

Tell me a story, Pew.

What kind of story, child?

A story with a happy ending.

There's no such thing in all the world.

As a happy ending?

As an ending.

(From Lighthousekeeping by Jeanette Winterson)

THE UMBRELLA MAN

By Roald Dahl

I'm going to tell you about a funny thing that happened to my mother and me yesterday evening. I am twelve years old and I'm a girl. My mother is thirty-four but I am nearly as tall as her already.

Yesterday afternoon, my mother took me up to London to see the dentist. He found one hole. It was in a back tooth and he filled it without hurting me too much. After that, we went to a café. I had a banana split and my mother had a cup of coffee. By the time we got up to leave, it was about six o'clock.

When we came out of the café it had started to rain.

"We must get a taxi," my mother said. We were wearing ordinary hats and coats, and it was raining quite hard. "Why don't we go back into the café and wait for it to stop?" I said. I wanted another of those banana splits. They were gorgeous. "It isn't going to stop," my mother said. "We must go home." We stood on the pavement in the rain, looking for a taxi. Lots of them came by but they all had passengers inside them. "I wish we had a car with a chauffeur," my mother said.

Just then, a man came up to us. He was a small man and he was pretty old, probably seventy or more. He raised his hat politely and said to my mother "Excuse me. I do hope you will excuse me. . . ." He had a fine white moustache and bushy white eyebrows and a wrinkly pink face. He was sheltering under an umbrella which he held high over his head.

"Yes?" my mother said, very cool and distant. "I wonder if I could ask a small favour of you. " he said. "It is only a very small favour." I saw my mother looking at him suspiciously. She is a suspicious person, my mother. She is especially suspicious of two things - strange men and boiled eggs.

When she cuts the top off a boiled egg, she pokes around inside it with her spoon as though expecting to find a mouse or something. With strange men she has a golden rule which says, "The nicer the man seems to be, the more suspicious you must become." This little old man was particularly nice. He was polite. He was well-spoken. He was well-dressed. He was a real gentleman. The reason I knew he was a gentleman was because of his shoes. "You can always spot a gentleman by the shoes he wears," was another of my mother's favourite sayings. This man had beautiful brown shoes.

"The truth of the matter is," the little man was saying, "I've got myself into a bit of a scrape. I need some help. Not much, I assure you. It's almost nothing, in fact, but I do need it. You see, madam, old people like me often become terribly forgetful. . . ." My mother's chin was up and she was staring down at him along the full length of her nose. It is a fearsome thing, this frosty-nosed stare of my mother's. Most people go to pieces completely when she gives it to them.

I once saw my own headmistress begin to stammer and simper like an idiot when my mother gave her a really foul frosty-noser. But the little

man on the pavement with the umbrella over his head didn't bat an eyelid.

He gave a gentle smile and said, "I beg you to believe, madam, that I am not in the habit of stopping ladies in the street and telling them my troubles." "I should hope not, " my mother said.

I felt quite embarrassed by my mother's sharpness. I wanted to say to her, "Oh, mummy, for heaven's sake, he's a very very old man, and he's sweet and polite, and he's in some sort of trouble, so don't be so beastly to him." But I didn't say anything.

The little man shifted his umbrella from one hand to the other. "I've never forgotten it before," he said.

"You've never forgotten what?" my mother asked sternly.

"My wallet," he said. "I must have left it in my other jacket. Isn't that the silliest thing to do?" "Are you asking me to give you money?" my mother said.

"Oh, goodness gracious me, no!" he cried. "Heaven forbid I should ever do that!" "Then what are you asking?" my mother said. "Do hurry up. We're getting soaked to the skin standing here." "I know you are," he said. "And that is why I'm offering you this umbrella of mine to protect you, and to keep forever, if . . . if only . . ." "If only what?" my mother said.

"If only you would give me in return a pound for my taxi-fare just to get me home." My mother was still suspicious. "If you had no money in the first place," she said, "then how did you get here?" "I walked," he answered. "Every day I go for a lovely long walk and then I summon a taxi to take me home. I do it every day of the year." "Why don't you walk home now," my mother asked.

"Oh, I wish I could, " he said. "I do wish I could. But I don't think I could manage it on these silly old legs of mine. I've gone too far already." My mother stood there chewing her lower lip. She was beginning to melt a bit, I could see that. And the idea of getting an umbrella to shelter under must have tempted her a good deal.

"It's a lovely umbrella," the little man said.

"So I've noticed," my mother said.

"It's silk, " he said.

"I can see that." "Then why don't you take it, madam," he said. "It cost me over twenty pounds, I promise you. But that's of no importance so long as I can get home and rest these old legs of mine." I saw my mother's hand feeling for the clasp on her purse. She saw me watching her. I was giving her one of my own frosty-nosed looks this time and she knew exactly what I was telling her. Now listen, mummy, I was telling her, you simply mustn't take advantage of a tired old man in this way. It's a rotten thing to do. My mother paused and looked back at me. Then she said to the little man, "I don't think it's quite right that I should take a silk umbrella from you worth twenty pounds. I think I'd just better give you the taxi-fare and be done with it." "No, no, no!" he cried. "It's out of the question! I wouldn't dream of it! Not in a million years! I would never accept money from you like that! Take the

umbrella, dear lady, and keep the rain off your shoulders!" My mother gave me a triumphant sideways look.

