



Learn English Through Stories

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30. The Fisherman and the Little Fish



A poor Fisherman, who lived on the fish he caught, had bad luck one day and caught nothing but a very small fry. The Fisherman was about to put it in his basket when the little Fish said:

"Please spare me, Mr. Fisherman! I am so small it is not worthwhile to carry me home. When I am bigger, I shall make you a much better meal."

But the Fisherman quickly put the fish into his basket.

"How foolish I should be," he said, "to throw you back. However small you may be, you are better than nothing at all."

A small gain is worth more than a large promise.

The Fisherman and the Little Fish: Version 2

Once upon a time, Steven lived with his widowed mother, Sara, in a modest, well-kept terrace house on the edge of an idyllic village, just a short walk from the sea. Six days a week, they toiled together at a nearby farm—planting seeds, harvesting spring onions, feeding livestock, and tending to the land. It was hard work, but it kept them afloat.

Sara often found her thoughts drifting to the past, to the days when her husband, Joe, was still alive. He had been a brave soldier, called to war when Steven was only five. Years later, Joe gave his life for his country, leaving Sara and Steven to carry on alone. His sacrifice cast a long shadow over their little family, but they learned to find comfort in their routines.

Every Sunday, Steven set out for the sea to fish. He was often lucky, returning with a decent catch—enough to fill their table with Sara's delicious creations: golden fish pies; hearty fish soups; deep-fried fish with chips and steamed farm vegetables. Mother and son would sit together for their Sunday meal, savouring the fruits of Steven's labour with a glass of local sherry, a small luxury in their simple life.

One Sunday morning, as was his custom, Steven walked to the shore. The windswept beach stretched out before him, unusually still. The air was calm, the sea glassy, and the sun cast a silver shimmer across the waves. He tossed his net into the water and waited. After a while, he hauled it back, revealing a single catch: a tiny fish, no bigger than his thumb. Its scales glinted faintly in the sunlight, and Steven felt a pang of pity as he looked at it—so small, almost fragile, like a child of the sea.

To his surprise, the little fish wriggled in the net and spoke, its voice trembling but clear. "Please, kind fisherman, let me go! I'm too small to be of much use now. Set me free, and I promise I'll grow big and strong. One day, you can catch me again, and I'll be worth so much more to you."

Steven cradled the fish in his roughened hand, its plea echoing in his mind. He thought of his mother waiting at home, the meagre soup she could make with such a tiny catch, and the long days they'd spent scraping by. For a moment, he wavered, imagining the fish grown large and plump, a prize worth waiting for. But then he shook his head, his resolve hardening.

"No, little fish," he said gently but firmly. "I have you now, and that's what matters. A small certainty today is worth more than a big promise tomorrow—one that might never come."

With that, he slipped the tiny fish into his basket and trudged home. That evening, Sara simmered it into a simple, fragrant soup, its flavour subtle but comforting. As they ate, Steven told her about the fish's plea. Sara listened quietly, then smiled faintly.

"You made the right choice, my boy," she said, sipping her sherry. "We've learned to take what we're given and make the best of it. That's how we've survived."

Steven nodded, gazing out the window toward the darkening sea. The little fish was gone, but its words lingered—a whisper of hope, tempered by the hard-earned wisdom of a fisherman's life.

The Fisherman and the Little Fish: Version 3

Once upon a time, Steven lived with his mum, Sara, in a small, tidy house. Their village was close to the sea. They worked hard at a farm six days a week. They planted seeds, cleaned vegetables, and fed animals.

Sara missed her husband, Joe. He was a soldier who went to war when Steven was five. Joe died fighting for his country. Life was tough for Sara and Steven after that.

Every Sunday, Steven went fishing by the sea. He often caught enough fish for a good meal. Sara cooked yummy dishes like fish pie, fish soup and sometimes a spiced fish curry. They ate together and drank a little sherry. It was their special time.

One Sunday, Steven walked to the beach. It was quiet. The sun shone on the water. He threw his net into the sea. After a while, he pulled it back. Inside was one tiny fish. It was very small, and Steven felt sad for it.

The little fish spoke. "Please, kind fisherman, let me go! I'm too small now. If you free me, I'll grow big. Then you can catch me later, and I'll be better for you."

Steven held the fish and thought about it. He wanted to help his mum with food. A big fish later sounded nice, but he wasn't sure it would happen. He shook his head. "No, little fish. I have you now. Something small today is better than waiting for something big that might not come."

