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ELT Newsletter

IN THIS VOLUME

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

- ✔ Fun Warm-up Activities for Online English Classes
- ✔ The Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on ESL Learners and TESOL Practitioners in the United States
- ✔ 7 Ways to Do Formative Assessments in Your Virtual Classroom
- ✔ An Analysis of Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication Tools in E-learning
- ✔ Class Reflection Activities to Close Out a Tough Year

NEWS

- ✔ The Online Symposium on Language Pedagogy in Higher Education
- ✔ VietTESOL International Convention 2021
- ✔ Online Training Course on 'Get Interactive: Practical Teaching with Technology'
- ✔ Online Training course on Teaching EFL/ESL Reading: A Task-based Approach
- ✔ Online Training Course on Language Assessment in the Classroom
- ✔ Upcoming English Teaching Webinars and Useful Teaching Resources

FUN CORNER

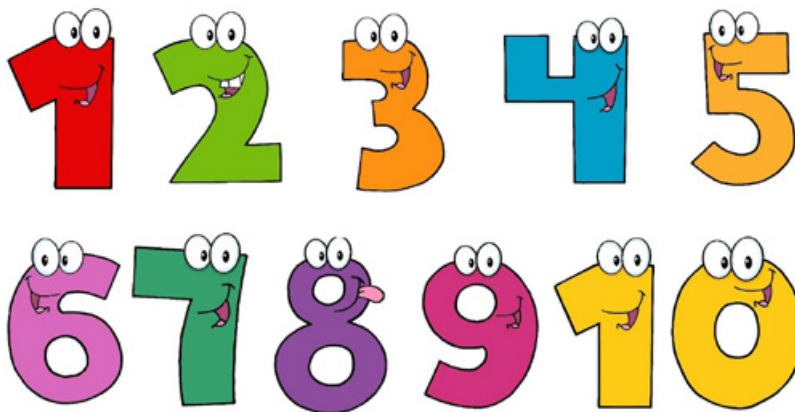
- ✔ The Donkey and the Cotton
- ✔ The Lion and the Mouse
- ✔ The Magic Pot

FUN WARM-UP ACTIVITIES FOR ONLINE ENGLISH CLASSES

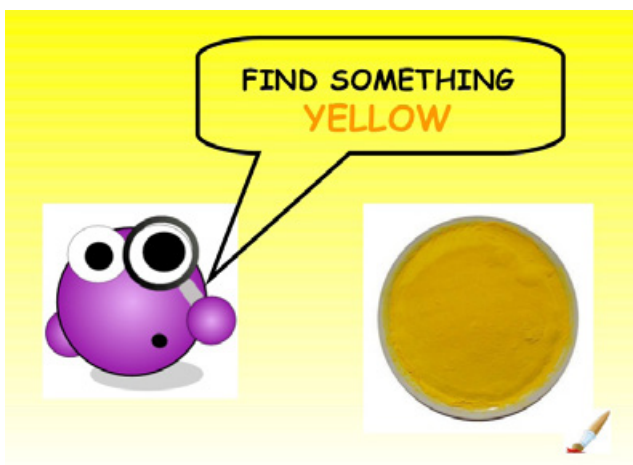
by Mach Buu Hien

It is important to make your online classes more interesting and engaging to your students. Following are some great ideas for online warmer activities that you don't need much time for preparation.

1. COUNT NUMBER 1-10



- Tell students they are going to count from number 1 to 10
- Anyone in class can start the number and the other continue (e.g. student 1: One -> student 2: Two...)
- BUT if two students say the same number at the same time, they will have to start again from 'One'



2. FIND SOMETHING "YELLOW"

- Tell students that they are going to find something "Yellow" around them.
- Set the time for students to find the yellow thing; for example, teacher may count down from 10 to 1
- Ask some students what they find, and they will tell what it is, what they use it for, or where they find it.
- If the time is still allowed, teacher can continue with a different color.
- A different way to conduct this activity is asking students to get something "round" or "rectangular"

3. GUESS WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

This activity can also be used as a lead-in activity for the target structure “Simple Future” or “Simple Past”

<p>PICTURE 1: WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?</p> 	<p>PICTURE 2: WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?</p> 	<p>PICTURE 3: WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?</p> 
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- Choose a set of three or four pictures
- Show a picture one at a time to the whole students
- Ask students to guess what will happen next
- Then, show the next picture and ask the same question until going through all the pictures.

