

UNIT ONE

READ AND RETELL

I. Introduction

Reading and retelling skills are of great importance for English learners and are widely used in daily life and business affairs such as reading newspapers, retelling stories and reporting based on business documents.

This unit is compiled to help students with the reading and retelling component of Oral Skill Practice Series (Level 2). In this unit, you'll learn the skills in reading and retelling stories within required time.

Here are 6 exercises based on common themes. Each exercise includes hints for a student's reference, which will help a student build his vocabulary and enhance both his speaking and writing skills.

II. Outline

In this unit, we will learn

- A. General procedure of reading and retelling;
- B. Tips for reading and retelling stories;
- C. Case study.

III. Learning Objectives

- A. Understand the common procedure of reading and retelling.
- B. Apply skills in reading and retelling short stories within required time.
- C. Use the 5 "W"s and 1 "H" method to help you master the guideline of a paragraph or a story.

IV. Focus Questions

- A. What should you pay attention to when you read a story?
- B. Can you master the guideline of a story when you first read it?
- C. What elements should be included when you retell a story?

V. Case Study

Task 1

Unconditional Love

A story is told about a soldier who was finally coming home after having fought in Vietnam. He called his parents from San Francisco.

"Mom and Dad, I'm coming home, but I have a favor to ask. I have a friend I'd like to bring home with me."

"Sure," they replied, "we'd love to meet him."

"There's something you should know," the son continued, "he was hurt pretty badly in the fighting. He stepped on a land mine¹ and lost an arm and a leg. He has nowhere else to go, and I want him to come live with us."

"I'm sorry to hear that. Maybe we can help him find somewhere else to live."

"No, Mom and Dad, I want him to live with us."

"Son," said the father, "you don't know what you're asking. Someone with such a handicap² would be a terrible burden. We have our own lives to live, and we can't let something like this interfere with our lives. I think you should just come home and forget about this guy. He'll find a way to live on his own."

At that point, the son hung up the phone. The parents heard nothing more from him. A few days later, however, they received a call from the San Francisco police. Their son had died after falling from a building, they were told. The police believed it was suicide³. The grief-stricken⁴ parents flew to San Francisco and were taken to the city morgue⁵ to identify the body of their son. They recognized him, but to their horror they also discovered something they didn't know — their son had only one arm and one leg.

The parents in this story are like many of us. We find it easy to love those who are good-looking or fun to have around, but we don't like people who inconvenience us or make us feel uncomfortable. We would rather stay away from people who aren't as healthy, beautiful, or smart as we are. Thankfully, there's someone who won't treat us that way. Someone who loves us with an unconditional love that welcomes us into the forever family, regardless of how messed up⁶ we are. **(363 words)**

Notes

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----------------------|-------|
| [1] land mine | 地雷 | [4] grief-stricken | 极度忧伤的 |
| [2] handicap | 障碍 | [5] morgue | 太平间 |
| [3] suicide | 自杀 | [6] mess up | 陷入困境 |

Task 2**A Miserly¹ Beggar**

The king was to pass by a beggar's hut and the man was beside himself with excitement², not because he was about to see the king but because the king was known to part with³ expensive jewels and huge sums of money when moved by compassion⁴.

He saw the king's chariot⁵ just as a kindly man was filling his begging bowl with uncooked rice. Pushing the man aside, he ran into the street, shouting loudly in praise of the king and the royal family.

The chariot stopped and the king beckoned⁶ to the beggar. "Who are you?" he asked.

"One of the most unfortunate of your subjects⁷," said the beggar. "Poverty sits on my doorstep and follows me about like a dog. I haven't eaten since yesterday afternoon!"

"Have you nothing for your king except a tale of woe⁸?" said the ruler, putting out his hand. "Give me something."

The beggar, astonished, carefully picked up five grains of rice from his bowl and laid them on the king's outstretched palm⁹.

The king drove away. The beggar's disappointment was great. He raved and ranted¹⁰ and cursed the king again and again for his miserliness. Finally, his anger spent¹¹, and he went on his rounds.

When he returned home in the evening he found a bag of rice on the floor.

