

# ENGLISH

**SHORT STORIES FOR BEGINNERS AND  
INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS**

ENGAGING SHORT STORIES TO LEARN ENGLISH  
AND BUILD YOUR VOCABULARY



**LANGUAGE GURU**

# **ENGLISH SHORT STORIES FOR BEGINNERS AND INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS**

*Engaging Short Stories to Learn English and Build Your Vocabulary*

Language Guru

*SECOND EDITION*

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## **Books by Language Guru**

*English Short Stories for Beginners and Intermediate Learners*

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*Italian Short Stories for Beginners and Intermediate Learners*

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*Russian Short Stories for Beginners and Intermediate Learners*

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*Fluent English through Short Stories*

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# INTRODUCTION

We all know that immersion is the tried and true way to learn a foreign language. After all, it's how we got so good at our first language. The problem is that it's extremely difficult to recreate the same circumstances when we learn our second language. We come to rely so much on our native language for everything, and it's hard to make enough time to learn the second one.

We aren't surrounded by the foreign language in our home countries. More often than not, our families can't speak this new language we want to learn. And many of us have stressful jobs or classes to attend regularly. Immersion can seem like an impossibility.

What we can do, however, is gradually work our way up to immersion no matter where we are in the world. And the way we can do this is through extensive reading and listening. If you have ever taken a foreign language class, chances are you are familiar with intensive reading and listening. In intensive reading and listening, a small amount of text or a short audio recording is broken down line by line, and every new word is looked up in the dictionary.

Extensive reading, on the other hand, is quite the opposite. You read a large number of pages or listen to hours and hours of the foreign language without worrying about understanding everything. You look up as few words as possible and try to get through material from start to finish as quickly as you can. If you ask the most successful language learners, it's not intensive reading and listening but extensive that delivers the best results. Volume is much more important than total comprehension and memorization.

In order to be able to read like this comfortably, you must practice reading in the foreign language for hours every single day. It takes a massive volume of text before your brain stops intensively reading and shifts into extensive reading.

This book hopes to provide a few short stories in English you can use to practice extensive reading. These stories were written for both beginner and intermediate students in mind, so they should be a little easier to digest compared to native English. While it's no substitute for the benefits of reading native English, we hope these stories help build confidence in your reading comprehension skills overall. They offer supplementary reading practice with a heavy focus on teaching vocabulary words.

Vocabulary is the number one barrier to entry to extensive reading. Without an active vocabulary base of 10,000 words or more, you'll be stuck constantly looking up words in the dictionary, which will be sure to slow down your reading. To speed up the rate at which you read, building and maintaining a vast vocabulary range is absolutely vital. This is why it's so important to invest as much time as possible into immersing yourself in native English every single day. This includes both reading and listening.

We hope you enjoy the book and find it useful in growing your English vocabulary and bringing you a few steps closer to extensive reading and fluency!

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

To simulate extensive reading better, we recommend keeping things simple and using the short stories in the following manner. Read through each story just once and no more.

The words that have been written in **bold** appear on a vocabulary list at the end of each story. Whenever you encounter a word you don't know, try to guess its meaning using the surrounding context before going to the dictionary. Alternatively, you could make the reading easier by first going over the vocabulary list and looking up any words unknown to you.

After completing the reading for each chapter, test your knowledge of the story by answering the comprehension questions. Check your answers using the answer key located at the end of the book.

Memorization of any kind, however, is completely unnecessary. Attempting to push new information into your brain forcibly only serves to eat up your time and make it that much more frustrating when you can't recall it in the future. The actual language acquisition process occurs subconsciously, and any effort to memorize new vocabulary and grammar structures only stores this information in your short-term memory.

If you wish to review new information that you have learned from the short stories, there are several options that would be wiser. Spaced Repetition Systems (SRS) allow you to cut down on your review time by setting specific intervals in which you are tested on information in order to promote long-term memory storage. Anki and the Goldlist Method are two popular SRS choices that give you the ability to review whatever information you'd like from whatever material you'd like.



It's also recommended to read each story silently. While reading aloud can be somewhat beneficial for pronunciation and intonation, it's a practice aligned more with intensive reading. It will further slow down your reading pace and make it considerably more difficult for you to get into extensive reading. If you want to work on pronunciation and intonation, take the time to do it during SRS review time. Alternatively, you could also speak to a tutor in the foreign language to practice what you learned.

Trying to actively review everything you learn through these short stories will slow you down on your overall path to fluency. While there may be an assortment of things you want to practice and review, the best way to go about internalizing new vocabulary and grammar is to forget it! If it's that important, it will come up through more reading and listening to more English. Save the SRS and other review techniques for only a small selected sample of sentences you feel are the most important. Languages are more effectively acquired when we allow ourselves to read and listen to them naturally.

And with that, it is time to get started with our main character John and the ten stories about his life. Good luck, reader!

# CHAPTER 1:

## ILLNESS AND MEDICINE

For the past few days, John has had some difficulty **breathing**. He was 30 years old, and it was a bit odd for someone of his age to have this **symptom**. Maybe if he was a **smoker**, things would make more sense, but John has never smoked a **cigarette** in his life. He decided to go see his doctor about it.

Luckily, he was able **to schedule an appointment** that very week and **get himself checked out**. At the **doctor's office**, there was a considerable waiting period before you could be seen by the **physician**. John brought a book to read in the waiting room, but he found it hard to focus for very long, given his **condition**. After 20 minutes, he started to get a **splitting headache**. In **anticipation** of such a **scenario**, he kept **over-the-counter pain relievers** in his car. Following a quick trip and back, he **washed down** the **pills** with water from the **water fountain** and took a big **sign of relief**.

The **nurse** called John back to room 107 and did some **routine check-up procedures**. She took his **blood pressure**, measured his **height** and **weight**, and asked about his family's history of health problems. John was fortunate enough to not have any **hereditary** health issues. There was no **heart disease**, **cancer**, **diabetes**, nor **arthritis** to worry about. The nurse also asked about any and all current **drugs** he was taking, but he replied that he doesn't take any **medication**.