4. NAME THREE

Ask students to think of THREE items that are appropriate with the given topics as below:

- Jobs where you have to wear uniforms.
- Sports that play with the ball.
- Animals that lay eggs
- Foods that contain eggs

References: <https://eslgames.com/no-prep-warm-up-activities/>

THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ESL LEARNERS AND TESOL PRACTITIONERS IN THE UNITED STATES ¹

Summarized by Mai Thi Minh Tho



This research was conducted to find out how the Covid-19 pandemic affected a group of ESL university students and their teachers at an intensive English program in the United States. The researchers aimed to have better understanding of the pandemic effects on students and teachers in terms of stress levels, learning and teaching English, remote instruction as well as its impact on the actual English development of the students. An online survey was made with the participation of 153

¹ Hartshorn, K. J., & McMurry, B. L. (2020). The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on ESL learners and TESOL practitioners in the United States. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, Vol 2 (2), 140-156. From <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2020.09.11>

students and 41 teachers to find the answers for six research questions. The questionnaire was designed with structured and unstructured questions for both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Moreover, the study utilized the thematic interpretation to understand underlined challenges that students and teachers experienced during the pandemic. Such themes as school work, student well-being finances, family, social and mental health, physical health, and travel restrictions respectively, were analyzed in the percentage of theme frequencies for students and teachers. From the quantitative and qualitative data, it was found that the Covid-19 pandemic increased the stress level for both students and teachers across an array of

contexts. In addition, the result also showed that the teaching and learning of English was less prioritized during the pandemic because of new stressors in both practitioners and their students' lives. More importantly, students found it more challenging for the transition to online instruction and their speaking skills was less developed than writing skills.

In conclusion, the authors addressed that the stress levels varied from one individual to another depending on context and circumstances. However, there are some limitations during the study such as the investigation on a single institution and a low outbreak of the pandemic in the investigated location, so it is suggested there should be more research in different institutions across the regions for a broader view.

7 WAYS TO DO FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS IN YOUR VIRTUAL CLASSROOM ²

Summarized by Vo Thi Hong Tram

Technology has made an indispensable transition from the traditional classrooms with pens and papers into the virtual classrooms with ICT tools and hand signals. To find out what students are really learning, the author suggests 7 techniques to conduct formative assessments in virtual classrooms.

1. DIPSTICKS

This technique is described as a dipstick to check the oil in a car, and it allows teachers to check students' learning academically and emotionally. Asking general or specific questions about previous lessons or contents that teacher has recently covered and students have to respond by dropping an emoji or a thumbs-up/thumbs-down in their chat box or video window. They can also use hand signals to show their understanding on the scale of 1-5.



2. DIGITAL JOURNALS AND ONE-PAGERS

It is essential for teachers to create a 'Journal Jot' online document so that students will have a private space to reflect what they learnt. For example, Google Docs, Blackboard platform are useful tools to measure

² Fleming, N. (2020). 7 ways to do formative assessments in your virtual classroom. From <https://www.edutopia.org/article/7-ways-do-formative-assessments-your-virtual-classroom>

how well students can understand. The prompts as K-W-L (what they know, what they want to know and what they learnt) or 3-2-1 (three things you found out; two things you found interesting; one thing you didn't understand) should be used so that students can have more ideas to write in their journal. Also, teachers can adapt one-pager activity by asking students to write down key themes, questions and idea on their own page through the tools like Canva or Google slides.

