

# Learning English

## **American Stories**

### ***The Ransom of Red Chief***

*by O. Henry*

Lesson Plan  
*by John Russell*

# Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *The Ransom of Red Chief* by O. Henry.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

# Lesson Elements

**Prepare**

**Present**

**Practice**

**Self-Evaluate**

**Expand**

# Prepare

Introduce the story. “Today we will read *The Ransom of Red Chief*, by O. Henry. It is a story about a boy who is kidnapped. What usually happens when a child is kidnapped?”

Listen to students’ answers. Explain that when a child is kidnapped, the criminals ask the child’s parents for money. The family pays the money and the child is returned to them.

Teach the vocabulary for the story.

# Vocabulary

**ransom** – *n.* money that is paid in order to free someone who has been captured or kidnapped

**carriage** – *n.* a large vehicle with four wheels that is pulled by a horse and that carries people

**paleface** – *n.* a name supposedly used by North American Indians for a white person.

**sling** – *n.* a strap usually with a pocket in the middle that is used to throw something (such as a stone)

**funning** – *v.* joking or teasing someone

# Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *making predictions* to help us understand the story. I’ll show you how to do this.”

Play or read aloud to “would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?”

Model the strategy: “The first part of the story introduces two men. The two men need money for an illegal land deal in Illinois. To get the money that they need, they decide to kidnap the only child of an influential man. The two men drive in to town and speak to the young boy. They offer him candy. At this moment, I predict that the boy will accept the candy and go for a ride.”

Make a chart like the one on the next slide. Explain the final action of the character, then predict what will happen. Do not complete the outcome category yet.

You don't know much about the characters yet, so list them, but do not spend time on them yet. Explain to the students that they will learn more about the characters as the story continues.

# Predict

Character	Prediction	Outcome
The two kidnapers	I predict that the kidnapers will capture the boy.	
The boy	I predict that the boy will take the candy. I predict that he will go on a ride with the kidnapers.	



Play or read aloud to “Red Chief, would you like to go home?”

Show the chart again and ask students to help you fill in the Outcome column. See the next slide for possible answers. Explain to students,

“Our first prediction was the same as what happened in the story. We said the kidnappers would capture the boy. The second prediction, that the boy would go along with the kidnappers, was different from what happened in the story. He fought them. It does not matter if what we predict does not happen. What *is* important is to use what we know about the characters to guess what they will do. That helps us to focus on the story as we read or listen.”

# Predict

Character	Prediction	Outcome
The two kidnappers	I predict that the kidnappers will capture the boy.	<i>The kidnappers capture the boy.</i>
The boy	I predict that the boy will take the candy. I predict that he will go on a ride with the kidnappers.	<i>The boy hits one of the kidnappers with a rock. He fights like a wild animal.</i>

# Practice

Prepare students for the next part, “Now it’s your turn. Let’s listen to some more of the story. As we listen, think about the people in the story. The storyteller asked the boy, ‘Red Chief, do you want to go home?’ Take out a piece of paper. Write a chart listing the people. What do you think the boy will say? Does he want to go home? Write your prediction on your chart. Get ready to make more *predictions* as you listen.”

Ask several students to share and write what they predicted on the board or screen as on the following slide.

Play or read aloud to “He moved it faster and faster around his head.”

# Predict (2)

Character	Prediction	Outcome
The two kidnapers		
The boy		

Have students sit with a classmate and say aloud what they wrote about each character.

Ask students to check their predictions and write the events in the story in the Outcome column. See the following slide for possible answers.

## Predict (2)

Character	Prediction	Outcome
The two kidnapers	<i>They will get angry with the boy because of his bad behavior.</i>	<i>Bill asks the storyteller if they can take the boy back.</i>
The boy	<i>He will keep acting wild.</i>	<i>He hits Bill with a rock.</i>

Have students sit with a classmate and say aloud what they wrote about each character.

Play or read aloud to “I opened the note and read it to Bill. This is what it said:”

Ask students to check their predictions and write the events in the story in the Outcome column.

Tell students to add a new row on their chart. The character is the boy’s father. Ask students to share with their classmate what they *predict* the father will say in his note. Give students time to discuss their predictions.