There you are, she was telling me. You're wrong. He wants me to have it.

She fished into her purse and took out a pound note.

She held it out to the little man. He took it and handed her the umbrella. He pocketed the pound, raised his hat, gave a quick bow from the waist, and said. "Thank you, madam, thank you. " Then he was gone.

"Come under here and keep dry, darling," my mother said. "Aren't we lucky. I've never had a silk umbrella before. I couldn't afford it." "Why were you so horrid to him in the beginning?" I asked.

"I wanted to satisfy myself he wasn't a trickster," she said. " And I did. He was a gentleman. I'm very pleased I was able to help him." "Yes, mummy," I said.

"A real gentleman," she went on. "Wealthy, too, otherwise he wouldn't have had a silk umbrella. I shouldn't be surprised if he isn't a titled person. Sir Harry Goldsworthy or something like that." "Yes, mummy."

"This will be a good lesson to you," she went on.

"Never rush things. Always take your time when you are summing someone up. Then you'll never make mistakes." "There he goes," I said.

"Look." "Where?" "Over there. He's crossing the street. Goodness, mummy, what a hurry he's in." We watched the little man as he dodged nimbly in and out of the traffic. When he reached the other side of the street, he turned left, walking very fast.

"He doesn't look very tired to me, does he to you, mummy?" My mother didn't answer.

"He doesn't look as though he's trying to get a taxi, either," I said.

My mother was standing very still and stiff, staring across the street at the little man. We could see him clearly. He was in a terrific hurry. He was bustling along the pavement, sidestepping the other pedestrians and swinging his arms like a soldier on the march.

"He's up to something," my mother said, stony-faced.

"But what?" "I don't know," my mother snapped. "But I'm going to find out. Come with me." She took my arm and we crossed the street together. Then we turned left.

"Can you see him?" my mother asked.

"Yes. There he is. He's turning right down the next street." We came to the corner and turned right. The little man was about twenty yards ahead of us. He was scuttling along like a rabbit and we had to walk fast to keep up with him. The rain was pelting down harder than ever now and I could see it dripping from the brim of his hat onto his shoulders. But we were snug and dry under our lovely big silk umbrella.

"What is he up to?" my mother said.

"What if he turns round and sees us?" I asked.

"I don't care if he does, " my mother said. "He lied to us. He said he was too tired to walk any further and he's practically running us off our feet!"

He's a barefaced liar! He's a crook!" "you mean he's not a titled gentleman?" I asked.

"Be quiet, " she said.

At the next crossing, the little man turned right again.

Then he turned left.

Then right.

"I'm not giving up now," my mother said.

"He's disappeared!" I cried. "Where's he gone?" "He went in that door!" my mother said. "I saw him!

Into that house! Great heavens, it's a pub!"

It was a pub. In big letters right across the front it said **THE RED LION**.

"You're not going in, are you, mummy?" , "No," she said. "We'll watch from outside." There was a big plate-glass window along the front of the pub, and although it was a bit steamy on the inside, we could see through it very well if we went close.

We stood huddled together outside the pub window.

I was clutching my mother's arm. The big raindrops were making aloud noise on our umbrella. "There he is," I said. "Over there." The room we were looking into was full of people and cigarette smoke, and our little man was in the middle of it all. He was now without his hat or coat, and he was edging his way through the crowd toward the bar. When he reached it, he placed both hands on the bar itself and spoke to the barman. I saw his lips moving as he gave his order. The barman turned away from him for a few seconds and came back with a smallish tumbler filled to the brim with light brown liquid.

The little man placed a pound note on the counter.

"That's my pound!" my mother hissed. "By golly he's got a nerve!"

"What's in the glass?" I asked.

"Whiskey," my mother said. "Neat whiskey." The barman didn't give him any change from the pound.

"That must be a treble whiskey," my mother said.

"What's a treble?" I asked.

"Three times the normal measure," she answered.

The little man picked up the glass and put it to his lips. He tilted it gently. Then he tilted it higher. . . and higher. . . and higher. . . and very soon all the whiskey had disappeared down his throat in one long pour.

"That was a jolly expensive drink," I said.

"It's ridiculous!" my mother said. "Fancy paying a pound for something you swallow in one go!" "It cost him more than a pound, " I said. "It cost him a twenty pound silk umbrella." "So it did," my mother said. "He must be mad." The little man was standing by the bar with the empty glass in his hand. He was smiling now, and a sort of golden glow of pleasure was spreading over his round pink face. I saw his tongue come out to lick the white moustache, as though searching for the last drop of that precious whiskey.

Slowly, he turned away from the bar and edged back through the crowd to where his hat and coat were hanging. He put on his hat. He put on his coat. Then, in a manner so superbly cool and casual that you hardly

noticed anything at all, he lifted from the coatrack one of the many wet umbrellas hanging there, and off he went.

"Did you see that!" my mother shrieked. "Did you see what he did!"

"Ssshh!" I whispered. "He's coming out!" We lowered the umbrella to hide our faces and peeped out from under it.

