

ENGLISH DANNY CHANNEL



Learn English Through Stories

Volume 2

16 MORE STORIES TO
IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH
GRAMMAR AND
VOCABULARY

by Donald Wells

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Learn English Through Stories Volume 2

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1

Introduction

English language teachers and learners, this book is for you! One of the oldest and most effective means of learning language has been through the use of stories, and this book has 16 short, easy-to-understand stories which you can use to test and improve your English. Each story has three versions, scaled according to difficulty: a Basic English version, an Intermediate English version, and an Advanced English version. The stories used in this book are *fables*, meaning that each story has a moral lesson at the end. The lessons I have used for this volume are common English-language sayings, such as “Actions speak louder than words.”

The Basic English version of each story uses simple grammar and vocabulary. Sentences use very minimal verb conjugation, ordinary vocabulary, and shorter structures for ease of understanding. By understanding the basic ideas of the story in this way, readers can then follow the story more easily as the complexity of the grammar and vocabulary increases.

The Intermediate English version introduces different verb tenses and more complex vocabulary and grammatical structures. The basics of the story, however, will remain the same. Some English learners who are operating at a higher level might want to begin with the Intermediate English version of each story. Choose the version which seems best for your own language level.

Finally, the Advanced English version presents the story at the level of a native English speaker. This version will provide English learners with the biggest challenge—but because the story is still the same, it should still be easy to follow. In fact, learners can expand their vocabulary and their understanding of grammar in this way!

A set of five study questions follows the Advanced English version of each story. Teachers (and students engaged in self-study) can use these questions to check story comprehension. A list of plausible answers to the questions can be found at the back of the book.

This book also contains a Vocabulary Builder. This is a list of 66 words used in the 16 stories which students may not be familiar with. The Vocabulary Builder provides definitions, explanations, and examples. Each entry begins with the word and the part of speech it belongs to (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.). Some entries provide alternative forms of the verb (such as adjective forms or past tense forms). The Vocabulary Builder is meant to be a resource for teachers and students who want to do more.

By the end of this book, readers will have a better, more intuitive understanding of how English works. The stories are short enough to be used in classroom activities as well. I have used some of the stories here for translation practice with my own students. I recommend using the

Intermediate or Advanced versions of the stories for translation practice, as the Basic English version is probably too simple for comfortable translation.

Enjoy the stories, and enjoy learning English!

2

The Mouse and the New Cat

Basic English

A mouse lives under the floorboards of an old house. A family moves in. The Mouse is upset to find the family owns a Cat. The Mouse considers moving to a new place. As he does so, the Cat starts speaking to him.

The Cat tells the Mouse that he has no interest in him. He says that his owners feed him very well. Catching the Mouse is too much trouble. If the Mouse stays out of trouble, there will be no problems.

The Mouse replies very politely. But because he is cautious, the Mouse sneaks under the floorboards and spies on the Cat. He sees the Cat sharpening his claws. The Cat has a deadly look in his eyes. When the Mouse sees this, he packs up his things to leave.

The Mouse tells himself that the Cat may say anything, but this sight says a whole lot more.

Intermediate English

There was a mouse who lived under the floorboards of an old house. When a family moved in, the mouse was concerned to learn they owned a Cat. He was considering moving to a new place, when the Cat appeared near his mousehole and started speaking to him.

The Cat told the Mouse that he had no interest in trying to catch him. His owners fed him well enough, and he was too old to be chasing a mouse around. If the Mouse would just stay out of trouble, the Cat explained, they would have no problems.

The Mouse politely thanked the Cat for his kind words. But because he was cautious, the Mouse snuck under the floorboards in the kitchen to spy on the Cat a little. While he was there, he saw the Cat sharpening his claws with a deadly look in his eyes. As soon as he saw this, the Mouse started packing his things.

The Cat might say anything, the Mouse told himself, but what he just saw said a whole lot more.

Advanced English

There once was a Mouse living under the floorboards of an old house. A family moved in, and the Mouse was chagrined to discover they had a Cat with them. The Mouse was mulling over the idea of moving to a new place when the Cat poked his head near the mousehole and started speaking to him.

“I can smell you in there, little mouse,” the Cat told him, “and let me assure you I have no interest in you at all. I’m getting on in years, and my owners feed me so well that catching you would be more trouble than you’re worth. Just keep yourself out of the way down there and we’ll get along famously.”

“Very well,” the Mouse replied courteously. But the Mouse was a

cautious fellow, and he snuck under one of the floorboards in the kitchen where he could spy on the Cat through a little hole that he had made. Sure enough, he found the Cat carefully sharpening his claws with a murderous glint in his eyes. As soon as the Mouse saw this, he started packing his things to leave. “Let him say what he will,” the Mouse said to himself, “but what I just saw said a whole lot more!”

Moral

Actions speak louder than words.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What does the Cat say to the Mouse to try to reassure him?
- 2) Why does the Mouse decide to spy on the Cat?
- 3) Where does the Mouse go to spy on the Cat?
- 4) What does the Mouse see that makes him think the Cat was lying?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

3

The Pig's New Friend

Basic English

On a farm, a little Pig becomes friends with the local Dog. They play together all day, chasing each other around happily. But the Pig's mother notices that the Dog often scratches behind his ear. She tells her son to be careful because the Dog has fleas. The Pig agrees to be careful, but he does not expect to have any problems with fleas.

Then one day the little Pig and the Dog play together until nightfall. Because the farmhouse door is locked, the Pig invites the Dog to sleep in the pigsty. The Dog does so.

The next morning, the little Pig and his mother both wake up to find they have fleas. But unlike the Dog, they are unable to scratch themselves, so the fleas bite at them terribly.

Intermediate English

In a farmyard a little Pig became friends with the local Dog. They would play together all day, chasing each other around squealing and barking happily. But the little Pig's mother noticed that the Dog often paused to scratch behind his ear. So, she told her son to be careful when playing with the Dog because the Dog had fleas. The little Pig agreed to be careful, but he ignored the warning because he didn't think the fleas would ever become a problem.

Then one day the little Pig and the Dog played together until nightfall. They came back home to find the farmhouse door was locked. So, the little Pig invited his friend to spend the night in the pigsty. The Dog agreed and they slept the night peacefully.

The next morning, the little Pig and his mother woke up to find themselves covered with fleas. But unlike the Dog, they were unable to scratch at themselves. All they could do was run through the farmyard squealing unhappily.

Advanced English

In a farmyard there was a little Pig who became friends with the local Dog. All day long they would romp through the yard together, chasing each other around while the Pig squealed with delight and Dog barked happily. But the little Pig's mother noticed the Dog would often pause and scratch behind his ear. So, she pulled her son aside and gave him a stern warning. "Be careful when playing with the Dog, because he has fleas, and they can easily find their way onto you." The little Pig agreed, but as he did so he thought to himself: "I've never noticed a flea jumping onto me so far. And besides, without any hair for them to hide in I can easily find them and wipe them away."

Then one night, after the little Pig and his friend had been out playing in the woods, the two friends noticed the sun going down. When they reached their home, the Dog was surprised to discover the door to the farmhouse was locked. "I suppose I shall have to sleep outside tonight," he said sadly. "No problem," the little Pig told him, "you can sleep with my family tonight." So that night the little Pig and the Dog nestled together in the pigsty.

The next morning, the little Pig and his mother woke up to find themselves covered with fleas. But unlike the dog, they were unable to use their little legs to scratch themselves, so they ran through the farmyard squealing miserably.

Moral

If you lie down with dogs, you wake up with fleas.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) Why does the little Pig's Mother warn him?
- 2) Why doesn't the little Pig follow his Mother's warning?
- 3) Why does the Dog spend the night in the pigsty?
- 4) Why are the Pigs unable to handle the fleas?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

4

The Bird's Nest

Basic English

A young man notices a bird building a nest. From the ground he can see a lot of shiny objects in the nest. The young man thinks that some of the objects must be valuable. Perhaps the bird sees valuable things when he flies around.

He waits for the bird to fly away and climbs up the tree to get the nest. It is hard to reach it, and more than once he almost falls. But he soon gets the nest and takes it home with him.

He takes the nest to his father and asks him to identify the valuables inside. But the father throws the nest away. He tells his son there is nothing valuable in the nest, only lots of shiny junk. Some shiny things may be worth a bird's time but not a human's.

