

Patchwork

Stories around the world
for students of English

RAJA NASR



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*Stories around the world
for students of English*

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and Linguistics,
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Foreword to teachers

This book is a collection of thirty short stories written within a vocabulary of about 2,500 words. The stories are international in character: the real life stories are ones of men and women who have distinguished themselves in different parts of the world as well as in different ways, and the fiction stories, similarly, represent a number of different cultural backgrounds.

Teachers will find the various exercises at the end of each story of help in making the book a *language learning* device as well as a source of interest to students. The exercises have been designed to offer a range of activities, so it is hoped that teachers will use their knowledge of their classes to select appropriate stories and exercises. There is no reason why, for some stories, different groups in one class should not each work at a different exercise and then pool their results, while for other stories, the whole class should work together.

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Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Foreword to teachers | iv |
| Why the clever Oxford student lost his supper | 1 |
| Jeha and his famous donkey | 3 |
| Silly Saburo | 6 |
| The peasant and the bear | 11 |
| Jeha and the vizier | 14 |
| St George and the dragon | 18 |
| The fisherman and the fish | 23 |
| Jeha and his answers | 26 |
| The death of a great president | 30 |
| Andy my boy | 35 |
| Alice and Humpty Dumpty | 39 |
| Balda and his master | 43 |
| Father and son | 47 |
| The father | 50 |
| To go or not to go | 55 |
| Examination time for Helen Keller | 59 |
| The child's story | 64 |
| Alice and the Caterpillar | 71 |
| Prince Ivan and the grey wolf | 77 |
| Alone on an island | 84 |
| My man Friday | 89 |
| Power is not everything | 97 |
| Never again | 101 |
| The bet 1 | 107 |
| The bet 2 | 112 |
| A cup of tea 1 | 117 |
| A cup of tea 2 | 124 |
| Happiness 1 | 128 |
| Happiness 2 | 133 |
| The sale of a present | 137 |

Why the clever Oxford student lost his supper¹

Once there was a rich man who lived with his wife and child. He loved the child so much that he sent him to Oxford for two or three years. At the end of the first year at the university, this young student came home to his father. He wanted a change. And he also wanted to tell his parents about Oxford.

It happened one night that the father, the mother, and the young student were sitting at supper. They had in front of them only two chickens. Just as they were about to begin eating, the father said, 'My boy, I have spent a lot of money on you to send you to Oxford. Now I have a great desire to know what you have learned.' The son smiled and said, 'Father, I have studied a science which can make me prove that these two chickens in the dish are really three chickens.' 'Well,' said the father, 'this is something I would very much like to know.'

'There are two chickens on the dish,' said the student. He took one of the chickens in his hand and said, 'Here is one more: and one and two make three. So here are three chickens.' Then the father took one of the chickens to himself, gave the other to his wife, and said, 'I will have one of the chickens myself; your mother shall have another; and because of your good reasoning, you can have the third for your supper and nothing else.' The father kept his word and so the student went without his supper.

¹ We do not know who first wrote this story, but it was printed by John Rastell in the sixteenth century. Shakespeare is said to have used this story as well as some others from *A Hundred Merry Tales* (1526).

Comprehension and discussion

A Answer the following questions:

- 1 How many members were there in the family?
- 2 Was the child a boy or a girl?
- 3 Which university did he go to? (Where is this university?)
- 4 Where were the two chickens at first?
- 5 Where was the third chicken during the student's explanation?
- 6 Where was the third chicken when they started to eat?
- 7 Was the father pleased with his son's knowledge?

B Discuss the following questions in class:

- 1 Did the student really prove that there were three chickens?
- 2 Would you call the student's explanation 'a science'?
What would you call it—a joke, a game, a trick? Do you think the student expected his father to take it seriously? Why or why not?
- 3 Do you think the father was right to let his son go without supper?

Writing

A In the story, the word *night* appears in the second paragraph. You know, of course, that *g* and *h* are not pronounced in that word. Can you say and write five other words which contain a *gh* which is not pronounced?

B Write two or three sentences about *either*

- a) the difference between a school and a university *or*
- b) the difference between two schools that you know.

Jeha and his famous donkey

Jeha was a very famous man, and Jeha's donkey was famous too. No-one knows much about their lives. Some people called Jeha foolish. Some people thought his donkey was very wise. But a lot of people loved Jeha. He was a kind man and they liked his stories. These people said that Jeha's donkey was a foolish animal.

Jeha and his donkey were good friends, and they were always together. Sometimes one of them fell sick; but then the other fell sick too. Sometimes Jeha laughed, and then the donkey used to give a special donkey laugh. No other donkey could make the same sound. Jeha's heart was sometimes sad; then the donkey's eyes looked sad too. So you can see that they were good friends.

Jeha and his donkey also worked together. The donkey did the heavy work of ten other donkeys in the fields. But Jeha fed him very well. Jeha's donkey was the strongest animal in all the country. The two friends went together to every part of the country: to town, to the fields, and to the houses of friends. Jeha rode on his strong donkey, and everyone saw him.

