



American Stories
A Piece of Red Calico
by Frank Stockton

Lesson Plan
by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.

Level: Intermediate

Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the VOA Learning English **American Stories** episode, *A Piece of Red Calico* by Frank Stockton.

Depending on the length of the class period, this lesson may cover more than one session. The approach used in this lesson is based on the CALLA approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach.

Lesson Elements

Prepare

Present

Practice

Self-Evaluate

Expand

Prepare

Introduce the topic of the story: “Today’s story is about a man shopping for something his wife needs. It’s not always easy to please someone else when we shop for them. Have you ever done shopping for another person? What are some problems you had?” Allow students time to share their experiences.

Find out how much students know about sewing and fabric by asking questions such as:

- *What kind of cloth are you wearing?*
- *Is it cotton or wool?*
- *Does your clothing have a print?*

Show the pictures to introduce the vocabulary for the lesson.

Upholsterers



This picture shows workers who cover furniture with cloth or leather.

Red Calico



Vocabulary

calico- *n.* a light, printed cotton cloth

from the bottom of my heart – (idiom) sincerely, honestly

goods - *n.* products that are made or grown in order to be sold : things for sale

recover - *v.* to apply fabric

turkey red - *n.* a color that was widely used to dye cotton in the 18th and 19th century.

upholster *v.* to put a covering of cloth, leather, etc., on (a piece of furniture, such as a couch or chair)

upholstery *n.* the cloth, leather, etc., that covers a couch, chair, etc.

Present

Explain “Today we’re going to use the strategy **selective attention**. This strategy helps us *pick out key words* in something we read or hear. The key words help us to summarize or understand the story. In this story the narrator has a problem. Let’s pick out the key words as he tries to solve his problem. ”

Pass out sheets of paper or ask students to take out their notebooks.

“Let’s start by making a chart. Draw a box and divide it into five rows and three columns. At the top of the first column, write ‘Store.’ For the next column, write ‘Key Words.’” For the last column, write, ‘Problem.’”

Show students the graphic on the next slide.

Looking for Red Calico – Store Chart

Store	Key words – how store is described	Problem(s)
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Model how to use the strategy by playing the first part of the story.

Play the story to “but we have some very nice plain calicoes in other colors.”

Discuss the problem the man has: “He has to find some cloth for his wife. Why does it have to match the piece she gave him?”

Let students give reasons as they understand the problem of finding the right kind of cloth. Show the chart again and talk through how you would fill it in.

Say, “I picked out some words that tell me the man went to a large store. I’m going to write them here.”

Looking for Red Calico – Store Chart

Store	Key words – how store is described	Problem(s)
1	A large store	Striped design Not same color
2		
3		
4		
5		

“I read that the first store did not have any ‘plain calico,’ which is cloth that has no design on it. He wants a solid color cloth. The store only has red striped (with printed lines of color) cloth. They have plain cloth in other colors. So I’m writing in the boxes the things I noticed when I used **selective attention.**”

Practice

Say, “Now it’s your turn. Let’s listen to and read the next section. Be ready to pay attention to the key words that tell you the man is going to another store. Then watch or listen for the words that tell you what problem he has in that store.”

Play the story to “You'll get that from an upholsterer, someone who recovers furniture.”

Next, ask students to write the key words in their chart. Show the chart with the next store information as on the next slide.

Looking for Red Calico – Store Chart

Store	Key words – how store is described	Problem(s)
1	A large store	Striped design Not same color
2	a store a few doors up the street	Fabric not for furniture
3		
4		
5		

Say, “Let’s read another section now. Use **selective attention** to pick out the key words.”

Play to “They don't use red like that. They use Turkey red.”

Repeat the procedure in which students fill in the key words they noticed.

Play to “But I thought a simple little thing like that could be bought anywhere.”

Repeat the procedure in which students fill in the key words they noticed.

Play the rest of the story. Ask students to compare their chart with the model or fill in a chart on the board or screen.

Looking for Red Calico – Store Chart

Store	Key words – how store is described	Problem(s)
1	A large store	Striped design Not same color
2	a store a few doors up the street.	Fabric not for furniture
3	across the street to the upholsterer's store.	Only had Turkey red
4	The next place I visited was a very large store.	Not in calico department or in upholstery department
5	I went into another large store.	Had to buy Turkey Red; got 15 meters

Self-Evaluation

Ask students if they think *picking out the key words* helped to understand this story. “Do you think **selective attention** helped you understand and remember the story? Use the chart you filled in and tell the story to your neighbor in your own words.”

Ask students to turn to their neighbor and summarize the story in their own words. If time allows, ask a couple of students to share their summary with the class.

Expand

Wrap up the lesson by asking students to think of other times they can use **selective attention**.

Possible answers are 'listening to a lecture, studying a textbook, or answering questions.

Encourage students to go home and **pick out the key words** with a reading assignment; or when listening in another class.

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 here:

<http://calla.ws/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/strategylist.pdf>