Intermediate English

A young man noticed a bird building a nest one day. Even from the ground the young man could tell the bird had collected a number of shiny objects to place in his nest. He thinks to himself that some of these things must surely be valuable. Perhaps the bird spotted some gold or silver when he was flying around.

So, he waited for the bird to fly off and climbed up the tree to get the nest. It was dangerous and difficult to reach the nest, and more than once he nearly lost his grip. But eventually he made it to the top, grabbed the nest, and brought it home with him.

He took the nest to his father thinking the old man could identify the valuables inside. But the father tossed the nest aside angrily. He told his son there were no valuable inside, only a lot of shiny pieces of junk. Some shiny things, he explained, are worth a bird's time but not a human's.

Advanced English

One day, a young man noticed a bird constructing a nest in a pine tree. Even from the ground he could tell that the bird must have collected quite a number of shiny objects to place in his nest. "Surely some of these must be valuable," the young man said to himself. "This bird might have spotted some gold or silver while he was up there flying around in the sky."

So, he waited patiently for the bird to fly off and then climbed up the tree to retrieve the nest. It was a dangerous and difficult effort to reach the nest, and more than once the young man nearly lost his grip—which would have meant a painful end to his efforts. But eventually he reached the nest, snagged it, and brought it home.

He brought the nest to his father, hoping the old man would identify the valuables it contained. Instead, the father tossed the nest aside in disgust. "It's

nothing but a bunch of foil and wrappers,” he explained. “Listen, son: any shiny thing might be worth a bird’s time but it’s not necessarily worth ours.”

Moral

All that glitters is not gold.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What does the young man notice at the beginning of the story?
- 2) Why does the young man climb the tree?
- 3) What information shows that climbing the tree was dangerous?
- 4) Why does the father toss the nest aside in disgust?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

5

The Pudding Contest

Basic English

The Country Fair has a pudding contest one year. Three judges gather to decide the winner between the top two puddings. One is a well-made milk pudding which is gold in the middle with a caramel top. The other is a simple vanilla pudding in a small glass bowl.

Two of the judges point to the milk pudding. They are impressed by the look of it. The vanilla pudding looks boring to them. They dismiss it.

But the third judge, who is a fat man with a big moustache, walks up to the puddings and tastes both of them. The first pudding tastes awful, but the simple vanilla pudding is delicious.

The third judge tells the other two to try the vanilla pudding. They do so, and quickly decide that the vanilla pudding is the winner.

Intermediate English

The Country Fair had a pudding contest one year. Three judges gathered to decide the winner between the top two contest entrants. One was a perfect-looking milk pudding which was gold in the middle with a caramel-colored top. The other was a boring-looking vanilla pudding in a simple glass bowl.

Two of the judges are attracted to the milk pudding right away. They think it looks just right, while the vanilla pudding seems dull and uninteresting. They dismiss it at once.

But the third judge, who was a chubby fellow with a big moustache, walked up to the first pudding and gave it a taste. From his reaction, it was clear that it tasted pretty bad. He tasted the vanilla pudding, however, and found it delicious.

He told the other judges to give the second pudding a try. They did so, and by the end all three judges had agreed that the vanilla pudding was the clear winner.

Advanced English

The Country Fair held a pudding contest one year. Three judges gathered to determine the winner between the top two entrants. One was a perfectly formed milk pudding, golden in the middle with a caramel-colored top. The other was a simple vanilla pudding lightly swirled around a small glass bowl.

Two of the judges were completely taken by the milk pudding. "Look at the color and richness," they gushed. "It's an ideal pudding." The vanilla pudding, however, they dismissed with a wave of their hands. "Boring," they called it.

But the third judge, who was a portly fellow with a bushy moustache, walked up to the first pudding and plunged in a finger. He pulled it back out and tasted the pudding. In a moment, he grimaced as if he had been hit. He

repeated the same act with the boring-looking vanilla pudding, then proceeded to pick up a spoon and eat up every bit of it.

“You need to try this,” he told the other two judges. And after they had tried both puddings, all three judges agreed that the boring old vanilla pudding was absolutely the winner of the Fair.

Moral

The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What is the difference between the two entrants in the pudding contest?
- 2) Why do the two judges appreciate the first pudding?
- 3) What does the third judge do with the second pudding?
- 4) Why do the two judges change their mind about which pudding is better?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

6

The Horse Rider

Basic English

A young man lives on a farm. He gets a chance to take his first horse ride. His older brother shows him a horse and teaches him how to ride it. After some directions, the young man mounts the horse and rides off.

After about an hour the horse gives the reins a shake. The young man thinks the horse must be thirsty. He guides the horse to a little pond. When they reach the water, the man gets off and holds on to the reins. The horse follows along behind him.

At the pond, the horse just stands by the water. The young man offers some water, but the horse looks away. He tries to pull the horse's head down to the water, but it pulls away from him. His brother rides up and tells him that he's done everything he can. It's up to the horse to decide if he wants a drink or not.

Intermediate English

A young man who lived on a farm once got a chance to take his first horse ride. His older brother showed him a horse with a long mane and offered to teach him how to ride it. After some careful instructions from his brother, the young man got on the horse and rode off.

After about an hour, the horse gave the reins a shake. The young man thought to himself that his horse must be thirsty. So, he guided the horse to a little pond nearby. When they reached the water, the young man got off and held on to the reins in the way his brother taught him. The horse followed along behind him as he led it to the pond.

But when they reached the water, the horse just stood by it. The young man tried to offer him some water, but the horse just turned away. He tried to pull the horse's head toward the water, but it pulled back. Just then his brother rode up and told him he had done everything he could. It was up to the horse now to decide if he'd have a drink or not.

Advanced English

A young man who lived on a large farm once got a chance to take his first horse ride. His older brother showed him a young horse with a long mane and offered to teach him how to ride it. After some careful instructions from his brother the young man mounted the horse and galloped away.

He had been riding for about an hour when the horse began to give the reins a little shake. "Perhaps this fellow is thirsty," the young man said to himself. He directed his mount to a little pond nearby. When they reached the water, the young man got off and held the reins the way his brother had instructed. The horse dutifully followed along behind him as he led it to the pond.

But when they reached the water's edge, the horse just stood there. The

young man cupped some water in his hands and offered it, but the horse just looked away. He tried to pull the horse's head down to the water, but it pulled away from him. Just then his brother came riding up. "You've done all you can," the brother said, "that horse will decide for himself if he needs a drink or not."

Moral

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) Who teaches the young man to ride a horse?
- 2) How long had the young man been riding when the horse shook the reins?
- 3) Where does the young man try to take the horse for water?
- 4) How does the horse respond when the young man offers it water?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

The Fishermen and the Storm

Basic English

A Fisherman and his sons go out to sea one day. They catch some fish, but on their way back home they run into a big storm. The wind blows their little ship around. The three men must work hard to stay afloat.

After about an hour the wind dies down. The Fisherman tells his oldest son to take the helm. The son does so. The boat is soon on its way back home. The wind picks up again. The rain comes hard. But the three men are happy to see land ahead of them.

As they get closer the oldest son notices that the harbor is not their home. The Fisherman agrees, but he explains that in stormy weather any harbor at all is as good as home.

Intermediate English

A Fisherman and his two sons went out to sea one day. They caught some fish, but on their way back home they ran into a terrible storm. The wind

blew their little ship around and around on the ocean. The three men had their hands full just trying to keep the ship afloat.

After about an hour, the winds died down. The Fisherman told his oldest son to take the helm and guide the ship. He did so, and soon the ship was back on its way home. The wind started to pick up again, and the rains came back hard, but the three men were happy to see that land was ahead of them.

But as they got closer the oldest son cried out sadly that the land ahead of them was not their home port. The Fisherman agreed but said that in his view any port at all would be as good as home in such stormy weather.

Advanced English

A Fisherman and his two sons put out to sea on day. They had a successful catch, but on the way back home with their haul they ran into a frightful storm. The wind blew their poor little vessel around like a top on the ocean, and the three men had their hands full just trying to stay afloat.

After about an hour, the wind began to subside a little, and the Fisherman directed his oldest son to take the tiller and steer the ship. He did so, and soon had the ship moving back towards land. The wind and the rain kicked back up again, but the three men were happy to see land ahead of them.