3. ELEVATOR PITCHES AND TWEETS

This is the summary activity of what the students have learnt on a specific unit by asking them to type it into Google Docs, in a chat box or Padlet, or they can summarize the lesson in a tweet or Instagram post.

4. SQUARE, TRIANGLE, CIRCLE

This activity provides students an opportunity to choose a shape and its relevant question prompt. Choosing a square means something which is now "squared away" in their thinking. A triangle expresses like where the students extract three important ideas from what they have learnt. And a circle is a place where students to discuss something 'circulating'. Besides, the students can note their responses independently into an online document.

5. MAKE ART YOUR ASSESSMENT

For this kind of assessment, the students can use art, music and drama to share their thinking. They are free to create and describe a market of specific concept, or draw a comic chronicling a historic event, as well as write a poem or a song. Then, the students can use their phone to record themselves by Voice Memos or photograph/film their work with their phone's camera to upload and share virtually.

6. PEER-TO-PEER EVALUATIONS

Although it is a virtual classroom, fostering relationships between students is also important. Students are assigned with a virtual classmate every week or pair work randomly. In classroom, they can join the breakout room on Zoom or another video conference platform. Each student can be given a general rubric or teachers can use T.A.G.(Tell-Ask-Give) feedback to evaluate their peer's assignment.

7. VIRTUAL EXIT TICKET

Teachers can run Google Docs for each student in order to keep the information private or broaden it to the rest of the class with questions posted on an online platform—Flipgrid. Then students can find the questions and write their comments to their friends' responses. There is the list of open-ended questions introduced. And this kind of activity can be normally used in the end-of-class activity.

AN ANALYSIS OF SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN E-LEARNING ³

Summarized by Mach Buu Hien

In this paper the author analyzes differences in using communication tools for both synchronous and asynchronous e-learning. Referring to Schramm's Model of Communication, the author discusses succinctly the communication process in which both sender and receiver take turns to send and receive a message. It is explained as a two-way process of (1) encoding-interpreting-decoding and (2) decoding-interpreting-encoding to attain mutual understanding as clearly shown in the figure below:

³ Lim, F. P. (2017). An Analysis of Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication Tools in e-Learning. *Advanced Science and Technology Letters*, Vol 143, pp.230-234. From <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313673458>



Schramm's Model of Communication

The author also emphasizes the vital role of communication tools which enables the communication process to take place, especially in the e-learning environment. These tools may facilitate collaboration and interactions between individuals involved in synchronous or asynchronous communication.

From the discussion of communication process and the importance of tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication, the author also provides an analysis on the positive aspects as well as limitations of these communication tools as shown in the following table:

	SYNCHRONOUS	ASYNCHRONOUS
COMMUNICATION TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Video/ Web/ Audio conferencing, ● Live chat, ● White boarding, ● Application sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussion forum, ● Web logs, ● E-mail messaging, ● Social media messaging
USABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Real time interaction, ● Collaborative discussions, ● Demonstration and co-development of ideas, ● Seeing and/or hearing people that you are communicating, ● Providing documentation of student interaction, ● Permitting sharing of presentation documents and application demonstration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaboration and sharing of ideas can be made over a certain time period, ● Easy to form and control the level of participation, ● More time for reflection on the topic of discussion, ● Dissemination of ideas, comments, images, and other documents is easy and open to all, ● Distribution of course materials on one-to-one or one-to-many basis,
LIMITATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quality is dependent on bandwidth, ● There may be short time lag between speaking and receiving a response that can disrupt the natural flow of conversation, ● Documents and other presentations can only be shared through the presenter's camera, ● May lead to misinterpretation of expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● May lead to misinterpretation of other people's ideas, ● May take longer to have feedback, ● Messages in the group chat cannot be deleted, or unnecessary participations cannot be controlled.

As these communication tools have their own positive and negatives aspects, the author suggests that with the modern learning management systems they should be combined for the instruction improvement and effective learning promotion.

