



# Learn English Through Stories

F Series

F78

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# The Trophy of Victory

By Rabindranath Tagore

Bad news had come from the battlefield. The King was walking in the garden, perturbed.

Near the garden wall he saw a boy and a girl playing in the shade of a tree.

The King asked them. "What do you call that game?"

They said: "Today we are acting the exile of Prince Rama and Princess Sita."

The King sat down and watched.

The boy said: "See the great forest Dandaka. We shall build a cottage here."

He had collected a heap of straw and twigs, and seemed not to have a moment to spare.

The girl was cooking roots and tree leaves without a fire; Princess Sita busy preparing a meal for her exiled husband, Rama.

The King said: "All's in order; but where is the demon with whom Rama would light?"

The boy had to admit that he had overlooked the point. The King said: "O well, I shall be the demon."

The boy gazed at him carefully and said: "But you will have to admit defeat at my hands."

"I am ever ready to admit defeat. You will see for yourself," said the King.

That day the game of killing the demon went on so smoothly that the boy, in his pleasure and excitement would not let the King go. In an hour the King had to die the death of ten demons.

Birds sang just as they had sung in ages gone by when Prince Rama and Princess Sita had lived and loved; and the sun beat on the tree leaves just as it had done in times of yore.

The King had regained his peace of mind. He summoned his minister and asked him: "Do you know whose children those are?"

The minister replied: "The girl is my daughter Ruchira, and the boy is Kausika, son of a poor priest."

The King said: "It is my wish that when these two grow up they shall be man and wife." The minister dared not reply, but bent his head in disapproval.

The King sent Kausika to the best school in his kingdom. Boys and girls of high lineage read there. Among them there was Ruchira, the minister's daughter. The teacher was displeased to have Kausika, a poor priest's son, in his school, and the other pupils were no less sore. But the King's will prevailed.

Ruchira was in a dilemma. Boys and girls pointed at her and at Kausika, and whispered to one another. Her cheeks would flame and her eyes fill with angry tears.

If Kausika picked up a book she had dropped, she would not even thank him. If he spoke to her, she would not reply.

There was no end to the teacher's affection and care for Ruchira. He was determined that she should pass ahead of Kausika in every branch of their studies; and Ruchira had made the same vow, too.

It seemed that she would easily go ahead of him, for Kausika did not confine himself to his textbooks. He liked to sing, to swim, to wander in the woods.

The teacher took him to task: "Why don't you ply your books with more care?"

He replied: "My interests are not confined to books alone, they touch many other things."

The teacher advised: "Get rid of the needless interests."

"Then my interest in books will also vanish."

After some days the King asked the teacher: "Who is the best among your pupils?"

"Ruchira," replied the teacher."

"And what about Kausika?"

"I don't think he has gained much from the school."

The King said: "I wish Kausika and Ruchira to marry each other."

The teacher could not hold back a sarcastic laugh.

"It will be the marriage of Dusk with Dawn."

The King summoned his minister and said: "Your daughter's marriage with Kausika should not be delayed."

"But, Sire, my daughter objects to this marriage."

The King said: "Does a woman ever speak out the true desire of her heart?"

"But her tears are significant."

"Does she think Kausika is unfit to be her husband?"

"That is the truth."

The King said: "Then let there be a debate between the two before me. Unless Kausika wins, the marriage shall not take place."

The Court assembled. The King took his seat on the throne and Kausika sat at his feet.

The teacher came in with the minister's daughter. Kausika stood up and saluted both. Ruchira hardly looked at him.

Never had the two debated with each other. The other pupils scornful of Kausika, had never let him take part in discussions. So, that day, when sarcasm flashed on his arguments like light on steel, the teacher was surprised and not a little displeased. Beads of sweat broke out on Ruchira's fair brow and she nearly lost her head. Kausika left her only when she had been pushed to the brink of defeat.

The teacher's voice was choked with anger! Ruchi's eyes were full of tears.

The King turned to his minister and said: "Now let the marriage be arranged.

But Kausika with folded hands humbly said: "Pardon me. Sire. I do not want this marriage to take place."

The King was amazed.

"You refuse to accept the trophy of victory?"

Kausika replied: "The victory is mine, but let someone else have the reward."

The teacher suggested: "Sire, let a year pass and there be another debate at the end of it."

The proposal was approved.

Kausika left school. He was seen sometimes in the shades of the woods, sometimes on hilltops.

The teacher devoted all his energy to Ruchira's training. But what had happened to her? Where was her mind a-wandering?