# Predict (3)

Character	Prediction	Outcome
The father	The letter will say that the father will not pay the ransom.	



Play or read aloud to “Very respectfully, Ebenezer Dorset.”

Ask students to check their predictions and write the Outcome on their chart. Discuss the reasons for the father’s response to the kidnappers.

# Predict (4)

Character	Prediction	Outcome
The father	The letter will say that the father will not pay the ransom.	<i>The letter says that the father wants money from the kidnappers for taking back Red Chief.</i>

Ask students to listen again. “As we read the rest of the story, think about the boy, the kidnappers, and the father. How does the writer hint about what will happen to each character? Can you *predict* what will happen?”

**Play or read aloud to the end of the story.**

Ask students to share with their classmate. See following slide for possible predictions and outcomes.

# Predict (5)

Character	Prediction	Outcome
The boy - Red Chief	<i>Red Chief won't want to go home. He will escape and run away.</i>	<i>The kidnappers take Red Chief home. He does not escape.</i>
The two kidnappers - Bill Driscoll and the storyteller	<i>Bill will want to pay the father to take the boy back to his father. The other kidnapper will want to take the boy back to his father. He will want to pay the money.</i>	<i>Bill and the other kidnapper take the boy back to his father. Bill runs as fast as he can away from the town. The other kidnapper and Bill take the boy back to his father. The other kidnapper runs away, too.</i>
The father - Ebenezer	<i>The father will have the kidnappers arrested.</i>	<i>The father holds the boy and lets the kidnappers go.</i>

# Self-Evaluate

Ask students to stay with their partner and talk about the end of the story: “What do you think about the ending? What about the ending of this story is humorous?”

Give students time to talk about the story’s ending.

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, *making predictions*, when you read? Did it help you understand the characters in the story? Did it help you find humor in the story? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how *predicting* helped you today.”

# Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *predict*?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. Predicting encourages you to make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text. You try to anticipate new information, and then think about why the outcome was similar or different to what you thought.

You can use *predicting* in mathematics, too. When you estimate an answer, or guess the answer to a problem, you are *predicting*.”

*We present the short story "The Ransom of Red Chief" by O. Henry. Here is Shep O'Neal with the story.*

It looked like a good thing. But wait till I tell you. We were down south, in Alabama – Bill Driscoll and myself – when this kidnapping idea struck us. There was a town down there, as flat as a pancake, and called Summit. Bill and I had about six hundred dollars. We needed just two thousand dollars more for an illegal land deal in Illinois.

We chose for our victim -- the only child of an influential citizen named Ebenezer Dorset. He was a boy of ten, with red hair. Bill and I thought that Ebenezer would pay a **ransom** of two thousand dollars to get his boy back. But wait till I tell you.

About two miles from Summit was a little mountain, covered with cedar trees. There was an opening on the back of the mountain. We stored our supplies in that cave.

One night, we drove a horse and **carriage** past old Dorset's house. The boy was in the street, throwing rocks at a cat on the opposite fence.

"Hey little boy!" says Bill, "would you like to have a bag of candy and a nice ride?"

The boy hits Bill directly in the eye with a piece of rock.

That boy put up a fight like a wild animal. But, at last, we got him down in the bottom of the carriage and drove away.

We took him up to the cave. The boy had two large bird feathers stuck in his hair. He points a stick at me and says:

"Ha! **Paleface**, do you dare to enter the camp of Red Chief, the terror of the plains?"

"He's all right now," says Bill, rolling up his pants and examining wounds on his legs. "We're playing Indian. I'm Old Hank, the trapper, Red Chief's captive. I'm going to be scalped at daybreak. By Geronimo! That kid can kick hard."

"Red Chief," says I to the boy, "would you like to go home?"

"Aw, what for?" says he. "I don't have any fun at home. I hate to go to school. I like to camp out. You won't take me back home again, will you?"

"Not right away," says I. "We'll stay here in the cave a while."

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

We went to bed about eleven o’clock. Just at daybreak, I was awakened by a series of terrible screams from Bill. Red Chief was sitting on Bill’s chest, with one hand holding his hair. In the other, he had a sharp knife. He was attempting to cut off the top of Bill’s head, based on what he had declared the night before.