After John's information was recorded, the nurse left the **examination room** and told him the doctor would be with him shortly. Just two minutes

later, he was finally **face to face** with the man who could help **cure** him in no time. Dr. Spetzel was his name, and he was as friendly as could be. The two chatted about John's breathing issue, and John went into more detail about his condition. **Chest pains** were occurring **throughout the day**, but there were no **heart palpitations**. There was a little **coughing** but no **wheezing**. The doctor placed his **stethoscope** on John's **chest** and asked him **to take a couple of deep breaths**.

With a few **subtle nods**, it appeared Dr. Spetzel had reached a final **diagnosis**. It was **asthma**. He said it was common for adults to develop asthma and not just children. An **inhaler** would immediately **curb** his symptoms, but it's a medication he would be required to take for the rest of his life **to keep his symptoms at bay**.

Carrying his **prescription** from Dr. Spetzel, John **headed towards** the **pharmacy** to receive his inhaler. He **dropped it off** at the **customer service desk** then started **to wander around** the store. It would be some time until his **prescription was filled**, so he **browsed** the various medicines on the store's **shelves**. He saw tons of **products** to treat **colds**, **allergies**, and **the flu**. There were even over-the-counter **treatments** for **constipation** and **diarrhea**.

The **pharmacist** called out to John, for it was time to pick up his prescription and head back home. While out in his car in the **parking lot**, John took his first **dose** and instantly felt much better. It became significantly easier to breathe, and his chest pains **subsided**. He was **grateful** for the **miracle of modern science** and medicine.

Throughout the **ordeal**, it occurred to John how important his health and body were to him. Being in a constant state of bad health would make for a very poor **quality of life**. His **diet** would be the first place to start making improvements.

## Vocabulary

- **breathing**

- **symptom**
- **smoker**
- **cigarette**
- **to schedule an appointment**
- **to get checked out**
- **doctor's office**
- **physician**
- **condition**
- **splitting headache**
- **anticipation**
- **scenario**
- **over-the-counter**
- **pain reliever**
- **to wash down**
- **pill**
- **water fountain**
- **sigh of relief**
- **nurse**
- **routine**
- **check-up**

- **procedure**
- **blood pressure**
- **height**
- **weight**
- **hereditary**
- **heart disease**
- **cancer**
- **diabetes**
- **arthritis**
- **drug**
- **medication**
- **examination room**
- **face to face**
- **to cure**
- **chest pain**
- **throughout the day**
- **heart palpitations**
- **coughing**
- **wheezing**
- **stethoscope**

- chest
- to take a deep breath
- subtle
- nod
- diagnosis
- asthma
- inhaler
- to curb
- to keep at bay
- prescription
- to head towards
- pharmacy
- to drop off
- customer service desk
- to wander around
- to fill a prescription
- to browse
- shelf
- product
- cold

- **allergy**
- **the flu**
- **treatment**
- **constipation**
- **diarrhea**
- **pharmacist**
- **parking lot**
- **dose**
- **to subside**
- **grateful**
- **miracle**
- **modern science**
- **ordeal**
- **quality of life**
- **diet**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. What kind of smoker was John?

A) He only smoked at social events.

- B) He smoked a pack a day.
- C) He was suffering from emphysema.
- D) He had never smoked a cigarette in his life.

2. How did John get rid of his splitting headache?

- A) The doctor cured him.
- B) He took pain relievers.
- C) He used his inhaler.
- D) The nurse massaged his forehead.

3. Which of the following is NOT considered a serious illness?

- A) Heart disease
- B) Coughing
- C) Diabetes
- D) Cancer

4. What tool does a doctor use to listen to the internal sounds of a human or animal body?

- A) Prescription
- B) Stethoscope
- C) Diagnosis
- D) Symptoms



5. What does an inhaler do?

- A) It keeps asthma symptoms at bay.
- B) It keeps asthma from spreading to other people.
- C) It keeps asthma from becoming cancer.
- D) It cures asthma altogether.

## CHAPTER 2:

### FOOD

John has been on a diet now for four weeks and has already **lost five kilos**. His new diet is very strict, but he follows it extremely closely.

For **breakfast**, he eats a small **bowl** of **oatmeal** cooked in the **microwave** with either water or milk. He also has a **serving of fruit** with his oatmeal, like a banana, **strawberries**, or a **mango**. And of course, what breakfast would be complete without a **cup of coffee**?

For **lunch**, John prefers to eat a **light meal** to maximize his **weight loss**, so he usually has a **spinach salad**. On top of his salad, he puts **carrots**, **onions**, **cucumbers**, **croutons**, and **nuts**. **Dressing** tends to have a lot of **calories**, so he adds just a **small dab**. If the salad does not **fill him up**, he'll also eat some **soup**. Usually, it's **tomato soup**, as that is his **favorite**.

For **dinner**, there are a few **options** available, depending on what he wants that night. He can have a **pasta and vegetable mix** cooked in **olive oil** and **Italian spices**. Or he can have **rice and beans** topped with a **garlic and onion sauce**. He can also have a **Thai curry dish** with **kale** and **sweet potato**. All **choices** require some **cooking**, but it's worth it in the end.

All was going pretty well for John until the fifth week started. Like many of us, he works a **stressful and demanding job**, so there wasn't always enough time **to prepare every meal**. His **energy** started dropping, while his **appetite** and **hunger** started rising rapidly.

Soon, the small bowl of oatmeal for breakfast became the large bowl of **sugary cereal**. And the black coffee was now drowned in a **high calorie coffee creamer**.

The salad for lunch turned into **fast food** meals, since John was always running late for meetings. Originally, he was drinking water with this meal as well as every meal, but now it was soda.

And dinner was just hopeless after a while. John would come home **exhausted** from work and could not bring himself to cook. **Pizza, ice cream, french fries, and snacks** were much easier choices and helped take his mind off all the **anxiety**.

Several weeks later, he had regained all five kilos he had lost and even **gained an additional five more kilos** on top of that! The failure made John feel even worse. He vowed, for his next diet, that he would be even more **strict** and eat even less food.

