

6 Short Stories That Students Love Reading

1. “How Anansi Brought Wild Animals into the World”

This short story brings a bit of West African folklore to your classroom. It is about following directions, which Anansi, the anti-hero of the story is not the best at. “[How Anansi Brought Wild Animals into the World](#)” is perfect for all ages and, although it may seem like a children’s story, even your more advanced level students may find a word or two, like “cursing” or “thud,” that they may not recognize. There are also a few essential phrasal verbs in this short story you can utilize for further practice and reinforcement activities.

As you go through the story with your students, make sure to ask a few comprehension questions that will spark English thought and develop a bit of creativity.

Here are a few questions to ask your students:

- Who is Anansi?
- What is Anansi’s son’s name?
- Was Anansi tricked, and by whom was he tricked?
- What sort of animals did Anansi bring into the world?

Expanding on ESL skills is vital to any lesson plan. You can use the wealth of phrasal verbs in this short story to help your ESL students fully comprehend meaning and usage. Write a few phrasal verbs from the story onto the board, like “shooting off” or “calling out,” and have your students describe the meaning of each phrasal verb before they create a sentence of their own using it. This will help your students develop a solid understanding of a few great phrasal verbs and how to use them correctly.

2. “The Remarkable Rocket”

“[The Remarkable Rocket](#)” is a great short story that encompasses classical literature from famous author Oscar Wilde. The story itself is a metaphor for ego and boasting, which are two character traits you can explain to your students before beginning. This short story is also loaded with dialogue and descriptive wording that will surely spark imagination in your students. All ESL levels can benefit from this short story and due to its length, is perfect to discuss over a few class periods.

An essential part of utilizing a short story in your lesson plan is to have a few questions that you can ask your students as you work through the material together. Since this short story is a bit longer, it is a great idea to have a few discussion breaks after a bit of reading or listening. Here are a few essential questions to ask your students in order to build communication and discussion:

- What was the purpose of the fireworks?
- Who was to be married?
- What did the Roman Candle say about romance?
- What does the Catherine Wheel think about Romance?

You can utilize these great questions to spark discussion and also develop a deeper understanding of the vocabulary as well. For instance, the word “romance” may not be familiar to your students, or the use of “fireworks” may not be so common for them. Expand on your discussion questions for a few minutes before returning to the reading and listening.

You can also use this story as a catalyst for other ESL skills like writing and collaboration. After your students have completed the story and discussion has been thoughtfully carried out, pair them up for a writing activity. Have each pair discuss the reactions of the prince and princess to the fireworks and what they may say while watching them. Then have them write out a dialogue together that they will share with the class with one student playing the prince and the other the princess. You could even make a prince and princess hat to accentuate the activity.

3. “Kung Fu Monkey Style”

This short story is excellent for all ages and ESL levels and offers a bit of humor and fun to your students. It is a mix of animal kingdom and human amenities that will get your students’ imaginations flowing. “[Kung Fu Monkey Style](#)” offers dialogue, presents wonderful adjectives and develops new vocabulary that is essential for your ESL students to learn.

Here are a few questions to ask:

- What is Sifu Stan doing at the beginning of the story?
- What was the most famous story on the 24-hour news channel?
- What does “throwing caution to the wind” represent?
- What does Sifu say about learning kung fu?
- What style of kung fu was Sifu using?

You can ask your students these questions and explore with them how this may differ from their own culture. This will open up a cross-cultural communication that will allow your students to explain about their lives and culture in English. It is also a valuable moment in the lesson, since many of them may have never been asked about these topics, causing them to really think in English before answering.

4. “Fenris the Wolf”

“[Fenris the Wolf](#)” is a powerful Norse myth that will be not only fun and informative for your ESL students, but rather exciting as well!

Fenris is a wolf that tormented the Norse gods and they often battled with one another due to Fenris’ cunning skills. This short story is *very* short and it is excellent for all ages and ESL levels. Your adult students may find this story extraordinarily interesting and they will be able to discuss this great Norse myth with friends and family around the dinner table.

Here are a few questions to ask:

- Where do Norse myths come from?
- Who were the Vikings?
- Was Fenris a pet?
- What did Odin think about Fenris the wolf?
- What happened to Fenris?

This short story is told in a compelling way and offers a bit of mystery and a feel of the unknown as your students read it. You can use this mystery and employ a group writing activity to further your students' ESL skills in regards to the story.

Before the story ends, stop your students and have them gather in groups. Here they will craft the ending before knowing what really happens. This is a great way to build collaboration, discussion and writing skills into this short story lesson plan. You may even find many of their endings more exciting than the story itself.

5. "The Elves and the Shoemaker"

This short story is perfect for the [holiday season](#) and beyond. ESL lessons that encompass a holiday are always a fun and exciting way for your class to break away from formal textbook learning. ["The Elves and the Shoemaker"](#) is a Brothers Grimm tale that is timeless, ageless and wonderful for all ESL levels. Though it is a short story about fantasy and elves, the vocabulary is anything but simplistic.

Here are some essential questions for your students to discuss:

- What problem did the shoemaker have?
- What did he do when he realized he was in trouble?
- What did the shoemaker find the first morning he woke up?
- Was he astounded, and why?
- What did the elves not have, and how was that remedied?

This exceptional Christmas themed short story offers a plethora of wonderful new vocabulary your students will find very useful. To build on the reading and listening of the short story, you can employ a crossword worksheet to really solidify the new vocabulary. Utilize a few easy and challenging words in the crossword worksheet and put your students into groups. Each group will work through the worksheet together, deriving meaningful vocabulary from the short story and crossword hints.

6. "Robin Hood And The Golden Arrow"

["Robin Hood And The Golden Arrow"](#) is an educational tale of Robin Hood. Some of your ESL students may have some form of knowledge about Robin Hood already, or they may even have a different name for him in their native language. This is a perfect place to begin this lesson.

Open up the floor for discussion about Robin Hood and evoke discussion in your classroom. After a bit of discussion, move into the reading and listening. Here are a few questions to ask:

- Where did Robin Hood invite the Sheriff of Nottingham to dinner?
- What was there dinner about?
- Who was the finest archer north of England at that time?
- What was the crowd's reaction to Robin Hood's victory?

Once your class discusses each question and finishes the short story, take what they have discussed and build on those essential ESL skills further. You can employ a bit of ethical English thought into this short story lesson and ask your students if Robin Hood is a bad guy or a good guy. What makes him good or bad?

After a short discussion, divide your class into pairs, one who is for Robin Hood and the other against. Have them write out supporting points and debate with each other over the topic. This is a perfect way to build communication and allows your students to express their opinions in English.

Utilizing short stories in your classroom is an exceptional, fun and exciting way to build on almost every ESL skill your students need to communicate effectively in English. They will pick up on reading, listening, writing, grammar, discussion, collaboration and even debate.

Short stories bring English to life and evoke powerful creativity that encourages ESL students to try new things and learn more.

Implementing a few short stories into your classroom syllabus is a surefire way to keep students engaged and active with each turn of the page.