But as they drew closer, the oldest son cried out sadly, “That doesn’t look like our home at all!” “Don’t worry,” the Fisherman reassured his sons, “in a storm like this, any harbor at all looks like home to me.”

Moral

Any port in a storm will do.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What were the fishermen doing when the storm first hit their ship?
- 2) How long did the fishermen endure the storm before it eased for a little while?
- 3) Which of the three men directs the ship toward land?
- 4) Why are the sons unhappy when they first see land?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

8

The Piper's Tune

Basic English

A shopkeeper holds a birthday party for his employee. He hires a small band to play music at the party. The band has a fiddle player, a bass player, and a piper.

At the party, an employee talks to the band to ask about some songs for them to play. The band ignores him. The piper shakes his head and keeps playing. The employee waits a little while then asks again. He gets the same response the second time.

A few songs later, the musicians take a break to rest. The employee talks to the piper and asks him if the band takes requests. The piper explains that the shopkeeper hired them, so he decides what songs to play.

Intermediate English

A shopkeeper held a birthday party for one of his employees. Since he had money, the shopkeeper hired a small band to play music at the party. The

band had a fiddle player, a double-bass player, and a piper.

At the party, an employee went to the band to request some songs for them to play. Most of the band ignored him, but the piper shook his head no and kept on playing. Thinking it was a bad time, the employee waited for a few songs and went back. He got the same response the second time.

After a few more songs, the musicians took a break to rest. The employee went up to the piper and asked him if the band would take any requests. The piper explained that since the shopkeeper paid for them to play, he would decide which songs they played.

Advanced English

A well-to-do shopkeeper threw a birthday party for one of his employees. He hired a small band, with a fiddle player, a double-bass player, and a piper, to play music at the party for his employees to dance to.

At the party, one of the employees approached the band to request some songs for them to play. For the most part, the band ignored him, but the piper shook his head no and kept on playing. Thinking it may have been a bad time, the employee waited for a little while before going back. Unfortunately, he got the same response the second time.

A few songs later, the band took a break to rest. The employee went up to the piper and asked if the band was willing to take any requests. “Sorry,” the piper told him ruefully, “but the old man who paid us told exactly what songs he wanted to hear—and that’s what we’re going to play.”

Moral

He who pays the piper calls the tune.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What kind of party does the shopkeeper hold?
- 2) How many musicians are in the band hired by the shopkeeper?
- 3) What instruments do the musicians play?
- 4) How many times does the employee approach the band?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

9

The Two Hunters

Basic English

Two hunters are out looking for quail one day. One of them finds one and chases after it. It flies into a thick bush near a pond. He finds a second quail, but it also flies into the bush. He sits by the bush and waits. Sooner or later the birds have to leave their hiding place.

An hour later, his friend comes by and finds him waiting there. The friend has a caught bird and shows it to him. The first hunter says he has two birds. He points to the bush and explains he will get the birds when they try to fly out.

The friend offers to take a look in the bush. When they do, they do not find any birds. Instead, there is only a space where the two birds used to be.

Intermediate English

Two hunters were out looking for quail one day. The first hunter found one and chased after it, but it flew into a thick bush by a pond. Then he found

a second quail, but it also flew into the bush. He sat by the bush and waited for a while. He thought to himself that sooner or later the birds would leave their hiding place and he could catch them.

An hour or so later, the hunter's friend came by and found him waiting. The friend showed the quail he'd caught and asked how the first hunter was doing. The first hunter said he'd caught two birds. He pointed to the bush and explained how he would catch them when they tried to fly out.

The friend suggested they take a look inside to see whether the two birds were still in the bush. But when they did, they found no birds. They only found the place where the birds had hopped through the bush and flown off.

Advanced English

Two hunters were out trying to bag quail one day. The first hunter found one and chased after it, only to have it fly into a thick bush by a pond. Soon afterward he found a second quail, but it too fled into the bush. He sat by the bush for a while thinking that sooner or later the birds would have to leave, and he'd get them when they did.

An hour or so later, the hunter's friend came by and found him still waiting there for the birds. "I've bagged a good one," the friend said, holding up a plump quail he'd caught, "How about you?" "I've got two," the first hunter said. "Where?" his friend asked, looking around. "Right over there in that bush. I drove them in there a couple hours ago, and it's just a matter of time before I get them both when they try to get away."

"Oh, you think you've got them both, do you?" the friend taunted him. "Let's take a look." When they checked the bush, however, they found nothing but a little space in the back where the two quails had long since hopped through the bush and flown away.

Moral

A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What does the hunter do after the two quail fly into a bush?
- 2) What does the hunter believe he will do to catch the quail?
- 3) When does the hunter's friend come by?
- 4) What does the hunter's friend suggest they do?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

10

The Poor Carpenter

Basic English

A Townsman goes to a Carpenter's shop one day. He asks the Carpenter to make a table for him. When he returns to pick up the table, he sees that it leans a lot on one side. The Carpenter says he has a new saw. The new saw is the reason for the problem. He promises to fix the table before the next day.

The Townsman agrees to wait and comes back the next day. The table leg is now even. But he notices the table surface has dents in it. The Carpenter claims the new stain he uses is not perfect. He promises to apply a new coat of stain and fix the table by the next day.

Again, the Townsman agrees and comes back the third day for his order. This time, the table is fine but the upholstery on the chairs is torn. The Carpenter starts to blame the fabric, but the Townsman interrupts him. He tells the Carpenter he may be unlucky in his choice of tools and supplies, but perhaps the real problem is his poor workmanship.

Intermediate English

A Townsman went to a Carpenter's shop one day and asked the Carpenter to make a table set for him. But when he returned to pick up the table, he saw that it leaned heavily to one side. The Carpenter blamed his new saw, saying it was poorly made. He promised to fix the table by the next day.

The Townsman agreed to wait and came back the next day. Now the table leg was fixed, but he noticed the enameling on the table surface was dented. This time the Carpenter blamed the new stain he used, saying it didn't hold to the wood properly. He promised to apply a new coat of stain and fix the table by the next day.

Again, the Townsman agreed and came back a third day for his order. This time, the table was fine but the upholstery on the chairs was torn. The Carpenter started to blame the fabric he used, but the Townsman interrupted him. The Carpenter might just be unlucky in his choice of tools and supplies, he said, but perhaps the real problem was his poor workmanship.

Advanced English

A Townsman went to a Carpenter's shop one day and asked the Carpenter to make a dinner table set for him. But when he returned to pick up his order, he found that the table listed badly to one side. "It's this new saw I've got," the Carpenter explained. "It pulls to the left a bit and makes me miss my aim. Give me another day and I'll have it fixed."

The Townsman agreed, and when he came back the next day the uneven table legs had been squared away. However, he also noticed that the enameling on the table was chipped here and there. "It's this stain they sold me," the Carpenter told him. "It doesn't hold so well. I'll apply a new coat and that'll fix you up properly."

The Townsman agreed again and came back a third day to collect his order. This time he found the table was fine but the upholstery on the chairs that came with his dinner table set was badly torn. “It’s the fabric,” the Carpenter started to say, but the Townsman held his hand up to stop him. “You may well have been most unlucky in your choice of tools and supplies,” he conceded, “but perhaps the real issue lies with your workmanship.”

Moral

A poor craftsman blames his tools.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What is the Carpenter hired to build?
- 2) What is wrong with the table the first time the Townsman comes to pick it up?
- 3) What does the Carpenter blame for the problems the second time the Townsman arrives?
- 4) What does the Carpenter try to blame for the problems the third time?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

The Escaped Horse

Basic English

A young man gets a job as a stable boy at a local horse farm. He is hardworking but sometimes forgetful. One day, he forgets to lock the door to the paddock. The horse inside escapes. The horse runs into the forest at once.

Several other stable boys see the horse and chase after him. The young man hears them and remembers the paddock door. He goes to check on it and finds that he left it open. He feels shame for his mistake and locks the door.

The Manager comes by at this time. He watches the stable boy lock the door. This gets him angry and he shouts at the boy. He tells the boy to forget about the door and help the others bring back the horse. Why lock the door when there is no horse left inside?

Intermediate English

A young man got a job as a stable boy at a local horse farm. He was hardworking but also sometimes forgetful. One day, his forgetfulness got the

better of him and left the door to the paddock unlocked. The horse inside noticed the mistake. He pushed open the door and escaped into the nearby forest.

