



Learn English Through Stories

G Series

G75

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1. The Story of Two Doctors

Adapted from Sudha Murty

The air was heavy with the scent of antiseptic and the faint hum of fluorescent lights as my sister, Dr. Anjali, trudged through the door of our modest Bangalore home. Her face, usually bright with a quiet resilience, was etched with exhaustion. As a senior doctor in a government hospital, she worked gruelling hours, often stretching into the night. Government hospitals in India, with their peeling walls and overburdened staff, are a lifeline for the poor, offering treatment at minimal cost. But for doctors like Anjali, the price was paid in sleepless nights and unrelenting duty.

That evening, she had just returned from a 24-hour shift, her eyes heavy from performing a string of emergency surgeries during her night duty. She sank into the worn sofa, her stethoscope still dangling around her neck, when the phone rang. The hospital's urgent tone cut through the quiet: another emergency surgery required her immediate presence. I watched her rise, her movements mechanical yet resolute, and felt a pang of frustration.

"Anjali, you're human too," I said, my voice tinged with concern. "You've been at the hospital for a full day. Can't someone else handle this? You need rest."

She paused at the door, her hand on the knob, and turned to me with a faint smile. "Patients don't wait, Meera. I'm not alone in this—my colleagues are just as tired. As the senior doctor, I have to lead. It's about the greater good, not my comfort." Her eyes softened. "Don't you remember the story of anaesthesia? It's not just about me." With that, she stepped into the night, leaving me with the echo of her words.

The story she mentioned was one she'd shared years ago, a tale that lingered in my mind like a half-remembered dream. Its truth was uncertain, but its power undeniable. It was a story of sacrifice, of a father and son bound by medicine and a shared vision to ease human suffering.

In a small English town in the mid-19th century, Dr. William Hartley and his son, Edward, practiced medicine in a modest clinic lined with apothecary jars and leather-bound books. William, a man of fierce intellect and gentle demeanour, was renowned for his innovative spirit. Edward, barely 25, shared his father's passion, his youthful enthusiasm tempered by a quiet resolve. The era was one of crude surgical practices, where operations were performed with patients sedated by chloroform, a risky method that often left them disoriented or worse.

William had long dreamed of a better way. After years of experiments in his dimly lit study, he developed a revolutionary injection: a local anaesthetic that could numb a specific area of the body, sparing patients the dangers of unconsciousness. By blending precise ratios of four chemicals, he created a formula that dulled pain without clouding the mind. In animal trials, it worked flawlessly, but the medical establishment demanded proof—human trials—before the medicine could be approved.

The challenge was daunting. No one volunteered to be the first, fearing the unknown. William's colleagues at the Academy of Medical Science, a stern body of grey-haired sceptics, insisted on irrefutable evidence. Weeks passed, and William's frustration grew, his dream teetering on the edge of failure.

One evening, as father and son sat by the hearth, Edward broke the silence. "Father, I'll be your subject." His voice was steady, though his hands trembled slightly. Edward had been born with a sixth finger on his left hand, a small anomaly he'd always wished to remove. "Inject your medicine and operate on my finger. Let's show them it works. I trust you."

William's heart swelled with pride and fear. "Edward, it's untested on humans. If it fails—"

"It won't," Edward interrupted, his eyes bright with conviction. "You've worked too hard. This could change surgery forever. I want to help."

Reluctantly, William agreed. He sent word to the Academy, inviting its members to witness the operation. The news spread, drawing scientists, physicians, and curious onlookers to the Hartley clinic on the appointed day. The operating room, a sterile space lit by gas lamps, buzzed with anticipation. Edward lay on the table, his left hand exposed, the sixth finger stark against his pale skin. William stood beside him, his instruments gleaming, his face a mask of focus.

"Ladies and gentlemen," William began, addressing the crowd, "today, we demonstrate a new era in surgery. This injection will numb my son's hand, allowing me to remove his extra finger without pain." He filled a syringe with the anaesthetic, his hands steady despite the weight of the moment. With a nod from Edward, he injected the solution.

The room held its breath as William picked up his scalpel. Edward's face remained calm, a faint smile playing on his lips. The blade cut through skin, and not a flinch crossed Edward's features. The crowd murmured in awe as William worked swiftly, removing the finger and suturing the wound. Through it all, Edward's smile never wavered. When the final stitch was tied, the room erupted in applause. The Academy members, initially sceptical, congratulated William, hailing the anaesthetic as a triumph.

