-fifty?” The man was obviously crestfallen. He hesitantly produced a five dollar bill. “I’d like to have these birds. But this is all I’ve got. Just five dollars.” Mentally, Mr Purcell made a quick calculation, which told him that at a fifty cent reduction he could still reap a tidy profit. He smiled magnanimously.

“My dear man, if you want them that badly, you can certainly have them for five dollars.”

“I’ll take them.” He laid his five dollars on the counter. Mr Purcell tottered on tiptoe, unhooked the cage, and handed it to his customer. The man cocked his head to one side, listening to the constant chittering, the rushing scurry of the shop. “That noise,” he blurted. “Doesn’t it get you?”

“Noise? What noise?” Mr Purcell looked surprised. He could hear nothing unusual.

The customer glared. “I mean all this caged stuff. Drives you crazy, doesn’t it?”

Mr Purcell drew back. Either the man was insane, or drunk. He said hastily, “Yes, yes. Certainly, I guess so.”

“Listen.” The staring eyes came closer. “How long do you think it took me to make the five dollars?”

The merchant wanted to order him out of the shop. But, oddly enough, he couldn’t. He heard himself dutifully asking, “Why—why, how long did it take you?”

The other laughed. “Ten years—at hard labour. Ten years to earn five dollars. Fifty cents a year.”

It was best, Purcell decided, to humour him. “My, my; ten years. That’s certainly a long time. Now...”

“They give you five dollars,” laughed the man, “and a cheap suit, and tell you not to get caught again.”

Mr Purcell mopped his sweating brow. “Now, about the care and feeding of your doves. I would advise...”

“Bah!” The man swung around, and stalked abruptly from the store. Purcell sighed with sudden relief. He waddled to the window and stared out. Just outside, his peculiar customer had halted. He was holding the cage shoulder-high, staring at his purchase. Then, opening the cage, he reached inside and drew out one of the doves. He tossed it into the air. He drew out the second and tossed it after the first. They rose like windblown balls of fluff and were lost in the smoky grey of the wintry city. For an instant the liberator’s silent and lifted gaze watched after them. Then he dropped the cage. He shoved both hands deep in his trouser pockets, hunched down his head and shuffled away. The merchant’s brow was puckered with perplexity. So desperately had the man desired the doves that he had let him have them at a reduced price.



And immediately he had turned them loose. "Now why," Mr Purcell muttered, "did he do that?" He felt vaguely insulted.