Several of the other stable boys realized the horse had escaped and chased after him. The young man heard them and remembered the paddock door he left unlocked. He went to check on it and discovered his mistake. Feeling ashamed of himself, he closed and locked the door.

The Manager came by at this time and saw the boy locking the door. This made him angry, and he started to yell at the boy. He told the boy to forget about locking the door and go help the others bring back the escaped horse. Why bother locking the door when there was no horse left inside?

Advanced English

A young man got a job as a stable boy at a local horse farm. He was a hardworking fellow but occasionally forgetful. One day, his forgetfulness got the better of him and he left one of the paddock doors unbolted. It wasn't long before the eager colt inside discovered the mistake, burst through the door, and raced into the nearby forest.

Several of the other stable hands spotted the loose colt and made after him. The stable boy heard their commotion and immediately thought of the paddock he was in charge of. When he checked the door, he found that he had indeed left it unbolted. Feeling ashamed of his mistake, the boy closed the door again and started to fix the bolt the way he should have in the first place.

Just then the Manager came by and found the stable boy carefully locking the paddock. This really got him riled up, and he started shouting at the boy.

“Forget about that door,” he told him, “and go help the others bring back that horse! Why bother locking a door when there’s nothing left inside?”

Moral

It’s no use locking the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What mistake does the young man make?
- 2) What happens as a result of his mistake?
- 3) When does the young man realize his mistake?
- 4) What does the Manager tell the young man to do instead of bolting the door?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

12

The Apple Cart

Basic English

A young man picks apples in the orchard one day. He piles the apples onto a cart to take to the market. On his way to town, he leans over in the cart to pick up something from the floor. This shift in weight makes the whole cart tip over. The young man and the apples spill onto the road. It takes him half an hour to pick up all the apples and clean them off.

Back on his way to town, the young man sees a friend by the side of the road. He pulls up to his friend and leans over to talk to him. As he does so, the cart tips over and the whole load of apples spills onto the road again.

The friend laughs at him as he helps him pick up the apples. He reminds him that a full apple cart is in a very delicate balance.

Intermediate English

A young man spent a day picking apples in the orchard. He piled the apples onto a cart and took them to the market. On his way to town, he leaned

over in the cart to pick up something he had dropped on the floor. The sudden shift in weight made the whole cart tip over. The young man and the pile of apples spilled all over the road. It took him half an hour to pick up all the apples and clean them off.

When he was back on his way to town, the young man saw a friend walking by the side of the road. He pulled up to his friend and leaned over to talk to him. As he did this, the cart tipped over, spilling the load of apples onto the road once again.

The friend laughed at him as he helped him pick up the apples. He reminded him that a full apple cart was a very delicately balanced thing.

Advanced English

A young man spent a whole day in the orchard picking apples and piling them onto a cart to take to market. On his way into town, he dropped something on the floor of the cart. When he leaned over to pick it up, the sudden shift in weight caused the whole cart to tip over, spilling the young man and his pile of apples across the road. It took him half an hour to pick up all the apples and clean them off the best he could.

When he was back on his way into town, the young man spotted a friend of his walking along the road ahead. He pulled up alongside his friend and leaned over to talk to him for a moment. As he did so, he overbalanced the cart again and the load of apples was once more spilled onto the roadside.

The young man's friend laughed at him as he helped him pick up the apples. "You should know by now," the friend said as they worked, "that a full apple cart is in a very delicate balance."

Moral

Don't upset the apple cart.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) How long does the young man work in the orchard?
- 2) How does he spill the apples the first time?
- 3) What does he do that spills the apples the second time?
- 4) Where is the young man going with the apples?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

The Mice and the Cheese

Basic English

A Dairyman takes a load of cheese to market one day. Part of his load of cheese falls off the back of his cart. A pair of Mice happens by and is happy to find the cheese. But they soon find the blocks of cheese are too heavy for them to lift.

The younger Mouse is about to give up, but the older Mouse tells him to wait and watch out. The older Mouse leaves for a little while. The young Mouse watches and waits, but he doesn't believe they can get the cheese back home.

Eventually the older Mouse returns with six other mice. Together, they pull at the blocks of cheese. Each Mouse gets a portion of cheese that he can carry. Just as the Dairyman comes back to find his lost cheese, the eight Mice run off with the blocks of cheese.

Intermediate English

A Dairyman was taking a load of cheese to market one day, when part of his load fell off the back of his cart. A pair of Mice happened by and were happy to find the cheese there. But they soon found that the blocks of cheese were a bit too heavy for the pair of them to lift.

The younger Mouse was about to give up, but the older Mouse told him to wait for a few minutes and watch for the Dairyman's return. The older Mouse disappeared into the brush for a while. The younger Mouse watched and waited, but he didn't believe they would ever get the cheese back home.

He had just seen the Dairyman returning along the road when the older Mouse returned. The older Mouse had six other mice with him as well. Together, the mice pulled at the block of cheese. Each Mouse got a portion of cheese he could carry, and just as the Dairyman reached the spot where he had lost his cheese, they each raced off with all the blocks in hand.

Advanced English

One day a Dairyman was taking a load of cheese to market when part of his load fell off the back off his cart onto the road. A pair of Mice happened by and were delighted to discover the windfall. Unfortunately, they soon found that the blocks of cheese were too heavy for the pair of them to lift.

The younger Mouse was about ready to give up, but the older Mouse told him to wait for a few minutes and watch out for the Dairyman's return. Then the older Mouse vanished into the underbrush for a little while. The younger Mouse watched and waited, but he despaired of getting the cheese back to the warren.

The younger Mouse had just spotted the Dairyman returning along the road when the older Mouse returned—with six other mice with him. Together, the mice pulled at the blocks of cheese, each grabbing a portion

that he could handle, until they had gotten all of it. Before the Dairyman reached the spot where his cheese had fallen, the eight mice had taken away more cheese than any one of them could have handled alone.

Moral

Many hands make light work.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) How do the two mice discover the block of cheese?
- 2) What is the problem with the cheese they discover?
- 3) What does the older mouse tell the younger mouse to do?
- 4) What has just happened when the older mouse returns?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

The Leopard's Spots

Basic English

A Leopard has trouble with his prey. The other animals know him by sight, and they run away before he can get close. He thinks he must be too familiar. So, he decides to take on a disguise.

The Leopard rolls his face in the mud. He wanders through the brush until a lot of it sticks to him. His face is no longer recognizable. He goes back to the hunt wearing this disguise. His first prey is a little Fox. But as soon as the Fox sees him coming, he runs up a tree and hides.

The Leopard sits down under the tree. He asks the Fox how he can recognize him. The Fox explains that the Leopard's face may change but his spots do not.

Intermediate English

There was a Leopard who had trouble with his prey. They other animals had learned to recognize him, and they ran away before he could get close.

The Leopard thought he must have become too familiar to the animals. He decided to solve the problem by taking on a disguise.

The Leopard rolled his face in the mud and wandered through the brush until a lot of it had stuck to him. Finally, he had done enough that his face couldn't be recognized anymore. He went back to the hunt wearing his new disguise. His first choice of prey was a little Fox. But as soon as the Fox saw him coming, he ran up a tree and hid.

The Leopard sat down under the tree, frustrated. Looking up at the Fox, he asked how the Fox could have recognized him. The Fox explained that the Leopard's face may have changed but his spots had not.

Advanced English

Once upon a time there was a Leopard who was having trouble catching his prey. The other animals had learned to detect him by sight from a long way off, and they were running away long before he could approach them. "I'm too recognizable," the Leopard thought to himself. "Perhaps I should adopt a disguise."

The Leopard rolled his face in the mud and wandered through the brush until enough of it had stuck to him that his own mother wouldn't have recognized his face anymore. Thinking this was a good enough disguise, he returned to the hunt. His first choice of prey was a little Fox. But as soon as the Fox saw the Leopard coming, he rushed up the nearest tree and hid himself in the highest branches.

Frustrated, the Leopard sat under the tree gazing up at the Fox. "But how did you know it was me?" he asked the Fox. "Your face may have changed," the Fox replied, "but I'd know those spots of yours anywhere."

Moral

A leopard cannot change his spots.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) Why is the Leopard having problems catching his prey?
- 2) What does he do to disguise himself?
- 3) Is his disguise successful?
- 4) Who does the Leopard talk to for advice?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

The Two Swords

Basic English

A Knight has two Swords. One Sword is for use in battle, and the other is a Spare. He stores them together in his war chest. At first, the Swords look alike. After a few years, though, the Battle Sword is different due to all the use.

