

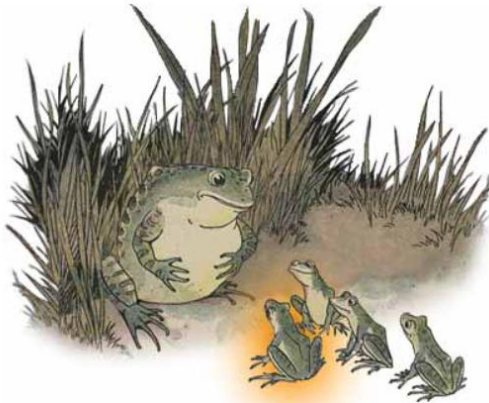


Learn English Through Stories

**Adapted and modified by  
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# 1. The Frog and the Ox



An Ox came down to a pool to drink. As he splashed heavily into the water, he crushed a young Frog into the mud.

The old Frog soon missed the little one and asked his brothers and sisters what had happened to him.

"A great big monster," said one of them, "stepped on little brother with one of his huge feet!"

"Big, was he!" said the old Frog, puffing herself up. "Was he as big as this?"

"Oh, much bigger!" they cried.

The Frog puffed up still more.



"He could not have been bigger than this," she said.

But the little Frogs all declared that the monster was much, much bigger and the old Frog kept puffing herself out more and more until, all at once, she burst.

***Do not attempt the impossible.***

## The Frog and the Ox – Version 2

Father,” said a little Frog, “I have seen such a terrible monster! It was as big as a mountain, with horns on its head, and a long tail, and it had hoofs divided in two.”

“Tush, child,” said the old Frog, “that was only Farmer White’s Ox. It isn’t so big either; he may be a little bit taller than I, but I could easily make myself quite as broad; just you see.”

So he blew himself out, and blew himself out, and blew himself out. “Was he as big as that?” asked he.

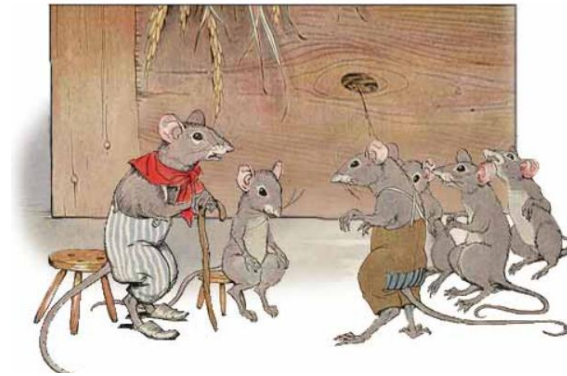
“Oh, much bigger than that,” said the young Frog.

Again the old one blew himself out, and asked the young one if the Ox was as big as that.

“Bigger, father, bigger,” was the reply.

So the Frog took a deep breath, and blew and blew and blew, and swelled and swelled and swelled; and said: “I’m sure the Ox is not as big as that.” At this moment he burst.

## 2. Belling the Cat



The Mice once called a meeting to decide on a plan to free themselves of their enemy, the Cat. At least they wished to find some way of knowing when she was coming, so they might have time to run away. Indeed, something had to be done, for they lived in such constant fear of her claws that they hardly dared stir from their dens by night or day.

Many plans were discussed, but none of them was thought good enough. At last a very young Mouse got up and said:

"I have a plan that seems very simple, but I know it will be successful.

All we have to do is to hang a bell about the Cat's neck. When we hear the bell ringing we will know immediately that our enemy is coming."

All the Mice were much surprised that they had not thought of such a plan before. But in the midst of the rejoicing over their good fortune, an old Mouse arose and said:

"I will say that the plan of the young Mouse is very good. But let me ask one question: Who will bell the Cat?"

***It is one thing to say that something should be done, but quite a different matter to do it: Easy said than done.***

## Belling the Cat – Version 2

Long ago, the mice had a general council to consider what measures they could take to outwit their common enemy, the Cat. Some said this, and some said that; but at last a young mouse got up and said he had a proposal to make, which he thought would meet the case. “You will all agree,” said he, “that our chief danger consists in the sly and treacherous manner in which the enemy approaches us. Now, if we could receive some signal of her approach, we could easily escape from her. I venture, therefore, to propose that a small bell be procured, and attached by a ribbon round the neck of the Cat. By this means we should always know when she was about, and could easily retire while she was in the neighbourhood.”

This proposal met with general applause, until an old mouse got up and said: “That is all very well, but who is to bell the Cat?” The mice looked at one another and nobody spoke. Then the old mouse said: “It is easy to propose impossible remedies.”

### 3. The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse



A Town Mouse once visited a relative who lived in the country. For lunch the Country Mouse served wheat stalks, roots, and acorns, with a dash of cold water for drink. The Town Mouse ate very sparingly, nibbling a little of this and a little of that, and by her manner making it very plain that she ate the simple food only to be polite.