Out he came. But he never looked in our direction.

He opened his new umbrella over his head and scurried off down the road the way he had come.

"So that's his little game!" my mother said.

"Neat, " I said. "Super." We followed him back to the main street where we had first met him, and we watched him as he proceeded, with no trouble at all, to exchange his new umbrella for another pound note. This time it was with a tall thin fellow who didn't even have a coat or hat. And as soon as the transaction was completed, our little man trotted off down the street and was lost in the crowd. But this time he went in the opposite direction.

"You see how clever he is!" my mother said. "He never goes to the same pub twice!" "He could go on doing this all night, " I said.

"Yes," my mother said. "Of course. But I'll bet he prays like mad for rainy days."

AFTER READING THE STORY

N.1 You have to provide a design for the story's cover.

You've got different possibilities: you can draw and colour something. Or you can make a collage using magazine pictures, to be cut out and glued on to large sheets of coloured poster card or a kit of geometrical shapes in different sizes and colours, to be combined to form abstract or symbolic designs.

When the designs are complete, an exhibition is held in the classroom. Each "designer" or design team presents its cover to the class and talks about the effect they were trying to communicate.

N.2 This is a summary of the plot of *The Umbrella Man*. There are 12 mistakes. Can you find them?

The narrator of this story is a 12-year-old boy who has gone to London with her mother to visit the dentist. The girl has a tooth filled, and then she and her mother go to a café afterwards. When it's time to go home, they discover that it's pouring rain and they have no umbrella. They decide to catch the bus. While they're watching for a cab, a young gentleman sheltering under an umbrella approaches them. He asks for a favor. The girl's mother is very distrustful of strange men. The old man explains that he has forgotten his hat and would like to sell them his umbrella in return for taxi fare back to his home. He explains that it's a very nice cotton umbrella worth twenty pounds, but his legs are weak and he simply must take a taxi home. The mother likes the sound of the deal, but the little girl worries that they're taking advantage of the old man. The mother offers to simply give him the cab fare, but he insists that they take the umbrella. The transaction is made and everyone is happy.

As the mother is proudly explaining the importance of correctly judging people, the son notices that the old man has quickly crossed the street and is hurrying away. "He doesn't look very tired to me," she said. The mother is displeased. "He's up to something." They decide to follow him and find out. They quickly follow him as he rushes through the rainy streets. Eventually they find themselves at a pub called "The Pink Panther" and watch through the window as the old man enters and uses the pound note to pay for a double whiskey. "That's a jolly expensive drink," said the little girl. "It cost him a five-pound silk umbrella!" They watch as the old man finishes his meal and goes to retrieve his coat and hat. Just before he leaves the pub, he smoothly plucks a wet umbrella from the coat rack and takes it with him. "So that's his game!" the mother explained. They see him head back to the main street and sell the umbrella to another unsuspecting person. Then he heads off in another direction for another pub. "He could be doing this all night," the girl says. "Yes, of course," says the mother. "But I'll bet he prays like mad for sunny days."

The summary of the plot of *The Umbrella Man*. (KEY)

The narrator of this story is a 12-year-old boy who has gone to London with her mother to visit the dentist. The girl has a tooth filled, and then she and her mother go to a café afterwards. When it's time to go home, they discover that it's pouring rain and they have no umbrella. They decide to catch the bus. While they're watching for a cab, a young gentleman sheltering under an umbrella approaches them. He asks for a favor. The girl's mother is very distrustful of strange men. The old man explains that he has forgotten his hat and would like to sell them his umbrella in return for taxi fare back to his home. He explains that it's a very nice cotton umbrella worth twenty pounds, but his legs are weak and he simply must take a taxi home. The mother likes the sound of the deal, but the little girl worries that they're taking advantage of the old man. The mother offers to simply give him the cab fare, but he insists that they take the umbrella. The transaction is made and everyone is happy.

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Girl / get a taxi / an old / wallet / silk / daughter / quickly / The Red Lion / triple / twenty / drink / rainy /

N.3 Here you have different photographs of Roald Dhal's album taken at different periods of his life.



Mama's Cottage

(1)



(2)



*Flying Training,
Nairobi*

(4)



(5)



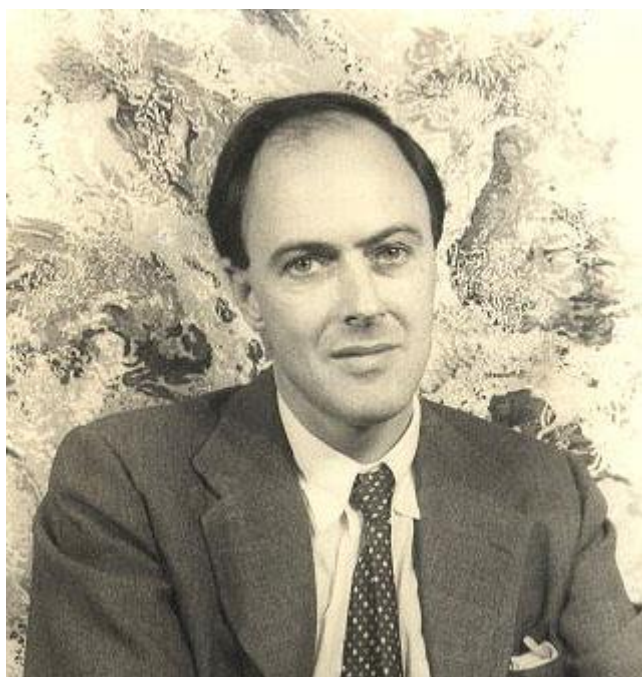
(6)



(3)



(7)



(8)



(9)



Times Newspapers Ltd. (11)



(10)



(12)

After having seen them tell us some things about the author: physical appearance, places he knew, different jobs, marriage and children.