The Spare Sword notices the changes to the Battle Sword. He mentions them. The Battle Sword replies that it is hard to stay the same after so many years of use.

The other items in the war chest begin to ask questions. The Helmet wants to know what it feels like to crash into the enemy. The Greaves want to know how it feels to swing through the air. The Shield wants to know who are the Knight's toughest enemies. Every piece of armor is eager to hear the stories.

The Battle Sword tells them he may have his share of damage, but he is glad to earn his damage through use rather than through disuse.

Intermediate English

There was a Knight who had two Swords. One Sword he used in battle, and the other he kept as a Spare. He stored them together in his war chest. At first, the two Swords looked alike. After a few years, however, the Battle Sword began to develop various signs of use and damage.

The Spare Sword remarked on these changes one day. He noticed that the Battle Sword had lost his old shine. The Battle Sword replied that it was hard to keep one's shine after years in the field.

Overhearing the conversation, the other items in the war chest began to ask questions. The Helmet wanted to know what it felt like to crash into the enemy. The Greaves wanted to know how it felt to swing through the air. The Shield wanted to know who the Knight's toughest opponents were. Every piece of armor was eager to hear the Battle Sword's stories.

The Battle Sword told them he might have received his share of damage and blemishes, but he was glad to have earned them in use rather than in disuse.

Advanced English

There was a Knight who kept two different Swords. One Sword was for use in battle, but the other he kept in reserve as a Spare. The two Swords looked very much alike at first, but after a few years of use the Battle Sword began to show various signs of wear and tear.

"I can't help but notice you've lost quite a bit of your old shine," the Spare Sword said to the Battle Sword. "I suppose I have," the Battle Sword admitted. "It's hard to keep one's shine after so many years in the field."

Overhearing this conversation, the other items in the war chest began to

pipe up with questions. “Tell us what it feels like to crash into the enemy,” the Helmet asked eagerly. “Yes, and tell us how it feels to swing through the air,” the Greaves chimed in. “And tell us about the toughest foes the Knight has overcome,” the Shield wanted to know. In short, every piece of arms and armor in the chest wanted to hear a story from the Battle Sword.

“I may have my share of dings and blemishes,” the Battle Sword told them, “but I’m glad to have earned them in use rather than disuse.”

Moral

Better to wear out than to rust out.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What is the difference between the two swords at first?
- 2) What happens that changes the appearance of the two swords?
- 3) Where does the Knight keep his two swords?
- 4) What do the other characters in the story ask about?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

The Judge's Robes

Basic English

A Laundryman picks up some clothes from a local Judge to clean them. He notices the Judge's robes in the laundry. He can't help but try the robes on. He looks at himself in the mirror. He imagines that he looks very dignified in the robes. He walks up and down and acts like the Judge.

His Wife comes in and sees him. She laughs at his behavior and asks him for his judgment on who can change the baby's diaper. When he can't answer, she asks him to decide who left his dirty clothes on the floor. When he again can't answer she asks him for his judgment on people who leave the bathroom door open. For a third time, he is unable to say anything.

The Wife laughs at him and says he may wear the robes, but he isn't much of a Judge.

Intermediate English

A Laundryman picked up a load of clothes from a local Judge to clean them. He noticed that the Judge's robes were mixed in with the other laundry. He couldn't help but try them on and look at himself in the mirror. He thought he looked quite dignified in the judicial robes and started striding up and down, acting like the Judge himself.

Then his Wife came in and saw him behaving this way. She laughed at him and asked for his judgment on who should change the baby's diaper. The Laundryman didn't dare answer, since he and his Wife often fought about this. So, she asked him for his judgment about who left his dirty clothes on the floor. Again the Laundryman said nothing, since he was the one who had done it. Next, she asked what should be done to those who left the bathroom door open. For a third time, he was unable to speak, since he often did this very thing himself.

The Wife laughed at him again and told him he might wear the robes but he couldn't really act like a Judge.

Advanced English

A Laundryman once picked up a load of clothing from the local Judge for cleaning. He noticed that the Judge had included his impressive black judicial robes in with the rest of the laundry. Struck by the sight of the robes, the Laundryman couldn't help trying them on and checking himself out in the mirror. "I look like quite the dignified fellow," he said to himself. He began to stride up and down in a stately manner, carrying himself the way he had seen the Judge do.

Just then his wife came in and found him behaving in this manner. "Well, your honor," she said ironically, "do you have any ruling on who should change the baby's diaper later?" The Laundryman struggled to respond, since

the couple often fought over who should change the baby. “Okay, then, how about determining who left his dirty clothes on the floor?” Again, the Laundryman said nothing, since he knew it was he who had done this. “Well, how about your sentence for those who always leaves the bathroom door open?” For a third time the Laundryman was unwilling to answer—this last issue was quite a sore spot between his wife and himself.

The wife just chuckled to herself. “You may wear the robes,” she told him, “but you sure aren’t much of a judge.”

Moral

Clothes do not make the man.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) Why does the Laundryman try on the judicial robes?
- 2) What does he do after he tries on the robes?
- 3) How does the Laundryman’s wife respond to his behavior?
- 4) What questions does the wife ask the Laundryman?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

The Acorn and the Oak

Basic English

A Swallow flies south for the winter one year. On his way, he stops to rest in a tree. He notices a Squirrel carrying acorns into his home at the bottom of the tree. He asks the Squirrel what he is up to. The Squirrel tells him it is winter food storage. The Swallow points out that one of the acorns fell behind. The Squirrel decides that the missing acorn is too small to bother with.

The next spring, the Swallow stops by the same tree. He talks to the Squirrel for a while, then notices that the little acorn is now a small sapling. Each year after that, when the Swallow stops to see his friend, he notices that the sapling continues to grow and grow.

Then one spring day, the Squirrel complains that his old tree is now too small for his family. The Swallow points him to the oak tree that grows from the little acorn years ago. He points out that the tree is now more than large enough to serve as a home.

Intermediate English

A Swallow flew south for the winter one year. On his way, he stopped for a rest in a tree. While he rested, he noticed a Squirrel carrying acorns into his home at the bottom of the tree. He asked the Squirrel what he was doing, and the Squirrel replied that he was storing up food for the coming winter. The Swallow pointed out that the Squirrel had dropped an acorn and left it behind. The Squirrel considered it for a moment, then decided it was too small for him to bother with.

The next spring, the Swallow stopped by the same tree to see how the Squirrel was doing. They talked together for a while, and then the Swallow noticed that the little acorn which had been left behind had grown into a little sapling. Each year after that, when the Swallow stopped by to see his friend, he made a note of how much the little tree had grown.

Then one spring day, when the Squirrel complained that his old home had become too small for his family, the Swallow pointed him to the oak tree. He suggested that the little acorn from a few years ago was now large enough to serve as the Squirrel's new home. And indeed it was.

Advanced English

While flying south for the winter one year, a Swallow stopped for a rest in a tree. As he was resting, he noticed a Squirrel at the bottom of the tree carrying little acorns into his home. "What are you up to, friend," the Swallow asked him. "Oh, just preparing a store of food for the winter," the Squirrel replied. "I notice you left one of your acorns behind," the Swallow pointed out helpfully. The Squirrel looked behind him and noticed that a little acorn had fallen from the pile and rolled off to one side. "Ah, that one's too

small for me to bother with,” he decided. “Anyway, I’ve got more than enough to last through the winter.”

On his way back up north the next spring, the Swallow stopped by the same tree to see how his friend had managed the winter. He and the squirrel chatted amiably for a bit. As they chatted, the Swallow noticed that in the place where the little acorn had fallen the previous winter a small sapling had sprung up. Each year after that, when the Swallow stopped by to chat with his friend, he made a note of how much that little tree had grown.

And then one spring day, the Squirrel happened to complain that his old home had become too small for his growing family. The Swallow directed his attention to the oak tree that had grown up nearby. “That little acorn you weren’t interested in eating a few years back looks like it might serve you well enough for a home today.” And so it did!

Moral

Great oaks from little acorns grow.