After the meal the friends had a long talk, or rather the Town Mouse talked about her life in the city while the Country Mouse listened. They then went to bed in a cosy nest in the hedgerow and slept in quiet and comfort until morning. In her sleep the Country Mouse dreamed she was a Town Mouse with all the luxuries and delights of city life that her friend had described for her. So the next day when the Town Mouse asked the Country Mouse to go home with her to the city, she gladly said yes.

When they reached the mansion in which the Town Mouse lived, they found on the table in the dining room the leavings of a very fine banquet. There were sweetmeats and jellies, pastries, delicious cheeses, indeed, the most tempting foods that a Mouse can imagine. But just as the Country Mouse was about to nibble a dainty bit of pastry, she heard a Cat mew loudly and scratch at the door. In great fear the Mice scurried to a hiding place, where they lay quite still for a long time, hardly daring to breathe. When at last they ventured back to the feast, the door opened suddenly and in came the servants to clear the table, followed by the House Dog.



The Country Mouse stopped in the Town Mouse's den only long enough to pick up her carpet bag and umbrella.

"You may have luxuries and dainties that I have not," she said as she hurried away, "but I prefer my plain food and simple life in the country with the peace and security that go with it."

***Poverty with security is better than plenty in the midst of fear and uncertainty.***

## The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse – Version 2

Now you must know that a Town Mouse once upon a time went on a visit to his cousin in the country. He was rough and ready, this cousin, but he loved his town friend and made him heartily welcome. Beans and bacon, cheese and bread, were all he had to offer, but he offered them freely. The Town Mouse rather turned up his long nose at this country fare, and said: "I cannot understand, Cousin, how you can put up with such poor food as this, but of course you cannot expect anything better in the country; come you with me and I will show you how to live. When you have been in town a week you will wonder how you could ever have stood a country life."

No sooner said than done: the two mice set off for the town and arrived at the Town Mouse's residence late at night. "You will want some refreshment after our long journey," said the polite Town Mouse, and took his friend into the grand dining-room. There they found the remains of a fine feast, and soon the two mice were eating up jellies and cakes and all that was nice.

Suddenly they heard growling and barking. "What is that?" said the Country Mouse. "It is only the dogs of the house," answered the other. "Only!" said the Country Mouse. "I do not like that music at my dinner." Just at that moment the door flew open, in came two huge mastiffs, and the two mice had to scamper down and run off. "Good-bye, Cousin," said the Country Mouse, "What! Going so soon?" said the other. "Yes," he replied; "Better beans and bacon in peace than cakes and ale in fear."



## 4. The Fox and the Grapes



A Fox one day spied a beautiful bunch of ripe grapes hanging from a vine trained along the branches of a tree. The grapes seemed ready to burst with juice, and the Fox's mouth watered as he gazed longingly at them.

The bunch hung from a high branch, and the Fox had to jump for it. The first time he jumped he missed it by a long way. So he walked off a short distance and took a running leap at it, only to fall short once more. Again and again he tried, but in vain.

Now he sat down and looked at the grapes in disgust.

"What a fool I am," he said. "Here I am wearing myself out to get a bunch of sour grapes that are not worth gaping for."

And off he walked very, very scornfully.

***There are many who pretend to despise and belittle that which is beyond their reach.***

## The Fox and the Grapes – Version 2

A Fox, very hungry, chanced to come into a vineyard, where there hung branches of charming ripe Grapes: but nailed up to a trellis so high, that he leaped till he quite tired himself, without being able to reach one of them.

‘Let who will take them!’ says he, ‘they are but green and sour; so I’ll even let them alone.’

## 5. The Wolf and the Cranes



A Wolf had been feasting too greedily, and a bone had stuck crosswise in his throat. He could get it neither up nor down, and of course he could not eat a thing. Naturally that was an awful state of affairs for a greedy Wolf.

So away he hurried to the Crane. He was sure that she, with her long neck and bill, would easily be able to reach the bone and pull it out.

"I will reward you very handsomely," said the Wolf, "if you pull that bone out for me."

The Crane, as you can imagine, was very uneasy about putting her head in a Wolf's throat. But she was grasping in nature, so she did what the Wolf asked her to do.

When the Wolf felt that the bone was gone, he started to walk away.

"But what about my reward!" called the Crane anxiously.

"What!" snarled the Wolf, whirling around. "Haven't you got it? Isn't it enough that I let you take your head out of my mouth without snapping it off?"

***Expect no reward for serving the wicked.***

## The Wolf and the Crane – Version 2

A Wolf was eating an animal he had killed, when suddenly a small bone in the meat stuck in his throat and he could not swallow it. He soon felt terrible pain in his throat, and ran up and down seeking something to relieve the pain. He tried to induce everyone he met to remove the bone. “I would give anything,” said he, “if you would take it out.”

At last the Crane agreed to try, and told the Wolf to lie on his side and open his jaws as wide as he could. Then the Crane put its long neck down the Wolf’s throat, and with its beak loosened the bone and removed it.

“Will you kindly give me the reward you promised?” said the Crane.

The Wolf grinned, showed his teeth and said: “Be content. You have put your head inside a Wolf’s mouth and taken it out again in safety; that ought to be reward enough for you.”