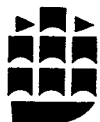




# NOW READ ON

A READING AND LANGUAGE PRACTICE  
BOOK

T. U. SACHS



LONGMAN

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## Foreword

‘Reading maketh a full man.’

FRANCIS BACON

READING a good story or essay is one of the most enjoyable – and therefore one of the best – roads for the explorer of a foreign language and of strange social and cultural climates. But the student at an intermediate level is often discouraged by the writer’s idiosyncracies of style as well as by an apparently inordinate length of the text. Most of the 20 short stories and essays by well-known British and American authors in this book have therefore been abridged so as to permit a reasonably rapid first reading at one sitting or during one lesson, and the vocabulary has been slightly and unobtrusively simplified. The transition to completely unadapted prose should present no difficulty at the next stage.

Arbitrary as is the choice in any anthology, the criterion for the inclusion of a text was its readability and teachability: it is hoped that this book will provide reading enjoyment as well as an improvement in the student’s language performance and some acquaintance with social and cultural settings in English-speaking countries.

This book is for students of the level of those who have completed the Cambridge Lower Certificate course and are beginning the study of works of literature such as those which are set for the Cambridge Proficiency Certificate.

The text is followed by a biographical note on the author, reading notes on points where help may be found useful, and by a set of exercises.

The notes explain difficulties, especially of phrase or structure, that cannot be solved by reference to a dictionary.

The exercises are designed to lead the student, as he works through them, to refer constantly to the text and in this way to get the fullest benefit from his reading of it.

Students working on their own without a teacher may, it is hoped, find the book particularly suited to their needs. In the classroom, the teacher should find the subjects for oral and written composition a stimulus to discussion and debate.

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# 1

## The Awful Fate of Melpomenus Jones

STEPHEN LEACOCK

SOME PEOPLE – not you nor I, because we are so awfully self-possessed – but some people, find great difficulty in saying good-bye when making a call or spending the evening. As the moment draws near when the visitor feels that he is fairly entitled to go away he rises and says suddenly, 'Well, I think I . . .' Then the people say, 'Oh, must you go now? Surely it's early yet!' and a pitiful struggle follows.

I think the saddest case of this kind of thing that I ever knew was that of my poor friend Melpomenus Jones, a clergyman – such a dear young man and only twenty-three! He simply couldn't get away from people. He was too modest to tell a lie, and too religious to wish to appear rude. Now it happened that he went to call on some friends of his on the very first afternoon of his summer vacation. The next six weeks were entirely his own – absolutely nothing to do. He chattered a while, drank two cups of tea, then prepared himself for the effort and said suddenly:

'Well, I think I . . .'

But the lady of the house said, 'Oh, no! Mr Jones, can't you really stay a little longer?' 20

Jones was always truthful. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'of course, I – er – can stay.'

'Then please don't go.'

He stayed. He drank eleven cups of tea. Night was falling. He rose again.

'Well now,' he said shyly, 'I think I really . . .'

'You must go?' said the lady politely. 'I thought perhaps you could have stayed to dinner . . .'

'Oh well, so I could, you know,' Jones said, 'if . . .'

50 'Then please stay, I'm sure my husband will be delighted.'

'All right,' he said feebly, 'I'll stay,' and he sank back into his chair, just full of tea and miserable.

Papa came home. They had dinner. All through the meal Jones sat planning to leave at eight-thirty. All the family wondered whether Mr Jones was stupid and ill-tempered, or only stupid.

After dinner mama tried to 'draw him out', and showed him photographs. She showed him all the family museum, several hundreds of them - photos of papa's uncle and his  
40 wife, and mama's brother and his little boy, an awfully interesting photo of papa's uncle's friend in his Bengal uniform, an awfully well-taken photo of papa's grandfather's partner's dog, and an awfully wicked one of papa as the devil for a fancy-dress ball.

At eight-thirty Jones had examined seventy-one photographs.

There were about sixty-nine more that he hadn't. Jones rose. 'I must say good night now,' he pleaded.

'Say good night!' they said, 'why it's only half past eight! Have you anything to do?'

50 'Nothing,' he admitted, and muttered something about staying six weeks, and then laughed miserably.

Just then it turned out that the favourite child of the family, such a dear little boy, had hidden Mr Jones's hat; so papa said that he must stay, and invited him to a pipe and a chat. Papa had the pipe and gave Jones the chat, and still he stayed. Every moment he meant to take the plunge, but couldn't. Then papa began to get very tired of Jones and finally said, with irony, that Jones had better stay all night, they could make up a bed for him. Jones mistook his meaning  
60 and thanked him with tears in his eyes, and papa put Jones to bed in the spare room and cursed him heartily.