Study Questions

(answers and explanations are in the back)

- 1) What is the Swallow doing when he stops and meets the Squirrel?
- 2) What is the Squirrel doing when the Swallow stops to talk to him?
- 3) Why doesn’t the Squirrel bother with the acorn he left behind?
- 4) What is the Squirrel complaining about at the end of the story?
- 5) How does the story show the moral?

Vocabulary Builder

Not sure of the meanings of words in one of the stories? Interested in expanding your English vocabulary? Use the vocabulary builder!

Adopt [VERB] – to choose to take up, follow, or use something. Example from the story *The Leopard’s Spots*: “Perhaps I should **adopt** a disguise.” The past tense is **adopted**. Example: The Leopard **adopted** a disguise.

Alongside [PREPOSITION] – close to the side of, next to, together with. Example from the story *The Apple Cart*: “He pulled up **alongside** his friend and leaned over to talk to him for a moment.”

Amiably [ADVERB] – in a friendly and pleasant manner. Example from the story *The Acorn and the Oak*: “He and the squirrel chatted **amiably** for a bit.” The adjective form of this word is **amiable**, meaning friendly. Example: The squirrel was an **amiable** fellow.

Chagrin [VERB] – to feel distress or humiliation. The past tense is **chagrined**. Example from the story The Mouse and the New Cat: “A family moved in, and the Mouse was **chagrined** to discover they had a Cat with them.” **Chagrin** is also a noun meaning distress or embarrassment at failure or humiliation. Example: Much to my **chagrin**, my presentation was a failure.

Check [VERB] – to examine something to determine accuracy, quality, or condition. Example: Let me **check** if we have the item you requested. The past tense is **checked**. Example from the story The Two Hunters: “When they **checked** the bush, however, they found nothing but a little space in the back where the two quails had long since hopped through the bush and flown away.”

Chime in [PHRASAL VERB] – to interrupt or speak in a conversation, usually to agree with what has been said. Example: Feel free to **chime in** whenever you see an opportunity. The past tense is **chimed in**. Example from the story The Two Swords: “Yes, and tell us how it feels to swing through the air,” the Greaves **chimed in**.

Chipped [ADJECTIVE] – damaged by having a small piece broken off at the edge or on the surface. Example from the story The Poor Carpenter: “However, he also noticed that the enameling on the table was **chipped** here and there.”

Commotion [NOUN] – a state of confused and noisy disturbance. Example

from the story The Escaped Horse: “The stable boy heard their **commotion** and immediately thought of the paddock he was in charge of.”

Concerned [ADJECTIVE] – worried, troubled, or anxious. Example from the story The Mouse and the New Cat: “When a family moved in, the mouse was **concerned** to learn they owned a Cat.”

Construct [VERB] – to build something. Example: We can **construct** a plan together. The participial form of the verb is **constructing**. Example from the story The Bird’s Nest: One day, a young man noticed a bird **constructing** a nest in a pine tree.

Courteously [ADVERB] – in a way that is polite and shows respect. Example from the story The Mouse and the New Cat: “Very well,” the Mouse replied **courteously**. The adjective form is **courteous**, meaning polite, respectful, or considerate in manner. The Mouse was always **courteous** to his guests.

Despair of [PHRASAL VERB] – to lose hope or be without hope. I began to **despair of** my chances of passing the test. The past tense is **despaired of**. Example from the story The Mice and the Cheese: “The younger Mouse watched and waited, but he **despaired of** getting the cheese back to the warren.”

Determine [VERB] – to ascertain or establish exactly, usually due to research or calculation. Example from the story The Pudding Contest: Three judges gathered to **determine** the winner between the top two entrants. The

past tense is **determined**. Example: In the end, they **determined** the better-tasting pudding had won.

Dismiss [VERB] – to send away or to treat as unworthy of serious consideration. Example from the story The Pudding Contest: “The vanilla pudding looks boring to them. They **dismiss** it.” The past tense is **dismissed**. Example: They **dismissed** it as too boring to win.

Dutifully [ADVERB] – in a conscientious or obedient manner. Example from the story The Horse Rider: “The horse **dutifully** followed along behind him as he led it to the pond.” The adjective form is **dutiful**, meaning fulfilling one’s duty with conscientiousness or obedience. Example: The boy was **dutiful** in completing his studies.

Enameling [NOUN] – a glassy, hard covering applied to hard surfaces like wood to make them shiny. Example from the story The Poor Carpenter: However, he also noticed that the **enameling** on the table was chipped here and there.

Entrant [NOUN] – a person or group who enters, joins, or takes part in something. Note the relation to the verb “enter.” Example from the story The Pudding Contest: “Three judges gathered to determine the winner between the top two **entrants**.”

Fiddle [NOUN] – informal name for a violin (especially when used to play popular or folk music). Example from the story The Piper’s Tune: “The band has a **fiddle** player, a bass player, and a piper.”

Flee [VERB] – to run away from danger. Example: Birds will **flee** at the first sight of a hunter. The past tense is **fled**. Example from the story The Two Hunters: “Soon afterward he found a second quail, but it too **fled** into the bush.”

Foe [NOUN] – a literary or formal name for an enemy or opponent. Example from the story The Two Swords: “And tell us about the toughest **foes** the Knight has overcome,” the Shield wanted to know.

Frightful [ADJECTIVE] – very unpleasant, serious, or shocking. Example from the story The Fishermen and the Storm: “They had a successful catch, but on the way back home with their haul they ran into a **frightful** storm.”

Gallop [VERB] – to go at a horse’s fastest pace. Example: The horse began to **gallop** over the turf. The past tense is **galloped**. Example from the story The Horse Rider: “After some careful instructions from his brother the young man mounted the horse and **galloped** away.”

Gaze [VERB] – to look steadily and intently, especially with admiration, surprise, or thoughtfulness. Example: The Leopard could only **gaze** up at the Fox. The participial form is **gazing**. Example from the story The Leopard’s Spots: “Frustrated, the Leopard sat under the tree **gazing** up at the Fox.”

Glint [NOUN] – a small flash of light, especially as reflected from a shiny surface. Example from the story The Mouse and the New Cat: “Sure enough,

he found the Cat carefully sharpening his claws with a murderous **glint** in his eyes.”

Grimace [VERB] – to make an expression of disgust or pain. We saw him **grimace** as he ate the pudding. The past tense is **grimaced**. Example from the story The Pudding Contest: “In a moment, he **grimaced** as if he had been hit.” **Grimace** can also be a noun meaning the expression of disgust or pain on someone’s face. Example: I could see by his **grimace** that he was hurt.

Haul [NOUN] – a quantity of something pulled out or dragged with effort or force. Example from the story The Fishermen and the Storm: “They had a successful catch, but on the way back home with their **haul** they ran into a frightful storm. Haul can also be a verb meaning to pull or drag something with effort or force. Example: I watched the fishermen **haul** their nets in.

Impressive [ADJECTIVE] – evoking admiration through a quality such as size, skill, or grandness. Example from the story The Judge’s Robes: “He noticed that the Judge had included his **impressive** black judicial robes in with the rest of the laundry.”

Ironically [ADVERB] – in a way indicating that one’s meaning is the opposite of or different from one’s actual words (usually for humorous effect). Example from the story The Judge’s Robes: “Well, your honor,” she said **ironically**, “do you have any ruling on who should change the baby’s diaper later?” This example indicates the wife is not at all fooled into thinking her husband is actually a judge, despite her saying “your honor.”

Miserably [ADVERB] – in a wretched and unhappy manner. Example from the story The Pig’s New Friend: “But unlike the dog, they were unable to use their little legs to scratch themselves, so they ran through the farmyard squealing **miserably**.”

Mount [VERB] – to climb up, to get onto a horse. Example from the story The Horse Rider: “After some directions, the young man **mounts** the horse and rides off.” **Mount** is also a noun meaning a horse used as a vehicle. Example from the story The Horse Rider: “He directed his **mount** to a little pond nearby.”

Mull over [PHRASAL VERB] – to think carefully about something. Example: I need some time to **mull over** your offer. The participial form is **mulling over**. Example from the story The Mouse and the New Cat: “The Mouse was **mulling over** the idea of moving to a new place when the Cat poked his head near the mousehole and started speaking to him.”

Nestle [VERB] – to settle or lie comfortable with or against something. Example: Let me **nestle** in to the coach next to you. The past tense is **nestled**. Example from the story The Pig’s New Friend: “So that night the little Pig and the Dog **nestled** together in the pigsty.”

