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ENGLISH SHORT STORIES FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS SAMPLE CHAPTER



A Lesson in Being a New Yorker
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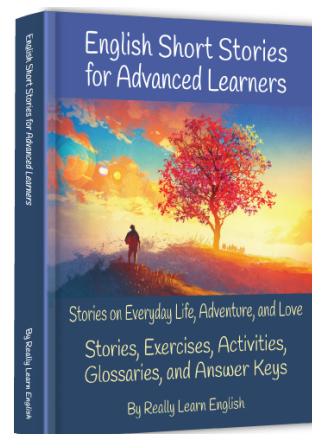
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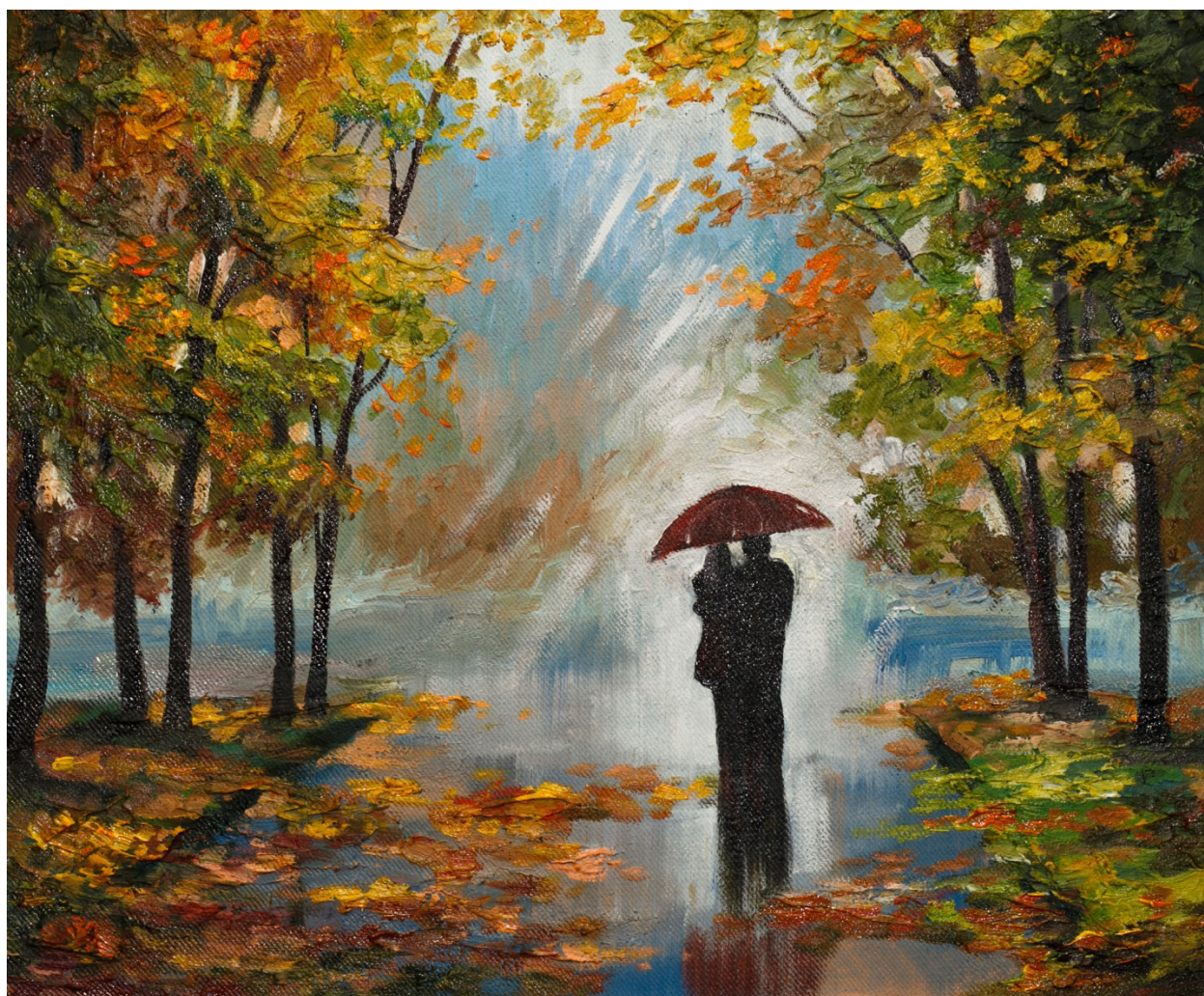


