

Jeremy Harmer • Herbert Puchta

STORY-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING



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Please note: You could start this book by watching the videos first (see p.128), to let yourself be inspired by the stories and by the way our storytellers present them to their listeners. You may then want to continue with Chapter 7, How to Tell Stories, before delving into the theoretical concepts presented in the earlier chapters in Story-Based Language Teaching.

The Wise Man

Level B1

Synopsis A wise man lives with his son in a land far away. The man is poor – all he owns is the hut they live in, and an old horse. But he and his son are content. One day their horse runs away. The people from the nearby village visit the man. When they express their feelings of sympathy for the man’s loss of the horse, his reaction surprises them. He says that one doesn’t know whether this is a good thing or a bad thing. The next day the horse is back, and when the villagers express their relief about that, the wise man reacts exactly as before – one doesn’t know whether this is a good or a bad thing. He reacts similarly when his son breaks a leg a few days later, and they think he is crazy. But that night, soldiers come into the village and take all the young men away to fight, and die, in a war – except the wise man’s son, with his broken leg.

Storyboard See next page.

Characteristic language Typical storytelling time markers:

Once upon a time, in a land far away ...
 Every morning the man and his son got up very early ...
 ...
 Every morning they would go out into their field, and ...
 One day the man and his son ...
 When the people from the village heard what had happened ...
 The same night, only a few hours later ...

Recurring language:

But we don’t know if this is a good thing or a bad thing. Maybe it’s a bad thing, but maybe it’s good. Who knows?

The Wise Man



The Wise Man

Once upon a time, in a land far away there was a man and his son. Their life wasn't easy as they had very little money. All they owned was a wooden hut in a tiny village, a small piece of land where they grew corn and potatoes, and a horse. The horse had been given to the man by his father before he died, and now the horse itself was quite old. The man knew that one day the horse wouldn't be able to help them with their work any more.

Every morning the man and his son got up very early, before the sun rose. Every morning they would go out into their field, and they would work in the field to make sure their potatoes and the corn would grow well. It was hard work, but the man and his son didn't complain. They enjoyed what they were doing, and they were glad they had their horse to help them.

One day the man and his son had just finished their work in the field. They went back to the hut, and the man told his son to tie the horse to a tree. The boy did what his father had told him. Then he followed him into the hut where they had a quick breakfast together, before the boy left for school. The boy took his schoolbag, said goodbye to his dad, and stepped out of the hut. But something was different from before. Something was missing.

"Dad, come here, quickly," he shouted. "The horse has gone! Come and look." The man stuck his head out of one of the small windows. This looked so funny that the boy almost started to laugh when he saw it. But of course he didn't. The situation was far too serious. Their horse was missing. The horse that was so important for them.

Sadly, the boy left for school. When the people of the village saw him walk past their houses – the boy who would normally laugh and sing, and tell jokes with the other boys and girls – this time that boy walked past them and said ... nothing! He was so shocked and sad and angry all at the same time that he just couldn't even smile a little.

When the people from the village heard what had happened, they came to visit the boy's father. "We're so sorry that your horse has run away," they said to the man. "This is terrible!" When the man heard that, he thought for a while and then he said, "Yes, it's true that the horse has run away. But we don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing. Maybe it's a bad thing, but maybe it's good. Who knows?" When the people heard this, they were confused and went back home.

The next morning the horse had come back, and with it there were two beautiful young wild horses. When the people heard that, they said, "Ah, now we understand what the man meant." And they went back to the man's house. They apologised to him and congratulated him on being the owner of three horses now. The man listened to what they had to say. A minute of silence followed. Then he said, "Yes, it's true that I own three horses now. But we don't know if this is a good

thing or a bad thing. Maybe it's a bad thing, but maybe it's good. Who knows?"

When the people heard that, they thought the man was going crazy. They turned round quickly and went back home. "Doesn't this man understand how lucky he is?" they said. "How can he be so stupid and so ungrateful?"

A few months later the man said to his son, "Our horse is getting very old now. He's getting weaker and weaker by the day. I don't think he'll be able to work for us much longer. Go and get one of the two wild horses, and ride him!"

The boy took a piece of rope and caught one of the beautiful wild horses. That wasn't easy, but the boy was very clever, and soon he managed to tie the rope round the horse's neck. A minute later he was sitting on the wild horse's back. He tried to ride it, but that turned out to be impossible. The horse jumped around so wildly that the boy sailed through the air and landed on the ground, hard. He shouted in pain. When the father heard his son shouting, he knew that something was wrong, so he came into the garden and saw what had happened. The boy had broken his right leg, and from the look on his face the man could see that he was in terrible pain.

When the people heard what had happened, they visited the man and his son, and they brought lots of presents for the boy. They told the man how sorry they were for them. They told him how awful it was that his son couldn't help him in the field any more, and how difficult life must be for him now, without his son's help.

Again, the man listened to what they had to say. Again, a minute of silence followed. And again, the man said, "Yes, it's true that my son's broken his leg. But we don't know if this is a good thing or a bad thing. Maybe it's a bad thing, but maybe it's good. Who knows?"

When the people heard that, they left the man's place even faster than the last time, and said to each other. "What a strange man he is. And how stupid he is! Doesn't he understand how terrible it is that his son has broken his leg?" And then each of them went back home.

The same night, only a few hours later, everybody in the village was woken up by terrible noises. Soldiers had come to the village, and they took all the boys and young men from the village to fight in a war that had just broken out with one of the country's neighbours. The only boy the soldiers didn't take with them was the boy with the broken leg, because he couldn't fight.

None of the young men ever came back to the village. They all died in the war. But the man's son recovered, and together they often visited the people in the village, and they helped them as much as they could. After some time, when the people from the village had learnt to live with the sad situation, they went to the man and said, "We would like to thank you. We have learnt a lot from you. We know there are good things and bad things, and that both are part of life; but from you we've learnt that we can't always see which are which straight away, so we need to be careful before making decisions."

THE RESOURCEFUL TEACHER Series

One of the secrets of teaching a foreign language successfully lies in balancing routine classroom work with innovative and creative activities and techniques. This new series offers teachers, teacher trainers and teacher trainees a discussion of new developments in various areas, such as linguistics, pedagogy and cognitive psychology, and shows them practical ways of using key findings in these areas to enrich their own teaching.



Jeremy Harmer and **Herbert Puchta**, both writers of award-winning books on ELT, look at the use of stories in language teaching. Starting from an imaginative account of how and why the very first stories may have been created, they look at what storytelling means to us as a species, why it maintains its relevance and appeal to people of all ages, and how it has contributed to our survival, our mental and physical wellbeing and the establishment of our various cultures.

The authors argue convincingly that something so important to people throughout history must also have a place in education and an impact on learning. Wishing to move away from the traditional use of stories in the classroom as simply a way of overtly teaching vocabulary and grammar, the authors take a more holistic approach, acknowledging and celebrating the role that stories can have in teaching language, but not losing sight of their primary purposes of showing people how to survive, how to deal with difficulties and prepare for situations they have yet to encounter, or their role in entertainment.

This book examines:

- The insights provided by neuroscience on the effect of stories on the brain.
- Traditional and new ways of using stories in English language teaching.
- The ingredients of a good story.
- The way stories can be made useful for language learners.
- How best to find good stories for students of different ages.
- Storytelling techniques and ways to prepare and rehearse.
- Using stories in the classroom, and creating stories for and with the students.
- Digital storytelling.

There are nine original stories included in the book, together with a wealth of ideas about how these could be used in the classroom.



You can also watch these stories being told to students and see interviews with the storytellers online.

helbling.com/english

