

LEARN ENGLISH THROUGH  
STORY

---

ENGLISH SHORT STORIES FOR  
ELEMENTARY LEVEL

**THE YOUNG KING**



**BY OSCAR WILDE**

THERE WAS ONCE AN OLD KING. HE HAD NO SON  
TO BE KING WHEN HE DIED. HIS PEOPLE WERE  
VERY WORRIED.

BY: [LEARNENGLISH-NEW.COM](http://LEARNENGLISH-NEW.COM)

## Chapter One

### The Old King's Secret

There was once an old King. He had no son to be King when he died. His people were very worried.

"Who will be the next King?" they asked. But before the King died he Revealed a secret: his only daughter, the Princess, had a child. In secret, she married an ordinary man and they had a son. Some people said her husband was an artist and some people said he was a musician. But his identity was a mystery and nobody knew about their secret son.

When the baby was a week old some men took him while his mother was sleeping. The Princess died immediately. Some people said for sadness. Other people said someone gave her poison in a cup of wine. The men left the baby with a very poor family. This poor family lived in the forest and the boy became a shepherd. He looked after goats all day.

The old King made an important decision: "The boy must be the new King when I die," he said. He sent his servants into the forest. "Find the boy and bring him here."

The servants found the boy and brought him to the palace. When the boy arrived he was very happy. He immediately fell in love with all the beautiful things around him. He took off his old leather tunic and put on his fine new clothes. Then he began to explore the castle. He ran from room to room admiring all the beautiful statues, paintings and jewels in the palace. The people of the city talked about him: "The young King spends all his time admiring statues," they said. "Beauty and art are the most important things for him." In fact, the young King was so fascinated with beautiful objects that he wanted more of them. He sent merchants to India to buy ivory and jade. He sent men to Persia for silk carpets, and others to find amber in the north. He sent servants to look for green turquoise in the magic tombs of the Egyptian kings.

The young King thought about all these things but most of all he thought about his coronation robe.

He was sixteen and it was his coronation day the next day. He was very happy because he had a beautiful coronation robe of gold, a crown of rubies and a scepter of

pearls. He ordered men to work night and day to prepare his coronation robes. "Search the whole world for the biggest rubies for my crown and the most beautiful pearl for my scepter," he said.

The young King was in his beautiful bedroom and he was thinking about his coronation robes. It was night time and he looked around him. The room was full of silver and gold and beautiful colors. Through the window he could smell the perfume of jasmine, he could hear a nightingale singing and he could see the moon shining. Servants arrived and put flower petals on his pillow. He was very happy. Tomorrow was his coronation day. He played beautiful music on his lute and at midnight he closed his eyes and went to sleep. That night the young King had a dream.

## Chapter Two

### The Dreams

This was the young King's dream:

He is in a horrible, dark building. There is a terrible smell, the small windows have bars and not much sunlight can enter. But in the poor light the young King sees lots of people working. They are making cloth. They are very thin. Their faces are hungry and their hands tremble because they are tired. Pale, ill children sit in the dark corners of the room. The young King watches them.

A man speaks to him angrily and asks, "Why are you watching me? Are you my master's spy?"

"Who is your master?" asks the young King.

"A man like me, but I have poor clothes and I am very hungry. He wears beautiful clothes and is very rich. We work for him all day. We make wine and he drinks it. We work on the land but he eats the food. We are his slaves."

"But this is a free land," says the young King. "You are no man's slave."

"In war, weak men are the slaves of strong men. In peace, poor men are the slaves of rich men."

"Are you all slaves?"

"Yes, the women and the children. The old and the young."

Suddenly the young King sees the cloth on the machine. It is gold. The young King is terrified. "You are making some very beautiful gold cloth."

What is it?"

"It is for the coronation robe of the young King," the man replies. When the young King heard this he screamed and woke up. But then he saw the yellow moon at the window and soon slept again. He had another dream.

This was his second dream:

He is on a long boat. The sun is very hot and a hundred slaves are rowing the boat and working. The master of the boat is giving orders: he is black like ebony and has a

red silk turban on his head. In his ears he has big silver earrings. Someone is whipping the slaves while they work.

Finally the boat arrives in a small bay and the master throws the anchor and a long rope ladder into the sea. Some men take the youngest slave. They tie a heavy stone to him and throw him into the sea. The young slave disappears into the water but returns to the boat many times. Every time he returns he has a beautiful pearl in his hand. The master of the ship looks at the pearls and puts them into a little green bag.