He put the fish in his basket and went home. Sara made a simple soup with it. They ate and talked. Steven told her about the fish. Sara smiled. "You did the right thing," she said. "We use what we have. That's how we keep going."

Steven looked at the sea through the window. The fish was gone, but he remembered its words. He felt okay with his choice.

31. The Wolf and the Kid



There was once a little Kid whose growing horns made him think he was a grown-up Billy Goat and able to take care of himself. So one evening when the flock started home from the pasture and his mother called, the Kid paid no heed and kept right on nibbling the tender grass. A little later when he lifted his head, the flock was gone.

He was all alone. The sun was sinking. Long shadows came creeping over the ground. A chilly little wind came creeping with them making scary noises in the grass. The Kid shivered as he thought of the terrible Wolf. Then he started wildly over the field, bleating for his mother. But not half-way, near a clump of trees, there was the Wolf!

The Kid knew there was little hope for him.

"Please, Mr. Wolf," he said trembling, "I know you are going to eat me. But first please pipe me a tune, for I want to dance and be merry as long as I can."

The Wolf liked the idea of a little music before eating, so he struck up a merry tune and the Kid leaped and frisked gaily.

Meanwhile, the flock was moving slowly homeward. In the still evening air the Wolf's piping carried far. The Shepherd Dogs pricked up their ears. They recognized the song the Wolf sings before a feast, and in a moment they were racing back to the pasture. The Wolf's song ended suddenly, and as he ran, with the Dogs at his heels, he called himself a fool for turning piper to please a Kid, when he should have stuck to his butcher's trade.

Do not let anything turn you from your purpose.

The Wolf and the Kid: Version 2

Gurnek grew up in the 1930s in a small village, a spirited boy with a love for nurturing life. He planted fruit trees that bore sweet harvests, tended to young animals with gentle hands, and dreamed of becoming a wrestler, training his wiry frame with fierce determination. At just five feet five inches tall, he was too short to join the British Army—until fate intervened. In 1939, World War II erupted, and the army, desperate for men, cast aside its height restrictions. Gurnek enlisted, his dreams of strength finding a new battlefield.

Assigned to the food supply section, Gurnek ensured frontline soldiers were fed, crisscrossing countries—Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Italy—on dusty roads and under hostile skies. He faced danger often, the enemy's breath sometimes close enough to feel, yet he survived, his resilience forged in war's crucible. When peace finally came in 1945, he left the army without a pension, content with a generous lump sum from the British. Returning home, he embraced a hearty diet to fuel his next chapter: buttery cream with almonds soaked overnight, rich chicken soup, and wholesome carbs. Twice daily, he committed to a rigorous exercise regimen, his body growing lean and powerful.

Word spread of Gurnek's discipline and newfound wealth. Marriage brokers swarmed, eager to pair him with a bride. Families visited, their daughters in tow, but Gurnek had firm conditions for a dowry: a strong young mare, a modest amount of gold, and a promise of mutual respect. No match met his standards, and the proposals faded away.

Undeterred, Gurnek turned to a simpler life. He bought a flock of goats—young kids and weathered elders—and learned to read from a local priest, a skill that opened new worlds to him. Each morning, he led his flock to distant pastures, a book of Indian folklore tucked under his arm. He sustained himself by selling goat milk and the occasional male kid to butchers, his days quiet but full. Among his flock, one buck stood out, a creature Gurnek adored. The kid was a marvel: sleek black-and-brown skin dappled with white spots, sturdy legs, and a bushy, playful tail that wagged like a metronome. As its spiral horns began to sprout, Gurnek lavished it with care—fresh leaves from the treetops, milk from any willing doe, even oil massages to make its coat gleam. In playful moments, he taught the kid to dance, its hooves tapping the earth to an imagined rhythm.

One crisp morning, the kid caught its reflection in a still pond. Mesmerized by the budding horns and sturdy frame staring back, it decided it was no longer a child but a proud billy goat, ready to stand alone. That evening, as Gurnek called the flock home from the grazing fields, the kid ignored the summons, nibbling at tender grass with newfound defiance. The herd drifted away, their bleats fading into the dusk. When the kid finally looked up, it was alone.

