

# Learning English

## American Stories

### *The Exact Science of Matrimony*

*by O. Henry*

Lesson Plan  
*by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.*

# Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *The Exact Science of Matrimony*, 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 Exact Science of Matrimony*, a story about two men with a plan to make money ‘quickly and easily.’ They don’t want to work. They are going to get money from a ‘marriage business.’ What do you think? Will they do something that is against the law?”

Listen to students’ comments about ‘cons,’ or ‘scams.’ Teach the vocabulary for the story.

# Vocabulary

**publish** – *v.* to have something you wrote included in a book, magazine, or newspaper

**investigate** – *v.* to try to get information about (someone who may have done something illegal)

**reject** – *v.* to refuse to love, care for, or give attention to (someone)

**federal** – *adj.* of or relating to the central government

**inspector** – *n.* a person whose job is to inspect something

**partner** – *n.* one of two or more people, businesses, etc., that work together or do business together

# Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *make inferences* to understand how the partners fool the people in the story. The author, O. Henry, does not come out and tell us how the men are able to carry out their plan. We need to ‘read between the lines’ and figure it out from what he tells us. I’ll show you how to do this.”

Play or read aloud to ‘Signed: Lonely, care of Peters and Tucker, agents, Cairo, Illinois.’

Tell students, “Here O. Henry gives us the advertisement. What does it say about the type of man the woman wants?”

Model the strategy: “Reading this advertisement, I think that the partners, Jeff and Andy, are attracting men who probably cannot find a wife. This type of man might be older or he might have little money. Why do you think their advertisement is aimed at these men?”

Give students a chance to make inferences here about the motivation of the con men in targeting older, poorer men.

Explain: “When we make guesses based on what the story doesn’t directly tell us, we are making inferences. It’s a strategy that helps us understand the story more deeply. Writers often do not tell us all of the facts directly. They show us things that help us to make inferences, or guess, about the characters in the story.”

# Practice

Prepare students to continue making inferences on their own. “Now it’s your turn. Let’s read some more of the story. Try to figure out what the author is telling us about the partners, Jeff and Andy.”

Play or read aloud to ‘Does that satisfy you?’

Have students turn to a neighbor and discuss the question (write on board or display it on a screen) Do Jeff and Andy really want to teach men a moral lesson?”

Give students time to discuss and make inferences based on what they get from the text.



As individual students or groups of students working together to share the inferences they have made about the partners. Praise students for ‘reading between the lines.’ and instruct them to continue with the next section.

Play or read aloud to ‘Still, Andy and Jeff often spoke about the trouble of cutting open envelopes and taking the money out.’

Summarize the story to this point. “We know that the plan is working pretty well. Many men are writing to offer themselves as husband to the widow. Tell me, do you think that Andy and Jeff really admire these men?”

Give students time to discuss their inferences about how Jeff and Andy view the men who write letters. Point out that O. Henry tells us they “answered every letter with high praise for the writer.” This is part of their plan. Then they asked the men to send two dollars for giving their letter to the widow. The partners also complain about opening the letters and taking the money out. Ask students, “What does this tell us about Jeff and Andy? (they are lazy!) When you answer this question, you are *making an inference*, or guessing, based on what you read in the story.”

Following this discussion, play or read aloud to “His name is William Wilkinson.”

Ask students to talk with their partner about the inferences they can make now about Missus Trotter. Is she playing a game with Jeff and Andy? Or is she serious that she is in love? Give students a few minutes to guess what Andy and Jeff will do about Missus Trotter's request.

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

# Self-Evaluate

Ask students to stay with their partner and talk about the surprise at the end of the story. Point out that we should not be too surprised at this turn of events. O. Henry gave us many hints in the story that Jeff and Andy are not trustworthy characters.