He was annoyed and cried: "If you do not take heed while there is still time, you will again be put to shame."

But it seemed that Ruchira wished for nothing more eagerly than to be put to shame for the second time. She seemed to have vowed to keep away from her books.

The teacher burst out in anger: "By all the Sages, never again shall I take a woman pupil. I have known an end to the mysteries of the Scriptures, but not to those of a woman's heart."

One day the minister said to the King: "A marriage proposal for my daughter has come from the House of Bhabadatta. In blood, wealth and fame the family has few equals. I await your Majesty's approval."

The King asked: "What does your daughter say?"

The minister replied: "Does a woman ever speak out the true desire of her heart?"

"But her tears— are they not significant this time?"

The minister could make no reply.

The King sat in his garden and sent for the minister's daughter. Ruchira came.

The King asked: "Do you remember that game, Ruchira, the game of Rama's exile?"

Ruchira looked away with a bashful smile.

The King said: "Today I am eager to see that game played over again."

Ruchira pulled down her veil slightly over her face and kept silent.

"We have the forest," said the King, "and we have

Prince Rama, but Princess Sita is wanting. If you wish, Ruchira, you can fill that want."

Ruchira came nearer and bowed at the King's feet.

"But, darling, this time I shan't play the part of the demon," he laughed.

Ruchira raised her eyes darkly bright with love.

The King said: "This time the demon's part will be played by your teacher."

### **Questions:**

Question 1: What game were the boy and girl playing when the King first saw them in the garden?

Question 2: Who offered to play the role of the demon in the children's game?

Question 3: What was the King's wish regarding the future of Ruchira and Kausika?

Question 4: Why was Ruchira angry and embarrassed when Kausika was sent to the same school?

Question 5: What were Kausika's interests outside of textbooks, according to the story?

Question 6: Who won the public debate arranged by the King between Ruchira and Kausika?

Question 7: After winning the debate, what did Kausika surprisingly refuse?

Question 8: Where was Ruchira's mind "a-wandering" after the first debate?

Question 9: What did the King suggest to Ruchira when he called her to the

garden again years later?

Question 10: In the final scene, who was going to play the role of the "demon" in the replayed game?

**Answers:**

Answer 1: They were acting the exile of Prince Rama and Princess Sita from the Ramayana.

Answer 2: The King himself offered to be the demon.

Answer 3: The King wished that when they grew up, Ruchira and Kausika would marry each other.

Answer 4: She was embarrassed because boys and girls pointed at her and Kausika, whispered about them, and she felt ashamed of being linked to a poor priest's son.

Answer 5: Kausika liked to sing, swim, and wander in the woods.

Answer 6: Kausika won the debate.

Answer 7: Kausika refused to accept the marriage (the "trophy of victory").

Answer 8: Her mind was wandering toward thoughts of Kausika / love for Kausika (she had begun to feel affection for him).

Answer 9: The King invited her to play Princess Sita again in the garden, this time filling the role properly (implying she would be with the real "Rama" – Kausika).

Answer 10: The teacher was going to play the part of the demon.

**Vocabulary Questions:**

Question 1: What does the word perturbed mean as it is used in the sentence "The King was walking in the garden, perturbed"?

Question 2: In the phrase "her mind a-wandering," explain the meaning of a-wandering in this context.

Question 3: What does prevailed mean in the sentence "But the King's will prevailed"?

Question 4: Explain the meaning of sarcastic as used when the teacher gives "a sarcastic laugh."

Question 5: In the story, what does the phrase "trophy of victory" refer to symbolically?

**Answers:**

Answer 1: Perturbed means disturbed, anxious, worried, or troubled (in this case, the King is upset because of bad news from the battlefield).

Answer 2: A-wandering means drifting, roaming, or wandering aimlessly — here, it describes Ruchira's mind being distracted and not focused on her studies, lost in other thoughts (particularly her growing feelings for Kausika).

Answer 3: Prevailed means succeeded, triumphed, or proved stronger — the King's wish (for Ruchira and Kausika to marry) was carried out despite opposition.

Answer 4: Sarcastic means mocking, ironic, or expressing contempt through irony — the teacher's laugh was not genuine amusement but a mocking or scornful reaction to the idea of Kausika marrying Ruchira.

Answer 5: The "trophy of victory" symbolically refers to the reward or prize that comes with winning (in this context, the marriage to Ruchira), but Kausika humbly refuses to claim it even though he won the debate.