CLASS REFLECTION ACTIVITIES TO CLOSE OUT A TOUGH YEAR ⁴

Summarized by Vo Thi Hong Tram

The year 2020 witnessed significant changes in every aspect of life, and education is not an exception. Despite challenges during the tough year of pandemic schooling, many teachers have found positive and creative ways to help their students with reflection activities of the whole academic year. This article summarized some great ideas for these reflection activities which have been used by teachers around the USA to close out a challenging year.

MEMORY ROCKS AND TIME CAPSULES



Inspired by the book 'If You Find a Rock' of Peggy Christian, first-grade students at Leverette Elementary School, in Massachusetts are asked to make **Memory rocks**. The students will paint the rocks and write down words that remind them of their lessons, feelings, or activities that they want to remember from the year.

Time capsules is another great activity, conducted by Katherine McGrath, an instructional coach at West Brook Middle School in Paramus, New Jersey. For this activity, students are asked to collect physical or digital artifacts to create their own time capsules with suggested prompts like "What movies, shows, or music helped you through this year?"

The next activity **Six-word Memoir** can be used for a shorter exercise purpose. Students are asked

to think about a moment from the year - it could be a memory from their class or anything they are impressed. And then, they will describe it with only six words.

PORTFOLIOS AND PASSAGES

It could be a great time for the students to look back their journey in the whole difficult schooling year with both challenging and learning opportunities. And the activity **Passages** can be in the last few weeks before the summer break. Some students may choose to write poetry or a letter to while others might create a PowerPoint to present their ideas.



Reflective portfolio or Optimistic closure is also a useful activity. Sometimes, it cannot be a happy ending, students are free to write or present what they are thinking and expecting for upcoming academic years. This means they can acknowledge something or somebody, or think about what motivates them and articulate them.

LETTERS TO THE FUTURE

Is there anyone of us that has ever written a letter to ourselves to the future? If yes, this is a right answer for you. With the letters to the future activity, students are free to write the letters to themselves in the future or to new students who might join their class next year. With this way, students are able to share their favorite moments, tips or ideas for navigating the class. Additionally, not only students can have self-reflection activity but also teachers can look at themselves and become better for their students.

⁴ Hoa P. Nguyen (2021). Class reflection activities to close out a tough year. From <https://www.edutopia.org/article/class-reflection-activities-close-out-tough-year>

THE ONLINE SYMPOSIUM ON LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION



The Symposium on Language Pedagogy in Higher Education will be organized online by the University of Illinois at Chicago. The symposium provides an opportunity for post-secondary language educators to share and discuss research findings, experiences, and practical and theoretical issues to enhance the quality of language programs and develop inter-institutional collaboration. During the symposium, tasks and sessions will be placed more emphasis on different aspects of language teaching and program administration in higher education settings. Following are the key strands of the symposium:

STRAND 1: LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Topics that fit this strand include but are not limited to the following:

- Research-based pedagogical approaches
- Technology integration
- Experiential learning
- Assessment of instructional outcomes
- Diversity and inclusive teaching
- Intercultural competence
- Students' and instructors' perceptions