I got the knife away from the boy. But, after that event, Bill’s spirit was broken. He lay down, but he never closed an eye again in sleep as long as that boy was with us.

“Do you think anybody will pay out money to get a little imp like that back home?” Bill asked.

“Sure,” I said. “A boy like that is just the kind that parents love. Now, you and the Chief get up and make something to eat, while I go up on the top of this mountain and look around.”

I climbed to the top of the mountain. Over toward Summit, I expected to see the men of the village searching the countryside. But all was peaceful.

“Perhaps,” says I to myself, “it has not yet been discovered that the wolves have taken the lamb from the fold.” I went back down the mountain.

When I got to the cave, I found Bill backed up against the side of it. He was breathing hard, with the boy threatening to strike him with a rock.

“He put a red-hot potato down my back,” explained Bill, “and then crushed it with his foot. I hit his ears. Have you got a gun with you, Sam?”

I took the rock away from the boy and ended the argument.

“I’ll fix you,” says the boy to Bill. “No man ever yet struck the Red Chief but what he got paid for it. You better be careful!”

After eating, the boy takes a leather object with strings tied around it from his clothes and goes outside the cave unwinding it. Then we heard a kind of shout. It was Red Chief holding a **sling** in one hand. He moved it faster and faster around his head.

Just then I heard a heavy sound and a deep breath from Bill. A rock the size of an egg had hit him just behind his left ear. Bill fell in the fire across the frying pan of hot water for washing the dishes. I pulled him out and poured cold water on his head for half an hour.

Then I went out and caught that boy and shook him.



“If your behavior doesn’t improve,” says I, “I’ll take you straight home. Now, are you going to be good, or not?”

“I was only **funning**,” says he. “I didn’t mean to hurt Old Hank. But what did he hit me for? I’ll behave if you don’t send me home.”

I thought it best to send a letter to old man Dorset that day, demanding the ransom and telling how it should be paid. The letter said:

“We have your boy hidden in a place far from Summit. We demand fifteen hundred dollars for his return; the money to be left at midnight tonight at the same place and in the same box as your answer.

If you agree to these terms, send the answer in writing by a messenger tonight at half past eight o’clock. After crossing Owl Creek, on the road to Poplar Cove, there are three large trees. At the bottom of the fence, opposite the third tree, will be a small box. The messenger will place the answer in this box and return immediately to Summit. If you fail to agree to our demand, you will never see your boy again. If you pay the money as demanded, he will be returned to you safe and well within three hours.”

I took the letter and walked over to Poplar Cove. I then sat around the post office and store. An old man there says he hears Summit is all worried because of Ebenezer Dorset’s boy having been lost or stolen. That was all I wanted to know. I mailed my letter and left. The postmaster said the mail carrier would come by in an hour to take the mail on to Summit.

At half past eight, I was up in the third tree, waiting for the messenger to arrive. Exactly on time, a half-grown boy rides up the road on a bicycle. He finds the box at the foot of the fence. He puts a folded piece of paper into it and leaves, turning back toward Summit.

I slid down the tree, got the note and was back at the cave in a half hour. I opened the note and read it to Bill. This is what it said:

“Gentlemen: I received your letter about the ransom you ask for the return of my son. I think you are a little high in your demands. I hereby make you a counter-proposal, which I believe you will accept. You bring Johnny home and pay me two hundred and fifty dollars, and I agree to take him off your hands. You had better come at night because the neighbors believe he is lost. And, I could not be responsible for what they would do to anybody they saw bringing him back. Very respectfully, Ebenezer Dorset.”

“Great pirates of Penzance!” says I, “of all the nerve...” But I looked at Bill and stopped. He had the most appealing look in his eyes I ever saw on the face of a dumb or talking animal.

“Sam,” says he, “what’s two hundred and fifty dollars, after all? We’ve got the money. One more night of this boy will drive me crazy. I think Mister Dorset is making us a good offer. You aren’t going to let the chance go, are you?”