"Some generous soul has been here," he thought and took out a handful of rice from the bag. To his astonishment there was a small piece of gold in it. He realized then that the bag had been sent by the king. He emptied the rice on the floor, feeling sure there would be more gold pieces in it, and he was right. He found five — one for each grain of rice he had given the king.

"It is not the king who has been miserly," thought the man, sadly. "If I had been generous and given him the whole bowl of rice, I would have been a rich man today."

(330 words)

Notes

[1] miserly	吝啬的	[6] beckon	招手, 召唤
[2] beside oneself with excitement	兴奋不已	[7] subject	臣服者, 臣民
[3] part with	让出, 拿出	[8] a tale of woe	悲惨的故事
[4] compassion	同情, 怜悯	[9] outstretched palm	伸出的手掌
[5] chariot	四轮礼车	[10] rave and rant	大叫大嚷
		[11] spent	用尽的, 疲惫的

Task 3

Old Friend Agreed to Help

George had stolen some money, but the police caught him and put him in prison. Now his trial¹ was about to begin, and he felt sure that he would be found guilty² and kept in prison for a long time.

Then he discovered that an old friend of his was one of the members of the jury³ at his trial. Of course, he did not tell anybody, but he managed to see his friend secretly one day. He said to him, "Jim, I know that the jury will find me guilty of having stolen the money. I cannot hope to be found not guilty of taking it — that would be too much to expect. But I should be grateful to you for the rest of my life if you could persuade the other members of the jury to add a strong recommendation for mercy⁴ to their statement should they consider me guilty."

"Well, George," answered Jim, "I shall certainly try to do what I can for you as an old friend, but of course I cannot promise anything. The other eleven people on the jury look terribly strong-willed⁵ to me."

George said that he would quite understand if Jim was not able to do anything for him, and thanked him warmly for agreeing to help.

The trial went on, and at last the time came for the jury to decide whether George was guilty or not. It took them five hours but in the end they found George guilty, with a strong recommendation for mercy.

Of course, George was very pleased, but he did not have a chance to see Jim for some time after the trial. At last, however, Jim visited him in prison, and George thanked him warmly and asked him how he had managed to persuade the other members of the jury to recommend mercy.

"Well, George", Jim answered, "as I suspected, those eleven men were very difficult

to persuade, but I managed it in the end by tiring them out⁶. Do you know, those fools all wanted to find you not guilty!”

(346 words)**Notes**

[1] trial	审判	[4] mercy	宽恕
[2] guilty	有罪的	[5] strong-willed	固执己见的
[3] jury	陪审团	[6] tire out	使十分疲劳

Task 4**A Chance to Start Over**

It was a cold December night in West Orange, New Jersey. Thomas Edison's factory was humming¹ with activity. Work was proceeding² on a variety of fronts³ as the great inventor was trying to turn more of his dreams into practical realities. Edison's plant, made of concrete⁴ and steel, was deemed⁵ "fireproof⁶". As you may have already guessed, it wasn't.

On that frigid⁷ night in 1914, the sky was lit up by a sensational⁸ blaze⁹ that had burst through the plant roof. Edison's 24-year-old son, Charles, made a frenzied¹⁰ search for his famous inventor-father. When he finally found him, he was watching the fire. His white hair was blowing in the wind. His face was illuminated¹¹ by the leaping flames. "My heart ached for him," said Charles. "Here he was, 67 years old, and everything he had worked for was going up in flames. When he saw me, he shouted, 'Charles! Where's your mother?' When I told him I didn't know, he said, 'Find her! Bring her here! She'll never see anything like this as long as she lives.'"

The next morning, Mr. Edison looked at the ruins of his factory and said this of his loss: "There's value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God! We can start anew."

What a wonderful perspective on things that seem at first to be so disastrous. A business failure, divorce, personal dream gone sour... Whether these things destroy an individual depends largely on the attitude he or she takes toward them. Sort out¹² why it happened, and learn something from the blunders¹³. Think of different approaches that can be taken. Start over.

