



Learn English Through Stories

D Series

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1. A Lesson for the Uncles

Rajendra was a young boy who had lost both his parents when he was still quite young. He lived all by himself. He had one goat with which he stayed in a tiny hut. He also had three uncles, who were always trying to cheat him out of his goat and house. They made his life miserable.

One day, the uncles stole his goat and tied it alongside some other goats that belonged to the village butcher. Poor Rajendra looked everywhere for it. The butcher, meanwhile, took all the goats and killed them for their meat. Now, Rajendra's goat wore a special bell around its neck. When the butcher cut that goat, he threw away the bell. Rajendra found it soon after and was grief-stricken. He knocked on the butcher's door for justice. By then the butcher had realized that he had killed Rajendra's goat. Scared that the boy would tell everyone he had killed a stolen goat, he gave Rajendra some money and sent him away.

When the uncles saw their nephew coming home with the coins jingling in his pocket, they were astonished. How had Rajendra made money from a lost goat? When they asked him he said, 'Everyone wanted goat's meat today in the market. My poor goat somehow ended up at the butcher's and he sold its meat and made a lot of money. This is my share.'

The uncles thought this was a good way to make money. They owned twenty goats and they slaughtered them all and went to the market to sell the meat. But now there was so much meat in the market that the prices had come down and they got only a few rupees for their goats.

Angry at being fooled, they decided to burn down Rajendra's hut. So one day, when Rajendra had gone out, they set fire to his little hut. The young boy was shocked to come home and find a pile of smouldering ash where his hut used to be. At once he knew who was behind it. Sadly he gathered the ash in a bag and decided to leave the village forever. With the bag slung over his shoulder, he set off. After walking for many miles, he at last reached a village. He sat down under a tree to rest and think what to do next.

Soon a crowd of curious villagers gathered around him. Who was this stranger? Why he was carrying a bag of ashes, they wondered. Finally one man asked him, 'What is the matter? Why are you sitting quietly like this? Why are you carrying so much ash?'

Rajendra's hut had been his dearest, most sacred possession, so he said, 'It is the ash from a sacred place.'

Now the villagers were excited. 'Will you sell it to us?' they asked.

'No.'

But they would not give up. 'Give us a pinch at least,' they begged. Rajendra agreed and gave them a pinch of ash each. Soon, word spread in the village that a holy man had come from the Himalayas, who looked like he was twenty but was really eighty years old. He was carrying a bag of ashes with him that could cure all misfortunes and disease. He was giving away a pinch of it only to each person, and though he wanted no money, it was only right that you paid a coin at least for such happiness.

Thus a long queue formed in front of Rajendra. Each villager took a pinch of ash and left a coin in return. At the end of the day, Rajendra discovered the ash was all gone and in its place he had a pile of coins.

Happily, he decided to go back to his village and start life afresh. When he came back, his uncles could not believe their eyes. How had Rajendra done this? They asked Rajendra his secret. Rajendra said, 'There is a great demand for the ashes in that village. I sold the ash that I gathered from my burnt hut and got all this money.' The uncles were amazed. If Rajendra could get so much money by selling the ash from his little hut, how much would they get if they burnt their sprawling houses and sold the ash? That night itself, they burnt down their houses, gathered the ashes in huge sacks and set off for the village. But as soon as they reached and uttered the word 'ash', why, all the villagers fell on them and beat them black and blue! By then the villagers knew there was no magic in the ash. And here were three more people trying to fool them!

The uncles somehow saved their skins and ran home. They were even angrier with Rajendra now for having tricked them a second time. They decided to kill him. One day, they invited him for a walk with them by the river. As they stood on the bridge, where the river was at its deepest, one of them pointed at the water and exclaimed, 'See! A beautiful mermaid!'

As soon as Rajendra leaned over to look in, they pushed him from behind and ran home. Poor Rajendra nearly drowned. Just in time, a girl washing clothes nearby heard his screams for help and dived in. She was a good swimmer and saved his life.

A grateful Rajendra told her the story of his life. She thought for a while and then whispered a plan in his ear.

The next day Rajendra arrived at his uncles' house. With him was the girl, dressed in beautiful clothes and jewellery. Rajendra also held a bag in his hands. His uncles were astonished to see him alive. How had he survived? Rajendra said 'When I fell into the river, this beautiful girl saved me. She has a

palace at the bottom of the river. She fell in love with me and married me. She also gave me half her riches. Now we will live in the river. Do come and visit us some time.' Saying this, they left in the direction of the river. The uncles had a quick discussion and decided they would follow Rajendra to his palace in the river and perhaps cheat him of his newfound wealth. So they ran to the river and dived into its deep waters.