As the crowd dispersed, William led Edward to a private room to dress the wound. Alone, the facade crumbled. William's hands shook as he bandaged his son's hand, tears streaming down his face. "Edward, forgive me," he whispered, his voice breaking. "I forgot the fourth chemical. The injection was useless. You endured that pain—"

Edward's smile faded, but his eyes held no blame. "I knew, Father. Halfway through, I felt the pain. But I saw your face, the hope in the room. If I'd faltered, your work would've been dismissed. I couldn't let that happen."

William sank into a chair, sobbing. "You bore that agony for me?"

"For you, and for every patient this will help," Edward said softly. "Some sacrifices are worth it."

As I sat in our quiet home, Anjali's words and the story intertwined in my mind. The tale, whether fact or legend, mirrored her life. Like Edward, she bore the weight of exhaustion, leading her team through endless nights to save lives. Government hospitals, with their endless queues and scarce resources, demanded such sacrifices. Anjali and her colleagues were modern-day Hartleys, their dedication a quiet heroism.

I thought of the patients who left her ward with gratitude, unaware of the toll it took. The story wasn't just about anaesthesia; it was about the heart of medicine—selflessness in the face of suffering. Anjali's tired smile, like Edward's, hid a deeper resolve: to serve, no matter the cost.

As dawn broke, I heard the door creak open. Anjali returned, her face weary but serene. "The surgery went well," she said simply, collapsing onto the sofa. I brought her a cup of tea, saying nothing. In her quiet strength, I saw the legacy of the two doctors, their story alive in every doctor who chooses duty over ease.

2. Comprehension

Question 1: Where does Anjali work as a doctor?

Question 2: Why does Anjali return to the hospital despite being tired?

Question 3: What did Dr. William Hartley invent?

Question 4: Why did Edward endure pain during the operation?

Question 5: What mistake did William make during Edward's surgery?

Answers

Answer 1: She works in a government hospital in Bangalore.

Answer 2: She is called for an emergency surgery and feels it's her duty as the senior doctor.

Answer 3: He invented a local anaesthetic to numb specific areas during surgery.

Answer 4: He hid his pain to protect his father's reputation and ensure the anaesthetic's success.

Answer 5: He forgot to add the fourth chemical, making the anaesthetic ineffective.

3. Grammar Page

Unit
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the 3 (children / the children)

A When we are talking about things or people in general, we do *not* use **the**:

- I'm afraid of **dogs**. (*not* the dogs)
(**dogs** = dogs in general, not a specific group of dogs)
- Doctors** are usually paid more than **teachers**.
- Do you know anybody who collects **stamps**?
- Life** has changed a lot in the last thirty years.
- Do you like **classical music** / **Chinese food** / **fast cars**?
- My favourite sport is **football/skiing/athletics**.
- My favourite subject at school was **history/physics/English**.



We say '**most** people / **most** shops / **most** big cities' etc. (*not* the most ...):

- Most** shops accept credit cards. (*not* The most shops)

B We use **the** when we mean specific things or people.
Compare:

In general (without the)

- Children** learn from playing.
(= children in general)
- I couldn't live without **music**.
- All **cars** have wheels.
- Sugar** isn't very good for you.
- English people** drink a lot of tea.
(= English people in general)

Specific people or things (with the)

- We took **the children** to the zoo.
(= a specific group, perhaps the speaker's children)
- The film wasn't very good, but I liked **the music**. (= the music in the film)
- All **the cars in this car park** belong to people who work here.
- Can you pass **the sugar**, please?
(= the sugar on the table)
- The English people I know** drink a lot of tea. (= only the English people I know, not English people in general)

C The difference between 'something in general' and 'something specific' is not always very clear.
Compare:

In general (without the)

- I like working with **people**.
(= people in general)
- I like working with **people who say what they think**.
(not all people, but 'people who say what they think' is still a general idea)
- Do you like **coffee**?
(= coffee in general)
- Do you like **strong black coffee**?
(not all coffee, but 'strong black coffee' is still a general idea)

Specific people or things (with the)

- I like **the people I work with**.
(= a specific group of people)
- The coffee we had after dinner** wasn't very good. (= specific coffee)