Now match these pictures with the following captions and you will know much more about the author of *The Umbrella Man*.

Dahl's mother Sophie's cottage in Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire, England. During WWII Sophie and her daughters moved here to escape the German bombings in London and eastern England. When Roald returned home from duty in the Royal Air Force in 1941 he at first had no idea where to find his family. Their eventual reunion is described by Dahl on the last page of his autobiography *Going Solo*. (Key 1)

1933 - Dahl at Repton Public School, aged seventeen, from the Priory House photograph album. Though he seems happy, in *Boy-Tales of Childhood* he writes about beatings and abuse from both the headmasters and the house prefects as well. He was not an exceptional student, but he did enjoy success on some of Repton's athletic teams. (2)

Dahl was working in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania when World War II began in 1939. He took a leave of absence from the Shell company and traveled 600 miles to Nairobi to join the RAF. He received the traditional military haircut and was awarded the rank was a Leading Aircraftman. (3)

1939 - From inside the cover of *Going Solo*, this is a shot of Dahl at the beginning of his RAF career. He learned to fly Tiger Moths (small biplanes) over the African desert. Though originally there were 16 young men training together, Dahl later confirmed that only two (other than himself) managed to survive the War. (4)

1941 - This photograph was taken a few months before Dahl's 25th birthday. At the time, he was rejoining his squadron after having crashed in Libya a year earlier. That incident, recounted in *Going Solo* and Dahl's first story "Shot Down Over Libya", resulted in his later discharge from the RAF due to head injuries. (5)

1948 - Dahl's first novel, *Sometime Never*, was a pacifist fantasy featuring the Gremlins and documented the inevitable destruction of the human race.

The book was a dismal failure and is only memorable for being the first book about nuclear war to be published in the U.S. following Hiroshima. This photo appears on the book's back flap. (6)

1953 - Dahl married actress Patricia Neal, whom he had first met at a party in 1951. She was a promising Warner Bros. star who had recently ended a much-publicized affair with Gary Cooper. Neal and Dahl eventually divorced after thirty years together in 1983. (7)

Portrait of Dahl taken by Carl Van Vechten in 1954. (8)

1964 - At Great Missenden after the announcement of Patricia Neal's Oscar nomination for *Hud*, with Tessa, aged seven, and Theo, three. Neal was heavily pregnant with Ophelia and decided not to attend the Awards ceremony. After the birth, the family moved to Los Angeles for the filming of Neal's new movie, *7 Women*. (9)

1965 - Patricia Neal suffered three crippling aneurysms (a kind of stroke) in February, leaving her unable to walk and even speak for a time. Roald took personal control of her rehabilitation and she was miraculously able to leave the hospital three months later. On August 4 she successfully gave birth to daughter Lucy Neal. (10)

Roald in his writing hut, which remains just as he left it to this day. (11)

Roald Dahl died on November 23, 1990. He was buried in the graveyard of the church of SS Peter and Paul, Great Missenden. One of the readings at the funeral was from Dahl's favorite poet, Dylan Thomas: (12)

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(<http://www.roalddahlfans.com/pictures.php>)

The Open Window

By Saki (H.H.Munro)

"My aunt will be down presently, Mr. Nuttel," said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; "in the meantime you must try and put up with me."

Framton Nuttel endeavored to say the correct something which should duly Hatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing

"I know how it will be," his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat; "you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice."

Framton wondered whether Mrs. Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction came into the nice division.

"Do you know many of the people round here?" asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion.

"Hardly a soul," said Framton. "My sister was staying here, at the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here."

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

"Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?" pursued the self-possessed young lady.

"Only her name and address," admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.

"Her great tragedy happened just three years ago," said the child; "that would be since your sister's time."

"Her tragedy?" asked Framton; somehow in this restful country spot tragedies seemed out of place.

"You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon," said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened on to a lawn.

"It is quite warm for the time of the year," said Framton; "but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?"

"Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day's shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favorite snipe-shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog. It had been that dreadful wet summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it." Here the child's voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly human. "Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back someday, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm, and Ronnie, her youngest brother, singing 'Bertie, why do you bound?' as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window--"

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

"I hope Vera has been amusing you?" she said.

"She has been very interesting," said Framton.

"I hope you don't mind the open window," said Mrs. Sappleton briskly; "my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They've been out for snipe in the marshes today, so they'll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you menfolk, isn't it?"

She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton it was all purely horrible. He made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk on to a less ghastly topic, he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open window and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

"The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise," announced Framton, who labored under the tolerably widespread delusion that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one's ailments and infirmities, their cause and cure. "On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement," he continued.