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

# Expand

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

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. In our relations with others, we often have to guess about what they are really thinking, and imagine what they will do. Making inferences gives a deeper meaning to what we read or hear. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

Jeff Peters and Andy Tucker could never be trusted. One day, the two men decided to open a marriage business to make some quick and easy money. The first thing they did was to write an advertisement to be **published** in newspapers. Their advertisement read like this:

“A charming widow, beautiful and home-loving, would like to remarry. She is only thirty-two years old. She has three thousand dollars in cash and owns valuable property in the country. She would like a poor man with a loving heart. No objection to an older man or to one who is not good-looking. But he needs to be faithful and true, can take care of property and invest money with good judgment. Give address, with details about yourself. Signed: Lonely, care of Peters and Tucker, agents, Cairo, Illinois.”

When they finished writing the ad, Jeff Peters said to Andy Tucker: “So far, so good. And now, where is the lady?”

Andy gave Jeff an unhappy look. “What does a marriage advertisement have to do with a lady?” he asked.

“Now listen,” Jeff answered. “You know my rule, Andy. In all illegal activities, we must obey the law, in every detail. Something offered for sale must exist. It must be seen. You must be able to produce it. That is how I have kept out of trouble with the police. Now, for this business to work, we must be able to produce a charming widow, with or without the beauty, as advertised.”

“Well,” said Andy, after thinking it over, “it might be better, if the United States Post Office should decide to **investigate** our marriage agency. But where can you hope to find a widow who would waste her time on a marriage proposal that has no marriage in it?”

Jeff said that he knew just such a woman.

“An old friend of mine, Zeke Trotter,” he said, “used to work in a tent show. He made his wife a widow by drinking too much of the wrong kind of alcohol. I used to stop at their house often. I think we can get her to work with us.”

Missus Zeke Trotter lived in a small town not far away. Jeff Peters went out to see her. She was not beautiful and not so young. But she seemed all right to Jeff.

“Is this an honest deal you are putting on, Mister Peters?” she asked when he told her what he wanted.

“Missus Trotter,” said Jeff, “three thousand men will seek to marry you to get your money and property. What are they prepared to give in exchange? Nothing! Nothing but the bones of a lazy, dishonest, good-for-nothing fortune-seeker. We will teach them something. This will be a great moral campaign. Does that satisfy you?”

“It does, Mister Peters,” she said. “But what will my duties be? Do I have to personally **reject** these three thousand good-for-nothings you speak of? Or can I throw them out in bunches?”

Jeff explained that her job would be easy. She would live in a quiet hotel and have no work to do. He and Andy would take care of all letters and the business end of the plot. But he warned her that some of the men might come to see her in person. Then, she would have to meet them face-to-face and reject them. She would be paid twenty-five dollars a week and hotel costs.

“Give me five minutes to get ready,” Missus Trotter said. “Then you can start paying me.”

So Jeff took her to the city and put her in a hotel far enough from Jeff and Andy's place to cause no suspicion.

Jeff Peters and Andy Tucker were now ready to catch a few fish on the hook. They placed their advertisement in newspapers across the country. They put two thousand dollars in a bank in Missus Trotter's name. They gave her the bank book to show if anyone questioned the honesty of their marriage agency. They were sure that Missus Trotter could be trusted and that it was safe to leave the money in her name.

Their ad in the newspapers started a flood of letters – more than one hundred a day. Jeff and Andy worked twelve hours a day answering them. Most of the men wrote that they had lost their jobs. The world misunderstood them. But they were full of love and other good qualities.



Jeff and Andy answered every letter with high praise for the writer. They asked the men to send a photograph and more details. And they told them to include two dollars to cover the cost of giving the second letter to the charming widow.

Almost all the men sent in the two dollars requested. It seemed to be an easy business. Still, Andy and Jeff often spoke about the trouble of cutting open envelopes and taking the money out.

A few of the men came in person. Jeff and Andy sent them to Missus Trotter and she

did the rest. Soon, Jeff and Andy were receiving about two hundred dollars a day. One day, a **federal postal inspector** came by. But Jeff satisfied him that they were not breaking the law.

