



**Learn English Through Stories**

**F Series**

**F57**

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# **1. The Problem with a Sheltered Life**

Raising a boy in a “sheltered life,” where parents keep him under their wing, is not always wise. If he must go out into the world and stand on his own two feet, he’ll face many troubles. Without experience, he might fall flat on his face, just because he doesn’t know how the world works.

Think of a puppy. If it eats soap or chews a dirty boot, it gets sick. It learns that soap and boots are bad news. An older dog might snap at the puppy if it bites its ears. The puppy learns fast and grows up well-behaved. But if you keep the puppy away from soap, boots, and other dogs until it’s grown, it’ll be in deep water when it finally faces them. This is like a sheltered boy. He needs to learn life’s lessons early, or he’ll pay a heavy price later.

There was a boy who was raised this way, and it cost him dearly. Let me tell you his story.

## **The Boy’s Early Life**

The Boy grew up with his parents, who kept him safe from all harm. He never caused them a moment’s worry. A private teacher taught him well, and he shone like a star in school. He joined Sandhurst, a famous military school, and nearly took the top spot. At Sandhurst, he saw a bit of the world, like tasting soap or boots, but it didn’t teach him much. He left Sandhurst with lower marks than he started, his shine a bit dulled.

His parents had high hopes, but he let them down. Then he spent a year in a dull army unit, where the young soldiers acted like kids and the older ones grumbled like old hens. Finally, he was sent to India, far from his family. He had to fend for himself, with no one to lean on.

## **Life in India**

India was a strange place. The narrator explains it like this: “You must not take things to heart in India, except the hot sun at noon.” Too much work or energy can burn you out, just like too much drinking or bad habits. Love affairs don’t matter because people move away quickly. Good work isn’t valued because someone else steals the spotlight. Bad work doesn’t matter either, because others do worse. Fun activities, like games, are just ways to win money, and you repeat them endlessly.

Sickness is part of the deal, and if you die, someone else takes your job in a flash. Nothing matters much except going home to England or getting extra

pay, which are hard to come by. India feels like a lazy, imperfect place. The smartest thing is to keep your cool and leave as soon as you can.

But the Boy took everything to heart. He was handsome, and people made a fuss over him at first. He loved their attention but got bent out of shape when women ignored him, even if they weren't worth his time. He enjoyed the exciting life in India—horses, dances, and parties. It was new and fun, like a puppy tasting soap. But he didn't know how to keep his balance. He expected everyone to treat him as kindly as his parents did, and it hit him hard when they didn't.

### **The Boy's Struggles**

The Boy clashed with other young soldiers. He was very sensitive, so these fights got under his skin. He liked playing cards and joining horse races, which were meant to be fun after work. But he took them too seriously, just like he suffered headaches from drinking too much. He lost money in these games because he was green and inexperienced.

He cared too much about small things, like a cheap horse race, as if it were the race of a lifetime. Half of this came from not knowing better, like a puppy wrestling with a rug. The other half came from being overwhelmed. He went from a quiet life to a loud, busy one, and it threw him off track. No one warned him about the dangers, because most people assume you've got the hang of it. It was sad to watch him fall apart, like a young horse tripping and hurting itself when it runs free.

We thought the hot weather and his losses—money, health, and injured horses—would bring him down to earth. Usually, this happens. Most young men learn their lesson. But the Boy was different. He was too sensitive and took everything to heart. We didn't know how much he was hurting inside.

### **A Cruel Comment**

His troubles weren't so bad compared to others. He owed money, but he could bounce back with help. In time, people would forget his slip-ups. But he saw things differently. He thought he was down for the count. His Colonel gave him a stern talking-to when the cold season ended, which made him feel worse. It was just a normal scolding, but it crushed him.

Then something small but terrible happened. A woman said something unkind to him while they talked. It was a thoughtless comment, not worth repeating, but it cut him to the quick. His face turned red, and he felt ashamed. For three days, he kept to himself. Then he asked for two days off to go shooting near a rest house by a canal, about thirty miles away. He got permission and left that night, acting loud and rude at dinner. He said he was going to hunt "big game,"

but everyone laughed because only small birds, like partridges, lived near the rest house.

### **A Worried Major**

The next morning, a Major returned from a short trip. He had always kept an eye on the Boy and tried to steer him right. When he heard about the “big game” hunting, he smelled a rat. He went to the Boy’s room and looked around. He found something odd: a revolver and a writing case.

The Major found me in the dining hall and said, “Does a man go hunting with a revolver and a writing case?” I said, “That’s nonsense!” but I knew what he was driving at. He said, “I’m going to the canal now. I’m worried.” Then he asked, “Can you keep a secret?” I said, “Yes, it’s my job.” He told me to get my hunting clothes and gun and come with him to hunt deer.

The Major was serious, so I followed his orders. We took a small cart called an ekka, with guns and food. The Major drove fast, pushing the pony to the limit. We covered thirty miles in less than three hours, but the pony was worn out.

I asked, “Why are we in such a rush?” He said quietly, “The Boy has been alone for fourteen hours. I’m scared for him.” His fear rubbed off on me, and I helped urge the pony faster.

### **A Tragic Discovery**

At the rest house, we called for the Boy’s servant, but no one answered. We shouted the Boy’s name, but it was silent. I said, “Maybe he’s out hunting.” Then I saw a small lamp burning inside, even though it was only four in the afternoon. We stopped on the porch, listening. We heard the buzzing of many flies. The Major took off his hat, and we walked in quietly.

The Boy was dead on a bed in the plain room. He had shot himself with his revolver. His gun cases and bedding were still packed, and his writing case was on the table. He had died alone, like a trapped animal.

The Major whispered, “Poor Boy! Poor, poor boy!” Then he said, “I need your help.” I knew what he meant. We couldn’t spill the beans about the Boy’s death.

I sat at the table, lit a cigarette, and opened the writing case. The Major looked over my shoulder, saying, “We were too late! Poor boy!” The Boy had written letters all night—to his parents, his Colonel, and a girl in England. Then he shot himself. He had been dead for hours when we arrived.

## **The Boy's Letters**

The letters showed how seriously he took everything. He wrote about “shame he couldn't bear,” “foolish mistakes,” and a “wasted life.” He shared private thoughts with his parents, too personal to share. The letter to the girl was the saddest. It brought tears to my eyes. The Major cried openly, and I admired him for not hiding it. The letters were so full of pain that we forgot the Boy's mistakes and only felt sorry for him.

We knew we couldn't send these letters home. They would break his parents' hearts. The Major said, “We can't drop this bombshell on his family. What should we do?” I said, “We'll say he died of cholera. We were with him. We have to go all in.”

## **A Big Lie**

We started to cook up a false story. I wrote a letter saying the Boy was a perfect soldier, loved by everyone, with a bright future. I said he got sick with cholera, we cared for him, and he died peacefully. The Major helped with ideas while he burned the Boy's real letters in the fireplace. It was a hot evening, and the lamp flickered. I felt sick writing lies, thinking of the Boy's parents reading them.

Sometimes I laughed at how odd it was, and the Major said we needed drinks. We drank whiskey, but it didn't faze us. We took the Boy's watch, locket, and rings. The Major said, “We need a lock of hair. Mothers value that.” But the Boy's hair wasn't suitable. Luckily, the Major had dark hair like the Boy's. I cut some of his hair and added it to the package. We laughed and choked, knowing the hardest part was coming.

We sealed the package with the Boy's wax and stamp. Then the Major said, “Let's get out of here. I can't stay.” We walked by the canal, eating and drinking, until the moon rose. I felt like I was carrying a heavy load.

## **Hiding the Truth**

We went back to the room. We burned the bed and threw the ashes into the canal. We did the same with the floor mats. I borrowed tools from a nearby village to dig a grave, while the Major handled other tasks. It took four hours of backbreaking work. As we dug, we talked about whether to say a prayer. We said the Lord's Prayer and a quiet one for the Boy's soul. Then we filled the grave and slept on the porch, too tired to go inside.