They were never heard of again.

2. A Bag of Words

Keerti Kumara was a handsome young shepherd. He could play the flute wonderfully. Whenever he played on his simple bamboo flute, which he had made with his own hands, his sheep would listen to it spellbound and do whatever he wanted them to.

The princess of that kingdom was very beautiful. Her father, the king, wanted her to choose a prince and marry him, but she found fault with all the suitors he brought to her. They were so dull, they bored her to tears. Finally, she set an unusual condition. 'I will marry only that man who will be able to look after our hundred rabbits for a month, without losing a single one.'

Soon word of this strange condition spread in the kingdom. Keerti too heard it and decided to give it a try. He landed up at the king's palace, clutching his flute. The king and queen were shocked that a scruffy shepherd wanted to marry their daughter, but they had to keep their word, and Keerti was shown the cage with the hundred rabbits.

The next morning, Keerti went to the cage and, blowing softly into his flute, he led the rabbits to a beautiful meadow where they played, grazed and listened to the music. Not one rabbit tried to escape, and the predators like eagles and foxes too kept away.

The princess heard about this strange and exciting suitor and decided to see him for herself. She went to the meadow and instantly fell in love with the handsome boy who played such divine music. She started meeting him every day. When the king and queen heard about this, they were furious. Not only was the boy fulfilling the condition, the princess too supported him! How could their beautiful daughter marry a poor shepherd!

One day, as Keerti lay on the soft grass with the rabbits hopping about him, a stranger approached him. 'Give me a rabbit and I will give you a gold bar,' said the man. Keerti of course understood that this was no one but the king in disguise. He jumped up and said, 'Of course you can have a rabbit, but first you must wash my dirty clothes, massage my feet and polish my shoes. Then I will give you a rabbit.'

The king had no choice but to do all this. He was only happy no one saw him. Then he took a rabbit, popped it into a sack and walked back to the palace quickly. Keerti gathered the rest of the rabbits and took them home, softly playing his flute. As soon as the king reached the palace, the queen came out to greet him. Joyfully, he opened the sack to show her the rabbit. In a flash, the rabbit leapt out of the bag and hopped off to join its friends, who had followed

the king to the palace with Keerti.

Furious, the queen now decided she would get a rabbit. A few days later, again Keerti was lying on the grass when an old woman came up to him and asked for a rabbit. She promised him two bars of gold for it. Keerti knew it was the queen and said, 'Of course you can have the rabbit. But first you must cook food for me, stitch my torn clothes and cut my hair, then you can have one of my rabbits.'

The queen reluctantly agreed to do all this and soon left with a rabbit in her bag. When she reached the palace, she first went into her room, carefully closed all the doors and windows, and then showed the rabbit to the king. Delighted that they had at last fooled the shepherd, the king flung open a window and yelled to the cook to make a delicious dinner to celebrate. Instantly the rabbit leapt out and hopped off to Keerti, who was standing outside the window, playing his flute.

One month passed and Keerti came to the palace to claim the princess's hand. But the queen spoke up this time. 'You may have carried out my daughter's wish, but in order to marry her, you need to fulfil my wish too.'

Keerti had to agree. The queen commanded three sacks to be brought in. Then she said, 'Now fill these sacks with your words.' Keerti thought for a while, then he picked up a sack and, holding it near his mouth, said, 'This is a true story. Once upon a time there was a mighty king. The whole kingdom trembled at his words. But one day he met a poor shepherd boy who made him wash his clothes, massage his dirty feet and polish his shoes . . .'

Immediately the king shouted, 'Enough, stop! The bag is full.'

'But my story is not over yet,' Keerti protested.

'Yes, it is. The bag is full,' said the king.

So Keerti picked up the second bag. He held it to his mouth and said, 'Once upon a time there was a beautiful queen. The king listened to every word she said. But one day she went to a poor shepherd boy and stitched his torn clothes, cut his hair. ..'

'Stop! Stop!' the queen shouted and tied the second bag.

Keerti Kumara opened the third bag. 'Once there was a lovely princess who fell in love with a poor shepherd boy. She would come up to the hills to meet him and .. .'

Now the king and the queen together tied the third bag. They knew who the princess was and realized she had made a good choice in deciding to marry this clever, musical shepherd boy.

3. Magic in the Air

Sheelavati and Jayasheel were a poor old couple. Their only precious possession was one cow. Once, Jayasheel fell very sick. Soon all their money was used up in buying medicines and they realized they would have to sell the cow. Sheelavati would have to go to the market. She was a very simple woman, so her husband warned her, 'Don't talk to anyone. Just walk to the market, sell the cow and come back with the money.'