(271 words)

Notes

[1] hum	发出嘈杂、轰鸣声	[8] sensational	巨大的, 惊人的
[2] proceed	依次有序进行	[9] blaze	火焰, 火光
[3] front	领域	[10] frenzied	狂乱的
[4] concrete	混凝土	[11] illuminate	照明, 照亮
[5] deem	认为	[12] sort out	领会到
[6] fireproof	防火的	[13] blunder	大错, 失误
[7] frigid	寒冷的		

VI. Summary

Students can briefly summarize a tale or story that they read from books or heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. It also helps students to narrate a story with logical structure, consisting of characters, setting, beginning, development, and ending.

VII. Unit Project

A. Project Introduction

This project is designed to help students put what they have learned in class into practice. It provides students with opportunity of combining both reading and retelling skills in one practice.

B. Project Analysis and Operation

The students are grouped in pairs and given two 200-word stories as project options. Each student selects one story and has two minutes to prepare. Then Student A reads his story and Student B is asked to take notes and retell. After finishing the first practice, Student A and Student B can switch turn and go on practicing.

C. Knowledge and Skill Points

1. Understand the procedure of reading and retelling.
2. Apply skills in reading and retelling short stories within required time.
3. Use the 5 "W"s and 1 "H" method to help you master the guideline of a paragraph or a story.

D. Results and Assessment

The marks will be made of two parts: marks of reading and marks of reciting. The

following elements will be considered when giving marks:

1. Read and recite fluently and accurately.
2. Read and recite with good intonation.
3. Recite the story by covering the general plots and details.
4. Recite with good logic.

Each pair of students is supposed to practice both the reading skills and retelling skills when reading his own story and retelling the other student's task. It avoids the possible distraction when students are doing the single practice and consequently strengthens the interest of practice.

Project Option 1

A Royal Servant¹

There was once a king in an African country who was a proud and stern² man, feared by all his subjects³.

One day while sitting in his mud palace, surrounded by fawning courtiers⁴ and watched by a multitude of⁵ people who had come to see him, he was suddenly overcome by a sense of grandeur⁶ and loudly declared that he was master of the world and that all men were his servants.

"You are mistaken," said a frail⁷ voice. "All men are servants of one another."

A deathly⁸ silence followed the remark. The blood froze in the veins⁹ of the people assembled there. Then the king exploded in anger.

"Who said that!" he demanded, rising from the royal stool. "Who dares suggest that I am a servant?"

"I do," said a voice in the crowd, and the people parted to reveal a white-haired old man, leaning heavily on a stout¹⁰ stick.

"Who are you?" asked the king.

"I am Boubakar," said the man. "We have no water in our village. I have come to ask for a well to be dug there."

"So you are a beggar!" roared the king, striding¹¹ down to where the man stood. "Yet you have the temerity¹² to call me a servant!"

"We all serve one another," said Boubakar, showing no fear, "and I will prove it to

you before nightfall."

"Do that!" said the monarch¹³. "Force me to wait on¹⁴ you. If you can do that, I will have not one but three wells dug in your village. But if you fail, you'll lose your head!"

"In our village," said the old man, "when we accept a challenge, we touch the person's feet. Let me touch your feet. Hold my stick. "The king took the stick and the old man bent down and touched the monarch's feet. "Now you may give it back to me," he said, straightening up¹⁵. The king gave him back his stick. "Do you want any more proof?" asked Boubakar. "Proof?" asked the king, bewildered¹⁶.

"You held my stick when I asked you to and gave it back to me when I asked you for it," said the old man." As I said, all good men are servants of one another."

The king was so pleased with Boubakar's wit and daring¹⁷ that he not only had wells dug in his village but also retained¹⁸ him as an adviser.

(398 words)

Notes

[1] royal servant	国王的仆人	[10] stout	坚固的
[2] stern	严厉的, 苛刻的	[11] stride	大踏步走
[3] subject	国民	[12] temerity	鲁莽, 蛮勇
[4] fawning courtiers	奉承的朝臣	[13] monarch	君主
[5] a multitude of	一大群人, 众多	[14] wait on	服侍, 招待
[6] grandeur	庄严, 伟大	[15] straighten up	直起来
[7] frail	虚弱的	[16] bewildered	迷惑的, 不知所措的
[8] deathly	死一般的	[17] daring	勇敢, 大胆
[9] vein	静脉, 血管	[18] retain	雇用

Project Option 2

More Is Not Enough

There was once a stone cutter who was dissatisfied with himself and his position in life.

