



# Learn English Through Stories

E Series

E57

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# 1. The Hare in the Moon

By Ruskin Bond

A long time ago, when animals could talk, there lived in a forest four wise creatures – a hare, a jackal, an otter, and a monkey. They were good friends, and every evening they would sit together in a forest glade to discuss the day's events, exchange advice, and make good resolutions. The hare was the noblest and wisest of the four. He believed in the superiority of men and women and was always telling his friends tales of human goodness, urging them to follow in their footsteps.

One evening, when the moon rose in the sky – and in those days the moon's face was clear and unmarked – the hare looked up and said, "Tomorrow, good men will observe a fast, for it's the middle of the month. They'll eat no food before sunset and give alms to any beggar or holy man they meet. Let's jump on the bandwagon and do the same. That way, we'll come closer to human dignity and wisdom."

The others agreed, and then went their separate ways.

The next day, the otter got up, stretched, and was preparing breakfast when he remembered the vow. If I keep my word, I'll be hungry as a bear by evening! he thought. I'd better make sure there's plenty to eat after the fast. He set off toward the river.

A fisherman had buried several large fish in the sand, planning to return for them later. The otter soon sniffed them out. "A supper all ready for me!" he said. "But since it's a holy day, I mustn't steal." He called out, "Does anyone own this fish?" Hearing no reply, he carried the fish home for his evening meal, locked his door, and slept all day, undisturbed by beggars or holy men.

The monkey and jackal felt much the same. The jackal found stale meat in someone's backyard. This'll keep the wolf from the door tonight, he thought, taking it home. The monkey climbed a mango tree and picked a bunch of mangoes. Like the otter, they decided to sleep through the day.

The hare woke early, shaking his long ears, and came out of his burrow to sniff the dew-drenched grass. When evening comes, I can have my fill of grass, he thought. But if a beggar or holy man comes my way, what can I give? I can't offer grass, and I have nothing else.

I'll have to offer myself. Men seem to relish hare flesh, so I'll bite the bullet and give my all. Pleased with this, he scampered off.

God Sakka, resting on a cloud nearby, overheard the hare. "I'll test him," said the god. "Surely no hare can be so noble." Towards evening, Sakka descended, disguised as an old priest, and sat near the hare's burrow. When the hare returned, the priest said, "Good evening, little hare. Can you give me something to eat? I've been fasting all day and am too hungry to pray."

The hare, remembering his vow, said, "Is it true men enjoy hare flesh?"

"Quite true," said the priest.

"Then, since I have no other food, you can make a meal of me."

"But I'm a holy man, and this is a holy day. I may not kill any living creature with my own hands."

"Then collect dry sticks and light a fire. I'll leap into the flames myself, and when I'm roasted, you can eat me."

Sakka marvelled but wasn't fully convinced, so he caused a fire to spring up. The hare, without hesitation, jumped in. "What's happening?" he called. "The fire surrounds me, but not a hair is singed. I'm cool as a cucumber!"

The fire died down, and the hare sat on sweet grass. Instead of the priest, God Sakka stood before him in radiance. "I am God Sakka, little hare, and I tested your sincerity. Your unselfishness deserves immortality. It must be known far and wide."

Sakka stretched his hand toward the mountain, drew its essence, and threw it at the moon, creating the hare's outline on its surface. Leaving the hare in a bed of grass, he said, "Forever, little hare, you'll look down from the moon, reminding all of the truth: 'Give to others, and the gods will give to you.'"

## **2. Comprehension**

Question 1: Why did the hare want the animals to follow in the footsteps of humans?

Question 2: What did the animals decide to do when the hare suggested they jump on the bandwagon and observe a fast?

Question 3: What did the otter, jackal, and monkey do after they went their separate ways following the agreement?

Question 4: Why did the otter worry about being hungry as a bear during the fast?

Question 5: Why did the hare remain cool as a cucumber in the fire, and how did God Sakka reward him?

## **Answers**

Answer 1: The hare believed humans were superior in goodness and wisdom, so he wanted the animals to fast and give alms like humans to gain dignity and wisdom.

Answer 2: They agreed to fast until sunset and give alms to any beggar or holy man they met.

Answer 3: The otter found fish, the jackal took stale meat, and the monkey picked mangoes, all to save for their evening meal after the fast.

Answer 4: The otter realized he would be extremely hungry by evening if he didn't eat all day, so he wanted to ensure he had food ready after the fast.

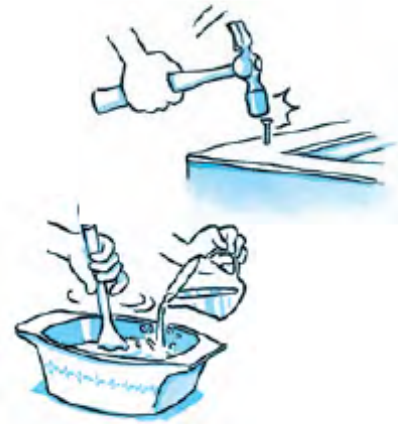
Answer 5: The hare was unaffected because the fire was a test by God Sakka, not real flames. Sakka rewarded the hare's unselfishness by placing his outline on the moon to remind people to give to others.

### 3. Grammar Page

#### Prepositions with Special Uses

##### with

He pounds nails in **with** a hammer.  
Mix the flour **with** water.  
She painted the picture **with** her new paints.  
Would you like to come **with** us to the arcade?  
I can do difficult problems **with** help from Mom.  
Who is the man **with** the beard?  
Michael came home **with** dirty hands.  
Cross the busy street **with** care.



##### except and instead of

I like all kinds of food **except** pasta.  
Everyone likes chocolate **except** Tom.  
We go to school every day **except** Saturday and Sunday.  
You should eat fruit **instead of** candy.  
Dad is coming to the theater with us **instead of** Mom.  
We could watch TV **instead of** reading our books.



##### like, as and than

The words **like**, **as** and **than** are used to compare things.

Kathleen looks **like** her dad.  
Andrew smiles **like** his mother.  
Peter sings **like** a professional singer.  
Are these shoes the same **as** those?  
Sue is nearly as tall **as** the teacher.  
My backpack is bigger **than** John's.  
Dad is taller **than** all of us.  
This painting is more beautiful **than** that one.  
The neighborhood streets are less busy **than** downtown streets.

