



# **Learn English Through Stories**

## **D Series**

### **D60**

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# The Eyes Have It

By Ruskin Bond - Modified

The train compartment was mine alone until Rohana. It was a quiet space, with only the rhythmic clatter of wheels and the occasional whistle of the engine to break the silence. I sat by the window, though it made little difference to me. I had been totally blind for years, my eyes sensitive only to the faint glow of light or the heavy shroud of darkness. The world outside was a mystery, painted in my mind through sounds, smells, and memories.

At Rohana, the compartment door slid open, and a girl stepped in. I heard the soft slap of her slippers against her heels and the rustle of her clothes as she settled into the seat opposite me. Outside, a couple—likely her parents—called out instructions. Their voices were warm but anxious, as if they feared for her safety. “Keep your bag close, dear,” the woman said. “Don’t lean out of the window, and please, no talking to strangers.” The man added, “Your aunt will be waiting at Saharanpur. Stay near the platform.” The girl murmured soft replies, her voice light and pleasant, like a stream bubbling over smooth stones.

The train jolted forward, and their goodbyes faded into the distance. I sat still, wondering about my new companion. Without sight, I could not tell if she was tall or short, fair or dark. But her slippers made a gentle, rhythmic sound, and her voice lingered in my mind. I wanted to speak, to learn more about her, but I hesitated. Would she notice I was blind? I decided to be careful, to keep my words simple and my movements small.

“Are you going all the way to Dehra?” I asked, my voice breaking the quiet.

She gasped softly, startled. “Oh! I didn’t know anyone was here,” she said. Her voice trembled for a moment, then steadied. “You were so quiet in that corner.”

I smiled, though she couldn’t see it. “People with good eyes often miss what’s right in front of them,” I said. “They see too much, I think. Those of us who can’t see... we notice what matters most.”

“I didn’t see you either,” I added quickly, “but I heard you come in.”

She laughed, a clear, ringing sound that warmed the cold metal of the compartment. “Well, I suppose we’re both a bit distracted,” she said. “I’m getting off at Saharanpur. My aunt is meeting me there.”

“Saharanpur’s not far,” I replied, leaning back in my seat. “Better not get too friendly, then. Aunts can be fierce, you know.”

She giggled. “Oh, mine is! She’s always watching me like a hawk. Where are you going?”

“To Dehra,” I said, “and then to Mussoorie.”

“Mussoorie!” she exclaimed, her voice bright with envy. “You’re so lucky. I love the hills. I went there once, years ago. The air smells of pine, and the roads twist through quiet forests. I wish I were going now.”

“Yes, it’s beautiful,” I said, drawing on memories from before my sight faded. “October is the best time. The hills bloom with wild dahlias, red and pink against the green. The sun is warm but soft, and at night, you can sit by a log fire, sipping brandy. The tourists are gone, and the roads are empty. It’s like the hills belong to you.”

She fell silent, and I wondered if my words had painted a picture for her. Did she think me a dreamer, or had I touched something in her heart? I wanted to keep talking, to hold onto the sound of her voice, but I made a mistake.

“What’s it like outside?” I asked, my tone casual.

She didn’t seem to find the question odd. “Why don’t you look out the window?” she replied.

My heart skipped. Had she guessed I was blind? I couldn’t let her know. I stood slowly, feeling my way along the berth until my fingers brushed the window ledge. The window was open, and a cool breeze touched my face. I turned toward it, pretending to study the view. In my mind, I saw the landscape from years ago: green fields stretching wide, telegraph posts flashing by, and distant hills under a pale sky. The engine panted, and the wheels rumbled beneath us.

“Have you noticed,” I said, “that the trees seem to move while we stand still?”

“Yes, it’s always like that,” she said, her voice curious. “Do you see any animals out there?”

“No,” I answered confidently. “The forests near Dehra are quiet now. Not many animals left.”

I turned back and sat down, hoping my act had worked. We sat in silence for a moment, the train rocking gently. I wanted to say something bold, to keep her talking. “You have an interesting face,” I said, my voice steady.

She laughed again, that same clear sound. “Interesting? That’s new. Everyone always says I have a pretty face. I’m tired of hearing it.”

So, she is pretty, I thought, smiling to myself. “Well,” I said, “an interesting face can be pretty, too.”

“You’re very kind,” she said, her tone playful. “But why so serious? You sound like you’re thinking deep thoughts.”

I wanted to laugh for her, to match her lightness, but the thought of laughter made me feel lonely. Her voice was a gift, a spark in the darkness of my world, but soon she would be gone. “I’m just enjoying the journey,” I said softly.