Sheelavati set off, leading the cow by a rope. On the way, she met four young men. They were the local thugs and enjoyed bullying and tormenting old people. When they saw Sheelavati with her cow, they decided to play a trick. One of them sneaked up behind her, untied the cow and tied a goat in its place. Sheelavati had been walking immersed in thought, worried about Jayasheel. She was surprised when she heard a goat bleating behind her. It was true: her cow had vanished and she was holding a goat!

The four boys came up to her and said, 'There is some magic in the air these days. It turned your cow into a goat.'

Poor Sheelavati walked on with the goat. After a while, the boys untied the goat and tied a rooster in its place. 'Cock-a-doodle-do,' crowed the rooster and Sheelavati was surprised again. Now the goat had become a rooster!

The four boys again shouted, 'Magic in the air, Grandma.'

Sheelavati now walked on with the rooster. The boys crept up again and tied a log of wood in place of the rooster. Sheelavati was surprised to hear the sound of wood dragging on the road behind her. 'Magic in the air, Grandma,' shouted the boys again.

Then, as she dragged the wood, the boys untied that too and ran away. When Sheelavati reached the market, she found she was holding only a rope in her hand. Feeling sad, she came back home. She had lost the cow and not got any money either. When she told Jayasheel the story of the magic, he knew what had happened. He told his wife, 'Tomorrow make chapatti, vegetable and kheer for lunch. Make sure you cook for four people. I will come home with some guests. As soon as they come, you must say, "I cooked what the rabbit

told me. Come, eat your lunch." Leave everything else to me.'

The next morning, Jayasheel went and borrowed two identical rabbits from a friend. He left one at home and tied the other with a string and started walking towards the market with it. On the way, he too met the four thugs. 'Hey, Grandfather!' they yelled. 'Your wife's cow vanished yesterday. Where are you taking this rabbit now?'

Jayasheel sighed sadly and said, 'This rabbit is like my son. It obeys my every word. But now I am sick and we need money, so I am having to sell it in the market.'

The four were surprised when they heard this. 'Does it really understand what you say, Grandfather?' they asked.

'Of course it does. Here, watch me.' Jayasheel turned to the rabbit and said, 'Hop home, little one, and tell your mother to make chapatti, vegetable and kheer for four people.' Then he untied the string and let the rabbit hop away. He said to the boys, 'Come home and have lunch with me.'

When they reached Jayasheel's house, his wife welcomed them and said, 'I cooked what the rabbit told me. Come, eat your lunch.' And she laid out chapatti, vegetable and kheer for each of them. What was more, they saw the rabbit sitting in a corner of the room, tucking into a green leaf!

They were amazed and told Jayasheel, 'We will buy your rabbit.'

Jayasheel pretended to think, then said, 'It is very precious to me. How can I sell it?' When the four begged him and offered more and more money, he reluctantly agreed. They dropped a heap of coins in his hand and rushed away with the rabbit.

Now, the thugs had been blackmailing the landlord for some money. They said to the rabbit, 'Go tell the landlord to come and give us our money in ten minutes.'

The rabbit hopped off and they waited for the landlord. An hour went by, but there was no sign of him. They marched to his house, knocked loudly on the door and demanded, 'Give us our money and the rabbit.'

The furious landlord ordered his largest bodyguard to give them the thrashing of their lives. Bleeding and bruised, the four went back to Jayasheel. 'You fooled us!' they shouted. 'Give us back our money at once.'

'There is magic in the air,' sighed Jayasheel. 'The money has disappeared!'

4. Grammar page

Was and Were

The verbs **was** and **were** are also forms of the verb **be**. **Was** is the simple past tense of **am** and **is**. Use **was** with the pronouns **I, he, she** and **it**, and with **singular nouns**.

Edison **was** a famous inventor.



Beethoven **was** a German composer.
Sue **was** at the library this morning.
It **was** very wet on Monday.
Ten years ago she **was** only a baby.
He **was** not well yesterday.
Last year she **wasn't** tall enough to reach the high shelf.
Samantha **was** second in the race, **wasn't she**?

Were is the simple past tense of **are**. Use **were** with the pronouns **you, we** and **they**, and with plural nouns.

These **were** my best jeans.

The Romans **were** brave soldiers.
They **were** third in the wheelbarrow race.
There **weren't** any clouds in the sky.
Were you still in bed when I phoned?
We **were** on the same school team.
Those **were** my best jeans.