Offer [VERB] – to present something for someone to accept or reject as they desire. Example from the story The Horse Rider: “The young man tried to **offer** him some water, but the horse just turned away.” The past tense is **offered**. Example from the story The Horse Rider: “His older brother showed him a horse with a long mane and **offered** to teach him how to ride it.”

Orchard [NOUN] – a piece of land planted with fruit trees. Example from the story The Apple Cart: “A young man spent a day picking apples in the **orchard**.”

Overbalance [VERB] – to fall or cause to fall over due to loss of balance. Example: If you **overbalance** the cart, it will tip over. The past tense is **overbalanced**. Example from the story The Apple Cart: “As he did so, he **overbalanced** the cart again and the load of apples was once more spilled onto the roadside.”

Overhear [VERB] to hear something without meaning to or without the knowledge of the speaker. Example: I didn’t mean to **overhear**, but were you talking about yesterday’s meeting? The participial form is **overhearing**. Example from the story The Two Swords: “**Overhearing** the conversation, the other items in the war chest began to ask questions.”

Paddock [NOUN] – a small field or enclosure where horses are kept. Example from the story The Escaped Horse: “One day, he forgets to lock the door to the **paddock**.”

Plump [ADJECTIVE] – having a full, rounded shape. Example from the story The Two Hunters: “I’ve bagged a good one,” the friend said, holding up a **plump** quail he’d caught, “How about you?”

Portion [NOUN] – a part of a whole. Example from the story The Mice and the Cheese: “Together, the mice pulled at the blocks of cheese, each grabbing a **portion** that he could handle, until they had gotten all of it.”

Previous [ADJECTIVE] – existing or occurring before in time or order. Example from the story The Acorn and the Oak: “As they chatted, the Swallow noticed that in the place where the little acorn had fallen the **previous** winter a small sapling had sprung up.”

Proceed [VERB] – to begin or continue a course of action, to do something as a natural or inevitable next step. Example: After our stop here, we can **proceed** to the next train station. The past tense is **proceeded**. Example from the story The Pudding Contest: “He repeated the same act with the boring-looking vanilla pudding, then **proceeded** to pick up a spoon and eat up every bit of it.”

Reassure [VERB] – to say or do something to remove someone else’s doubts or fears. Example: Let me **reassure** everyone, we are doing our best to solve this problem. The past tense is **reassured**. Example from the story The Fishermen and the Storm: “Don’t worry,” the Fisherman **reassured** his sons, “in a storm like this, any harbor at all looks like home to me.”

Recognizable [ADJECTIVE] – able to be identified from previous encounters or from knowledge. Example from the story The Leopard’s Spots: “I’m too **recognizable**,” the Leopard thought to himself.

Request [VERB] – to politely or formally ask for something. Example from the story The Piper’s Tune: “At the party, one of the employees approached the band to **request** some songs for them to play.” This word can also be used as a noun (**request** or **requests**) to mean a thing asked for. Example

from the story *The Piper's Tune*: "The employee talks to the piper and asks him if the band takes **requests**."

Retrieve [VERB] – to get something or bring something back. Example from the story *The Bird's Nest*: "So, he waited patiently for the bird to fly off and then climbed up the tree to **retrieve** the nest."

Rile up [PHRASAL VERB] – to annoy or bother someone. Example: Don't **rile up** your father when he's working. The past tense is **riled up**. Example from the story *The Escaped Horse*: "This really got him **riled up**, and he started shouting at the boy."

Romp [VERB] – to play roughly and energetically (especially of children or animals). Example from the story *The Pig's New Friend*: "All day long they would **romp** through the yard together, chasing each other around while the Pig squealed with delight and Dog barked happily." The past tense is **romped**. Example: "The Pig and the Dog **romped** through the yard."

Ruefully [ADVERB] – in a way that expresses sorrow or regret. Example from the story *The Piper's Tune*: "Sorry," the piper told him **ruefully**, "but the old man who paid us told exactly what songs he wanted to hear—and that's what we're going to play."

Sapling [NOUN] – a young tree, especially one with a slender trunk. Example from the story *The Acorn and the Oak*: "They talked together for a while, and then the Swallow noticed that the little acorn which had been left behind had grown into a little **sapling**."

Shift [NOUN] – a change in position, direction, or tendency. Example from the story The Apple Cart: “The sudden **shift** in weight made the whole cart tip over.” **Shift** can also be a verb meaning to move or cause to move from one place to another. Example: “I watched the man **shift** his weight from one leg to the other.”

Shiny [ADJECTIVE] – a way to describe a surface that reflects light, usually because it’s clean or polished. Example from the story The Bird’s Nest: “From the ground he can see a lot of **shiny** objects in the nest.”

Spring up [PHRASAL VERB] – to start to exist suddenly. Example: A lot of new business begin to **spring up** after the New Year. The past participial form of this is **sprung up**. Example from the story The Acorn and the Oak: “As they chatted, the Swallow noticed that in the place where the little acorn had fallen the previous winter a small sapling had **sprung up**.”

Square away [PHRASAL VERB] – to put everything in order or readiness. Example: Do you have anything left to **square away** before we leave? The past tense and past participial forms are **squared away**. Example from the story The Poor Carpenter: “The Townsman agreed, and when he came back the next day the uneven table legs had been **squared away**.”

Squeal [VERB] – to make a long, high-pitched cry or noise (often of delight or pain). Example: “I could hear them **squeal** in the next room.” The participial form is **squealing**. Example from the story The Pig’s New Friend:

They would play together all day, chasing each other around **squealing** and barking happily.

Stately [ADJECTIVE] – with a dignified, grand manner; majestic. Example from the story The Judge’s Robes: “He began to stride up and down in a **stately** manner, carrying himself the way he had seen the Judge do.”

Stern [ADJECTIVE] – serious, especially in asserting authority and exercising discipline. Example from the story The Pig’s New Friend: “So, she pulled her son aside and gave him a **stern** warning.”

Stride [VERB] – to walk with long, decisive steps in a specified direction. Example from the story The Judge’s Robes: “He began to **stride** up and down in a stately manner, carrying himself the way he had seen the Judge do.”

Tiller [NOUN] – a horizontal bar attached to a boat’s rudder and used as a lever for steering. Example from the story The Fishermen and the Storm: “After about an hour, the wind began to subside a little, and the Fisherman directed his oldest son to take the **tiller** and steer the ship.”

Toss [something] **aside** [PHRASAL VERB] – to throw away or get rid of [something]. Often, a thing tossed aside will appear between the words ‘toss’ and ‘aside’. Example: **Toss** that garbage **aside** and come help me! The past tense is **tossed aside**. Example from the story The Bird’s Nest: “But the father **tossed** the nest **aside** angrily.”

Unbolted [ADJECTIVE] – said of a door or window that is not locked or bolted. Example from the story The Escaped Horse: “One day, his forgetfulness got the better of him and he left one of the paddock doors **unbolted.**”

Upholstery [NOUN] – soft, padded textile covering that is added to chairs and sofas. Example from the story The Poor Carpenter: “This time, the table was fine but the **upholstery** on the chairs was torn.”

Valuables [NOUN] – a plural noun used to mean something of great worth, particularly a small item of personal property. Example from the story The Bird’s Nest: “He took the nest to his father thinking the old man could identify the **valuables** inside.”

Warren [NOUN] – a densely populated or labyrinthine living area; a network of interconnected burrows (usually where rabbits are living). Example from the story The Mice and the Cheese: “The younger Mouse watched and waited, but he despaired of getting the cheese back to the **warren.**”

Wear and tear [PHRASE] – the damage that happens to an object through ordinary use over a period of time. Example from the story The Two Swords: “The two Swords looked very much alike at first, but after a few years of use the Battle Sword began to show various signs of **wear and tear.**”

Well-to-do [ADJECTIVE] – wealthy, prosperous. Example from the story The Piper’s Tune: “A **well-to-do** shopkeeper threw a birthday party for one

of his employees.”

Windfall [NOUN] – a piece of unexpected good fortune. Example from the story The Mice and the Cheese: “A pair of Mice happened by and were delighted to discover the **windfall**.”

Study Questions – Answers and Explanations

Below, you can find suggested answers and explanations for the study questions for each of the 16 stories in this book. The study questions can be found at the end of each story after the Moral.