STRAND 2: LANGUAGE PROGRAM DIRECTION

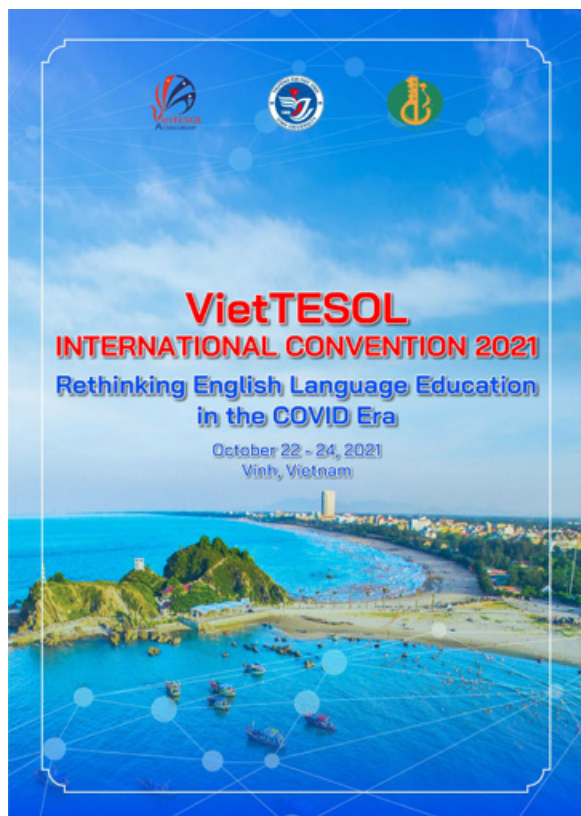
Topics that fit this strand include but are not limited to the following:

- Training and supervision of teaching assistants
- Language teaching methods courses
- Evaluation and training of language program directors
- Program articulation
- Curriculum development and revision
- Mission, vision, and objectives of basic language programs
- Recruitment and retention
- Selection and development of instructional materials
- Course placement practices

Time: Friday & Saturday, October 01–02, 2021

Website: <https://sites.google.com/uic.edu/solphe2021/home>

VIETTESOL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2021



Vietnam Association of English Language Teaching and Research (VTA), in collaboration with the National Foreign Language Project and Vinh University, will hold the annual international VietTESOL convention at Vinh University from October 23 to October 24, 2021.

Key theme: Rethinking English Language Education in the COVID Era

Subthemes are categorized in three strands:

STRAND 1: TECHNOLOGY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Online Teaching and Learning
- Blended Learning
- Multimedia in Language Teaching & Learning, and Testing & Assessment
- Using Electronic Gadgets/Online Resources for English Language Teaching and Learning
- Using Technologies in ELT

- Learning Autonomy through Technology
- Foreign Language Teacher Education via Online Learning Environment

STRAND 2: TEACHING METHODS AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

- Teaching Language Skills
- Teaching English Linguistics and Educational Linguistics
- Teaching Vocabulary, Grammar and Pronunciation
- Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning
- English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
- Global Englishes
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)
- English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)
- Task and Project-Based Language Teaching (TBLT/PBLT)
- Second Language Acquisition (SLA)
- Translation and Interpretation
- Classroom-Based Assessment
- Test Design and Development
- Materials/ Curriculum Development
- Classroom Management
- Learner Motivation and Engagement
- Learner Autonomy

STRAND 3. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- English Language Teacher Education
- Professional Development
- Communities of Practice (COP)
- Practical Teaching Contemplation
- Teacher Autonomy and Identity

TIME:

- **Pre-convention workshops:** October 22, 2021
- **Convention dates:** October 23-24, 2021

VENUE: Vinh University, 182 Le Duan, Vinh city, Nghe An province, Vietnam

MODES OF ATTENDANCE:

- **Online:** for participants from outside Vietnam.
- **Offline:** for participants living in Vietnam.

Website: <https://viettesol.dryfta.com/index.php>

GET INTERACTIVE: PRACTICAL TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY

This online course, developed by University of London and Bloomsbury Learning Exchange, aims to help participants create dynamic, interactive online courses through the use of multimedia tools, student collaboration opportunities, and formative assessment and feedback. Participants will be provided with a range of materials to read, videos to watch, topics to research, activities to perform, discussions to participate in, and an assessment to complete.

The course will cover the following topics:

- Using multimedia for teaching and learning.
- Encouraging student collaboration.
- Formative assessment and feedback.