Both of them went into town every week. There they had a wonderful time. They went into the shops and bought supplies.

But one day Jeha's wife asked to visit the town with him. She wanted to buy some material for a new dress. Jeha usually bought things for his wife. But she asked to go with him this time; so he could not say no.

After a big breakfast, the three went out together. Jeha came first—on his donkey, of course! His wife walked beside him. It was a beautiful morning. Jeha felt happy

that his wife was there. And she was happy to be with him. Of course the donkey was happy too.

They met some people on the road. The first was a stranger. 'I want to say something to you, wise Jeha. I am surprised. You are sitting on your donkey while your wife is walking! Now that's too bad!'

Jeha did not know what to do. He did not want to walk, because he had a donkey. But quickly he jumped off the animal and told his wife to sit on the donkey's back. He walked next to her.

Soon they met another person on the road. This time it was not a stranger; it was a friend from another village. Jeha stopped and talked to the man. But Jeha noticed that the man was angry.

'Jeha, you are a foolish man. A man never walks when he has a good donkey to ride!' his friend said.

Jeha always tried to please everyone. He liked to live that way. The donkey looked Jeha straight in the eye. He knew that something was going to happen. And what did Jeha do? He thought that he and his wife could ride the donkey together!

They went on in this way, but now the donkey was walking very slowly. Then they met a third person on his way back from the town. Jeha was almost falling asleep in the warm sun. He didn't look back at the man; but he and his wife heard the man's words. The man said, 'Jeha is very foolish. He and his wife together are too heavy for that donkey.' They jumped quickly to the ground.

Poor old Jeha didn't know what to do now. But then he thought of a good way out. He asked his wife to walk next to him. She did that with a smile. And what did Jeha do now? He picked up the donkey and carried it into town on his own back.

People never saw Jeha on his donkey after that day; and he never took his wife with him to town again.

Comprehension and discussion

A Answer the following questions:

- 1 How often did Jeha and his donkey go into town?
- 2 What did the first man say to Jeha? What did Jeha do?
- 3 What did the second man say? What did Jeha do then?
- 4 What did the third man say? What did Jeha do as a result?
- 5 Why didn't Jeha take his wife to town again?

B Discuss the following questions in class:

- 1 Do you think Jeha tried to please the people he met?
- 2 Do you think he succeeded?
- 3 Can a person please everyone?
- 4 What do you think Jeha should have done?

Writing

A Read the following sentence:

Jeha and his wife together are *too heavy* for that donkey.

Now complete the following sentences using *too + a suitable adjective* from the list underneath.

- 1 An elephant is ____ to sit in a car.
- 2 The donkey was ____ to carry Jeha and his wife together.
- 3 A baby is ____ to drive a car.
- 4 A grandfather is ____ to go to school.
- 5 The Atlantic Ocean is ____ to swim across.

young small old wide big

B Write down ten English names, each beginning with a different letter

- a) for boys.
- b) for girls.

Silly Saburo¹

Long ago there was a boy who lived on a farm in Japan. His name was Saburo, but he always did such silly things that people called him Silly Saburo. He could never remember more than one thing at a time, and then would do that one thing, no matter how silly it might be. His father and mother were very worried about him, but they hoped he'd get more sensible as he grew older, and they were always very patient with him.

One day his father said, 'Saburo, please go to the potato field today and dig up the potatoes. After you've dug them up, spread them out carefully and leave them in the sun to dry.'

'I understand,' said Saburo, and he went out to the potato field.

Saburo was busy digging the potatoes when all of a sudden he hit something in the earth. He dug deeper and found a big old pot. When he looked inside the pot he found it was filled with large gold coins. It was a huge treasure that someone had hidden there long ago.

'Father said I must first dig things up and then leave them to dry in the sun,' Saburo said to himself. So he very carefully spread the gold coins out. Then he went home and said, 'I found a pot of gold and spread the gold coins in the sun to dry.'

His parents were very surprised when they heard this. They went running to the potato field, but someone had taken all the gold. There was not a single coin left. 'Next

¹ Adapted from Florence Sakade: ed. *Japanese Children's Favourite Stories*, Charles E. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vermont, (U.S.A.) and Tokyo, Japan.



time you find something,' his father said, 'you must wrap it up very carefully and bring it home. Now don't forget!'

'I understand,' said Saburo. And the next day he found a dead cat in the field. So he wrapped it up very carefully and brought it home, very proud of having remembered.

His father said, 'Don't be so silly. When you find something like this, you must throw it in the river.'

Next day Saburo dug up a huge piece of wood. He thought very hard and remembered what his father had said about the dead cat. So he took the piece of wood and threw it with a great splash in the river.

Just then a neighbour was passing. 'You mustn't throw away valuable things like that,' the neighbour said. 'That would have made good firewood. You should have broken it into small pieces and taken it home.'