The young slave returns to the boat for the last time. He is very pale and tired. In his hand he has a very beautiful pearl. The pearl is round and white like the moon. But the young slave's ears and nose are full of blood. He falls and dies but the master of the boat laughs. He takes the pearl from the young slave's hand and the other slaves throw his dead body into the sea. "This pearl is for the scepter of the young King," he says.

When the young King heard this he screamed and woke up but he saw the stars at the window and soon slept again.

This was his third and last dream:

He is in a tropical forest. It is full of strange fruit and beautiful, poisonous flowers. There are snakes in the grass, parrots in the trees and monkeys and peacocks all around. The young King sees lots of men working in a dry river. They are digging the ground and cutting big rocks and stones.

Death and Avarice are in a dark cavern. They are also watching the men.

Death says to Avarice, "Give me one third of your men," but Avarice refuses.

"No! They are my servants," she says.

Death is very angry when he hears this. He sends Malaria to kill one third of the men.

"What have you got in your hand?"

Death asks. "Three grains of corn. But why are you interested?" she asks.

Death says, "Give me one grain of corn to plant in my garden." But Avarice replies, "No, it is my corn," and she hides the corn in her pocket.

Again, Death is very angry when he hears this and calls Fever. Fever comes in a red robe like fire, he touches one third of the men and kills them.

"Now give me a grain of corn for my garden," says Death.

"No, never!" replies Avarice. Death is extremely angry and calls Plague. Plague arrives from the sky, flying like a bird and kills the rest of the men. Avarice screams and runs into the forest. Death takes his red horse and rides away, fast like the wind. And then dragons and terrible monsters come out of the rivers and the valleys.

The young King cries and says, "Who were those men? What were they doing?"

"They were looking for rubies for a king's crown," replies a voice behind him. The young King turns and sees a man in white. This man has a mirror in his hand.

"Which king?" he asks.

"Look in this mirror and you will see the king," replies the man in white. He sees his face in the mirror screams and wakes up. He sees the sun shining at his window. It is his coronation day.

## Chapter Three:

### The Coronation

A servant arrived with the coronation clothes. They were extremely beautiful but the young King remembered his dreams. "Take these clothes away. I don't want to wear them," he said.

"Is this a joke, Your Majesty?" asked the servant, but the young King told him about his dreams.

"In my robe there is sadness and pain, in the rubies there is blood and in the pearl there is death," he said.

The servant replied, "Please forget your dreams. Put on the robe and the crown. The people will not recognize a king without a crown and a scepter."

But the young King put on his old tunic from the forest and took his shepherd's staff.

"I arrived in the palace with these clothes and I will leave the palace with these clothes," he said. "Now I am ready for my coronation."

A servant asked him, "Where is your crown?" And he took a briar of Thorns from his balcony. "This will be my crown," he replied. The young King rode his horse to the cathedral.

The people laughed when they saw him. "This is not the King but the King's servant," they said.

He explained his dreams but one man was angry and said, "Do you not know that rich people give poor people work. It is difficult to work for a hard master but it is more difficult to work for no master. Please return to the palace and put on your coronation robes."

"The rich and the poor are brothers," he replied, but the people laughed again.

He arrived at the great door of the cathedral but the soldiers stopped him.

"What do you want? Only the King can enter by this door."

"I am the King," he replied. The Bishop saw him and asked, "Where is your crown? Where is your scepter?"

The young King told the Bishop of his dreams but the Bishop answered,

"Listen to me, I am an old man. There are many bad things in the world but you cannot change them all. There are thieves and pirates and beggars but you can't make these things disappear. They are too much for one person.

Go back to the Palace and put on your coronation clothes."

But the young King passed the Bishop and entered the cathedral. He went to the altar and looked at the image of Christ. He saw the light of the candles and the smoke of the incense. Suddenly a crowd of people ran into the cathedral. They had swords and were very angry. "Where is this King dressed in beggar's clothes?" they cried. "We must kill him because a beggar cannot rule us. He will be bad for our country." But the young King prayed silently in front of the altar. Then he turned and looked at the people sadly.

At that moment a ray of sun shone into the cathedral. It illuminated the young King at the altar. The sun made a beautiful robe around him, red roses grew on his dry crown of thorns and white lilies grew on his staff. The roses were redder than rubies and the lilies were whiter than pearls. Music started to play and voices started to sing. The glory of God filled the cathedral. The people knelt down.

"He is crowned by someone greater than me," the Bishop said and he knelt in front of the young King. The boy came from the altar and passed the people. But they didn't have the courage to look at his face because it was the face of an angel.

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading! Come back to <https://learnenglish-new.com/> to find more fascinating and exciting stories!