For further details, please go to the website:
<https://www.coursera.org/learn/getinmooc>



Get interactive:
Practical Teaching with Technology

TEACHING EFL/ESL READING: A TASK-BASED APPROACH

This online course explores ways of teaching reading skills in English as Second and Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) using a task-based approach. Participants will learn the concept of task and the key principles of task-based language teaching (TBLT) and learning. TBLT uses communicative tasks as the key unit for creating language learning activities. They will also examine the role of reading in real-life and in second and foreign language teaching and current thinking about the interface between TBLT and second language reading. Moreover, they will explore how TBLT and teaching second language reading can be successfully integrated in practice through analyzing task-based reading materials. The course culminates in creating task-based materials for teaching reading in their own language teaching contexts.



After completing the course, participants will be able to:

- Explain the main components and tenets of a task-based approach to teaching language;
- Explain the main issues involved in teaching reading;
- Illustrate connections between TBLT approaches and the teaching of reading;
- Integrate tasks into their own teaching;
- Identify reading texts that are suitable for the construction of tasks; and
- Construct reading tasks and sequences for use in their own classroom.

For further details, please go to the website:
<https://www.coursera.org/learn/esl-reading>

LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

The British Council developed this online course for language teachers in secondary or high schools or anyone interested in understanding how language assessment works. To attend this course, participants need to achieve English language proficiency at a minimum CEFR B1 level. From this course, participants will learn the principles of sound language assessment, and develop an understanding of the different types of assessment in education and how they can be applied.

The course will cover the following topics:

- Assessing Speaking and Writing
- Assessing Reading and Listening
- Assessing Vocabulary and Grammar
- Test development

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Identify the basic principles involved in reliable and valid test design.
- Demonstrate an understanding of different types of tests and how they can be used.
- Evaluate assessment needs of students within a given context.
- Explain some practical techniques for assessing different language skills and knowledge.



For further details, please go to the website:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/language-assessment>

UPCOMING ENGLISH TEACHING WEBINARS AND USEFUL TEACHING RESOURCES

▶ Student-Centered Speaking Activities to Increase Fluency and Accuracy

- Presentation Slides: <https://bit.ly/3gYkhEM>
- Video: <https://bit.ly/2U16a8N>

▶ Technology-Enhanced Task Engagement in English Language Instruction

- Presentation Slides: <https://bit.ly/2TaoJXW>
- Video: <https://bit.ly/3A7iPra>

▶ Formative Assessment Strategies for the Student-Centered Classroom

- Presentation Slides: <https://bit.ly/35VR0Ez>

- Video: <https://bit.ly/3dkFeHI>

▶ Activate: Games for Learning American English

- Presentation Slides: <https://bit.ly/3h0jG5K>
- Video: <https://bit.ly/2TcqHqT>

▶ Upcoming Massive Open Online Courses

- <https://www.openenglishprograms.org/UpcomingMOOCs>

▶ Education exchange: Careers education in a pandemic

- <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/education-exchange-careers-education-a-pandemic>



FUN CORNER



THE DONKEY AND THE COTTON

There once lived a salt merchant. He had a monkey for his assistance. Every morning, he would load a sack of salt on the donkey and go to the nearby town to sell it. On the way, they had to walk across a pond.

One day, while crossing the pond, the donkey thought, "Ooh! This load is so heavy that I become exhausted very soon. I wish I could get some of this load taken off my back." Just then the donkey tripped and fell into the water.

Fortunately, the donkey was not hurt. But the sack of salt on the donkey's back fell into the water. Both the donkey and the salt became wet. Some of the salt in the sack got dissolved, making the load on the donkey lighter. The donkey felt very happy about the reduction in the weight of the sack of salt on its back. The merchant did his best to help the donkey to get up and they carried on their journey.

From that day, it became a regular practice for the donkey to slip and fall in the pond whenever they crossed the pond to the market. This would dissolve some salt in the sack thus reducing the weight and relieving the donkey of some load. The merchant was not aware of the donkey's cunningness. This continued for a few days.