“Tell you the truth, Bill,” says I, “this little lamb has got on my nerves, too. We’ll take him home, pay the ransom and make our get-away.”

We took him home that night. We got him to go by telling him that his father had bought him a gun and we were going to hunt bears the next day.

It was twelve o’clock when we knocked on Ebenezer’s front door. Bill counted out two hundred and fifty dollars into Dorset’s hand.

When the boy learned we were planning to leave him at home, he started to cry loudly and held himself as tight as he could to Bill’s leg. His father pulled him away slowly.

“How long can you hold him?” asks Bill.

“I’m not as strong as I used to be,” says old Dorset, “but I think I can promise you ten minutes.”

“Enough,” says Bill. “In ten minutes, I shall cross the Central, Southern and Middle Western states, and be running for the Canadian border.”

And, as dark as it was, and as fat as Bill was, and as good a runner as I am, he was a good mile and a half out of Summit before I could catch up with him.

*You have heard the American Story “The Ransom of Red Chief” by O. Henry. Your storyteller was Shep O’Neal. This story was adapted into Special English by Shelley Gollust. It was produced by Lawan Davis.*

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## Words in This Story

**ransom** – *n.* money that is paid in order to free someone who has been captured or kidnapped

**carriage** – *n.* a large vehicle with four wheels that is pulled by a horse and that carries people

**paleface** – *n.* a name supposedly used by North American Indians for a white person.

**sling** – *n.* a strap usually with a pocket in the middle that is used to throw something (such as a stone)

**funning** – *v.* joking or teasing someone

# About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.





CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.

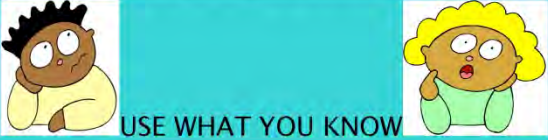




CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.







# Metacognitive Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES</b>		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Set goals.</li> <li>-Plan the task or content sequence.</li> <li>-Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies).</li> <li>-Preview a text.</li> </ul>
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Check your progress on the task.</li> <li>-Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem?</li> <li>-Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?</li> </ul>
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task.</li> <li>-Assess how well you have used learning strategies.</li> <li>-Decide how effective the strategies were.</li> <li>-Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.</li> </ul>
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Determine how you learn best.</li> <li>-Arrange conditions that help you learn.</li> <li>-Seek opportunities for practice.</li> <li>-Focus your attention on the task.</li> </ul>






# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task.</li> <li>- Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge.</li> <li>-Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.</li> </ul>
Make Inferences	 Use Clues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use context and what you know to figure out meaning.</li> <li>-Read and listen between the lines.</li> <li>-Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.</li> </ul>
Make Predictions	 Crystal Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Anticipate information to come.</li> <li>-Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text.</li> <li>-Make an estimate (math).</li> <li>-Make a hypothesis (science).</li> </ul>
Personalize	 Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies


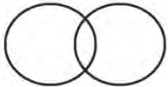


CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language.</li> <li>-Recognize cognates.</li> </ul>
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.</li> </ul>
		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information.</li> <li>-Use or draw a picture or diagram.</li> </ul>
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding.</li> <li>-Sound out/vocalize.</li> <li>- Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies






CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language.</li> <li>-Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.</li> </ul>
  <b>USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS</b>		
Find/Apply Patterns	 abacus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply a rule.</li> <li>-Make a rule.</li> <li>-Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules.</li> <li>-Identify patterns in literature (genre).</li> <li>-Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.</li> </ul>
Classify/Sequence	 Life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Categorize words or ideas according to attributes.</li> <li>-Classify living things; identify natural cycles.</li> <li>-Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies.</li> <li>-Sequence events in history.</li> </ul>



# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading.</li> <li>-List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..</li> </ul>
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.</li> </ul>
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.</li> </ul>
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
 		
<b>USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES</b>		
Access Information Sources	 <p>Look it up!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials.</li> <li>-Seek out and use sources of information.</li> <li>-Follow a model</li> <li>-Ask questions</li> </ul>
Cooperate	 <p>Together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.</li> </ul>
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 <p>I can do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.</li> </ul>