The Mouse and the New Cat

1) The Cat says that he is getting older (“getting on in years”) and is fed so well by his owners that trying to catch the Mouse is too much trouble (“catching you would be more trouble than you’re worth”).

2) The Mouse is a “cautious fellow” so he spies on the Cat just to make sure the Cat was telling the truth.

3) The Mouse goes under one of the floorboards in the kitchen and spies on the Cat through a little hole in one of the boards.

4) The Mouse sees the Cat “carefully sharpening his claws with a murderous glint in his eyes.”

5) While the Cat’s words tried to reassure the Mouse that he meant him no harm, his actions of sharpening his claws with a deadly look on his face made the Mouse suspicious of a lie. Rather than take any chances, the Mouse leaves.

The Pig’s New Friend

1) The Mother notices that the Dog has fleas and warns her son that the fleas could easily make their way to him as well.

2) The little Pig thinks to himself that he hasn’t caught any fleas so far and even if he did catch some he thinks it would be easy to remove the fleas.

3) After playing all day the Pig and the Dog return to find the farmhouse door locked. Rather than make the Dog sleep outside, the little Pig invites him to sleep in the pigsty with him for the night.

4) The legs of the pig are not long or nimble like a dog’s, so they are unable to scratch themselves.

5) By allowing the Dog to sleep in the pigsty, the little Pig makes it possible for the fleas to move onto him (and his mother). The saying “Lie down with dogs, wake up with fleas” generally has the sense that if you spend time with disagreeable people you will take on their undesirable traits.

The Bird’s Nest

1) He notices shiny objects in the bird’s nest.

2) He climbs the tree to get the nest, which he believes has something valuable in it.

3) We are told that the young man nearly loses his grip more than once,

“which would have meant a painful end to his efforts.”

4) Because the shiny things in the nest are “nothing but a bunch of foil and wrappers,” nothing valuable at all.

5) Plenty of things have an outward appearance of value but no actual value in themselves. Tin foil and similar objects might shine but just because they are shiny doesn’t mean they have much worth. Also, the objects are certainly of no value compared to the danger the young man was in when getting the nest down from the tree.

The Pudding Contest

1) One is “perfectly formed” and looks very appealing, while the other is simple and visually not so impressive.

2) They like the look of it: “Look at the color and richness... it’s an ideal pudding.”

3) He tastes it. He puts a finger in, pulls it out, and tastes the pudding on it.

4) They eat the second pudding and discover it is delicious.

5) Although the second pudding is not as impressive to look at, when the judges try to eat it, they all realize that it is the better of the two. The saying about the proof of the pudding lying in the eating means that the real value of something should be judged by experience of it, not by theory or appearances.

The Horse Rider

1) His older brother.

2) About an hour.

3) A nearby pond.

4) It just looks away.

5) The young man has no problem leading his horse to the pond, but nothing he does can force it to take a drink. The meaning of this saying is that in general the most one can do is provide an opportunity for others—it is up to them to make the most out of these opportunities.

The Fishermen and the Storm

1) They were on their way back home with the fish they had caught.

2) About an hour.

3) The oldest son. “The Fisherman directed his oldest son to take the tiller and steer the ship.”

4) Because they recognize that it isn’t their home: “That doesn’t look like our home at all!”

5) The Fisherman is appreciative of finding a safe harbor in the middle of a storm, even if that harbor may not be their home. The idea of this saying is that when one is in a difficult situation a perfect solution isn’t necessary—any solution may help.

The Piper’s Tune

1) A birthday party for one of his employees.

2) There are three.

3) One plays the fiddle, one plays the double-bass, and one plays a pipe.

4) He approaches three times. The third time he approaches, the Piper tells him they don’t take requests.

5) The shopkeeper hired the band, so the shopkeeper has decided what songs they are going to play. The meaning of this saying is that the person

who pays for something to be done is usually who decides *how* something will be done.

The Two Hunters

1) He sits nearby thinking that he will catch the birds when they try to leave.

2) He thinks he only has to wait for them to leave before he can catch them.

3) The friend comes by “an hour or so later.”

4) He suggests they take a look and see if the birds are still in the bush.

5) The second hunter has actually caught a quail, which is clearly more valuable than the two that the first hunter *thinks* he has chased into a bush. The meaning of this saying is that things we already have are more to be prized than things we only hope to have or plan to have.

The Poor Carpenter

1) A dinner table set, which will be a large table a family could eat dinner off of plus at least four chairs.

2) The first time, the table legs aren't even (so the table leans badly to one side).

3) The second time, the Carpenter blames “this stain they sold me” for not being good quality.

4) The third time, the Carpenter tries to blame the fabric he used (but the Townsman interrupts him).

5) There are a lot of problems with the dinner table set. After hearing excuses for each of the problems, at the end of the story the Townsman suggests that the issue may not be with the tools but with the Carpenter

himself and his workmanship. This saying is meant to encourage people to take ownership of their mistakes instead of blaming others for them.

The Escaped Horse

- 1) He forgets to lock the door to the paddock and leaves it unbolted.
- 2) The horse knocks the paddock door open and escapes.
- 3) First, the boy hears the sound of the other stable hands trying to catch the escaped horse. He goes to check on the paddock door and discovers that he had indeed left it unbolted.
- 4) He tells him to leave the door alone and go help the other stable hands try to capture the escaped horse.
- 5) Although the boy wants to cover over his mistake by locking the door, the horse inside has already gotten away. Instead of letting him cover his mistake, the Manager tells him to help capture the horse, which would at least handle the consequences of the mistake.

The Apple Cart

- 1) He spends a whole day.
- 2) He drops something in the cart and leans over to pick it up. The shift in weight causes the cart to tip over.
- 3) He leans over to talk to his friend who is walking along the roadside.
- 4) He is going into town to take the apples to market.
- 5) The young man learns that his apple cart is in a very delicate balance. Despite learning the lesson the hard way, he makes the mistake a second time and is rebuked by his friend for doing so. The meaning of this saying is that one should avoid causing unnecessary difficulties.

The Mice and the Cheese

1) They happen to walk by after the cheese fell off the back of a Dairyman's cart.

2) It is too heavy for them to lift by themselves.

3) He tells him to wait and look out for the Dairyman's return.

4) The Dairyman has just started returning along the road.

5) The block of cheese which was so difficult for two mice that the younger one despaired of success proved to be easy enough work for eight mice to handle. The meaning of this saying is that having more helpers can make an impossible task possible and a difficult task easier.

The Leopard's Spots

1) The other animals learned how to recognize him from a long way away.

2) He rolls his face in the mud and catches some of the brush on it.

3) Although it hides his face, the Fox recognizes him immediately—so it is not successful.

4) He asks the Fox he had tried to catch.

5) Although the Leopard was able to change his appearance, the Fox still knew who he was by his spots—which had not been able to change. The meaning of this saying is that the innate nature of people cannot be changed.

The Two Swords

1) At first there is very little difference other than their intended use—the one for battle and the other to be kept as a spare.

2) The Battle Sword gets used in many battles, and his appearance changes as a result.

3) He keeps both swords in a war chest with his other weapons and armor.

4) They ask the Battle Sword about his experiences in combat.

5) Although the Battle Sword may be more worn than the other one, it is the Battle Sword who has stories which are of interest to everyone else. The meaning of this saying is that it is better to be active than idle in life.

The Judge's Robes

1) He likes the sight of them and can't help but try them on himself.

2) He admires himself and begins to walk up and down in a dignified way as he had seen the Judge do.

3) She asks him to make "judicial" decisions about their home life which the Laundryman is unable to do. At the end, she makes fun of him for being a poor judge.

4) She asks him: who should change the baby's diaper, who left his dirty clothes on the floor, and who always leaves the bathroom door open.

5) Although the Laundryman wears the Judge's robes, he doesn't have the Judge's ability to make hard decisions. In fact, he has difficulty making the relatively simple decisions about how to run his own household. The meaning of this saying is that a person's character can't always be determined by their outward appearance.

The Acorn and the Oak

1) Flying south for the winter.

2) Preparing his store of food for the winter.

3) He says it's too small to worry about and he has more than enough in store already.

4) He says his old home has become too small for his growing family.

5) The acorn which was too small to bother with at the beginning of the story has become a tree large enough to house the Squirrel and his family at the end. The meaning of this saying is that great enterprises may have humble and unexpected beginnings.