After about three months, Jeff and Andy had collected more than five thousand dollars, and they decided it was time to stop. Some people were beginning to question their honesty. And, Missus Trotter seemed to have grown tired of her job. Too many men had come to see her and she did not like that.

Jeff went to Missus Trotter's hotel to pay her what she was owed, and to say goodbye. He also wanted her to repay the two thousand dollars that was put into her bank account.

When Jeff walked into the room she was crying, like a child who did not want to go to school.

"Now, now," he said. "What's it all about? Somebody hurt you? Are you getting homesick?"

"No, Mister Peters," she said. "I'll tell you. You were always a good friend of my husband Zeke. Mister Peters, I am in love. I just love a man so hard I can't bear not to get him. He's just the kind I've always had in mind."

"Then take him," said Jeff. "Does he feel the same way about you?"

"He does," Missus Trotter answered. "But there is a problem. He is one of the men who have been coming to see me in answer to your advertisement. And he will not marry me unless I give him the two thousand dollars. His name is William Wilkinson."

Jeff felt sorry for her. He said he would be glad to let her give the two thousand dollars to Mister Wilkinson, so that she could be happy. But he said he had to talk to his **partner** about it.

Jeff returned to his hotel and discussed it with Andy.

"I was expecting something like this," Andy said. "You can't trust a woman to stick with you in any plan that involves her emotions."

Jeff said it was a sad thing to think that they were the cause of the breaking of a woman's heart. Andy agreed with him.

"I'll tell you what I am willing to do," said Andy. "Jeff, you have always been a man of a soft and generous heart. Perhaps I have been too hard and worldly and suspicious. For once, I will meet you half-way. Go to Missus Trotter. Tell her to take the two thousand dollars out of the bank and give it to this Wilkinson fellow and be happy."

Jeff shook Andy's hand for a long time. Then he went back to Missus Trotter. She cried as hard for joy as she had done for sorrow.

Two days later, Jeff and Andy prepared to leave town.

"Wouldn't you like to go meet Missus Trotter once before we leave?" Jeff asked Andy. "She'd like to express her thanks to you."

"Why, I guess not," Andy said. "I think we should hurry and catch the train."

Jeff was putting all the money they had received in a belt he tied around his body. Then Andy took a large amount of money out of his pocket and asked Jeff to put it together with the other money.

"What's this?" Jeff asked.

"It's Missus Trotter's two thousand dollars," said Andy.

"How do you come to have it?" Jeff asked.

"Missus Trotter gave it to me," Andy answered. "I have been calling on her three nights a week for more than a month."

"Then you are William Wilkinson?" Jeff asked.

"I was," Andy said.

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### Words in This Story

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**investigate** – v. to try to get information about (someone who may have done something illegal)

**reject** – v. to refuse to love, care for, or give attention to (someone)



**federal** – *adj.* of or relating to the central government

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# 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.

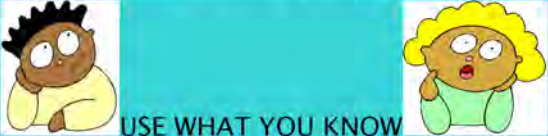




CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.



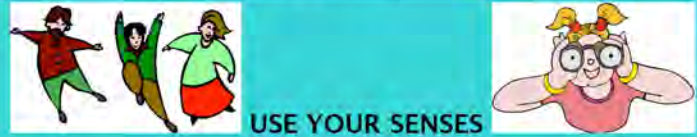



# Metacognitive Strategies

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>		
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>USE WHAT YOU KNOW</b></p>		
Use Background Knowledge	 <p style="text-align: center;">I know.</p>	<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	 <p style="text-align: center;">Use Clues</p>	<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	 <p style="text-align: center;">Crystal Ball</p>	<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	 <p style="text-align: center;">Me</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.</li> </ul>


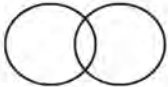


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CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native 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>
  <b>USE YOUR SENSES</b>		
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>




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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

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STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
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>