

## Listening to Short Stories

*Prof K Elango*

**Objectives** : To enable listeners to predict\* the story line (plot development) to develop their creativity while listening to/watching a story.

**Text** : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0jW-b-b-IM>  
'The Selfish Giant' – Oscar Wilde Narration by Duncan Driver.

**Duration** : About 11 minutes.

### **Preparation:**

To listen to as many stories as possible; need not necessarily be the complete story at once, but pausing in several places wherever one thinks a story is taking an interesting turn.

### **Procedure:**

Setting the context and task:

Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900) was a famous Anglo-Irish poet, playwright, short story writer and a critic. The story, **The Selfish Giant**, is a popular story which was made into an animated short film.

**Task:** Pausing at several places to predict the story's development.

### **Process: (Narration)**

Listen to the story for a few minutes to get a sense of what it is about – the setting, characters, beginning of the plot, the narration and so forth.

In the story, 'The Selfish Giant', at the beginning the Giant comes back to his castle after a gap of seven years and finds children playing in the garden. He said, 'What are you doing here?' he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away.'

While playing the audio to a group of teenagers I paused at this point and asked them, 'What do you think the Giant would have done next?' Came a surprising response from one who said, 'The Giant caught hold of a very young child and started to eat her up.'

Proceeding with the story further, when he heard that the Giant built a high wall and put up a notice-board announcing, 'TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED.'

The same listener was not impressed by that and said such things were done by ordinary humans and the giants would not do.

Likewise, the story was paused in a few more places and their predictions were sought.

To cite one more example - When I paused the story when, 'Downstairs ran the Giant in great joy, and out into the garden. He hastened across the grass, and came near to the child.' and asked them, what followed next?

One another student mentioned that the Giant was so excited that he hugged the child tight and played with him and other children also joined in.

When the story ended with the death of the Giant, he again mentioned that the giants would not normally die and the climax is unconvincing. In fact, he thought that the whole story is unrealistic and made up of incredible characters. (Although the story is popular for decades, here is one who did not think much of it)

Thus, pausing and getting them to predict elicited various creative responses. They were more involved in listening to the story and reflecting over it.

**Learning outcomes:**

- (1) Learners realize that instead of merely listening to the stories passively, they should pause at several places to imagine how the story would progress to develop their own creativity.
- (2) Learners understand that by exercising their ability to predict repeatedly and to reflect over it, would lead them to become creative writers themselves,

**Further practice:**

There are a large number of audio stories available on the net. While listening to them one can engage in creative strategies such as prediction for better appreciation of it. Even in casual communication when someone is narrating an incident/event one can engage in the act of prediction to become better communicators.

---

**\*Stories:** Stories have a perennial appeal irrespective of the age and it is proven that not only listeners but also storytellers benefit by them. Even the aged persons, who face the problems of dementia, Alzheimer’s disease and other kinds of memory loss, also seem to benefit, to an extent, by narrating stories, including their own life stories, to others.

**\*Prediction:** Prediction is guessing what would happen next – a cognitive strategy used to develop creativity. All sports and games demand this ability utmost, for example, the chess.

**Dr. K Elango**, National Secretary, ELTAI & Professor of English, (Formerly) Anna University,  
Email: elangoela@rediffmail.com