'I understand,' said Saburo, and started on his way home. On his way home he saw a teapot and a teacup which somebody had left beside the road. 'Oh, here's a valuable thing!' said Saburo. So he broke the teapot and teacup into very small pieces. Then he gathered up the pieces and took them home with him.

'Hello, Mother,' he said. 'Look what I found and brought home.' Then he showed his mother the broken pieces.

'Oh, my goodness!' said his mother. 'That's the teapot and teacup that I took to your father with his lunch at noon. And you've completely ruined them.'

Next day his parents said, 'Everything you do, you do wrong. We'll go out into the fields and work today. You stay home and keep house.' So they left Saburo alone.

'I really don't understand why people call me Silly Saburo,' he said to himself. 'I do everything exactly the way people tell me to.'

Comprehension and discussion

A Answer the following questions:

- 1 Why was Saburo called Silly Saburo?
- 2 What did Saburo do with the gold coins? Why?
- 3 Why didn't his parents find the coins?
- 4 What did Saburo do with the dead cat? Why?
- 5 What did he do with the teapot and teacup? Why?
- 6 Who had left the teapot and teacup at the side of the road?
- 7 Why was Saburo surprised to hear people call him Silly Saburo?

B Discuss the following questions in class:

- 1 Do you think that Saburo knew that he was doing things wrongly, or was he really foolish? Why?
- 2 What would you do if you found a pot of gold?

Writing

A Look at this sentence:

The boy was *busy digging* the potatoes.

Now you complete the following sentences by choosing a suitable verb from the list underneath and putting it into the correct part of the verb. Use each word from the list once only, but remember that some of the words are suitable for more than one sentence and some are not.

- 1 The girl was busy ____ a letter.
- 2 My mother was busy ____ the washing-up.
- 3 The class is busy ____ this exercise.
- 4 Tomorrow I'll be busy ____ my father in the garden.
- 5 The children in the playground are busy ____ games.
- 6 Saburo's parents were always very busy ____ Saburo.

| | | |
|----------|------|------------|
| complete | do | play |
| write | help | look after |

B Write five sentences beginning

If I found a pot of gold I would . . .

using the suggestions underneath. Write your answers in order beginning with the one you think is the most sensible, and finishing with the one you think is the silliest.

- 1 hide the coins in different places
- 2 take it home to my parents
- 3 spread the coins in the sun to dry
- 4 take it to a policeman
- 5 put it all back in the ground

The peasant and the bear¹

A peasant went to his field to plant some turnips. He wanted to have the best turnips in town. He planned to sell his produce in the market. While he was ploughing the field, a big bear came out of the forest and said, 'Peasant, I shall attack you.'

'Please do not attack me, my dear bear,' said the peasant. 'Instead let us work together. I will take only the roots, and you can have the upper parts of the turnips.'

'All right,' agreed the bear. 'But do not try to cheat me, for if you do, I shall attack you.'

In the autumn the peasant went to his field to pick the turnips. When the bear appeared, the peasant gave him the upper parts: the stems and the leaves. He kept the roots for himself. Then he loaded them on a cart and went to the village market to sell them. There he met the bear again.

'Let me try your roots,' demanded the bear. And when he did, he roared, 'Your roots are sweeter than my leaves. You have cheated me by taking the best part yourself. If you ever go to the forest to cut wood, I shall attack you.'

The following year, the peasant went to his field again, but this time he wanted to sow rye. 'You are planning to cheat me a second time,' the bear shouted as he came out of the forest. 'This time you must give me my proper share.'

'Very well,' answered the peasant. 'This time you may have the roots, and I will keep the upper parts.'

When harvest time came and they gathered the rye, the peasant gave the roots to the bear and loaded the upper parts on a cart and took them home.

¹ Adapted from a story by A.K. Tolstoi (a relative of Leon Tolstoi): *Russian Popular Tales*, State Edition of Literature for Children, Ministry of Education, Moscow, 1963.

The bear, of course, could make no use of the roots, and from that day on, the bear became the peasant's number one enemy.

Comprehension and discussion

A Answer the following questions:

- 1 What was the peasant planting in his field the first time?
- 2 What did the bear threaten to do?
- 3 How did the peasant persuade the bear not to attack him?
- 4 When did the peasant pick his turnips?
- 5 How did the peasant cheat the bear a second time?

B Discuss the following questions in class:

- 1 Do you know of any real ways in which man cheats animals?
- 2 In what ways are some animals quite helpful to man? In what ways are other animals quite harmful to man?

Grammar

Read the following sentences:

He was ploughing the field. A big bear came out of the forest.

These sentences can be joined by adding the word *while*:

While he was ploughing the field a big bear came out of the forest *or*

A big bear came out of the forest while he was ploughing the field.

Now join these sentences in the same way orally in class:

- 1 I was reading a book yesterday evening. The light went out.
- 2 I was looking for a candle. Someone knocked at the door.
- 3 I was opening the door. The telephone rang.
- 4 I was answering the telephone...

What happened next? Continue the story round the class for a few more sentences.

Writing

A Write the sentences and complete the story in the Grammar exercise above.