

Reading C



Uncle Podger Hangs a Picture

A new picture would have come, and be standing in the dining-room, waiting to be put up; and Aunt Podger would ask what was to be done with it, and Uncle Podger would say:

“Oh, you leave that to me. Don’t you, any of you worry yourselves about that, I’ll do all that.”

And then he would take off his coat, and begin. He would send the maid out for six-pennyworth of nails, and then one of the boys after her to tell her what size to get; and from that, he would gradually work down, and start the whole house.

“Now you go and get me my hammer, Will,” he would shout; “and you bring me the rule, Tom; and I shall want the step-ladder, and I had better have a kitchen-chair, too; and, Jim, you run round to Mr. Goggles, and tell him, ‘Daddy’s best wishes, and hopes his leg is better; and will he let him have his spirit-level for the evening? And don’t you go, Maria, because I shall want somebody to hold the light; and when the maid comes back, she must go out again for a bit of picture cord; and, Tom, - where’s Tom? - Tom, you come here; I shall want you to hand me up the picture,”

And then he would lift up the picture, and drop it, and it would come out of the frame, and he would try to save the glass, and cut himself; and then he would jump round the room, looking for his handkerchief. He could not find his handkerchief, because it was in the pocket of the coat he had taken off, and he did not know where he had put the coat, and all the house had to stop looking for all the other things he had asked for, and start looking for his coat, while he would dance round and get in their way.

“Doesn’t anybody in the whole house know where my coat is? I never came across such people in all my life - upon my word I didn’t. Six of you! - And you can’t find a coat that I put down not five minutes ago! Well, of all the-”

Then he’d get up, and find that he had been sitting on it, and would call out:

“Oh, you can give it up! I’ve found it myself now. I might just as well ask the cat to find anything as expect you people to find it.” And, when half an hour had been spent in tying something round his finger, and a new glass had been got, and the step-ladder, and the chair, and the light had been brought, he would try again, the whole family, including the maid and the charwoman, standing round in a semi-circle, ready to

help. Two people would have to hold the chair, and a third would help him to get up on it and hold him there, and a fourth would hand him a nail, and a fifth would give him the hammer, and he would take the nail in his hand and drop it.

“There!” he would say, in an angry voice, “now the nail’s gone.”

And we would all have to go down on our knees and look for it, while he would stand on the chair, and want to know if he was to be kept there all the evening.

The nail would be found at last, but by that time he would have lost the hammer.

“Where’s the hammer? What did I do with the hammer? Seven of you, standing all round me, and you don’t know what I did with the hammer!”

We would find the hammer for him, and then he would have lost sight of the mark he had made on the wall, where the nail was to go in, and each of us had to get up on the chair, beside him, and see if we could find it; and we would each discover it in a different place, and he would call us all fools, one after another, and tell us to get down. And he would take the rule and measure again, and find that he wanted half of thirty-one and three-eighths inches from the corner, and would try to do it in his head, and go mad.



And we would all try to do it in our heads, and all get different results. And in the noise that was being made by everybody, the original number would be forgotten, and Uncle Podger would have to measure it again.

He would use a bit of string this time, and at the critical moment, when the old fool was trying to reach a spot three inches beyond what was possible for him reach, the string would slip, and down he would fall on to the piano, a really fine musical effect being produced when his head and body suddenly struck all the notes at the same time.

And Aunt Maria would say that she would not allow the children to stand round and hear such language.

At last, Uncle Podger would find the spot again, and put the point of the nail on it with his left hand, and take the hammer in his right hand. And at the first attempt, he would strike his thumb, and drop the hammer, with a loud cry, on somebody’s toes.

Aunt Maria would say quietly that, next time Uncle Podger was going to hammer a nail into the wall, she hoped he’d let her know in time, so that she could make arrangements to go and spend a week with her mother while it was being done.

(An extract from Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K. Jerome)



About the Author



Jerome K. Jerome was an English writer. He wrote many humorous stories. Jerome lived his early life with immense difficulty. In 1888 he married Georgina and they spent some time after their wedding, rowing on the Thames. Their trip inspired his most successful book, *Three Men in a Boat*. Royalties from the book helped to improve his financial condition and since then Jerome devoted his life to writing.