The next morning, the Major said, “We can't go back yet. We need to say he died this morning to make it believable.” I asked, “Why not take him back to

the army base?” He said, “The people ran away because of cholera, and our cart is gone.” It was true—the pony had gone home.

We stayed all day, checking our story for holes. A villager came, but we said a British man died of cholera, and he took off. That evening, the Major shared his own stories of feeling lost when he was young. He said young men often blow their mistakes out of proportion. We practiced our story until the moon rose, then walked ten hours back to the base.

### **The End**

We went to the Boy’s room and put his revolver and writing case back neatly. We told the Colonel the Boy died of cholera, feeling guilty as sin. Then we slept for a whole day, exhausted.

The story held up. People forgot the Boy in two weeks. Some criticized the Major for not bringing the body back for a proper funeral. The saddest part was a letter from the Boy’s mother. She thanked us for our kindness and said she’d be grateful forever. She didn’t know the truth, but she was right to thank us in a way.

## 2. Grammar Page



### GRAMMAR STUDY: Some More Prepositions

about	<i>on the subject of</i> : This poem is about tigers in the zoo. Is it about poverty? <i>approximately</i> : There are about ten students in the hall. He is about 60.
above	<i>higher than</i> : The clock hangs above my bed. The plane flew above the clouds. <i>earlier on a page</i> : There is a heading above each diagram.
below	<i>lower than</i> : This lake is 50 metres below sea level. <i>later on a page</i> : Footnotes are provided below the text.
over	<i>above; higher than</i> : There is a bulb over that table. <i>covering</i> : We spread an extra blanket over the bed. <i>more than</i> : It costs over five thousand rupees.
under	<i>beneath</i> : There is a ball under the table. Who is that girl under the tree? <i>less than</i> : Under 15 students failed the final exam.
across	<i>from one side to the other side</i> : We walked across the road. <i>on the other side of</i> : There is a health post across the street.
along	<i>in a line; from one point to another</i> : They're walking along the road.
after	<i>one follows the other</i> : The cat ran after the dog. Is she always after you? <i>later in time</i> : Did he come after lunch? They met me after 10. <i>later in a series</i> : D comes after C in the alphabet. <i>in pursuit of</i> : He always runs after money. Several people are after this job.
before	<i>earlier in time</i> : He came here before lunch. Do you come here before 4 pm? <i>earlier in a series</i> : D comes before E in the alphabet.
between	<i>within a group of two</i> : The books were divided between the two students. <i>in-between location</i> : Our school is between the hospital and the park. <i>in-between time</i> : He came here between June and September. <i>in-between in a series</i> : M comes between L and N in the alphabet.
among	<i>in a group</i> : The money was shared among five people.
behind	<i>at the back of</i> : Our school is behind the hospital. Is a dog behind the gate?
in front of	<i>ahead of</i> : He stood in front of the class. There is a dog in front of the gate.
around	<i>in a circular way</i> : They were sitting around the campfire. <i>surrounding</i> : There is a wire fence around the park. <i>in different parts of</i> : I looked around the room for the letters. <i>in the other direction</i> : We turned around and went back home. <i>approximately</i> : He is around six feet tall.
beside	<i>next to</i> : Our house is beside the supermarket.
against	<i>touching; supported by</i> : He leaned the ladder against the wall. <i>in opposition to</i> : Dowry is against the law.
outside	<i>opposite of inside</i> : Can you wait outside?
inside	<i>opposite of outside</i> : You shouldn't stay inside the castle.
close to	<i>near</i> : Our house is close to the supermarket.
near	<i>close to</i> : Our house is near the supermarket.
next to	<i>beside</i> : Our house is next to the supermarket.
off	<i>away from something</i> : The cat jumped off the roof.
onto	<i>moving to a place</i> : The cat jumped onto the roof.
into	<i>entering something</i> : You shouldn't go into the castle.
opposite	<i>on the other side</i> : Our house is opposite the supermarket.