



Learn English Through Stories

E Series

E55

**Adapted and modified by
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1. Heart of Gold

By Sudha Murthy

This is a true story. I heard it on the radio during one of my visits to the US. It happened in one of the biggest cities in the world, New York.

It was winter. One evening, a worried mother stood shivering by the road, wearing an old coat. With her was a little girl, thin, sick-looking with a shaven head. She was wearing an oversize dress which somebody had probably given to her out of mercy. It was apparent that they were homeless and poor. The child had a cardboard placard in her hand which said, 'I am suffering from cancer. Please help me.'

The mother was carrying a begging bowl. Whenever the traffic lights turned red they would approach people, stopping them on the road and asking for help.

America is a rich country, but if you are sick and don't have insurance, then you are lost. Nobody can support you. People give small amounts of money when they see such pleas for help. This kind of a scene is not uncommon in India. We see lots of beggars with small infants in one hand and a begging bowl in another. But in America it is not so common. People felt bad for this unfortunate mother and child.

One day, a policeman was passing by and saw them. He asked them a few questions and noticed that the child indeed looked very sick with her swollen eyes and shaven head. He wanted to help, so he opened his purse. He saw a bundle of notes which he had just drawn from the bank. He had received a good bonus for the excellent work he had done. He thought, 'I have a warm home, a caring wife and a loving son. God has been very kind to me. But these unfortunate people don't have any one of these things. It is not their mistake that God has not been kind to them.' He remembered the many things he had promised his wife and son he would buy when he got his bonus. For a while he was in two minds. Then he decided and gave all the cash which he had drawn from the bank to the woman and said, 'Please take good care of the child.'

When he reached home his son met him at the doorstep as usual and hugged him. The house was warm and nice. He sat in front of his wife, and looking at the snow falling outside, he narrated the whole incident. After listening to him for a while his wife was silent, then she smiled. But the son was angry. He said, 'Dad, how are you sure that they have not cheated you? And even though you wanted to give some money you could have given

some portion. Why did you give everything?’

The policeman laughed at his son and said, ‘Son, you do not know what poverty is. I come across such unfortunate people in my work.’

The days passed and everybody forgot about it.

One day a news item in the paper caught the son’s attention: ‘Mother and child caught cheating.’

With great interest he read:

‘A greedy mother used her healthy child to pose as a cancer patient. She shaved the child’s head, starved her and dressed her shabbily so that anybody would feel the child was suffering from cancer. Using this tactic she duped many people. The mother has been arrested.’

The son realized who these people were and was very upset. When his father came home, he told him as soon as he entered the house, ‘Dad, you were cheated by that lady and her child who you thought was a cancer patient. The child is healthy and you gave away your entire bonus to that child.’

His father did not reply. He sat down, and looked out of the window. There were children playing outside. Winter was over and summer was setting in. In a calm voice he said, ‘Son, I am very happy. The child is healthy.’

The boy was surprised. He thought being a policeman, his father would pick up the phone and talk to the police station or he would be depressed that he had been cheated and given away so much of money to a healthy child. But there were no traces of such emotions.

He asked, ‘Dad, tell me, are you not upset?’

His father again gave him the same answer, ‘I am happy that the child is healthy.’

By that time his wife came with a mug of coffee in her hand. She had heard the entire conversation. With happiness in her voice she told her son. ‘Son, you are very fortunate. You have an extraordinary father, who is not angry even though he has lost a lot of money. You should be proud that your father is happy thinking somebody’s child is healthy, rather than worrying about his own big bonus. Learn from him. Help people without expecting anything in return.’

2. Comprehension Questions and Answers

Question 1: Why did the policeman decide to give his entire bonus to the mother and child?

Question 2: What did the policeman's son initially think about his father's decision to give away the bonus?

Question 3: How did the policeman react when he learned the mother and child had deceived him?

Question 4: What lesson did the policeman's wife want their son to learn from the incident?

Question 5: What societal difference does the story mention about begging in America compared to India?

Answers

Answer 1: The policeman was moved by compassion, seeing the mother and child's apparent poverty and the child's sick appearance, and wanted to help them despite his own plans for the money.

Answer 2: The son was angry and believed his father was cheated, questioning why he gave all the money instead of just a portion.

Answer 3: He remained calm and expressed happiness that the child was healthy, showing no anger or regret over the lost money.

Answer 4: She wanted her son to learn to help others selflessly, without expecting anything in return, and to be proud of his father's compassionate nature.

Answer 5: The story notes that begging, especially with children, is common in India but less so in America, where such scenes are less frequent.

3. Heart of Gold – Modified

This is a true story, one I heard on the radio during a visit to the United States. It unfolded in the heart of New York City, a sprawling metropolis where towering skyscrapers cast long shadows over bustling streets, and the pulse of life never slows.

It was a biting winter evening, the kind where the wind howls through concrete canyons, stinging exposed skin. A mother stood shivering by a busy intersection, her threadbare coat barely shielding her from the cold. Beside her was a frail little girl, her face pale and gaunt, her head shaven, making her look even more vulnerable. She wore a faded, oversized dress, its hem frayed and flapping in the wind, likely a hand-me-down from a stranger's fleeting kindness. In her small hands, she clutched a cardboard placard, its edges curling from the damp air. Scrawled in uneven letters were the words: "I am suffering from cancer. Please help me."