After breakfast next day, papa went off to his work in the city, and left Jones playing with the baby, broken-hearted. His nerve was utterly gone. He was meaning to leave all day, but the thing had got on his mind and he simply couldn't. When papa came home in the evening he was surprised and angry to find Jones still there. He thought to get rid of him with a joke, and said he thought he'd have to charge him for his board, he! he! The unhappy young man stared wildly for a moment, then shook papa's hand, paid him a month's board in advance, and broke down and sobbed like a child. 70

In the days that followed he was moody and unapproachable. He lived, of course, entirely in the drawing-room, and the lack of air and exercise began to affect his health. He passed his time in drinking tea and looking at the photographs. He would stand for hours gazing at the photograph of papa's uncle's friend in his Bengal uniform – talking to it, sometimes swearing bitterly at it. His mind was obviously failing.

At length the crash came. They carried him upstairs in a raging delirium of fever. The illness that followed was terrible. He recognised no one, not even papa's uncle's friend in his Bengal uniform. At times he would start up from his bed and shriek, 'Well, I think I . . .' and then fall back upon the pillow with a horrible laugh. Then, again, he would jump up and cry, 'Another cup of tea and more photographs! More photographs! Har! Har!' 80

At length, after a month of agony, on the last day of his vacation, he passed away. They say that when the last moment came, he sat up in bed with a beautiful smile of confidence playing upon his face, and said, 'Well – the angels are calling me; I'm afraid I really must go now. Good afternoon.' 90

And the rushing of his spirit from its prison-house was as quick as a hunted cat passing over a garden fence.

## THE AUTHOR

Stephen Leacock (1882–1944) was born in England. When he was seven years old, his parents emigrated to Canada. He was educated in Canada and in the United States, and is therefore to be considered as a North American writer.

He is well known to English-speaking people all over the world as a writer of humorous stories and essays, but he was not only a humorist. He was Professor of Economics and Political Science at McGill University, Toronto, Canada, and wrote an important textbook on political science. He also wrote studies of the works of Mark Twain, the nineteenth-century American humorist and author of *Tom Sawyer*, and of Charles Dickens, the English novelist who created many characters of world-wide fame such as Oliver Twist and Mr Pickwick. He is, however, best known for his own humorous writings, which are in some ways in the tradition of Mark Twain. Like Mark Twain, he gets some of his funniest effects by exaggerating some feature or other of real life, as in this story.

## READING NOTES

The tone and incidents of this story give a Canadian's idea of life in a certain section of English society forty or fifty years ago.

*Line 1 awfully*: very. *Awfully* is used in this way in colloquial conversation by the kind of people whose conversation is full of exaggeration. There is a similar example in lines 10–11 – 'He simply couldn't get away from people.'

3 *making a call*: paying a visit. Notice the change of verb if we use 'visit'.

4 *fairly*. *Fairly* is often used as an adverb of degree (e.g. 'fairly warm', which means 'quite warm' but is less strong than 'very warm'). Here, however, it has a totally different meaning. It is the corresponding adverb to 'fair' meaning 'just' or 'right'. The whole phrase means that the visitor has stayed long enough, and that he now has the right to leave. The point of the story depends very much on the humorous suggestion that calling on people is a social obligation rather than a pleasure.

7 *a pitiful struggle*. Leacock imagines that both the host and the guest are anxious to put an end to the visit, but that each of them

is so polite that he does not want to take the first step in doing so.

22 *er.* This represents a sound made by nervous people, when they are hesitating over what to say next.

27-8 The key to the rest of the story is here. The hostess, not wishing to appear rude, says something that she does not really mean - 'I thought you could have stayed to dinner.' Mr Jones, who has no other engagement, cannot tell a lie and accepts the invitation, though his acceptance pleases neither of them. That is why we are told in line 32 that he sank back into his chair, 'miserable'.

35 Mr Jones was not ill-tempered, but silent because he was worried about not being able to get away.

37 *draw him out:* get him to talk, get him interested.

41 *in his Bengal uniform.* This phrase tells us at what period this story happened, namely in the early years of the twentieth century, the period known as 'Edwardian' because Edward VII was king of England. The army was one of the professions which the sons of wealthy people entered at that time, and many of them served in India. The man in this photograph had evidently been an officer in a regiment in Bengal, perhaps the famous Bengal Lancers.