Meanings in context

char woman	: house cleaner
spirit level	: an instrument used to check the surface level
ladder	: stairs made of bamboo or metal

Comprehension

I. Given below is a list of items Uncle Podger used in order to hang the picture. Read the story again and list them in the order in which they are used in the story.

string, nails, ladder, picture, hammer, rule, spirit level, light, picture cord

II. Answer the following questions.

1. Do you think the children in the house were fools ? Why did Uncle Podger think so about them ?
2. Despite telling that he would hang the picture himself, why was Uncle Podger not able to do it?
3. The story of hanging the picture is incomplete. Write what happened after Uncle Podger dropped the hammer at the end of the story.
4. Write down four actions that make Uncle Podger a funny character.
5. What did Aunt Maria say when Uncle Podger used bad language? What does it tell you about her character?
6. Did Aunt Maria have confidence that Uncle Podger will hang the picture? Quote the line that makes you think so.
7. How many times did Uncle Podger fail to hang the picture? List the evidences from the story.

III. Read the incidents given in the table below and pick out adjectives from the box to describe Uncle Podger.

disorganized, forgetful, blames others, careless, clumsy, impatient

Incidents from the story	Adjectives describing Uncle Podger's Character
He dropped the picture, hammer and nail.	
He took off his coat and didn't know that he was sitting on it.	
And he would take the rule and measure again, and find that he wanted half of thirty one and three-eighths inches from the corner and would try to do it in his head, and go mad	
He shouted at all the children for not being able to find the coat when he was sitting on it himself.	
He sent the maid to get nails without telling what size.	
He said even a cat can find things that his family cannot.	

Vocabulary



In the sentences given below, the underlined phrases can be expressed in one word. Write meanings of the phrases in the space provided.

Underlined phrases	One word substitution
a. A new picture would come and would be standing in the drawing room, waiting <u>to be put up</u> .	hung
b. And then he would <u>take off</u> his coat and begin.	
c. You can't find a coat that I <u>put down</u> not five minutes ago.	
d. We would have to go down on our knees and <u>look for</u> it.	
e. I never <u>came across</u> such people in my whole life.	
f. Oh, you can <u>give it up</u> , I found it all by myself.	

Grammar



I. Expressing habitual action and states in the past

In this lesson we find the word ‘would’ used several times. Pick out ten sentences from the text where ‘would’ has been used. We have picked some for you.

1. Aunt Podger would ask what was to be done with it.
2. Then he would take off his coat and begin.
3. He would send the maid out for six pennyworth of nails.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

We can use the phrase ‘used to’ instead of ‘would’.

For example

Aunt Podger used to ask what was to be done with it. Then Uncle Podger used to take off his coat and begin. He used to send the maid out for six pennyworth of nails.

Both ‘used to’ and ‘would’ are used to show **habitual action** in the past. However, ‘would’ cannot be used to show **states** in the past. Here is a table to help you understand the difference between actions and states.

Habitual Actions in the Past (both would and used to can be used)	Habitual States in the Past(would cannot be used)
	used to live in the village
would play all day as a child	used to be very naughty
would go to my grandmother’s house every day	used to love my grandmother
would ride my tricycle every evening	used to have two cats
would not go out in the dark	used to believe in ghosts
	used to sleep in the afternoon

Verbs like ‘play, go, ride’ are action verbs. Verbs like ‘be, love, have, believe and live’ show states. (They are continuous not habitual)

1. *Would* is used when we establish the past time frame before the word *would* appears.

For example,

When I was a child, I would watch cartoons with my dad in the evenings.

When I was a student, I would read books in the library every Friday.

If the time frame is established after, *used to* can be used.

For example,

I *used to* watch cartoons with my dad in the evenings, when I was a child.

I *used to* read books in the library every Friday, when I was a student.

2. *Would* is not used with stative verbs (verbs that describe a state of being), such as be, understand, feel or love.

For example,

When I was a kid, I *used to* love playing in the park.

When I was a kid, I *would* love playing in the park.

3. We cannot use *would* when we want to talk about past state. We have to use *used to*!

For example,

I used to live in the village, when I was a child.

I would live in the village, when I was a child.

So, the use of *would* is more limited than *used to*.

II. For each of the following sentences, choose either '**used to**' or '**would**'. If both are possible, use '**would**'.

1. When I was a child, my father _____ pick me up and throw me in the air. I _____ love it.

2. My uncle _____ have a bicycle, when I was young. He _____ take me for a ride .

3. For years, I _____ be afraid of ghosts , as my grandmother _____ tell me stories of them every night .

4. I _____ become Krishna during *Janmastami* every year in childhood, and every year I _____ break the *matki*.

5. I _____ know many songs as a child, so my friends _____ ask me to sing every time we worked in the fields.

6. When I was five, I _____ be able to do incredible stunts. I _____ climb every tree in the neighbourhood and swing like a monkey.



III. Read the conversation and fill in the blanks with **used to** or **would**. Use **used to** to describe states in the past and **would** to describe habits in the past.