The sun dipped below the horizon, casting long, creeping shadows across the field. A cold wind rustled the grass, whispering eerie tunes. The kid shivered, its bravado crumbling as it recalled tales of the terrible Wolf. In a panic, it bolted across the pasture, bleating desperately for Gurnek. But halfway to safety, near a thicket of gnarled trees, the Wolf emerged—lean, grey, and hungry, its eyes glinting in the twilight.

The kid froze, trembling. It knew escape was futile. Yet, in a flash of cunning, it raised its voice. "Please, Mr. Wolf," it said, voice quavering, "I know you'll eat me. But before you do, play me a tune. Let me dance and be merry one last time." The Wolf, amused by the request, agreed. A meal seasoned with music sounded delightful. He lifted his head and piped a jaunty melody, the notes sharp and wild. The kid leaped and twirled, hooves kicking up dust, its dance a fleeting joy.

Unbeknownst to the Wolf, the flock had not gone far. In the still evening air, his piping carried across the fields. A pack of village dogs, romping nearby, pricked their ears. They knew that tune—the Wolf's prelude to a feast. With a chorus of barks, they raced toward the sound. The Wolf's song faltered as the dogs burst into the clearing, teeth bared and eyes fierce. He fled, the pack snapping at his heels, cursing himself aloud: "A fool I am, turning piper for a kid when I should've stuck to my butcher's trade!"

Gurnek, hearing the commotion, hurried back to the pasture. His heart swelled with relief as he spotted his beloved kid, trembling but unharmed. He scooped it into his arms, the little dancer safe once more. In the days that followed, the kid never strayed far again, its youthful pride tempered by the wisdom of near loss. And Gurnek, ever the tender shepherd, smiled as he tended his flock, knowing even the boldest spirits need a guiding hand.

The Wolf and the Kid: Version 3

Gurnek grew up in the 1930s in a small village. He liked planting fruit trees, taking care of baby animals, and training to be a wrestler. He was short—only five feet five inches tall—so he couldn't join the British Army at first. But in 1939, World War II started. The army needed more people and let him join. Gurnek worked in the food supply team. He brought food to soldiers fighting at the front. He went to places like Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Italy. Sometimes the enemy was very close, but he stayed safe.

When the war ended in 1945, Gurnek left the army. He didn't want a pension, but the British gave him some money. He started eating healthy food: butter with almonds, chicken soup, and pinnia. He exercised twice a day to stay strong.

People thought Gurnek was ready to get married. They brought girls to meet him. Gurnek wanted a wife, but he had rules. He asked for a young female horse and some gold as a gift. No one agreed, so he didn't get married.

Instead, Gurnek bought a group of goats—some old, some young. He learned to read from a priest in the village. Every morning, he took his goats to eat grass far away. He read Indian folk stories while they grazed. He sold their milk and some of the boy goats to make money. One little goat was his favourite. It had shiny black-and-brown fur with white spots, strong legs, and a cute, wiggly tail. Soon, it grew small, round horns. Gurnek took good care of it. He gave it milk from other goats, fresh leaves, and even rubbed oil on its fur. He taught it to dance, and it hopped around happily.

One day, the little goat saw itself in a pond. It liked its horns and thought, "I'm a big goat now. I can take care of myself." That evening, Gurnek called the goats to go home. The little goat didn't listen. It kept eating grass. When it looked up, the other goats were gone.

The sun was going down. Shadows stretched across the field. A cold wind blew, making spooky sounds in the grass. The little goat got scared. It remembered stories about the Wolf. It ran, calling for Gurnek. But near some trees, the Wolf appeared! It was big and grey, with sharp eyes.

The goat shook with fear. It knew it was in trouble. Then it had an idea. "Please, Mr. Wolf," it said, "I know you'll eat me. But first, play me a song. I want to dance one last time." The Wolf liked that. He thought music would

make his meal more fun. He started to play a happy tune. The goat danced, jumping and spinning.

The other goats weren't far away. The Wolf's music floated through the air. Some village dogs heard it. They knew that song—it meant the Wolf was about to eat. They ran to the field, barking loudly. The Wolf stopped playing. The dogs chased him away. As he ran, he shouted, "I'm so silly! I played music for a goat when I should've just eaten it!"

Gurnek heard the noise and came running. He was so happy to see his little goat safe. He picked it up and hugged it. After that, the goat stayed close to Gurnek. It learned it wasn't so big yet. Gurnek smiled as he watched his goats. Even the bravest ones needed him to keep them safe.