"No?" said Mrs. Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention--but not to what Framton was saying.

"Here they are at last!" she cried. "Just in time for tea, and don't they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!"

Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with a dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung round in his seat and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn towards the window, they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: "I said, Bertie, why do you bound?"

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall door, the gravel drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid imminent collision.

"Here we are, my dear," said the bearer of the white mackintosh, coming in through the window, "fairly muddy, but most of it's dry. Who was that who bolted out as we came up?"

"A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel," said Mrs. Sappleton; "could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of goodbye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost."

"I expect it was the spaniel," said the niece calmly; "he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make anyone lose their nerve."

Romance at short notice was her speciality.

N.1 After reading the first 47 lines the students are asked to write a **MISSING POSTER** for the three characters who have gone missing.

MISSING

Have you seen these men?

.....
 aged , were
 last seen They are
and
 have
 At the time they were missing they were wearing

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of these three men get in
 touch with the

.....
TELEPHONE

N.2 Having read until line 77, you are going to predict a range of possible ends to the story line. Then, choose the one you consider the author would have used. The list of predictions can, alternatively, be arranged in order of suitability. In groups, choices are compared and justified.

N.3 These are some details of the life of H.H. Munro. Fill in the gaps with the forms underneath the table.

H.H. Munro was born on 18 December, 1870 in Burma, where his father was an officer in the British military police. In 1872, the family went back to England where a tragedy occurred:.....

.....

The father returned to Burma, and Hector and his brother and sister were brought up by their grandmother and two maiden aunts. Hector was a frail but rather mischievous child. When he was nine, something happened which disrupted his schooling :

.....

He was sent to Bedford Grammar School but remained there only four terms. His education continued to be interrupted by ill health.

His first job was with in Burma. But he fell ill and had to return to England.

He worked as a from 1902 until 1909. During this time he was sent to the Balkan States, then to St Petersburg. He then abandoned a regular salaried job to devote himself to in London. He was an extremely patriotic man and when war was declared in 1914 immediately enlisted as a trooper in the army.

There was one thing he never did in his life:

The way he died in 1916 was:

in battle / He had severe brain fever / writing fiction / His mother was charged by a runaway cow in a field, and died. / the military police / get married / foreign correspondent for a newspaper

Mr. Jones

by Truman Capote



During the winter of 1945 I lived for several months in a rooming house in Brooklyn. It was not a shabby place, but a pleasantly furnished, elderly brownstone kept hospital-neat by its owners, two maiden sisters.

Mr. Jones lived in the room next to mine. My room was the smallest in the house, his the largest, a nice big sunshiny room, which was just as well, for Mr. Jones never left it: all his needs, meals, shopping, laundry, were attended to by the middle-aged landladies. Also, he was not without visitors; on the average, a half-dozen various persons, man and women, young, old, in-between, visited his room each day, from early morning until late in the evening. He was not a drug dealer or a fortuneteller; no, they came just to talk to him and apparently they made him small gifts of money for his conversation and advice. If not, he had no obvious means of support.

I never had a conversation with Mr. Jones himself, a circumstance I've often since regretted. He was a handsome man, about forty. Slender, black-haired, and with a distinctive face: a pale, lean face, high cheekbones, and with a birthmark on his left cheek, a small scarlet defect shaped like a star. He wore gold-rimmed glasses with pitch-black lenses: he was blind, and crippled, too - according to the sisters, the use of his legs had been denied him by a childhood accident, and he could not move without crutches. He was always dressed in a

crisplypressed dark grey or blue three-piece suit and a subdued tie - as though about to set off for a Wall Street office.

However, as I've said, he never left the premises. Simply sat in his cheerful room in a comfortable chair and received visitors. I had no option of why they came to see him, these rather ordinary-looking folk, or what they talked about, and I was far too concerned with my own affairs to much wonder over it. When I did, I imagined that his friends had found in him an intelligent, kindly man, a good listener in whom to confide and consult with over their troubles: a cross between a priest and a therapist.

Mr. Jones had a telephone. He was the only tenant with a private line. It rang constantly, often after midnight and as early as six in the morning. I moved to Manhattan. Several months later I returned to the house to collect a box of books I had stored there. While the landladies offered me tea and cakes in their lace-curtained "parlor", I inquired of Mr.

Jones.

The women lowered their eyes. Clearing her throat, one said: "It's in the hand of the police."

The other offered: "We've reported him as missing person."

The first added: "Last month, twenty-six days ago, my sister carried up Mr. Jones's breakfast, as usual. He wasn't there. All his belongings were there. But he was gone."

"It's odd-"

"-how a man totally blind, a helpless crippled-"

Ten years pass.

Now it is a zero-cold December afternoon, and I am in Moscow. I am riding in a subway car. There are only a few other passengers. One of them is a man sitting opposite to me, a man wearing boots, a thick long coat and a Russian-style fur cap. He has bright eyes, blue as a peacock's.

After a doubtful instant, I simply stared, for even without the black glasses, there was no mistaking that lean distinctive face, those high cheekbones with the single scarlet star-shaped birthmark.