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A Lesson in Being a New Yorker



Story, Exercises, Activities,
Glossary, and Answer Key

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Story Glossary

Don't guess! If you don't know a word in the story, check it in the story's glossary or a good dictionary.

a taste of home: something that reminds you of home when you live in a different place

adjust: to get used to living in a new environment

blush: when your cheeks turn red, usually because you are embarrassed

borrow: to take something temporarily, with the intention of giving it back later

break down: when a machine stops working (usually used to describe cars and other vehicles)

business trip: a trip you take for work

careless: not paying enough attention to something

cash: money in the form of coins and paper money

cash register: a machine in shops where money is kept

convenience store: a shop that sells a variety of household products

curvy: having curves (usually used to describe women's figures)

dial: to put a number into the phone when you want to make a call

dig around: to look for, usually in a bag or in your pockets

engine: a device in a car or some other vehicle that used fuel to generate energy and make something work

excuse: a reason or explanation for something

figure out: to determine the answer to something

flirt: to speak to someone in a playful way, usually because you like them

gentleman: a polite way of saying “man”

get out of: to escape from or to exit

give (someone) a ride: to let someone ride in your car

grateful: the way you feel when you appreciate someone

grinding (of a machine’s sound): making an unpleasant noise when it isn’t working properly

hang up: to end a phone connection

insurance card: a card with information about an insurance company (*insurance companies* are companies that are supposed to help you when you have problems with your health, house, or car)

judge: to form an opinion about someone or something

keep up with: to walk or move at the same rate as someone else

mechanic: someone who repairs cars

meet up with: to see someone informally (usually a friend)

nerd: someone who studies or reads a lot

nod: to move your head in a certain direction

operator: a person who helps you place telephone calls

overhear: to hear someone’s conversation when you aren’t intending to

pay (someone) back: to return money to someone

pay attention: to listen closely to

pick on: to criticize or bully someone

pouring: a word to describe the weather when it is raining a lot

rack: a frame or stand for holding things

shocked: very surprised

sit up: to sit straight so that you can see and pay attention

stand: to tolerate or put up with someone or something

stare: to look at something for a long time

steering wheel: the part of the car you use to navigate or change direction

swear: to promise strongly

switch: to change

Texan: a person from Texas

ticket machine: a machine that sells bus or train tickets

trace: to follow something, such as a picture or map, with your finger

trail off: to gradually lower down your voice

trek: a very long or difficult walk

A Lesson in Being a New Yorker



As the last few seconds of the school day pass, Riley does not know if she or her students are more excited for the day to be over. She took the job as a teacher in New York City because she wanted to help kids and get out of Texas, where she grew up.

Now, it just feels like a mistake. The children in her class don't respect her and never pay attention. No one in the city talks to her and she hasn't made a single friend. She just wants to go home, which is why she is so excited for the day to be over.

After work, she is going to meet up with her childhood friend, Sharon, at a park in Brooklyn. Sharon is on a business trip and only has a few free hours, but that is still enough to excite Riley. A little taste of home is all she needs.

She walks quickly to her old, gray car. As she turns the key, the engine makes a grinding sound and then is completely silent. She tries turning the key again and again but nothing happens.

She takes her wallet out of her purse and finds her insurance card. She dials the number printed on the back of the card and doesn't even wait for the operator to finish speaking before she explains the situation.

"My car won't start. At first it made a noise but now it's not doing anything," Riley says.

"We can send a mechanic to you, but it's busy tonight. Can you wait three hours?" the operator replies.

In three hours, Riley is supposed to be sitting on a park bench with Sharon. "No," she says and hangs up.

She rests her head on the steering wheel, trying to figure out what to do. When she sits up, she notices Mr. Oppenheim walking across the parking lot. Riley can't stand Mr. Oppenheim. He's only a year older than her, but he teaches like he has years of experience. His students pay attention and get good grades and actually like him. It doesn't help that he looks like the kind of kid she used to pick on in high school either. With his thick glasses, thin body, and messy hair he is a classic nerd. Riley, with her long blonde hair and curvy body would have been way better than him in high school.

But this isn't high school anymore, Riley thinks, as she gets out of the car and yells, "Mr. Oppenheim."

He looks around for a moment before noticing her. "You can just call me Chris," he says.

"I need your help," she says. "My car broke down and I'm supposed to meet a friend at Prospect Park. Can you give me a ride?"

“Well, I would if I owned a car. I just walk everywhere,” he says. Of course he does, she thinks. “You could just take the subway. There’s a station right by the park.”

“I, uh, don’t know how to take the subway,” she says. “Don’t judge me. It’s confusing and smells bad.”

“You can’t be a true New Yorker if you don’t take the subway. I’m going to teach you.”

He turns and starts walking away as Riley tries to keep up with him. She can see why his students like him so much. When he’s teaching something, he’s a great leader.

Chris walks into a subway station, to a map, and says, “Prospect Park is here. And we are right here. So, how do you get to the park?”

Riley stares at the map. “I need to take that train and then switch to that train,” tracing the path with her finger.

“Exactly!” Chris says. “See? It’s not that hard.”

Riley wishes she could be that excited with her students.

Chris walks to a ticket machine and shows her where to put her money. Riley reaches into her bag, but she can’t find her wallet. She digs around for it before remembering that she took the wallet out when she called the insurance company and didn’t put it back. She can’t believe she could be so careless. This day couldn’t get any worse. She hopes that she remembered to lock the doors so no one steals it!

“Problem?” Chris asks.

“I forgot my wallet. Can I borrow some money? I’ll pay you back tomorrow, I swear,” Riley says.

“I don’t have any cash. I spent the last of it on lunch today.” After a moment, Chris continues, “You know, the park isn’t too far away. I mean, it’s a long walk, but a nice one. I could take you.”

Chris smiles at her and Riley gets the feeling that he’s flirting with her. Suddenly she’s really excited about spending more time with him.

“That would be great,” she says as they walk up the stairs and into pouring rain. It is raining harder than Riley has ever seen. The roads look like rivers.

Chris grabs her arm and leads her into a convenience store. “Well, I don’t think we’re going to be able to make it now. I mean, unless you have an umbrella hidden somewhere in your purse.”

Riley starts to cry. “And neither of us can pay for a taxi. I just miss home and want to see my friend.”

“Excuse me, ma’am,” the man standing behind the cash register says. “You’re from Texas, right?”

Riley nods.

“I thought so. I could tell from your accent. I moved here from Texas fifteen years ago. I know how hard it is to adjust,” he continues.

Riley smiles at him, grateful at least for a fellow Texan.

“I overheard your gentleman friend there saying you need an umbrella. Well, I’ve got a whole rack of them over there,” he says as he nods to the door. “Why don’t you just go ahead and take one?”

Riley tries to speak, but she’s too shocked to form words. This is the friendliest anyone has been to her since she moved. Well, maybe the second friendliest, after Chris.

Chris thanks the man for her and grabs an umbrella. He opens it as they step out of the store and holds it over her. They lean against each other to fit under the umbrella. Touching Chris feels warm and comfortable.

“Why have you been so helpful today?” Riley asks.

Chris blushes. “I, uhm, wanted an excuse to talk to you, but you always seem too busy at school, so...” He trails off without finishing his thought. “You ready for the trek?”

“Yeah,” Riley smiles at him. “Just let me do something first.” She wraps her arms around him and pulls him in for a kiss.

The End

Vocabulary Questions

- 1) What does “a little taste of home” mean?
 - A. food from your hometown
 - B. something that reminds you of home
 - C. a restaurant that serves homemade food
 - D. a present from a friend from home

- 2) What does “grinding” mean?
 - A. a low humming sound
 - B. yelling or shouting
 - C. a very loud and unpleasant noise
 - D. an unpleasant noise something makes when it isn't working properly

- 3) What is an “operator?”
 - A. someone who helps you make phone calls
 - B. another word for a secretary or receptionist
 - C. someone who drives a bus or taxi
 - D. someone who helps people get into locked cars

- 4) What does “figure out” mean?
 - A. to learn
 - B. to determine
 - C. to realize
 - D. to misunderstand

- 5) What does “nerd” mean?
 - A. someone who gets good grades
 - B. someone who plays sports
 - C. someone who studies a lot
 - D. someone who helps the teacher

6) What does “switch” mean?

- A. to exit
- B. to stop
- C. to continue
- D. to change

7) What does “careless” mean?

- A. not paying enough attention
- B. irresponsible
- C. unbelievable
- D. in a rush

8) What does “pouring” mean?

- A. extremely windy
- B. bad weather
- C. very cold
- D. raining a lot

9) What is a “cash register”?

- A. the part of the bank where you hand in your money
- B. the place in a shop where you keep money
- C. a book that explains how many products you’ve sold
- D. a list of customers and how much money they’ve spent

10) What does an “excuse” mean?

- A. a favor
- B. a request
- C. an explanation
- D. an apology

Grammar Questions

- 1) Riley _____ from Texas to New York to work as a teacher.
 - A. is moving
 - B. will move
 - C. moved
 - D. was moving

- 2) Riley _____ New York, because she feels lonely.
 - A. doesn't like
 - B. don't like
 - C. hasn't liked
 - D. won't like

- 3) After work, Riley _____ her friend Sharon.
 - A. has met
 - B. meets
 - C. met
 - D. is going to meet

- 4) When Riley discovers that her car won't start, she _____ the operator.
 - A. should call
 - B. calls
 - C. is calling
 - D. called

- 5) Chris, Riley's colleague, has _____ her.
 - A. more experience from
 - B. more experience than
 - C. more experience of
 - D. more experience that

- 6) At first, Chris _____ Riley.
- A. can't notice
 - B. isn't noticing
 - C. doesn't notice
 - D. isn't going to notice
- 7) Chris explains that he _____ Riley how to use the subway.
- A. might teach
 - B. taught
 - C. teaches
 - D. is going to teach
- 8) When Riley and Chris leave the subway, it _____.
- A. is raining heavily
 - B. has rain heavily
 - C. rains heavily
 - D. was raining heavily
- 9) Riley and Chris _____ an umbrella from a friendly man.
- A. will borrow
 - B. should borrow
 - C. borrow
 - D. borrowing
- 10) At the end of the story, Riley discovers that Chris _____.
- A. can like her
 - B. likes her
 - C. will like her
 - D. have liked her

Sentence Structure

The following sentences are all mixed up. Put the words on each line in the correct order to make a logical sentence.

1) respect children her Riley's class don't never The attention and pay in.

2) takes card of her insurance She out purse and finds her wallet her.

3) supposed to hours, Sharon Riley is In be park sitting bench three on a with.

4) that used to It kind help looks like the of kid she pick doesn't on Mr. Oppenheim.

5) that remembered she her to lock the doors one wallet hopes so She no steals!

Comprehension Questions

1) How does Riley feel about her job? Is working as a teacher in New York what she expected?

2) Where is Riley going when she leaves work?

3) What does Riley do when she realizes her car isn't working?

4) Who does Riley find in the parking lot? How does she feel about him?

5) What problems do Riley and Chris experience when they try to take the subway?

6) How do they finally decide to get to Brooklyn?

7) What is the weather like when Riley and Chris leave the subway? What do they do?

8) How does Riley's relationship with her coworker change at the end of the story?

Essay Questions

1) Riley doesn't like her job working as a teacher in New York City, because she thinks her students are rude and don't respect her. In addition, she feels quite lonely living in a new city far from home. What do you think Riley should do? Should she look for a different job somewhere else, or wait and see if the situation improves? Explain your reasons.

2) What would be the best way for Riley to thank the kind man in the convenience store who lets her borrow an umbrella? Describe a couple of ways she can show her appreciation for him helping her when she was in trouble.

Role Play

Work with a partner (if possible). Take turns performing these tasks.

Scenario 1

When Riley finally gets to Brooklyn, she tells Sharon all about her crazy afternoon.

Partner A: Pretend you are Riley. Explain the many problems you have experienced this afternoon after leaving work. Don't forget to ask Sharon about her day, too!

Partner B: Pretend you are Sharon. Ask Riley questions about the things that have happened to her. Invent some things to tell her about your afternoon, too.

Scenario 2

A few days later, Riley goes back to the convenience store and returns the umbrella to the kind man who lent it to her.

Partner A: Pretend you are Riley. Thank the man in the convenience store for helping you that day when it was raining. Ask the man questions about his life in New York, and why he moved away from Texas.

Partner B: Pretend you are the man in the convenience store. Ask Riley about her life in New York, and why she moved to the city. Tell her about your life, too. Give her some recommendations about ways to adjust to her new situation.

Group Activity

Charades

This team game is called “charades.” it is a great activity because it gets your students up and moving around the room as they practice the new vocabulary. Use this opportunity to do something really active and fun!

- 1) Prepare small pieces of paper with selected words from the story’s glossary on them.
- 2) Divide the class into two groups.
- 3) Have the groups take turns sending one “actor” to the front of the class.
- 4) Give the actor a piece of paper with a glossary word.
- 5) Have the student act out the word while his or her teammates try to guess what it is.
- 6) If they guess correctly, give them a point.
- 7) Then have the other team take turns sending an actor to the front of the class.
- 8) At the end, the team with the most points wins.

Each student will have a chance to act and guess. You can put a time limit on the acting if you want to make the game more competitive. If the actor’s team cannot guess the word, the other team can try to guess correctly to steal the point. Which team can act and guess the best?

Competitions that involve movement make the class really fun and interesting for your students while they work with the new vocabulary.

Answer Key

Vocabulary Questions

1) B 2) D 3) A 4) B 5) C 6) D 7) A 8) D 9) B 10) C

Grammar Questions

1) C 2) A 3) D 4) B 5) B 6) C 7) D 8) A 9) C 10) B

Sentence Structure

- 1) The children in Riley's class don't respect her and never pay attention.
- 2) She takes her wallet out of her purse and finds her insurance card.
- 3) In three hours, Riley is supposed to be sitting on a park bench with Sharon.
- 4) It doesn't help that Mr. Oppenheim looks like the kind of kid she used to pick on.
- 5) She hopes that she remembered to lock the doors so no one steals her wallet!

Comprehension Questions

- 1) Riley hasn't been enjoying working as a teacher in New York, because her students are rude and don't listen to her.
- 2) When Riley leaves work, she is going to meet her friend Sharon in Brooklyn.
- 3) When Riley realizes her car isn't working, she calls her insurance company.

- 4) In the parking lot, Riley bumps into her colleague, Mr. Oppenheim. Riley doesn't like Mr. Oppenheim because he teaches like he has years of experience. Riley also feels jealous of him because his students seem to enjoy his classes.
- 5) Riley realizes that she forgot her wallet in her car and doesn't have money to buy a ticket. Chris doesn't have any cash either because he spent all of it on lunch. As a result, they can't buy subway tickets.
- 6) In the end, Riley and Chris decide to walk to Brooklyn, even though it is a long walk.
- 7) When Riley and Chris leave the subway, it is raining heavily. So she and Chris go into a small convenience store.
- 8) At the end of the story, Riley and Chris realize that they like each other. Riley puts her arms around Chris and gives him a kiss.

Essay Questions

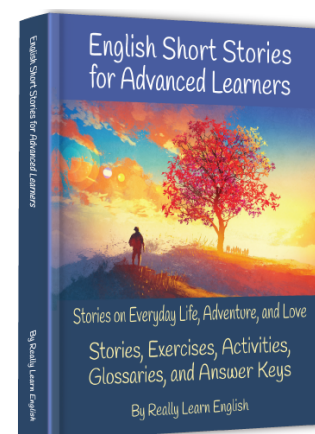
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