КАРМАННОЕ ЧТЕНИЕ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

ELEMENTARY

FUNNY STORIES

СМЕШНЫЕ РАССКАЗЫ

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Смешные рассказы / The Funny Stories

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Аннотация

В книге собраны лучшие юмористические рассказы, которые превратят изучение английского языка в увлекательное занятие. Чтение поможет легко и без напряжения погрузиться в мир настоящего английского языка и пополнить активный словарный запас. Тексты подготовлены для уровня Elementary (для начинающих нижней ступени) и снабжены комментариями. В конце книги предлагается англо-русский словарь. Издание рассчитано на всех, кто стремится читать на английском языке.

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Дорогие читатели!

Вы держите в руках сборник юмористических рассказов на английском языке. В него вошли как признанные шедевры, так и произведения, мало знакомые русскому читателю. Несмотря на то что эти тексты были в значительной степени адаптированы, удалось сохранить авторский стиль, живой язык, и, конечно же, искрометный юмор. Смейтесь от души и совершенствуйте свой английский. А в конце книги вы найдете словарь, который облегчит вам понимание текстов.

Приятного чтения!

A Man of Habit
Jerome K. Jerome

1. Smoking and drinking

There were three of us in the smoke-room of the ship – me, my very good friend, and, in the opposite corner, a shy man, the editor, as we knew out later, of a New York Sunday paper.

My friend and I were talking about habits, good and bad.

“After the first few months,” my friend said, “it is as easy to be a saint as to be a sinner; it becomes a habit.”

“I know,” I interrupted, “it is as easy to jump out of bed early in the morning as to say 'All Right,' and turn over for another five minutes of sleep, when you have got the habit. Not to swear is as easy as to swear, if you make a custom of it. A piece of bread and water is as delicious as champagne, when you got used to its taste. It is only a question of making your choice and getting used it.”

He agreed with me.

“Now take one of my cigars,” he said, pushing his open cigar case to me.

“Thank you,” I replied quickly, “I'm not smoking during this trip.”

“Don't be afraid,” he answered, “It was just an argument. One of these cigars would make you ill for a week.”

I agreed.

“Very well,” he continued. “As you know, I smoke them all day long, and enjoy them. Why? Because that is my habit. Many years ago, when I was a young man, I smoked very expensive Havanas. It was necessary for me to buy cheaper tobacco. I was living in Belgium and one friend showed me these. I don't know what they are made of – probably cabbage leaves soaked in guano[1]; they tasted to me like that at first – but they were cheap, they cost me three a penny. I decided to like them, and started with one a day. It was terrible work, I admit, but as I said to myself, nothing could be worse than the Havanas themselves in the beginning. Before the end of the month I could think of them without disgust, at the end of second I could smoke them without discomfort. Now I prefer them to any other brand on the market.”

He leant back and puffed great clouds into the air, filled the small room with a terrible smell.

“Then again,” he continued after a pause, “Take my wine. No, you don't like it.” (my face betrayed me.) “Nobody does, no one I have ever met. Three years ago, when I lived in Hammersmith, we caught two thieves with it. They opened the cupboard, and drank five bottles of it. A policeman found them later, sitting on a doorstep a hundred yards from my house. They were too ill and went to the police station like lambs, because he promised to

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[1] **soaked in guano** – вымоченный в помёте

send the doctor to them the moment they were safe in the cells. Since then I leave a bottle on the table every night.

Well, I like that wine. I drink several glasses, and I feel like I'm a new man. I took it for the same reason that I took the cigars – it was cheap. It is sent from Geneva, and it costs me six shillings a dozen of bottles. How they do it I don't know. I don't want to know.

2. Falling asleep

“I knew one man,” my friend continued, “All day long his wife talked to him, or at him, or of him, and at night he fell asleep to the rising and falling rhythm of what she thought about him. At last she died, and his friends congratulated him, they thought that now he would enjoy peace. But it was the peace of the desert, and the man did not enjoy it. For twenty-two years her voice had filled the house, penetrated through the conservatory, and floated into the garden.

The place was no longer home to him. He missed the fresh morning insult, the long winter evening's reproaches beside the fire. At night he could not sleep. For hours he would lie without sleep.