47 *pleaded:* begged. Suggests that the unfortunate Mr Jones was asking for permission to go away.

55 *Papa had the pipe and gave Jones the chat.* Papa smoked and did all the talking as well. We may imagine that a delicate young clergyman like Mr Jones would dislike the smell of tobacco smoke, and would also dislike having to listen to a lot of talk when he really wanted to get away.

56 *take the plunge:* take a sudden and bold decision. Literally the expression means 'dive into water'; it is commonly used to suggest that the water is very deep or cold.

58 *with irony.* These words indicate one more misunderstanding between Jones and his hosts.

61 *heartily.* This word usually means 'cheerfully', but here it suggests that Papa relieved his angry feelings by cursing Jones very strongly.

63 *broken-hearted.* Jones, of course, not the baby.

64 *nerve.* A common use of this word to mean 'courage'.

69 *board*. This means the cost of food. Compare 'board and lodging', which means that food and accommodation are provided, 'Boarding school' and 'boarder' (a boarder being a person who lives and has his or her meals in a boarding establishment).

### EXERCISES

A. Answer these questions.

1. What is the 'pitiful struggle' mentioned in the first paragraph of the story?
2. What are we told in the second paragraph about Mr Jones's character?
3. 'You must go?' said the lady politely. 'I thought perhaps you could have stayed to dinner . . .' What did the hostess really intend by these words, and what was their effect on Jones?
4. 'He thought to get rid of him with a joke . . .' Why did this plan fail?
5. What happened during Jones's last moments?

B. Show the meaning of these expressions by using them in sentences.

board ( <i>n</i> )	fancy dress	chatter ( <i>v</i> )
chat ( <i>n</i> )	spare room	sob ( <i>v</i> )
curse ( <i>v</i> )	unapproachable	
plead	vacation	

C. Find expressions in the story with the same meaning as those below:

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. make up one's mind and take action          | 5. a disaster happened          |
| 2. he was losing his sanity                    | 6. to say what is not true      |
| 3. he had nothing to do for the next six weeks | 7. it was discovered that . . . |
| 4. send him away                               | 8. he had lost his courage      |
|  | 9. he lost his self-control     |
|  | 10. sarcastically               |

D. Give the correct form of the verb in brackets in each of these sentences.

1. Some people find difficulty in (say) good-bye.
2. Mr Jones was too modest (tell) a lie.
3. He had absolutely nothing (do).
4. He spent an hour (look) at photographs.
5. He muttered something about (stay) six weeks.
6. Papa said he had better (stay) all night.
7. He left Jones (play) with the baby.
8. Jones was meaning (leave) every day.
9. Papa was angry (find) Jones still there.
10. The lack of exercise began (affect) his health.

E. Change each sentence by giving an adverb instead of the adjective in italics and a suitable verb instead of the noun in italics, and make any other necessary alterations.

Example

Jones gave a *cold stare* at his hostess.

Jones stared coldly at his hostess.

1. Jones made a *pitiful struggle* to get away.
2. He gave a *nervous smile* when his hostess asked him to dinner.
3. He made *feeble comments* on the photographs.
4. He gave a *miserable laugh* and sat down.
5. Papa uttered a *heartly curse* after he had put Jones to bed.
6. In the days that followed, Jones's *behaviour* was *moody*.
7. Jones uttered a *horrible laugh* as he fell back on the pillow.
8. He had a *confident smile* as he sat up in bed.
9. The hunted cat made a *quick rush* over a garden fence.
10. He never made an *untruthful speech*, not even to save his life.

F. Write out this passage with the verbs in brackets in their proper forms.

Jones (mistake) his meaning and (thank) him with tears in his eyes, and Papa (put) Jones to bed in the spare room and (curse) him heartily. After breakfast next day, Papa (go) off to his work in the city and (leave) Jones (play) with the baby, broken-hearted. He (mean, leave) all day, but the thing (get) on his mind and he simply (can, *negative*). When Papa (come) home in the evening he (be) surprised and angry (find) Jones still there.

G. Subjects for composition and discussion:

1. Give examples of exaggeration in the story which produce a humorous effect.
2. 'Some people – not you nor I . . .' Do you know any 'Joneses'? Do you sympathise more with them or with the people they visit?
3. Imagine you are the lady of the house. Write to your mother, telling her all about Mr Jones's visit.



## Eveline

JAMES JOYCE

SHE sat at the window watching the evening enter the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains, and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cotton cloth. She was tired.

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the path before the new red houses. Once there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field – the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up; her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home. 10 20

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided.