



B1+

THE OPEN WINDOW

SAKI

ELABORATED READER SERIES



AUTHENTIC
STORY

ELABORATIONS
& IMAGES

STORY PATH
(MAZE)

READING
JOURNAL

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The Elaborated Reader Series, 2026

Preface

So you feel you've outgrown traditional graded readers and want to finally read "real" books, stories in their original form, not rewritten for language learners?

You have perhaps picked up a story in English, started reading, and found it going well enough, until, somewhere around the third paragraph, an unfamiliar word appeared, and then another. You paused to guess at one, then the next, and without quite noticing when it happened, you were no longer reading the story so much as working your way through its words. The story made sense. But somewhere between the lines, the best of it was quietly slipping away.

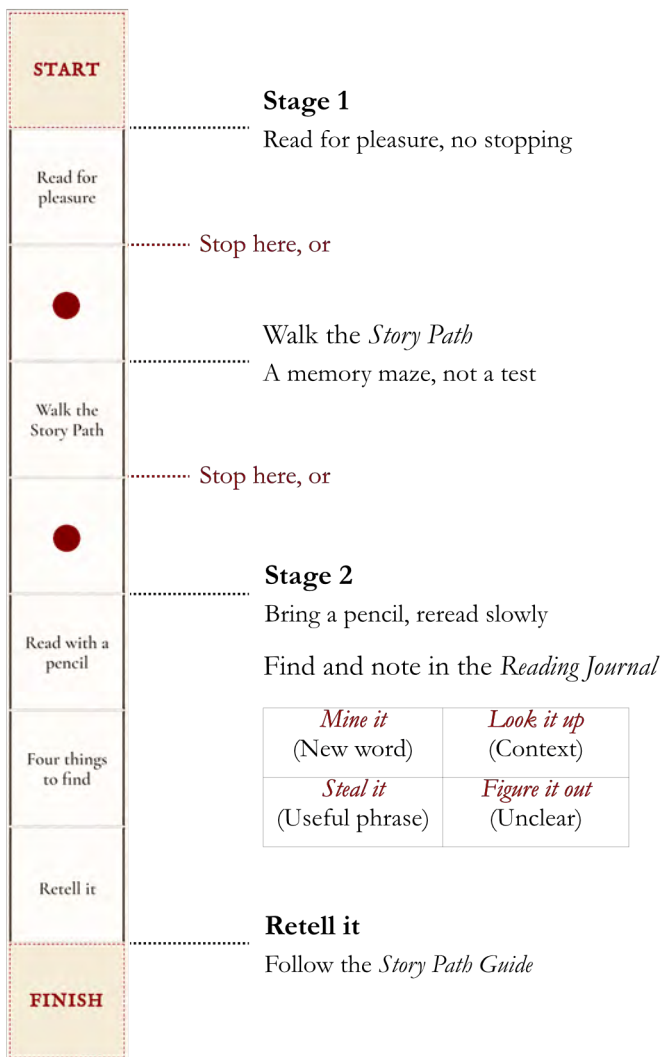
This is exactly why we made *The Next Reader (Elaborated Reader Series)*. The stories are presented as their authors wrote them, not simplified, not abridged, not tidied up, because the language itself is the point. But extra help is added inside the text. Elaborations are set *in italics*, so the author's own words are always clear, while a synonym here, a short explanation there, sometimes a picture, support your understanding. You may find you need them. You may find you don't. Either way, the story moves on, and you move with it.

This volume, *The Next Reader: Original Classic Stories for English Learners*, gathers seven classic stories by Jerome K. Jerome, Stephen Leacock, Oscar Wilde, Saki, O. Henry, and S. Weir Mitchell. They were written more than a hundred years ago, but they still feel familiar today. Human behaviour is still a mystery, and nothing in life is quite what it seems.

Happy reading.

How to Read an Elaborated Story

The *Next Reader* contains elaborated stories. They are original and unsimplified, with extra support built in: pictures and in-line elaborations set *in italics* that explain difficult words or ideas right where you need them.



The Open Window

By Saki

Before You Read

Has a total stranger ever told you something you had no way to check, and you believed it anyway?

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The Open Window

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

Framton Nuttel endeavoured, *tried* to say the correct something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come, *something nice — just enough for the niece, not so much that it made the aunt, who’d join them soon, seem less important*. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers, *one after another*, 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, *quiet place in the countryside*; "you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, *anyone at all*, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping, *feeling depressed*. 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, *the good group*. "Do you know many of the people round here?" asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion, *shared silence*.

"Hardly a soul," said Framton. "My sister was staying here, at the rectory, *priest's house*, 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, *continued to ask* the self-possessed young lady.

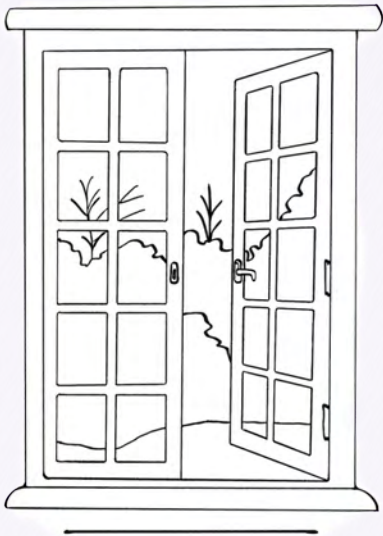
"Only her name and address," admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs. Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation, *a man's presence*.

"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 *lonely* moor to their favourite snipe shooting ground they were all three engulfed, *sank* in a treacherous, *dangerous* 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, *sounding hesitant and uncertain*. “Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back some day, 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, *jump?*’ 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, *a shiver of fear*. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room, *rushing in full of energy* with a whirl of many 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, *quickly*; “my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They’ve been out for snipe, *hunting the bird* in the marshes today, so they’ll make a *fine, proper* mess over my poor carpets. So like you men-folk, isn’t it?”

She rattled, *chattered* on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity, *shortage* 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, *dreadful* topic; he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment, *just a bit* of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying, *drifting* 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 laboured under the tolerably, *quite* widespread delusion, *wrongly believing* that total strangers and chance acquaintances *he’d only just met* are hungry for the least detail of one’s ailments and infirmities, *minor illnesses and weaknesses*, 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, *from head to foot!*”

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 dazed, *frozen* horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear *he couldn’t explain*, Framton swung round, *turned quickly* 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, *rough-sounding* 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, *driveway*, and the front gate were dimly-noted stages *that he barely noticed* in his headlong, *hurried and reckless* retreat, *escape*.

A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid an imminent, *seconds away* 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, *ran out fast* as we came up?”

“A most extraordinary man, a Mr. Nuttel,” said Mrs. Sappleton; “could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off, *left in a hurry*, without a word of good-bye 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, *stray* dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the *growling and frightening* creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make anyone lose their nerve, *panic with fear*.”

Romance at short notice — *dramatic stories on the spot* — was her speciality.



SPECIAL TALENT

START	rural retreat	give letters of introduction	pay a visit	a self-possessed young lady
cheerfully rattle on	make a fine mess	bustled into a room		out of place
a ghastly topic		get a creepy feeling	put up with me	go off for shooting
order complete rest	hardly a soul	kept open every evening till it is quite dusk	recover their bodies	engulfed in a bog
Here they are at last!	singing an old song		a little brown spaniel	got on her nerves
bolted out	in a one of distinct regret	snarling and grinning and foaming	hunted into a cemetery	Do you know many of the people around here?
muddy up to the eyes	dashed off	lose their nerve	romance at short notice	FINISH

STORY PATH

Follow the *Story Path* from Start to Finish. At each turn, choose the phrase that best continues the story.

NOTES

Reading with a Pencil

Now that you know how this story ends, it's worth going back and watching how it was built.

Take a pencil and read once more, slower this time.

While you read again, notice:

- every specific detail the girl adds to make her story feel real
- every place the story's calm tone doesn't match what's actually happening

Mark the following.

Four things to look for:

Mine it

New word

New words you want to learn:

e.g. bolt out

Steal it

Useful phrase

A phrase or line you'd like to use:

e.g. I expect it was a spaniel.

Look it up

Context

A place, a custom, a historical fact:

e.g. a letter of introduction

Figure it out

Uncertain or unclear

Anywhere the sentence feels unclear to you:

e.g. Was it irony?

Start small: choose 1–2 categories, and mark no more than 8 things total.

Then note them down in the *Reading Journal*.

MY READING JOURNAL

Mine it (*New word or phrase*)

NOTE FORMS, WORDS PAIRS, OR AN EXAMPLE SENTENCE

Steal it (Useful phrase)

WRITE A SENTENCE ABOUT YOUR LIFE

MY READING JOURNAL

Look it up (*Context*)

LIST NAMES, PLACES, OR CULTURAL DETAILS TO RESEARCH

MY READING JOURNAL

Figure it out (*Uncertain or unclear*)

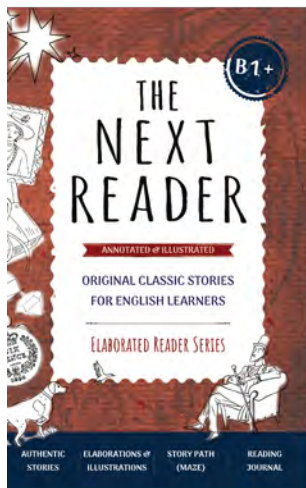
NOTE UNCLEAR SENTENCES AND WRITE YOUR BEST GUESS

STORY RETELLING

Use the *Story Path* as your guide and try to retell the story out loud or in writing.

START	rural retreat	give letters of introduction	pay a visit	a self-possessed young lady
cheerfully rattle on	make a fine mess	bustled into a room		out of place
a ghastly topic		get a creepy feeling	put up with me	go off for shooting
order complete rest	hardly a soul	kept open every evening till it is quite dusk	recover their bodies	engulfed in a bog
Here they are at last!	singing an old song		a little brown spaniel	got on her nerves
bolted out	in a one of distinct regret	snarling and grinning and foaming	hunted into a cemetery	Do you know many of the people around here?
muddy up to the eyes	dashed off	lose their nerve	romance at short notice	FINISH

Coming next in the Elaborated Reader Series



The Next Reader: Original Classic Stories for English Learners

A collection of seven original short stories.

Read one story at a time

Prefer to read a single story rather than a full collection? Every story in the *Elaborated Reader Series* is also available individually as a Kindle edition, and in *The Reading Room* on ELTcation <https://eltcation.com/reading-room>

Start with the story that pulls you in first. Build your collection one story at a time.