Unfortunately, he doesn't realize that the massive drop in calories is causing an equally massive dip in his energy **levels** and **cravings** for **junk food**. It would take many attempts before he finally learned that starting his diet with lots of **healthy foods** and slowly **cutting down calories** would be the wiser move.

## Vocabulary

- to lose weight
- kilo
- breakfast
- bowl
- oatmeal

- **microwave**
- **a serving of**
- **fruit**
- **strawberry**
- **mango**
- **cup of coffee**
- **lunch**
- **light meal**
- **weight loss**
- **spinach salad**
- **carrot**
- **onion**
- **cucumber**
- **crouton**
- **nut**
- **dressing**
- **calorie**
- **a small dab**
- **to fill up**
- **soup**

- **tomato soup**
- **favorite**
- **dinner**
- **option**
- **pasta and vegetable mix**
- **olive oil**
- **Italian spices**
- **rice and beans**
- **garlic and onion sauce**
- **Thai curry dish**
- **kale**
- **sweet potato**
- **choice**
- **cooking**
- **stressful and demanding job**
- **to prepare a meal**
- **energy**
- **appetite**
- **hunger**
- **sugary cereal**

- **high calorie creamer**
- **fast food**
- **pizza**
- **ice cream**
- **french fries**
- **snack**
- **to gain weight**
- **strict**
- **level**
- **craving**
- **junk food**
- **health food**
- **to cut down on calories**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. How much dressing does John put on his salad?

- A) None at all
- B) A big glob
- C) A small dab

D) He drowns it in dressing.

2. What's John's favorite meal for dinner?

A) A pasta and vegetable mix cooked in olive oil and Italian spices

B) Rice and beans topped with a garlic and onion sauce

C) A Thai curry dish with kale and sweet potato

D) The story does not say what John's favorite meal is.

3. What started happening during the fifth week of John's diet?

A) His energy started rising, while his appetite and hunger started dropping rapidly.

B) His energy started dropping, while his appetite and hunger started rising rapidly.

C) His energy stayed the same, while his appetite and hunger started rising rapidly.

D) His energy started dropping, while his appetite and hunger stayed the same.

4. Pizza, ice cream, french fries, and snacks are usually considered...

A) healthy food.

B) a well-balanced breakfast.

C) junk food.

D) low-calorie foods.

5. If John started his diet at 90 kilos, how many kilos did he weigh at the end of the story?

A) 85 kilos

B) 90 kilos

C) 95 kilos

D) 100 kilos



## CHAPTER 3:

### EXERCISE

John decides that he should really start **taking better care of himself** by exercising. It will help manage his stress and even help him lose the extra weight he put on. Starting next week, he will begin a **jogging** routine, where he will run five days a week.

On the first day, he **wakes up extra early** before work and puts on his **tennis shoes**, eager to get started. After some **basic stretches**, the jogging starts, and everything seems to go well. Within two minutes, however, John is **out of breath**. He's wheezing, and his breathing becomes super heavy. And after just five minutes, the jogging is replaced by walking. While it would be easy **to blame** his asthma and **call it quits**, he admits the truth. He is **out of shape**.

As time passes, days become weeks. Weeks become months. John is now able **to run continually** for 30 minutes. Within a year or two, he could be running a **marathon**, he thinks. While he's proud of his improvement, doing nothing but **cardio** has grown extremely boring, so a change of routine is the next step.

John's friends Andy and Joe have invited him to come **lift weights** after work, so they all meet at the **gym**, eager to spend some time together. They decide **to commit** to a **workout program** five days a week, where they will work one body part per week: chest, **back**, **shoulders**, **legs**, and **arms**.

Each day requires **strenuous effort**, but the **endorphin rush** at the end of each workout makes it all worth it. **To cool down**, the men **relax** by walking on the **treadmills** or **sweating it out** in the **sauna** for 10 minutes.

Some time passes, and John decides that **weightlifting** isn't a good fit for him. Andy and Joe get **too competitive** with it, and the **intensity** of the workouts has become more painful than fun. At the gym, however, they offer **yoga classes**, so John **signs up**, eager to start.

The classes teach a variety of **stretches and poses** designed to **loosen the body** and **calm the mind**. The **lessons** are not easy by any means, and they make all the students **sweat**. Yet, it's not as intense as weightlifting. And it's much more fun and relaxing than jogging. John leaves each class **feeling refreshed** and **excited to come back** for more. He even starts chatting with some pretty girls whom he looks forward to seeing every week. It's a routine with an **extra incentive to maintain**.

## Vocabulary

- to take better care of
- jogging
- to wake up extra early
- tennis shoe
- basic stretches
- out of breath
- to blame
- to call it quits
- out of shape

- **to run continually**
- **marathon**
- **cardio**
- **to lift weights**
- **gym**
- **to commit**
- **workout program**
- **back**
- **shoulder**
- **leg**
- **arm**
- **strenuous effort**
- **endorphin rush**
- **to cool down**
- **to relax**
- **treadmill**
- **sweating it out**
- **sauna**
- **weightlifting**
- **too competitive**

- **intensity**
- **yoga classes**
- **to sign up**
- **stretches and poses**
- **to loosen the body**
- **to calm the mind**
- **lessons**
- **to sweat**
- **feeling refreshed**
- **excited to come back**
- **extra incentive**
- **to maintain**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. What kind of shoes did John run in?

- A) Cleats
- B) Tennis shoes
- C) High heels
- D) Running boots

2. Why did John stop running?

- A) He accomplished his goal.
- B) He was tired of getting up early.
- C) He was extremely bored.
- D) He didn't want to run a marathon.

3. John, Andy, and Joe committed to a workout program that focused on...

- A) chest, back, shoulders, legs, and arms.
- B) chest, back, running, legs, and cardio.
- C) chest, swimming, shoulders, running, and arms.
- D) yoga, cardio, jogging, weightlifting, and sports.

4. How do the men relax after working out?

- A) Running on the treadmills while listening to music.
- B) Doing a quick 10 minute yoga routine.
- C) Swimming in the pool or taking a hot shower.
- D) Walking on the treadmills or sweating it out in the sauna for 10 minutes.

5. Why did John stop lifting weights?

- A) He was extremely bored.
- B) The workouts were too intense and competitive.

C) Andy and Joe quit lifting.

D) John suffered an injury.

## CHAPTER 4:

### HOBBIES

"It would be really nice **to go on a date** with one of those girls from class," John thinks to himself. "Hopefully, I can **find something in common** with one of them and maybe **make a connection**."

His hobbies were somewhat **relatable**. Everybody likes **watching TV and movies**, including John, but would he be able to find a girl who likes **video games**? If not, could he find someone into **professional baseball and basketball** as much as he was? It would be amazing if he had someone to talk to about **politics, history, and government**.

The first girl he met from yoga class was Jenny, who seemed really smart right away. She was a **big reader**, but of **fiction** rather than **non-fiction**. Her **passion** was **literature**, and she could talk for hours about the current story she was **reading**. Besides that, she spent a lot of time taking care of her dog and taking him for **long walks**. And occasionally, she'd **treat herself to a bottle of wine and watch horror movies**.

Emily was the second girl he **got to know** from class, although she didn't always have a lot of time to talk. There was always somewhere she needed to be. It was obvious that she was **extremely fit and in great shape**, and John later learned that she was a **female bodybuilding athlete and coach**. If she didn't have an **appointment** with a **client**, she was busy **building her business**. Emily had a big **social media following** and built a **clothing brand** that sold **T-shirts, sweat shirts, hats, and accessories**. You

could say she was a **workaholic**, but you had to admit she was very **successful**.

The last girl John spent time with was Jessica, who was a bit of a **social butterfly**. She had a large **social circle** of friends to talk to and **hang out** with. It was clear that she was an **extrovert**. If she wasn't **texting**, she was out with friends, **drinking and clubbing**. On the occasion that she did decide **to stay home**, Jessica would **watch Japanese anime** and play video games.

John was immediately drawn to Jessica, as he finally found someone he could **nerd out** with about current and upcoming games. Their **personalities**, however, didn't seem to match very well. The **chemistry** just wasn't there. They never seemed to be able to talk about anything outside of their **mutual** hobby.

Emily never really had much time to talk, but Jenny was more than willing **to spend some time together** with him. John listened to her talk about all her favorite books and even convinced him to try reading a book via **audiobooks**. Jenny didn't show much interest in **sports** or history, but she was attracted to the passion and energy John emitted whenever he spoke about subjects he cared about. Their **mutual interest** in one another was enough for them to start dating.

## Vocabulary

- **to go on a date**
- **find something in common**
- **make a connection**
- **relatable**
- **to watch TV and movies**



- **video games**
- **professional baseball**
- **basketball**
- **politics**
- **history**
- **government**
- **big reader**
- **fiction**
- **non-fiction**
- **passion**
- **literature**
- **reading**
- **long walk**
- **to treat oneself**
- **bottle of wine**
- **to watch horror movies**
- **to get to know**
- **extremely fit**
- **in great shape**
- **female bodybuilding athlete**

- **coach**
- **appointment**
- **client**
- **to build a business**
- **social media following**
- **clothing brand**
- **T-shirt**
- **sweat shirt**
- **accessory**
- **workaholic**
- **successful**
- **social butterfly**
- **social circle**
- **to hang out**
- **extrovert**
- **texting**
- **drinking and clubbing**
- **to stay home**
- **to watch Japanese anime**
- **to nerd out**

- **personality**
- **(romantic) chemistry**
- **mutual**
- **to spend some time together**
- **audiobook**
- **sports**
- **mutual interest**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. If you have something in common with somebody, it means that...
  - A) you both like each other.
  - B) you are in love with each other.
  - C) you do not like each other.
  - D) you have a mutual hobby you are both interested in.
2. Politics, history, and government are typically considered...
  - A) fiction.
  - B) non-fiction.
  - C) literature.
  - D) All of the above

3. Emily was not only a female bodybuilding athlete and coach but also...

A) a private business owner.

B) an alcoholic.

C) a yoga instructor.

D) a social butterfly.

4. Which of the following best describes an extrovert?

A) Someone who is loud and annoying

B) Someone who is bold and daring

C) Someone who is talkative and outgoing

D) Someone who is shy and reserved

5. Which couple had the best chemistry in the end?

A) John and Jessica

B) John and Emily

C) John and Jenny

D) John and the yoga instructor

## CHAPTER 5:

### WORK

While John's **social life** was blooming, his life at work was the **polar opposite**. He works at an office for an **insurance company**, and while the **pay** is good, the **workload** is **overwhelming**.

Each morning, he checks his work **email** to find 50 new **requests** that have to be immediately **dealt with**. If he doesn't quickly **dispatch and process** the emails before lunch, he will **get caught behind schedule** and most likely have **to work overtime**. It's extremely stressful and more so when his **boss** is watching him over his shoulder.

John's boss has to be strict with all the **employees**. One **mistake** and it could cost the company **a small fortune**. Not only will the employee **be disciplined harshly**, but the boss will be too.

Insurance is a difficult business to work in. It is not for the weak. **Meetings, documents, and regulations** are all of the **utmost importance**, and you cannot afford to miss or forget anything. You could **be fired** for it!

"How am I going **to make it to retirement**?" John asks himself at least once a week. And he's lucky if this question only comes up once that week. Stress and anxiety are **pushing him to his limits**. It's only **a matter of time** before he breaks.

What would life have been like if he had chosen a different **college degree**? What if he went into **computer science**? Would he have enjoyed

**programming** more? What if he pushed himself harder while playing for the **college baseball team**? Would he have made it to the **professional** level? What if he had made it as a **pro-gamer** back in **high school** and got to play video games **for a living**? It would have been a **dream come true**.

Life didn't **turn out that way** for John, unfortunately. He might be stuck with a job he hates, but at least he has hope things will change. Many of his **co-workers** seem to lack that same hope. **Depression** and anxiety are common in his **workplace**, but there are a handful of **colleagues** who are fun to talk to and **crack jokes** with to **lighten the mood**. They make it just a little easier to **get through each day**. That **makes all the difference**.

There are others, though, who seem to be absolutely crushed by the harshness of life and are now just **shells of their former selves**. Those people scare John more than any boss ever has.

But when will things change? How will they change? The only thing that is certain is that something must change.

## Vocabulary

- **social life**
- **polar opposite**
- **insurance company**
- **pay**
- **workload**
- **overwhelming**
- **email**
- **request**

- **to deal with**
- **dispatch and process**
- **to get caught behind schedule**
- **to work overtime**
- **boss**
- **employee**
- **mistake**
- **a small fortune**
- **to be disciplined harshly**
- **meeting**
- **document**
- **regulation**
- **utmost importance**
- **to be fired**
- **to make it to retirement**
- **to push to one's limits**
- **a matter of time**
- **college degree**
- **computer science**
- **programming**

- college baseball team
- professional
- pro-gamer
- high school
- for a living
- a dream come true
- to turn out that way
- co-worker
- depression
- workplace
- colleague
- to crack a joke
- to lighten the mood
- to get through each day
- to make all the difference
- shell of one's former self

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. What will happen if John doesn't quickly dispatch and process the emails before lunch?



- A) He will be fired and sent home immediately.
- B) He will get to go home early and play video games on his computer.
- C) He won't be eligible for a promotion for the next five years.
- D) He will get caught behind schedule and most likely have to work overtime.

2. Who could potentially be disciplined for a mistake at the office?

- A) The employee
- B) The boss
- C) The employee and the boss
- D) Only John

3. Throughout his life, John has considered multiple career paths but not...

- A) teaching at a high school.
- B) becoming a pro-gamer.
- C) playing baseball at the professional level.
- D) becoming a computer programmer.

4. A colleague is another word for...

- A) a boss.
- B) a friend.
- C) a supervisor.

D) a co-worker.

5. Those who are crushed by the harshness of life are most likely experiencing...

A) an upset stomach.

B) depression and anxiety.

C) dreams coming true.

D) a lightening of the mood.

## CHAPTER 6:

### ANIMALS AND NATURE

To relieve some of the stress and anxiety he had been **accumulating** for quite some time, John set off on a **nature walk**. He heard that spending a day or two in the **mountains** would **do wonders** for him and his **mental health**. The **isolation** would give his mind time and space **to detox** and **refresh**. Animals would be his only **companions** during the walk.

His house was located in an **apartment complex**, so it was pretty rare to see any **wildlife** besides the occasional **squirrel**. **Groundhogs** and **foxes** were even **rarer sights**. Because he spent all his time **indoors**, he mostly saw **spiders** and **house centipedes**. He was not particularly **fond of** the latter.

It was not too long of a drive to reach the mountains since the town he lived in was near a **mountain range**. Upon parking and exiting his vehicle, he was immediately **greeted** by a few **deer grazing** in an **open field**. They slowly **picked at** the **grass** and **wagged their tails**, not **paying much attention** to John. Then, suddenly, a large **booming sound** from far away caused them to **scatter frantically**. It was the sound of a **gunshot**. **Hunting season** must have started.

John was unsure where to begin **hiking**, but his question was answered when he saw some other **hikers** walking towards an opening in the **forest**. And what a beautiful forest it was! The **evergreen trees** and sun **shining through** them made for some **breathtaking scenery**. The **lake** added to the

**vastness** of the place, and a feeling of smallness **struck John from deep within**.

He could see the life flowing through every little **bush, insect**, and bird he came across. A **peaceful harmony** could be felt in the air. Sure, there were **bears** and **mountain lions** far up somewhere in the mountains, but they too were part of the **ecosystem** that connected all life in the forest. The **frogs** on the **lakeshore** had just as much life as the **beavers** building **dams**. They may be different **creatures**, but they were both small **fragments** from the same world. They were made from the same **chemical elements** found scattered throughout the **universe**.

As the sun was setting, it became less and less safe to remain in the forest. It would be better to avoid nighttime **predators**, so John hiked back to his car. Exhausted from the **journey**, he sat in his car wondering about the next time he would come back. There would **definitely** be a next time, and it would definitely have to be with Jenny.

## Vocabulary

- to accumulate
- nature walk
- mountain
- to do wonders
- mental health
- isolation
- to detox
- to refresh

- **companion**
- **apartment complex**
- **wildlife**
- **squirrel**
- **groundhog**
- **fox**
- **rare sight**
- **indoors**
- **spider**
- **house centipede**
- **fond of**
- **mountain range**
- **to greet**
- **deer**
- **grazing**
- **open field**
- **to pick at**
- **grass**
- **to wag one's tail**
- **to pay attention**

- **booming sound**
- **to scatter frantically**
- **gunshot**
- **hunting season**
- **hiking**
- **hiker**
- **forest**
- **evergreen tree**
- **to shine through**
- **breathtaking scenery**
- **lake**
- **vastness**
- **to strike from deep within**
- **bush**
- **insect**
- **peaceful harmony**
- **bear**
- **mountain lion**
- **ecosystem**
- **frog**

- **lakeshore**
- **beaver**
- **dam**
- **creature**
- **fragment**
- **chemical element**
- **universe**
- **predator**
- **journey**
- **definitely**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. Where did John go for his nature walk?

- A) Under the mountains
- B) Inside the mountains
- C) On the mountains
- D) In the mountains

2. Which wildlife animal did John NOT see around his apartment?

- A) Squirrels

B) Bears

C) Groundhogs

D) Foxes

3. What were the deer doing in the open field?

A) Rolling their eyes

B) Grazing

C) Shooting guns

D) Hunting smaller animals

4. How did the forest make John feel?

A) The vastness of the area made John feel small.

B) The openness of the area made John feel exhausted.

C) The vagueness of the area made John feel anxious.

D) The smallness of the area made John feel vast.

5. According to John, how is all life connected in the forest?

A) It's all getting demolished by bulldozers.

B) It's all fair game for hunters.

C) It's all one ecosystem that lives in peaceful harmony.

D) It's all good for relieving his stress and anxiety.



## CHAPTER 7:

### TOWN AND CITY

Before his big date with Jenny today, John had a few **errands** to run to make sure everything was ready. First of all, a trip to the **bank** was needed, so he could **withdraw enough cash** for the busy day ahead. Along the way to the bank, he stopped by his favorite **coffee shop** to pick up some much needed **caffeine to jump-start** the day.

Next, he had to make a run to the **post office** and drop off some **mail** that was **overdue** and nearly late. After that, it was off to the **mall** to find a new **outfit** to wear on today's date. He perused two **clothing stores** and even had enough time to get himself a new **haircut** at the **barber shop**.

At 2:00 pm, John and Jenny **met up**, ready to take a **tour around town**. They started by walking around the **park**, catching up on what happened with each other during the week. Inside the park was a **large plaza**, where the **couple** found a **small concert** by a **rock band**. After hearing a few songs, they left the park and drove towards a local **amusement park**.

Due to a large **accident**, the amusement park had to be **shut down**, so as a **back-up plan**, the couple decided to go to the **movie theater** instead. To Jenny's luck, they were able to find a horror movie playing that week. It would be **an hour-long wait** for the movie, so they grabbed an early dinner at a **nearby Mexican restaurant** with just enough time to make it back to the theater. The movie turned out to be fairly **generic** and **predictable**, but there was one **jumpscare** that got both John and Jenny really, really good.

As the **evening** came, the couple had a mutual feeling of not wanting **to stay out too late** in the city, but they agreed to have **one drink** at a **unique bar** they found searching on their **smartphones**. It had a **medieval castle theme** and was **decorated** with **banners, suits of armor**, and chairs that looked like **thrones**. The **conversation** picked up between the two and along with it came more drinking.

Now they were both too **intoxicated to drive home** safely! Not feeling up for a **night of clubbing**, they would wait two hours **to sober up** before driving home. **Calling a taxi** would be a **crazy expensive** option, and it wasn't all that much of a wait to begin with. **To pass the time**, they walked along the **boardwalk** and stopped by the **convenience store** for a quick snack.

John and Jenny thoroughly enjoyed each other's **presence**, so the hours passed quicker than expected, but it was time **to part ways**. A **brief kiss** was shared, along with a couple of **cheeky smiles**, and that was it before they both drove home.

## Vocabulary

- **errand**
- **bank**
- **to withdraw cash**
- **coffee shop**
- **caffeine**
- **to jump-start**
- **post office**
- **mail**

- **overdue**
- **mall**
- **outfit**
- **clothing store**
- **haircut**
- **barber shop**
- **to meet up**
- **a tour around town**
- **park**
- **large plaza**
- **couple**
- **small concert**
- **rock band**
- **amusement park**
- **accident**
- **shut down**
- **back-up plan**
- **movie theater**
- **an hour-long wait**
- **nearby**

- **Mexican restaurant**
- **generic**
- **predictable**
- **jumpscare**
- **evening**
- **to stay out too late**
- **one drink**
- **a unique bar**
- **smartphone**
- **medieval castle**
- **theme**
- **decorated**
- **banner**
- **suit of armor**
- **throne**
- **conversation**
- **intoxicated**
- **to drive home**
- **a night of clubbing**
- **to sober up**

- **to call a taxi**
- **crazy expensive**
- **to pass the time**
- **boardwalk**
- **convenience store**
- **presence**
- **to part ways**
- **brief kiss**
- **cheeky smile**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. When you put money into your bank account, it's called...
  - A) withdrawing.
  - B) checking your balance.
  - C) opening your account.
  - D) depositing.
  
2. What did John do at the mall?
  - A) He played video games at the arcade.
  - B) He hung out with friends and shopped for clothes.

- C) He shopped for clothes and got a haircut.
- D) He got a haircut and grabbed lunch at the food court.

3. Where did John and Jenny head towards immediately after leaving the park?

- A) The amusement park
- B) Home
- C) The movie theater
- D) The restaurant

4. How did the couple find out about the medieval-themed bar?

- A) They walked around looking for a bar.
- B) A mutual friend recommended it to them.
- C) They searched for nearby bars using their smartphones.
- D) They saw an advertisement for the bar.

5. If you are intoxicated, then it is unsafe to...

- A) drink more.
- B) drive a car.
- C) talk on the phone.
- D) walk around in public.

## CHAPTER 8:

### STAYING AT HOME

It was a Sunday afternoon. John had no particular plans, so he **slept in** and allowed himself **to catch up on sleep** he had missed during the week. It would not be a completely lazy day though, for he had a number of **household chores** to do.

Perhaps most important of all were the **unpaid bills** that needed to be taken care of. **Housing** isn't free, after all. **Rent, electricity, water, internet, student loans, and phone plans** all **have payments due**. Thanks to **technology**, however, all of these can be **paid online** without **leaving the house**.

Next, the **laundry** had **piled up** over the week, and a few **loads** would be necessary for the upcoming week. He never bothered **to sort** his laundry into whites, darks, and colors; instead, he would just **throw in** as much as he could each load, **pour in** some **laundry detergent** and **fabric softener**, and **run the laundry machine**.

While he waited for each load to finish, he figured he would stay **productive** by **doing the dishes** and **vacuuming the house**. John's house was **by no means spotless**, but he did just a little bit each week to maintain what he could. This week, he would do some **extra work** in the **kitchen**. He **cleaned out the fridge** by **throwing away expired foods**. He also **scrubbed the counters** with **disinfectant** and **brushed off** all food **crumbs** to the **floor**. And he finished by **sweeping** the floor with his **broom and dustpan**. **Mopping** could wait another week, he thought.

John was more interested in spending **the rest of his day** at the **computer** playing video games. He was a fan of **strategy games** and could spend hours coming up with new strategies to try out against his friends online and even in **single player games**. When he needed a break, he would occasionally get up for a quick stretch, **peer out the windows**, **heat up** some food in the microwave, and sit back down for more **gaming**.

After spending too many hours in front of the computer, a small **existential crisis** would occur. Was it really all that **wise** to spend so much time gaming when it could be used for something more **meaningful**? Sure, there were **videos** he could watch online, but would that be any different? And so, he picked up the **headphones** in his **bedroom** and started to listen to some of the audiobook recommended to him by Jenny.

Listening to the book **instantly** felt like **the right use of his time** and even **opened up the opportunity** for some **self-reflection**. As he kept listening, he wandered around his house. He opened and closed his **closet doors for no particular reason**. He put his hand on the **couch** and let it **glide over** as he **walked across**. There was no **dining room table** to repeat this action, as he **lived by himself** and usually ate in the kitchen or out on the **balcony**.

Before he knew it, it was 10:00 pm. It was **time for bed**. While he didn't finish the audiobook, he **certainly** had something new to talk about next weekend when he would go to the **family gathering**. He could even bring Jenny and **introduce** her as the one who introduced him to the book.

## Vocabulary

- to sleep in
- to catch up on sleep
- household chore
- unpaid bill



- **housing**
- **rent**
- **electricity**
- **internet**
- **student loan**
- **phone plan**
- **to have a payment due**
- **technology**
- **to pay online**
- **to leave the house**
- **laundry**
- **to pile up**
- **load**
- **to sort**
- **to throw in**
- **to pour in**
- **laundry detergent**
- **fabric softener**
- **to run a machine**
- **laundry machine**

- **productive**
- **to do the dishes**
- **to vacuum the house**
- **by no means**
- **spotless**
- **extra work**
- **kitchen**
- **to clean out the fridge**
- **to throw away**
- **expired food**
- **to scrub the counter**
- **disinfectant**
- **to brush off**
- **crumb**
- **floor**
- **to sweep**
- **broom and dustpan**
- **to mop**
- **the rest of the day**
- **computer**

- **strategy games**
- **single player games**
- **peer out the window**
- **to heat up**
- **gaming**
- **existential crisis**
- **wise**
- **meaningful**
- **video**
- **headphones**
- **bedroom**
- **instantly**
- **the right use of one's time**
- **to open up the opportunity**
- **self-reflection**
- **closet door**
- **for no particular reason**
- **couch**
- **to glide over**
- **to walk across**

- **dining room table**
- **to live by oneself**
- **balcony**
- **time for bed**
- **certainly**
- **family gathering**
- **to introduce**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. If someone needs to catch up on sleep, it means that...
  - A) they have been sleeping too much.
  - B) they have been sleeping too little.
  - C) they enjoy sleeping.
  - D) they have trouble falling asleep.
  
2. Which of the following is not considered a housing utility?
  - A) Student loans
  - B) Water
  - C) Electricity
  - D) Internet

3. When cleaning the kitchen, John did not...
- A) scrub the counters with disinfectant.
  - B) throw away expired foods.
  - C) mop the floor.
  - D) sweep the floor with his broom and dustpan.
4. What's generally the fastest way to cook food?
- A) The stove
  - B) The microwave
  - C) The oven
  - D) The toaster oven
5. Where did John find his headphones?
- A) In his bedroom
  - B) In his closet
  - C) In the laundry machine
  - D) In the living room

## CHAPTER 9:

### FAMILY AND OCCUPATIONS

Jenny happily agreed **to accompany** John on his visit to his family gathering the following weekend. They were now **officially** a couple, and it would be **a good time to** introduce her to his **mother, father, and brothers**.

Also at the **get-together** was John's **uncle**, named Doug. Doug was a **mechanical engineer**, who worked on all kinds of machines, including **steam and gas turbines** and **electric generators**. He was an **extremely intelligent** man, who helped guide John in his younger years.

While chatting with his uncle, he noticed his two **cousins** Michael and Joanne in the **background**. The three of them **hung out** quite frequently as **kids** and shared a lot of **childhood memories**. They **grew apart** as they **got older**, unfortunately, and **lost contact** with one another as they entered the **workforce**. Michael ended up working his way up to a **management position** at a **retail store**. And Joanne was a **part-time hairdresser** but a **full-time mom**.

Jenny was **obviously overwhelmed** by all the **new faces**, but she was able to get to know at least one person at the **event**. This person was John's **sister-in-law** Olivia. From the very **get-go**, the two **hit it off** and **established an instant rapport**. Jenny was a **journalist by trade**, and Olivia was a **writer** for a **TV show** that was **produced** by the same **media company** they both worked for. While they had seen each other around the office, they had never met until now.

In the end, there were just too many people for Jenny to meet and even for John to catch up with. They briefly said hello to his **grandmother** and **aunts**, but they never got the chance to greet his **nieces** and **nephews**. All the kids were busy playing together in the **backyard**.

The family was able to take a **group photo**, which included Jenny, who was invited to join in. Every year, it's John's dad who is given the task to create the best family photo possible. Leaving the task to him makes sense, given that he's a professional **photographer**.

The sun started going down, and the day was growing late. As everyone was leaving, John had another opportunity to speak with his Uncle Doug. He voiced his concerns about **burning out** at his current job at the insurance company and was considering a few **possible paths** he could take. Uncle Doug **advised** him that, even though he's not sure where he wants to work in the future, he should definitely start **taking classes as soon as possible**. Waiting to start was the worst thing he could possibly do.

## Vocabulary

- **to accompany**
- **officially**
- **a good time to**
- **mother**
- **father**
- **brother**
- **get-together**
- **uncle**

- **mechanical engineer**
- **steam and gas turbines**
- **electric generator**
- **extremely intelligent**
- **cousin**
- **background**
- **to hang out**
- **kid**
- **childhood memory**
- **to grow apart**
- **to get older**
- **to lose contact**
- **workforce**
- **management position**
- **retail store**
- **part-time**
- **hairdresser**
- **full-time**
- **mom**
- **obviously**



- **overwhelmed**
- **new face**
- **event**
- **sister-in-law**
- **get-go**
- **to hit it off**
- **to establish rapport**
- **journalist**
- **by trade**
- **writer**
- **TV show**
- **to produce**
- **media company**
- **grandmother**
- **aunt**
- **to greet**
- **niece**
- **nephew**
- **backyard**
- **group photo**

- **photographer**
- **to burn out**
- **possible path**
- **to advise**
- **to take a class**
- **as soon as possible**

## **Comprehension Questions**

1. What is John's uncle's profession?
  - A) Electrical engineer
  - B) Civil engineer
  - C) Chemical engineer
  - D) Mechanical engineer
  
2. Michael and Joanne's parents are John's...
  - A) grandfather and grandmother.
  - B) mother and father.
  - C) aunt and uncle.
  - D) brother and sister.
  