I was just about to cross the aisle and speak to him when the train pulled into a station, and Mr. Jones, on a pair of fine sturdy legs, stood up and strode out of the car. Swiftly, the train door closed behind him.

BEFORE READING THE STORY

1. Put the title "Mr Jones" and the picture up on the board. Have the students brainstorm three or four things the story might be about. Use *it could / may / might be*.
2. Now the students should come up with four questions that they would like to find the answers to in the text. ('Where does he live? How old is he?')
3. Cut up the text into four parts: (a. first paragraph, b. second, third, fourth and fifth paragraphs, c. sixth paragraph and dialogue, d. last four paragraphs). Get students to put the text back in the right order and proceed to the reading of it.

AFTER READING THE STORY

1. Complete the table to establish the order of events

YEAR	SEASON	CITY	PLACE(S) MENTIONED	SCENIC DETAILS (IF POSSIBLE)
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Two parts of the story deal with Mr Jones's physical description. Give line numbers or the first few words of each part.

3. List the parts of the body mentioned in these lines.

4. Use context to find the words in the story that mean:

- a. good-looking
- b. long and thin
- c. a mark on your body that you have from birth
- d. dark red
- e. when you can't see
- f. a person who has difficulties walking
- g. something you use to walk with when you have a broken leg

5. Complete Mr Jones's portrait.

	1. In New York	2. In Moscow
a. Age		
b. Build		
c. Eyes		
d. Face		
e. Hair		
f. Physical condition		
g. Distinguishing features		
h. Clothes		

From

Winter's Tales

By Karen Blixen

"I have heard a story, Rosa, you know," he said, "of a skipper who named his ship after his wife. He had the figurehead of it beautifully carved, just like her, and the hair of it gilt. But his wife was jealous of the ship. "You think more of the figurehead than of me," she said to him. "No," he answered, "I think so highly of her because she is like you, yes, because she is you yourself. Is she not gallant, fullbosomed, does she not dance in the waves, like you at our wedding? In a way she is really even kinder to me than you are, she gallops along where I tell her to go, and she lets her long hair hang down freely, while you put yours up under a cap. But she turns her back to me, so that when I want a kiss I come home to Elsinore."

"Now once, when this skipper was trading to Trankebar, he chanced to help an old native King to flee from traitors in his own country. As they parted the King gave him two big blue, precious stones, and these he had set into the face of his figurehead, like a pair of eyes to it. When he came home he told his wife of his adventure, and said: "Now she has your blue eyes too." "You had better give me the stones for a pair of earrings," said she. "No," he said again, "I cannot do that, and you would not ask me to if you understood." Still the wife could not stop fretting about the blue stones, and one day, when her husband was with the skipper's corporation, she had a glazier of the town take them out, and put two bits of glass into the figurehead instead, and the skipper did not find out, but sailed off to Portugal."

"But after some time the skipper's wife found that her eyesight was growing bad, and that she could not see to thread a needle. She went to a wise woman, who gave her ointment and waters, but they did not help her, and in the end the old woman shook her head, and told her that this was a rare and incurable disease, and that she was going blind. "Oh God," the wife then cried, "that the ship was back in the harbour of Elsinore! Then I should have the glass taken out, and the jewels put back. For did he not say that they were my eyes?" But the ship did not come back. Instead the skipper's wife had a letter from the consul of Portugal, who informed her that she had been wrecked, and gone to the bottom with all her hands. And it was a very strange thing, the consul wrote, that in broad daylight she had run straight into a tall rock, rising out of the sea."

There are 8 words in this wordfinder taken from the text which mean :

1. worrying
2. the captain of a ship or boat
3. damaged so much that it sinks and can no longer sail
4. ability to see
5. run away from someone or something
6. unable to see because your eyes are damaged
7. a large wooden model of a person that was put just under the pointed front of a sailing ship in former times
8. put a piece of thread through a hole in the top of it in order to sew with it

N	B	H	F	S	D	A	U	O	T	E
M	L	O	J	F	A	V	R	G	L	Y
F	I	G	U	R	E	H	E	A	D	E
A	N	H	S	L	R	Y	P	O	I	S
E	D	C	Z	A	H	B	P	H	K	I
T	N	F	R	E	T	T	I	N	G	G
U	I	L	O	T	M	I	K	A	E	H
P	U	E	G	I	O	F	S	L	V	T
A	K	E	B	I	D	M	O	Q	F	A
Y	L	O	T	L	A	T	E	M	G	R
W	R	E	C	K	E	D	S	I	O	L

KEY:

N	B	H	F	S	D	A	U	O	T	E
M	L	O	J	F	A	V	R	G	L	Y
F	I	G	U	R	E	H	E	A	D	E
A	N	H	S	L	R	Y	P	O	I	S
E	D	C	Z	A	H	B	P	H	K	I
T	N	F	R	E	T	T	I	N	G	G
U	I	L	O	T	M	I	K	A	E	H
P	U	E	G	I	O	F	S	L	V	T
A	K	E	B	I	D	M	O	Q	F	A
Y	L	O	T	L	A	T	E	M	G	R
W	R	E	C	K	E	D	S	I	O	L

2. Give the students the first part of the story: up to line 13 *like a pair of eyes to it*. And then the last part of it: the third paragraph. After reading all this tell them to make suggestions about what has happened in the meanwhile. Each student is given a small poiece of card on which to write his or her predictions. You can prompt with questions if necessary, or individual writing can follow a general brainstorming session where as many possibilities as can be imagined are quickly reviewed. The cards are then collected, to be sealed in a 'time capsule' envelope where they will remain until they read this part of the story.