Shahila: Hey guys, how about making biryani on Friday?

Shabana: Hmm, I'm not sure if biryani is such a good idea...

Rajiv: But you used to love biryani? What happened? I remember that we would eat lots of it when your mother _____ make it for Eid.

Shabana: I still do. But yesterday we had some, and ...

Rajiv: OK, I see. Well, then I have a better idea. Let's have a potluck party. I will prepare some cabbage curry, the way mom _____ do it. I _____ like it a lot when I was a kid. And Shabana can make some fried rice.

Shahila: Really? I _____ hate cabbage when I was a child. But now I like it. Maybe I can prepare some kheer.

Listening

Listen to the dialogue between Ram Lal, a student of Class X, and the Teacher In-charge of 'Lost and Found' room in your school.

Draw Ram Lal's cricket kit bag and complete the notice as shown in the box.

Dear Friends,

I have lost.....

If anyone has.....

Undersigned

Ram Lal

Draw the
bag here

Speaking

Work in groups. Discuss how you will decorate your classroom in a funny way for the Class Decoration Competition of your school. Make a list of all funny things that you will use and then present your plan to the whole class. The others will give their feedback.

Writing

I. Rearrange the sentences to describe the order in which Uncle Podger made mistakes while hanging the picture.

- a. He lost the hammer.
- b. He dropped the nail.
- c. He forgot where he had made the mark to hammer the nail.
- d. He dropped the picture.
- e. He fell down while measuring with the string.
- f. He tried to save the glass and cut himself.

II. Now write a paragraph based on these sentences and using linkers given in the box below.

first, then, next, after that, also, finally

Uncle Podger made a lot of mistakes while trying to hang the picture. First, he

.....

.....

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Study Skills

Look at the dictionary entry of ‘take off’.

take 'off 1 (of an aircraft, etc.) to leave the ground and begin to fly: *The plane took off an hour late.*—related NOUN TAKE-OFF [OPP] LAND **2** (informal) to leave a place, especially in a hurry: *When he saw me coming he took off in the opposite direction.* **3** (of an idea, a product, etc.) to become successful or popular very quickly or suddenly: *The new magazine has really taken off.* ◊ *Her singing career took off after her TV appearance.* **take sb ↔ 'off 1** to copy sb's voice, actions or manner in an amusing way **2** (in sports, entertainment, etc.) to make sb stop playing, acting, etc. and leave the field or the stage: *He was taken off after twenty minutes.* **take sth ↔ 'off 1** to remove sth, especially a piece of clothing from your/sb's body: *to take off your coat/hat/skirt/glasses* ◊ *He took off my wet boots and made me sit by the fire.* [OPP] PUT ON **2** to have a period of time as a break from work: *I've decided to take a few days off next week.* **3** [often passive] to stop a public service, television programme, performances of a show, etc: *The show was taken off because of poor audience figures.* **4** to remove some of sb's hair, part of sb's body, etc: *The hairdresser asked me how much she should take off.* ◊ *The explosion nearly took his arm off.* **take yourself/sb 'off (to ...)** (informal) to leave a place; to make sb leave a place **take sb off sth** [often passive] to remove sb from sth such as a job, position, piece of equipment, etc: *The officer leading the investigation has been taken off the case.* ◊ *After three days she was taken off the ventilator.* **take sth 'off sth 1** to remove an amount of money or a number of marks, points, etc. in order to reduce the total: *The manager took \$10 off the bill.* ◊ *That experience took ten years off my life* (= made me feel ten years older). **2** [often passive] to stop sth from being sold: *Doctors recommended that the slimming pills should be taken off the market.*

This entry tells you how ‘take off’ is used in various contexts with different meanings. In sentence 1 given below:

And then he would *take off* his coat, and begin.

‘take off’ is used to mean ‘*to remove something, especially a piece of clothing from your or someone’s body.*’

Now look up a dictionary and find out what the italicised words in the following sentences from the story ‘Uncle Podger Hangs a Picture’ mean.

1. I shall want you to *hand me up* the picture
2. And then he would *lift up* the picture,...
3. All the house had to stop *looking for* all the other things he had asked for.
4. I never *came across* such people in all my life - upon my word I didn't.
5. Six of you! - And you can't find a coat that I *put down* not five minutes ago!
6. "Oh, you can *give it up*!
7. And we would all have to go down on our knees and *look for* it.
8. We would find the hammer for him, and then he would have *lost sight of* the mark he had made on the wall,...
9. ...and he would call us all fools, one after another, and tell us *to get down*.