The mother held a chipped tin bowl, her fingers red and raw from the cold. When the traffic lights glowed red, halting the endless stream of cars, she and her daughter would weave through the idling vehicles, approaching strangers with quiet desperation. Their eyes told a story of hardship, one that tugged at the hearts of passers-by.

In America, a land of wealth and opportunity, the weight of poverty and illness can crush even the most resilient. Without insurance, a medical crisis can spiral into ruin. Those who saw the mother and child often reached into their pockets, offering spare change or a crumpled bill, moved by the sight of such misfortune. In India, scenes like this are woven into the fabric of daily life—beggars with infants cradled in one arm, a bowl in the other. But in New York, where the homeless are less visible, the sight of this pair stirred unease and pity in equal measure.

One evening, a policeman patrolling the area noticed them. His uniform was crisp, but his face was kind, etched with the weariness of someone who had seen the city's underbelly. He approached the mother and asked gentle questions, his eyes lingering on the girl. Her swollen eyes and skeletal frame seemed to confirm the placard's plea. His heart stirred. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out his wallet, revealing a thick bundle of bills—his recent bonus, earned for exceptional service. It was money he had withdrawn that very day, earmarked for promises he'd made to his family: a new coat for his wife, a new bicycle for his son.

He paused, caught in a moment of quiet conflict. I have a warm home, a loving

wife, and a healthy son, he thought. God has been generous to me. But this woman and her child—they have nothing. The weight of their hardship pressed against the fleeting temptation to keep the money. With a resolute breath, he handed the entire bundle to the mother. “Please,” he said softly, his voice steady but warm, “take good care of your daughter.”

That night, he returned to his modest home in a quieter corner of the city. The glow of streetlights filtered through the frosted windows, and the warmth of the house enveloped him like an embrace. His young son, full of energy, bounded to the door, wrapping his arms around his father as he always did. Over dinner, with the aroma of his wife’s cooking filling the air, the policeman recounted the encounter, his words painting the scene vividly against the backdrop of falling snow outside. His wife listened, her eyes soft with understanding, but his son’s face darkened.

“Dad,” the boy said, his voice sharp with indignation, “how do you know they weren’t lying? Even if you wanted to help, why give everything? You could’ve spared just a little!”

The policeman chuckled, his laugh warm and untroubled. “Son,” he said, “you’ve never known real poverty. In my work, I see people like them every day—people who’ve been dealt a harder hand than we can imagine.”

Time passed, and the incident faded into the rhythm of their lives. Then, one morning, the boy’s eyes caught a headline in the newspaper: “Mother and Daughter Arrested for Deceptive Begging Scheme.” His heart sank as he read on:

A cunning mother manipulated her healthy daughter to pose as a cancer patient. She shaved the child’s head, starved her to appear frail, and dressed her in tattered clothes to evoke pity. Using this ruse, she swindled countless passers-by out of their money. Authorities have arrested the mother, and the child has been placed in protective care.

The boy’s hands trembled as he realized who they were. When his father came home that evening, he thrust the newspaper forward. “Dad, they cheated you! That girl wasn’t sick! You gave away your entire bonus to a liar!”

The policeman sat down heavily, his gaze drifting to the window. Outside, children laughed and chased each other in the early summer light, their voices carrying the carefree joy of a new season. Winter’s chill had given way to warmth, and the world felt lighter. In a voice calm as a still lake, he said, “Son, I’m happy. The child is healthy.”

The boy blinked, confused. He had expected anger, perhaps a call to the precinct or a sigh of regret over the lost money. But his father’s face held no

trace of bitterness—only a quiet serenity.

“Why aren’t you upset?” the boy pressed, his voice tinged with frustration.

His father’s eyes met his, steady and kind. “I’m happy the child is healthy,” he repeated, each word deliberate.

At that moment, his wife entered, carrying a steaming mug of coffee. She had overheard the exchange, and her face glowed with pride. Setting the mug down, she placed a hand on her son’s shoulder. “You’re lucky, my dear,” she said, her voice rich with emotion. “Your father is a rare man. He gave without expecting anything in return, and even now, he finds joy in knowing a child is well, not sorrow in his loss. That’s a heart of gold. Learn from him—help others not for reward, but because it’s right.”

The boy looked from his mother to his father, the lesson settling into his young heart like a seed. Outside, the summer breeze carried the laughter of children, a reminder that sometimes, the truest wealth lies not in what you keep, but in what you give away.

4. Grammar Page

Prepositions of Place

Some prepositions show **where** something happens. They are called **prepositions of place**.

Sally was sitting **under** a tree.

There's a wooden floor **underneath** the carpet.

Some geese flew **over** their house.

John and Sarah were hiding **inside** the wardrobe.

There was a tree **beside** the river.

I have a friend who lives **in** Wyoming.

A big truck parked **in front of** their car.

The cat jumped **on top of** the cupboard.

One girl sits **in the middle of** the playground and the others dance round her.

Prepositions of Time

Some prepositions show **when** something happens. They are called **prepositions of time**.

School starts **at** nine o'clock.

I brush my teeth **in** the morning and **at** night.

We're going to the zoo **on** Saturday.

No, you can't watch a video. It's **past** your bedtime already.

I visited my grandparents **during** the summer.

You must finish the work **by** Friday.

I'll do my homework **before** dinner.

"Mom, can you help me with my homework?" "Not now. You'll have to wait **until** this afternoon."