This Is Just to Say

by William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

Pronunciation Poem

Here is some pronunciation.
 Ration never rhymes with nation,
 Say prefer, but preferable,
 Comfortable and vegetable.
 B must not be heard in doubt,
 Debt and dumb both leave it out.
 In the words psychology,
 Psychic, and psychiatry,
 You must never sound the p.
 Psychiatrist you call the man
 Who cures the complex, if he can.
 In architect, chi is k.
 In arch it is the other way.

Please remember to say iron
 So that it'll rhyme with lion.
 Advertisers advertise,
 Advertisements will put you wise.
 Time when work is done is leisure,
 Fill it up with useful pleasure.
 Accidental, accident,
 Sound the g in ignorant.
 Relative, but relation,
 Then say creature, but creation.
 Say the a in gas quite short,
 Bought remember rhymes with thwart,
 Drought must always rhyme with bout,
 In daughter leave the gh out.

Wear a boot upon your foot.
 Root can never rhyme with soot.
 In muscle, sc is s,
 In muscular, it's sk, yes!
 Choir must always rhyme with wire,
 That again will rhyme with liar.
 Then remember it's address.
 With an accent like posses.
 G in sign must silent be,
 In signature, pronounce the g.

Please remember, say towards
 Just as if it rhymed with boards.
 Weight's like wait, but not like height.
 Which should always rhyme with might.
 Sew is just the same as so,
 Tie a ribbon in a bow.

When You meet the queen you bow,
Which again must rhyme with how.
In perfect English make a start.
Learn this little rhyme by heart.

Dreams

by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

Introduction to Poetry

by Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a colour slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
And feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

Ode to Things

by Pablo Neruda

I have a crazy
Crazy love for things.
I like pliers,
and scissors,
I love
cups
rings
and bowls –
not to speak, of course,
of hats.
I love
all thing
not just
the grandest,
also
the infinite
ly
small-
thimbles,
spurs,
plates,
and flower vases.

Oh yes

How Laughter Made Clock Smile

by John Agard

To make Clock smile
Even a little smile.
That's what Laughter wanted to do.

So Laughter stared at Clock
Clock didn't.

Laughter clapped hands
Clock didn't.

Laughter made a funny face
Clock didn't.

Laughter asked Clock
Have you any idea of the time?

Clock chuckled.

Two Poems about Socks

by Wendy Cope

The Joy of Socks

Nice warm socks,
Nice warm socks-
We should celebrate them.
Ask a toe!
Toes all know
It's hard to overrate them.

Toes say, "Please
Don't let us freeze.
Till we're numb and white.
Summer's gone-
Put them on!
Wear them day and night!"

Nice warm socks,
Nice warm socks-
Who would dare to mock them?
Take good care
Of every pair
And never, ever knock them.

The Sorrow of Socks

Some socks are loners-
They can't live in pairs.
On washdays they've shown us
They want to be loners.
They puzzle their owners,
They hide in dark lairs.
Some socks are loners
They won't live in pairs.

I So Liked Spring

by Charlotte Mew



I so liked Spring last year
Because you were here;-
The thrushes too-
Because it was these you so liked to hear-
I so liked you.

This year's a different thing,-
I'll not think of you.
But I'll like the Spring because it is simply spring
As the thrushes do.

Funeral Blues

by W. H. Auden

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever; I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood,
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