One day he passed a wealthy merchant's house. Through the open gateway, he saw many fine possessions¹ and important visitors. "How powerful that merchant must be!" thought the stone cutter. He became very envious and wished he could be like the merchant.

To his surprise, he suddenly became a merchant, enjoying more luxuries² and

power than he had ever imagined, but envied and detested³ by those less wealthy than himself.

Soon a high official passed by, carried in a sedan⁴ chair, accompanied by attendants⁵ and escorted⁶ by soldiers beating gongs⁷. Everyone, no matter how wealthy, had to bow low before the procession⁸. "How powerful that official is!" he thought. "I wish I could be a high official!"

Then he became a high official, carried everywhere in his embroidered⁹ sedan chair, feared and hated by the people all around.

It was a hot summer day, so the official felt very uncomfortable in the sticky¹⁰ sedan chair. He looked up at the sun. It shone proudly in the sky, unaffected by his presence. "How powerful the sun is!" he thought. "I wish I could be the sun!"

Then he became the sun, shining fiercely down on everyone, scorching¹¹ the fields, cursed by the farmers and laborers.

But a huge black cloud moved between him and the earth, so that his light could no longer shine on everything below. "How powerful that storm cloud¹² is!" he thought. "I wish I could be a cloud!"

Then he became a cloud, flooding the fields and villages, shouted at by everyone.

But soon he found that he was being pushed away by some great force, and realized that it was the wind. "How powerful it is!" he thought. "I wish I could be the wind!"

Then he became the wind, blowing tiles¹³ off the roofs of houses, uprooting¹⁴ trees, feared and hated by all below him.

But after a while, he ran up against something that would not move, no matter how forcefully he blew against it — a huge, towering¹⁵ rock. "How powerful that rock is!" he thought. "I wish I could be a rock!"

Then he became the rock, more powerful than anything else on earth.

But as he stood there, he heard the sound of a hammer pounding a chisel¹⁶ into the hard surface, and felt himself being changed. "What could be more powerful than I — the rock?" he thought.

He looked down and saw far below him the figure of a stone cutter.

(426 words)

Notes

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------|--------------------|----------|
| [1] possessions | 轿子 | [9] embroidered | 刺绣的 |
| [2] luxury | 奢侈品 | [10] sticky | 粘的, 热湿的 |
| [3] detest | 厌恶, 憎恨 | [11] scorch | 烘烤 |
| [4] sedan | 轿子 | [12] storm cloud | 暴风云 |
| [5] attendant | 侍者 | [13] tile | 瓦片 |
| [6] escort | 护卫 | [14] uproot | 连根拔起 |
| [7] gong | 铜锣 | [15] towering | 巨大的, 高耸的 |
| [8] procession | 行列, 队伍 | [16] chisel | 凿子 |

VIII. Self-assessment

Use the following code (In the first column, leave blank those items you do not think you can do at all.):

- ✓ I can do this under normal conditions. ! This is one of my goals.
 ✓✓ I can do this easily and well. !! This is a high-priority goal for me.

Retelling Skills	Self	My Goals
I can read the story fluently.	<input type="checkbox"/> ✓ <input type="checkbox"/> ✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/> ! <input type="checkbox"/> !!
I can grasp all the details of the story.	<input type="checkbox"/> ✓ <input type="checkbox"/> ✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/> ! <input type="checkbox"/> !!
My recitation is complete and accurate.	<input type="checkbox"/> ✓ <input type="checkbox"/> ✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/> ! <input type="checkbox"/> !!
I can retell the story fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly.	<input type="checkbox"/> ✓ <input type="checkbox"/> ✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/> ! <input type="checkbox"/> !!
There are few grammatical mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/> ✓ <input type="checkbox"/> ✓✓	<input type="checkbox"/> ! <input type="checkbox"/> !!