One day, the merchant noticed the donkey

deliberately slipping and landing with the sack into the water. "Oh! So this is the way I am losing my salt everyday" he thought. He decided to teach the donkey a lesson.

Next morning, instead of loading a sack of salt, the merchant loaded a sack of cotton on the donkey's back. As usual they had decided to reach the market by crossing the same pond. While crossing the same pond, the donkey, as usual, slipped and fell into the pond, hoping that after some time the weight of the sack would go reduced. As usual, both the donkey and the cotton would become wet. But this time, when he got up, the load on his back seemed heavier. "Ooh! The Load seems to have gotten heavier," thought the donkey. The donkey was astonished at what had taken place against the usual result.

The merchant looked at the donkey and said, "Dear friend, I saw you fall into the water of the pond deliberately every day with the malicious intention of reducing the weight of the salt. So, I loaded a sack of cotton today. Cotton when wet gets more weight and becomes heavier. Now you will have to carry it to the town." The poor donkey had learnt his lesson.

Source: <http://www.english-for-students.com/The-Donkey-and-The-Cotton.html>

THE MAGIC POT

Once upon a time a farmer, Gopi, lived in a village. He had few acres of land. One hot afternoon, the poor farmer was digging his field. All of a sudden, his spade hit something. Then he continued his digging. "It is a big metal pot," said Gopi. It was big enough to boil rice for more than hundred people. "It does not seem to be of any use to me. I will dig deeper. May be I will find something else," thought Gopi. He continued to dig.

After he had dug for a long time, Gopi felt tired. "It is of no use. There is nothing in this field" he thought. Then at once, he threw the spade into the pot in frustration and sat under a tree to take rest for a while.

After a while, when he got up to leave, he could not believe his eyes. There were one hundred spades in the pot. "This is a magical pot. I will put this mango inside the pot and see what happens," Gopi thought. Then Gopi put a mango into the pot. To his astonishment, he found one hundred mangoes in the pot. Gopi carried the pot to his home and kept in a secret place so that no one would become aware of it.

After that, he put many things in that and everything became hundred folds. With that pot, he became a rich man. The King came to know of the pot and its whereabouts. The King was curious to know about it and he was a greedy King. "I want to find out the secret of the magical pot. If it is valuable, it should be in the King treasury," the King thought. Then at once, the King ordered his men to bring the farmer and his pot.

When the magic pot was brought to the King's chamber, he did not know what to do. The King thought, "Let me see what is there inside this pot which makes this pot so magical?" He peered inside. Inadvertently, he slipped and fell inside the pot. When



he climbed out of the magic pot, he was shocked to find that there were one hundred Kings.

All the kings then started to climb the throne. They fought among themselves and died. The magic pot lay in the King's treasury. "The foolish King took away the magic pot from me out of curiosity and eventually he died. This magic pot has killed the King himself," said the farmer and he to be safe left the magic pot at the treasury of the King itself.

Source: <http://www.english-for-students.com/The-Magic-Pot.html>

THE LION AND THE MOUSE



Lion lay asleep in the forest, his great head resting on his paws. A timid little Mouse came upon him unexpectedly, and in her fright and haste to get away, ran across the Lion's nose. Roused from his nap, the Lion laid his huge paw angrily on the tiny creature to kill her.

"Spare me!" begged the poor Mouse. "Please let me go and someday I will surely repay you."

The Lion was much amused to think that a Mouse could ever help him. But he was generous and finally let the Mouse go.

Some days later, while stalking his prey in the forest, the Lion was caught in the toils of a hunter's net. Unable to free himself, he filled the forest with his angry roaring. The Mouse knew the voice and quickly found the Lion struggling in the net. Running to one of the great ropes that bound him, she gnawed it until it parted, and soon the Lion was free.

"You laughed when I said I would repay you," said the Mouse. "Now you see that even a Mouse can help a Lion."

"A kindness is never wasted".

Source: <https://americanliterature.com/author/aesop/short-story/the-lion-and-the-mouse>



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