“It’s a short trip for me, thank goodness,” she said, gathering her things. “I don’t like trains for too long. Two or three hours is enough.”

I nodded, though I could have sat there forever, listening to her. Her voice was like music, bright and flowing. When she left, she would forget me, but I would carry this moment for the rest of my journey—and beyond.

The train slowed, and the engine’s whistle pierced the air. The rhythm of the wheels changed, growing heavier. She stood, her slippers tapping lightly as she collected her bag. I wondered about her hair. Was it long and loose, brushing her shoulders? Or short, framing her face? I would never know.

Outside, voices rose—porters shouting, vendors calling. A sharp, high-pitched voice cut through the noise, likely her aunt’s. “Goodbye,” the girl said, standing close to me. The scent of her perfume, soft and floral, filled the air. I wanted to reach out, to touch her hand or her hair, but she stepped away. The perfume lingered, a faint trace of her presence.

The door banged open, and there was a shuffle of movement. A man entered, muttering an apology as he bumped into someone. The door slammed shut, and the train lurched forward. I returned to my seat, the compartment feeling emptier now. The guard’s whistle sounded, and we were moving again.

I sat by the window, staring into the daylight that was darkness for me. The world outside was alive with sounds: the creak of the carriage, the hum of the tracks, the rush of wind. I played a game in my mind, guessing what passed by.

Perhaps a river sparkled under the sun, or a farmer led his cows across a field. It was a way to fill the silence.

The new passenger spoke, his voice rough but friendly. "You must be disappointed," he said. "I'm not nearly as nice to talk to as the girl who left."

I smiled. "She was interesting," I said. "Can you tell me—did she have long hair or short?"

He paused, as if thinking. "I don't remember her hair," he said, sounding puzzled. "It was her eyes I noticed. Beautiful eyes, but... they were no use to her. She was completely blind. Didn't you know?"

The words hit me like a cold wind. Blind? She was blind, just like me? I hadn't noticed. All that time, we had both been hiding, pretending to see a world we could only imagine. Her voice, her laugh, her gentle questions—they took on new meaning. She had played the same game I had, keeping her secret as carefully as I kept mine.

I turned to the window, the darkness pressing against my eyes. The train rattled on, carrying me toward Dehra, toward Mussoorie's quiet hills. But my thoughts stayed with her, the girl with the sparkling voice and sightless eyes. We had shared something rare, a moment of connection in a world we could not see. And though she was gone, her perfume, her laughter, and the truth of who she was would stay with me, like a light in the endless night.

## **2. Comprehension**

Question 1: What does the narrator notice about the girl when she enters the train?

Question 2: Where is the girl going, and who is meeting her there?

Question 3: Why does the narrator pretend to look out the window?

Question 4: What does the narrator say about Mussoorie in October?

Question 5: What surprising fact does the new passenger tell the narrator about the girl?

### **Answers**

Answer 1: He notices the sound of her slippers slapping against her heels, the rustle of her clothes, and her pleasant voice.

Answer 2: The girl is going to Saharanpur, and her aunt is meeting her there.

Answer 3: He pretends to look out the window to hide that he is blind and cannot see.

Answer 4: He says the hills bloom with wild dahlias, the sun is warm, and at night you can sit by a log fire, with quiet roads and fewer tourists.

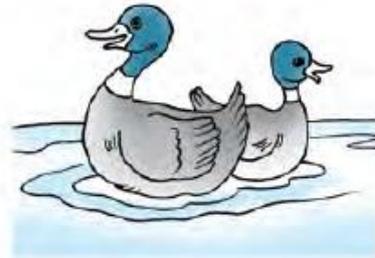
Answer 5: The new passenger says the girl is completely blind and had beautiful but useless eyes.

### 3. Grammar page

You can also use **do**, **does** and **did** as **helping verbs** to ask and answer questions.



Where **did** you find the wallet?



**Do** ducks **like** water?  
Yes, they **do**.

**Do** you **like** ice cream? Yes, I **do**.

**Does** it **rain** often here? Yes, it **does**.

**Does** he **enjoy** music? Yes, he **does**.

**Did** it **snow** last night? No, it **didn't**.

Who wants to come with me to the zoo? We all **do**!

What **do** you **want** for lunch?

Who broke this vase? Peter **did**!

**Does** Ken often **come** home late? Yes, he **does**.

Why **did** he **leave** so suddenly?

**Does** everyone **have** a dictionary?