Dear Reader

by Elaine Equi

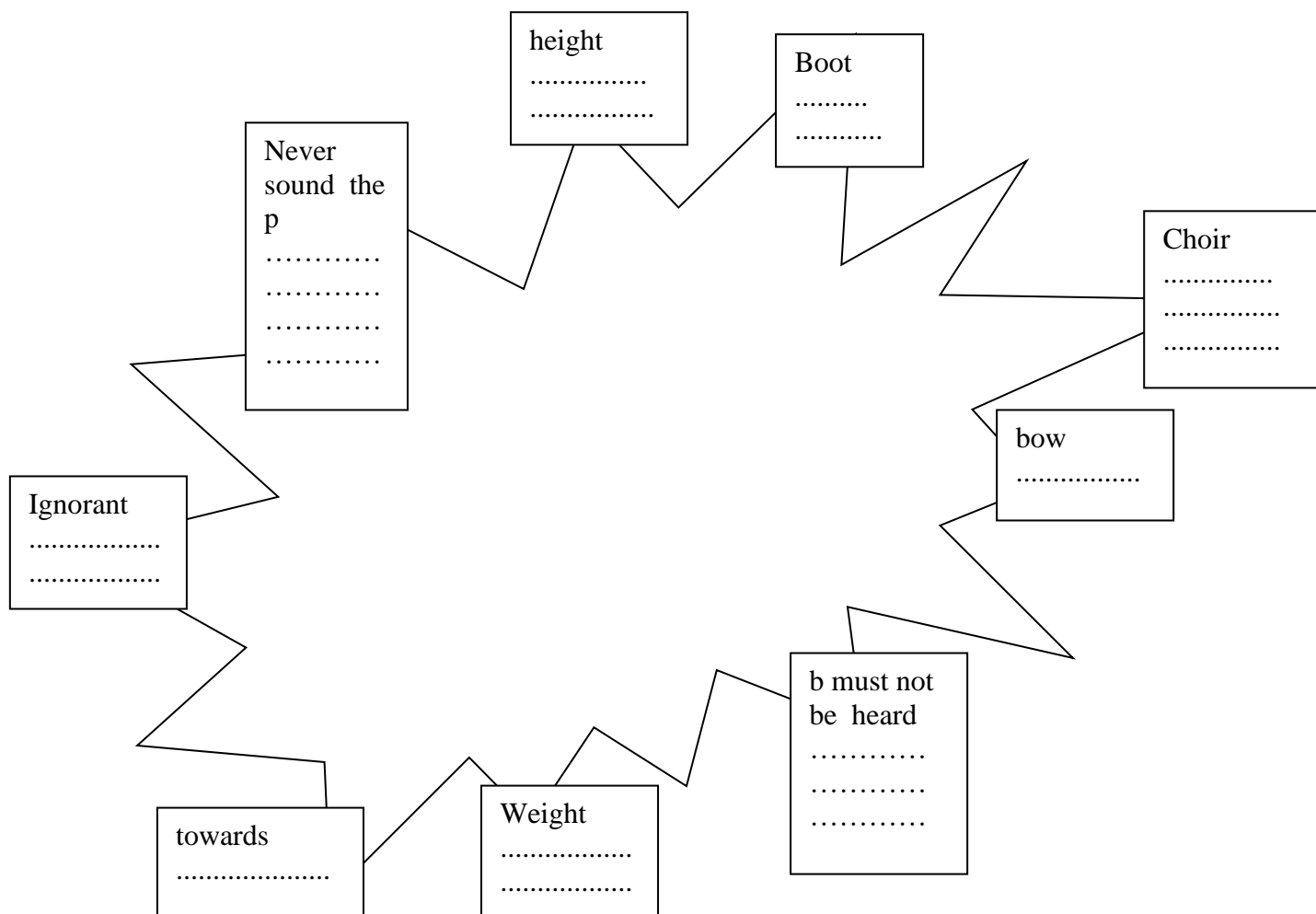
When you read this paragraph about the end of the world, things will happen in your life. The old world with its pain, suffering and sorrow will literally end, but a new world is ready and waiting to take its place. It's a world where there is exactly the right amount of red, blue, green and yellow -exactly the right amount of pollen, trees and flowers. There comedians are always funny, mothers always kind, and french fries never greasy. So sleep now, gentle reader, and dream of comets trailing blood and planets exploding. When you wake, it will be spring.

1. You have already read several poems. What are they about? Write a sentence per poem.
2. Classify them according to their topic.

LOVE	
EVERYDAY'S LIFE	
DEATH	
ENGLISH LEARNING	
BODY AND SOUL	
.....	

PRONUNCIATION POEM

After reading the poem complete the following table by adding the words which rhyme or match with :



ODE TO THINGS

(After reading) Answer these questions:

And what about you? Which things do you love?

If you write them down, like Neruda did, as if it were a poem, you will see how easy being a poet can be.

THIS IS JUST TO SAY

Write a similar note to a person who is living with you.

HOW LAUGHTER MADE CLOCK SMILE

Look up in a dictionary the difference between laugh and chuckle

Chuckle: laugh quietly to yourself

TWO POEMS ABOUT SOCKS

In these poems toes can "speak" and socks "live".

Can you imagine some other "things" that can live and do things like human beings do. Tell us about some of them.

I SO LIKED SPRING

What are thrushes?

Do you want to know something else about them? What? Think of it and write your questions down. Then, read the text and see if you can find the answers. If not all are here look for them!



The **Thrushes**, family **Turdidae**, are a group of birds that occur mainly but not exclusively in the Old World.

They are plump, soft plumaged, small to medium sized insectivores or sometimes omnivores, often feeding on the ground. Many have attractive songs and some have vocalizations that are among the most lovely on earth.

Song thrushes have a varied status in East Anglia. Some of our breeding birds are considered quite sedentary, particularly those dwelling in gardens. Others winter in north-west France, northern Spain and Portugal to the Balearics. Yet others from northern Britain winter in Ireland, such movement continues even into February.

Half the adult population and two-thirds of first-year song thrushes are considered to be migratory. Numbers of nocturnal travelling song thrushes cross the North Sea to our shores each autumn. These travellers come from Scandinavia, Germany and Russia. A glance at a thrush distribution map reveals that summer range extends as far north as the birch scrub zone on the Kola peninsular.

Depending on the severity of the winter, variable numbers later journey to Iberia and beyond. In fact those from farthest north (especially first-year birds) winter farthest south to the Canary Isles and to North Africa. During periods of very cold weather in Europe large scale midwinter arrivals of song thrushes occur regularly in North Africa.

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