'Ah!' he cried to himself, 'it is the old story, we never know the value of a thing until we lose it.' He grew ill. The doctors gave him tons of sleeping pills, but all in vain. At last they told him that his life depended on finding another wife.

There were plenty of wives of the type he wanted in the neighbourhood, but the unmarried women were not experienced, and his health was so bad that he did not have the time to train them.

Fortunately, a man died nearby, talked to death by his wife. He called her the day after the funeral and in six months he won her heart.

But she was a poor substitute.

From his favourite seat at the bottom of the garden he could not hear her at all, so he brought his chair into the conservatory. It was all right for him there while she continued to abuse him; but every time he got comfortably settled down with his pipe and his newspaper, she suddenly stopped.

He dropped his paper and sat listening, with a troubled expression.

'Are you there, dear?' he called out after a while.

'Yes, I'm here. Why do you think I am not, you old fool?' she cried back in a tired voice.

His face brightened at the sound of her words. 'Go on, dear,' he answered. 'I'm listening. I like to hear you talk.'

But the poor woman was too exhausted.

At night did her best, but it was a weak performance. After insulting him for three-quarters of an hour, she laid back on the pillow, and wanted to go to sleep. But he shook her gently by the shoulder.

'Yes, dear,' he said, 'you were speaking about Jane, and the way I looked at her during the lunch.'

“It's very strange,” concluded my friend, lighting a fresh cigar, “what men of habit we are.”

The shy man in the corner said: “I can tell you a true story and I bet a dollar you won't believe it.”

“I haven't got a dollar, but I'll bet you half a sovereign,” replied my friend.

So the shy man told his story.

3. The editor's story

“I'm going to tell you about a man from Jefferson,” he began. “He was born in the town, and for forty-seven years he never slept a night outside it. He was a respectable man – a merchant from nine to four, and a religious man in his free time. He said that a good life meant good habits. He got up at seven, had family prayer at seven-thirty, had breakfast at eight, got to his business at nine, had his horse brought to the office at four, and rode for an hour, reached home at five, had a bath and a cup of tea, played with children and read to them till half-past six, dressed and dined at seven, went to the club and played whist till quarter after ten, returned home to evening prayer at ten-thirty, and went to bed at eleven. For twenty-five years he lived that life without any variations. He was used by the local astronomers to check the sun.

One day his business partner in London, an East Indian merchant and an ex-Lord Mayor died, and our man was his only heir. The business was complicated and needed management. He decided to leave his son, a young man of twenty-four, as a manager of his business at Jefferson, and to go to his second family in England, to look after the East Indian business.

He set out from Jefferson City on October the fourth, and arrived in London on the seventeenth. He was ill during the whole trip. After several days in bed he announced his decision to go

into the City to see to his business.

On the Thursday morning he got up at one o'clock. His wife told him she did not disturb him, because she thought that the sleep was good to him. He admitted that perhaps it was. He felt very well, and he got up and dressed himself. He said he did not like the idea of beginning his first day without a prayer, and his wife agreed with him. They assembled the servants and the children in the dining-room, and had family prayer at half-past one. After that he had breakfast and set off. He reached the City about three.

Everyone was surprised by his late arrival. He explained the circumstances to his partners and made appointments for the next day, which he planned to start from nine-thirty.

He remained at the office until late, and then went home. For dinner, usually the chief meal of the day, he could eat only a biscuit and some fruit. He was strangely uncomfortable all the evening. He said he supposed he missed his game of whist, and decided to look for a quiet, respectable club. At eleven he went to bed, but could not sleep. He tossed and turned, and turned and tossed, but grew only more and more energetic. A little after midnight he decided to go and wish the children good-night. The opening of the door awoke them, and he was glad. He wrapped them up in the blanket, sat on the edge of the bed, told them religious stories till one o'clock.

Then he kissed them, told them to be good and to go to sleep; and found himself painfully hungry. He went downstairs, where

in the kitchen he made a meal of cold pie and cucumber.

He went to bed feeling more peaceful, but still could not sleep, so he lay thinking about his business affairs till five, when he fell asleep.

At one o'clock to the minute[2] he awoke. His wife told him she had made everything to wake him earlier, but in vain. The man was irritated. If he had not been a very good man, I believe he would have sworn. The same repeated as on the Thursday, and again he reached the City at three.

This situation went on for a month. The man fought against himself, but was unable to change himself. Every afternoon at one he awoke. Every night at one he went down into the kitchen for food. Every morning at five he fell asleep."

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[2] **to the minute** – минута в минуту

4. The end of the editor's story

“He could not understand it, nobody could understand it. His business suffered, and his health grew worse. He seemed to be living upside down[3]. His days didn't have a beginning or end, only the middle. There was no time for exercise or rest. When he began to feel cheerful and sociable[4] everybody was asleep.

One day by chance the explanation came. His eldest daughter was preparing her home studies after dinner.

'What time is it now in New York?' she asked.

'New York,' said her father, 'let me see. It's just ten now, and there's a little over four and a half hours' difference. Oh, about half-past five in the afternoon.'

'Then in Jefferson,' said the mother, 'it is earlier, isn't it?'

'Yes,' replied the girl, 'Jefferson is nearly two degrees further west.'

'Two degrees,' said the father, 'and there's forty minutes to a degree. That would make it now, at the present moment in Jefferson–'

“He jumped up with a cry:

'I've got it!' he shouted, 'I see it.'

'See what?' asked his wife, alarmed.

'It's four o'clock in Jefferson, and just time for my ride. That's

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[3] **upside down** – вверх тормашками

[4] **cheerful and sociable** – радостный и общительный

what I want!'

There was no doubt about it. For five-and-twenty years he lived by clockwork. But it was by Jefferson clockwork, not London clockwork. He had changed his longitude, but not himself.

He examined the problem and decided that the only solution was for him to return to the order of his old life. He was too formed by habit to adapt himself to circumstances. Circumstances must adapt to him.

He changed his office hours from three till ten. At ten he mounted his horse and went for a canter in the Row, and on very dark nights he carried a lantern. News of it got abroad, and crowds would gather to see him ride past.

He dined at one o'clock in the morning, and after that went to his club. He tried to discover a quiet, respectable club where the members were willing to play whist till four in the morning, but failed and joined a small Soho club, where they taught him poker. The place was occasionally raided by the police, but thanks to his respectable appearance[5], he managed to escape.

At half-past four he returned home, and woke up the family for evening prayers. At five he went to bed and slept like a top[6]. The only thing that really troubled him was loss of spiritual communion. At five o'clock on Sunday afternoons he felt he wanted to go to church, but had to do without it. At seven he ate

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[5] **respectable appearance** —презентабельная внешность

[6] **sleep like a top** – как убитый

his simple midday meal. At eleven he had tea and muffins, and at midnight he began to crave for hymns and sermons. At three he had a bread-and-cheese supper, and retired early at four a.m., feeling sad and unsatisfied.

He was a man of habit."

* * *

We sat in silence.

My friend stood up, took half-a-sovereign from his pocket, put it on the table and went out.

The Ransom of Red Chief
O. Henry

1. A good idea

It looked like a good idea, but wait till I tell you. We were in Alabama – Bill Driscoll and I – when this kidnapping idea came to us. It was, as Bill expressed it later, “during a moment of temporary mental apparition[7]”; but we didn't find that out until later.

There was a town, as flat as a cake, and called Summit.

We had six hundred dollars, and we needed just two thousand dollars more. We talked about it on the front steps of the hotel. They love children a lot in rural communities; because of this and for other reasons, a kidnapping project is better here than in the place where newspapers can send reporters to talk about such things. We knew that Summit couldn't get after us with anything stronger than constables and maybe some bloodhounds and one or two articles in the “Weekly Farmers' Budget”. So, it looked good.

We selected for our victim the only child of a rich citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. The father was respectable. The kid was

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[7] **temporary mental apparition** —временное помутнение рассудка

a boy of ten, with freckles, and hair the color of the cover of the magazine you buy when you are waiting for a train. Bill and I thought that Ebenezer could give a ransom of two thousand dollars. But wait till I tell you.

About two miles from Summit was a little mountain with a cave. We stored provision there. One evening after sundown, we drove past old Dorset's house. The kid was in the street, throwing rocks at a kitten on the opposite fence.

“Hey, little boy!” said Bill, “would you like to have a bag of candies and a nice ride?”

The boy threw a stone into the Bill's eye.

“That will cost the old man an extra five hundred dollars,” says Bill, climbing over the wheel.

We got him down in the bottom of the carriage and drove away. We took him up to the cave. After dark I drove the carriage to the little village, three miles away, where we hired it, and walked back to the mountain.

Bill was putting plaster over the scratches on his face. The boy was watching a pot of boiling coffee, with two feathers stuck in his red hair. He pointed a stick at me when I came up, and said:

“Ha! Paleface, do you dare to enter the camp of Red Chief?”

“We're playing Indians. I'm Old Hank, Red Chief's captive, and he is going to take my scalp!”, said Bill.

Yes, sir, that boy was having fun. He forgot that he was a captive. He called me Snake-eye, the Spy, and announced that when his men returned from the warpath, they were going to burn

me at the stake.

Then we had supper; he filled his mouth with bacon and bread, and began to talk. He said something like this:

“I like this. I never camped before; but I had a pet once, and I was nine last birthday. I hate to go to school. Rats ate up sixteen of Jimmy Talbot's aunt's hen's eggs. Are there any real Indians in these woods? I want some more meat. We had five puppies. What makes your nose so red, Hank? My father has lots of money. Are the stars hot? I whipped Ed Walker twice on Saturday. I don't like girls. Do oxen make any noise? Why are oranges round? Have you got beds to sleep on in this cave? Amos Murray has got six toes. A parrot can talk, but a monkey or a fish can't.”

“Red Chief,” I said to the kid, “would you like to go home?”

“Aw, what for?” said he. “I don't have any fun at home. I hate to go to school. I like to camp. You won't take me back home, Snake-eye?”

“Not right now, we'll stay here for a while[8].”

“All right!” said he. “That'll be fine. I never had such fun in all my life.”

We went to bed about eleven o'clock. We lay down on wide blankets and put Red Chief between us. We weren't afraid he'd run away. He kept us awake for three hours, jumping up and screaming. At last, I fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed that I was kidnapped and chained to a tree by a pirate with red hair.

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[8] **for a while** – некоторое время

2. Good morning

In the morning I was awakened by Bill's screams. They weren't yells, or shouts, such as you'd expect from a man – they were simply humiliating screams, such as women make when they see ghosts or caterpillars. It's an awful thing to hear a strong, fat man scream in a cave at daybreak.

I jumped up to see what the matter was. Red Chief was sitting on Bill's chest, with one hand in Bill's hair. In the other he had the sharp knife we used for slicing bacon; and he was really trying to take Bill's scalp.

I got the knife away from the kid and told him to lie down again. But, from that moment, Bill's spirit was broken. I slept for some time, but soon I remembered that Red Chief said he was going to burn me at the stake at the rising of the sun. I wasn't afraid, but I sat up and lit my pipe.

“Why did you get up so early, Sam?” asked Bill.

“Oh, I have got a pain in my shoulder.”

“You're a liar!” says Bill. “You're afraid. He said he will burn you at a stake and you are afraid he'll do it. And he would, if he finds a match. Isn't it awful, Sam? Do you think anybody will pay money to get a little devil like that back home?”

“Sure,” said I. “Now, you and the Chief get up and cook breakfast, and I will go up on the top of this mountain.”

I went up on the peak of the little mountain and looked over

the surroundings. I expected to see the dozens of villagers armed with scythes and pitchforks and looking for the kidnappers. But I saw a peaceful landscape with one man ploughing with a mule. “Perhaps,” said I to myself, “they didn't find out that the boy was kidnapped.”

When I got to the cave I found Bill backed up against the side of it, breathing hard, and the boy threatening to smash him with a rock half as big as a coconut.

“He put a hot boiled potato in my pants,” explained Bill, “and then smashed it with his foot; and I boxed his ears[9]. Do you have a gun, Sam?”

I took the rock away from the boy and of calmed them down.

After breakfast the kid takes a piece of leather with strings wrapped around it out of his pocket and goes outside the cave.

“What's he going to do now?” says Bill, anxiously. “You don't think he'll run away, do you, Sam?”

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[9] **I boxed his ears** – я надрал ему уши

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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