3. John's sister-in-law is married to whom?

- A) His brother
- B) His father
- C) His cousin
- D) His boss

4. Where were the kids playing during the family gathering?

- A) At the school
- B) In the house
- C) In the backyard
- D) In the toy room

5. When you are highly qualified to do a job you are called...

- A) an amateur.
- B) the workforce.
- C) an occupation.
- D) a professional.

## CHAPTER 10:

### EDUCATION

With a full-time job and a girlfriend, John's schedule was pretty tightly packed. But for the sake of a better future, he **enrolled** in a **graduate program** for **economics** at his local **university**. John had already completed an **undergraduate program** and **graduated** with a **bachelor's degree** in **philosophy**, yet like most **liberal arts degrees**, it was not the greatest choice for **seeking employment** and **starting a career**.

This time would be different. With much more **experience** and **wisdom**, this opportunity **to further his education** would not go wasted. A graduate program in economics was going to be a **formidable challenge**, but if he succeeded, the rewards would be great. The classes he took at **community college** would be a **cakewalk** compared to this. **Intense study** and **perseverance** would be required.

The **textbooks** would often prove to be much more useful than the **lectures**. Some of the **professors** he had talked with such **long-winded delivery** that it was incredibly difficult **to maintain focus** in class. He could spend half the time reading chapters from the book and come away with double the information he got in the **lecture hall**. The **teacher assistants**, however, were most helpful, as they could explain **complex concepts** using very **basic language**.

**To make the information stick**, **serious work** was needed to be done outside the **classroom**. **Study groups** organized by students were instrumental in providing John the **motivation and drive** required to do

well in the **course**. In the groups, students **shared the notes** they took in class and **reviewed the information** they thought would appear on the **exams**. Not all this time was serious though, as there were multiple breaks where **chit-chat** was encouraged as a means **to vent built-up** stress and **frustration**.

**Finals** for the first year were approaching, and anxiety filled the classroom during the last few lectures. On the test would be **essay questions** only; there would be no **multiple choice**. **Cramming** wasn't going to get you anywhere on this test. You had to know the information in order to get a **good grade**. John and all his classmates paid **hefty tuition fees**, but not all would **pass the test**. It would be those who **attended** the lectures, **participated** in the study groups, and **read extensively** that would pass with **high marks**.

It was very much like learning a **foreign language**. Those who do the best are those who immerse themselves in the foreign language. They read as much as possible in the target language, and when they can no longer read, they spend all their **free time** listening to the target language. **Immersion takes precedence** over their old hobbies and **lifestyles**. That's how they **achieve** high levels of **fluency**.

The question is not whether or not John passed the final exam. The true question is whether or not you will do what it takes in order to achieve fluency.

Happy studying! And thank you for reading!

## Vocabulary

- **to enroll**
- **graduate program**
- **economics**

- **university**
- **undergraduate program**
- **to graduate**
- **bachelor's degree**
- **philosophy**
- **liberal arts degree**
- **to seek employment**
- **to start a career**
- **experience**
- **wisdom**
- **to further one's education**
- **formidable challenge**
- **community college**
- **cakewalk**
- **intense study**
- **perseverance**
- **textbook**
- **lecture**
- **professor**
- **long-winded delivery**

- **to maintain focus**
- **lecture hall**
- **teacher assistant**
- **complex concept**
- **basic language**
- **to make information stick**
- **serious work**
- **classroom**
- **study group**
- **motivation and drive**
- **course**
- **to share notes**
- **to review information**
- **exam**
- **chit-chat**
- **to vent**
- **built-up**
- **frustration**
- **finals**
- **essay question**

- **multiple choice**
- **to cram**
- **good grade**
- **hefty**
- **tuition fee**
- **to pass the test**
- **to attend**
- **to participate**
- **to read extensively**
- **high mark**
- **foreign language**
- **free time**
- **(language) immersion**
- **to take precedence**
- **lifestyle**
- **to achieve**
- **fluency**

## **Comprehension Questions**



1. Where is John taking economic classes?
  - A) Through an online program
  - B) At a local university
  - C) At a community college
  - D) Through a tutor
  
2. When we say a challenge is formidable, we mean it is...
  - A) easy.
  - B) impossible.
  - C) intimidating.
  - D) possible.
  
3. What was the problem with the lectures?
  - A) The classes took place late at night.
  - B) John's friends were talking during class.
  - C) The professor's explanations were too complicated.
  - D) The professor didn't like the students.
  
4. Who organized the study groups?
  - A) The students
  - B) The teacher assistants
  - C) John

D) The professor

5. The final exam was what kind of test?

A) All multiple choice

B) A mix between multiple choice and essay questions

C) A mix between cramming and hefty tuition fees

D) Essay questions only

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# ANSWER KEY

## Chapter 1:

1) D

2) B

3) B

4) B

5) A

## Chapter 2:

1) C

2) D

3) B

4) C

5) C

## Chapter 3:

1) B

2) C

3) A

4) D

5) B

Chapter 4:

1) D

2) B

3) A

4) C

5) C

Chapter 5:

1) D

2) C

3) A

4) D

5) B

Chapter 6:

1) D

2) B

3) B

4) A

5) C

Chapter 7:

1) D

2) C

3) A

4) C

5) B

Chapter 8:

1) B

2) A

3) C

4) B

5) A

Chapter 9:

1) D

2) C

3) A

4) C

5) D

Chapter 10:

1) B

2) C

3) C

4) A

5) D