

Learning English

American Stories

The Last Leaf

by O. Henry

Lesson Plan
by John Russell

Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *The Last Leaf* by O. Henry.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

Lesson Elements

Prepare

Present

Practice

Self-Evaluate

Expand

Prepare

Introduce the story. “Today we will read *The Last Leaf*, by O. Henry. It is a story about a young woman who gets sick. What usually happens when a young person gets sick?”

Listen to students’ answers. Explain that when a young person gets sick, they usually want to feel better. They rest and think about what they will do when they will feel better.

Teach the vocabulary for the story.

Vocabulary

apartment – *n.* a usually rented room or set of rooms that is part of a building and is used as a place to live

pneumonia – *n.* a serious disease that affects the lungs and makes it difficult to breathe

carriage – *n.* a large vehicle with four wheels that is pulled by a horse and that carries people

drawing – *n.* a picture, image, etc., that is made by making lines on a surface with a pencil, pen, marker, chalk, but usually not with paint

leaf – *n.* one of the flat and typically green parts of a plant that grow from a stem or twig

ladder – *n.* a device used for climbing that has two long pieces of wood, metal, or rope with a series of steps or rungs between them

Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *focus* to help us understand three characters in the story. Their names are Johnsy, Sue and Mr. Behrman. In the first part of the story, I want you to focus on Johnsy. I’ll show you how to do this. I will focus as I read, to help me learn about the characters”

Play or read aloud to “But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages at her funeral, I take away fifty percent from the curative power of medicines.”

Present (2)

Re-read the lines “But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages at her funeral, I take away fifty percent from the curative power of medicines.” Say, “When I read this, I know that Johnsy is sick and she does not want to live. She has begun to anticipate her death before it happens. Johnsy is sad.”

Practice

Prepare students for the next part, “Now it’s your turn. Let’s listen to more of the story. As we listen, *focus* on Sue. What do you learn about her?”

Play or read aloud to “I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves.”

Have students sit with a classmate and say aloud what they wrote about Sue. Tell them to share with their classmate what they learned by *focusing* on the characters in the story.

Focus on Sue

Give students time to discuss what they learned.

Ask several students to share and write what they learned on the board or screen as on the following slide.

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Focus on Sue

A possible answer:

“When I read this, I learn that Sue is an artist. She makes pictures for a magazine. Sue cares about Johnsy, and she encourages Johnsy to feel better. The doctor said Johnsy would not live, but Sue tells Johnsy that her chances of living were ten to one. This means that Sue is trying to be optimistic.”

Focus on Behrman

Ask students to listen again. “As we listen to more of the story, think about what the author tells us about the characters. Focus on Mr. Behrman, a new character. What do you learn by focusing on him?”

Play or read aloud to “Behrman sat and posed as the miner.”

Ask students to share what they learned with their classmate.

Focus on Behrman

A possible answer:

“When I read this, I learn that Behrman is an artist, too. He failed in art, but found work as a model for artists. One day, he hopes to paint a masterpiece. He cares about the Sue and Johnsy, and he wants to protect them.”

Focus on Johnsy

Ask students to listen again. “As we listen to more of the story, think about what the author tells us about how Johnsy changes. Focus on what she says. What do you learn by focusing ?”

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Ask students to share what they learned with their classmate.

Self-Evaluate

Ask students to stay with their partner and talk about the end of the story: “What do you think about the ending of the story? Based on what you knew about Sue, Johnsy, and Mr. Behrman, did you think the story would end this way?”

Give students time to talk about the story’s ending.

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, ***focusing***, when you read? Did it help you understand the characters in the story? Did it help you think about the story in a different way? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how *focusing* helped you today.”

Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *focus*?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. *Focusing* forces you to think about specific information, key words, or ideas. By focusing on one part of a story, it can help you understand the story’s characters and ideas.

You can use *focusing* in other areas as well. The next time you are reading a book or studying for a math exam, use this strategy, and let me know how it works for you.

Our story today is called "The Last Leaf." It was written by O. Henry. Here is Barbara Klein with the story.

Many artists lived in the Greenwich Village area of New York. Two young women named Sue and Johnsy shared a studio apartment at the top of a three-story building. Johnsy's real name was Joanna.

In November, a cold, unseen stranger came to visit the city. This disease, **pneumonia**, killed many people. Johnsy lay on her bed, hardly moving. She looked through the small window. She could see the side of the brick house next to her building.

One morning, a doctor examined Johnsy and took her temperature. Then he spoke with Sue in another room.

"She has one chance in -- let us say ten," he said. "And that chance is for her to want to live. Your friend has made up her mind that she is not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?"

"She -- she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples in Italy some day," said Sue.

"Paint?" said the doctor. "Bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking twice -- a man for example?"

"A man?" said Sue. "Is a man worth -- but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind."

"I will do all that science can do," said the doctor. "But whenever my patient begins to count the **carriages** at her funeral, I take away fifty percent from the curative power of medicines."

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom and cried. Then she went to Johnsy's room with her drawing board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep. She began making a pen and ink **drawing** for a story in a magazine. Young artists must work their way to "Art" by making pictures for magazine stories. Sue heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting -- counting backward. "Twelve," she said, and a little later "eleven"; and then "ten" and "nine;" and then "eight" and "seven," almost together.

Sue looked out the window. What was there to count? There was only an empty yard and the blank side of the house seven meters away. An old ivy vine, going bad at the roots, climbed half way up the wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken leaves from the plant until its branches, almost bare, hung on the bricks.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

"Six," said Johnsy, quietly. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head hurt to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now."

"Five what, dear?" asked Sue.

"Leaves. On the plant. When the last one falls I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?"

"Oh, I never heard of such a thing," said Sue. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine. Don't be silly. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were -- let's see exactly what he said -- he said the chances were ten to one! Try to eat some soup now. And, let me go back to my drawing, so I can sell it to the magazine and buy food and wine for us."

"You needn't get any more wine," said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. "There goes another one. No, I don't want any soup. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go, too."

"Johnsy, dear," said Sue, "will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I am done working? I must hand those drawings in by tomorrow."

"Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johnsy, closing her eyes and lying white and still as a fallen statue. "I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves."

"Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Mister Behrman up to be my model for my drawing of an old miner. Don't try to move until I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor of the **apartment** building. Behrman was a failure in art. For years, he had always been planning to paint a work of art, but had never yet begun it. He earned a little money by serving as a model to artists who could not pay for a professional model. He was a fierce, little, old man who protected the two young women in the studio apartment above him.

Sue found Behrman in his room. In one area was a blank canvas that had been waiting twenty-five years for the first line of paint. Sue told him about Johnsy and how she feared that her friend would float away like a **leaf**.

Old Behrman was angered at such an idea. "Are there people in the world with the foolishness to die because leaves drop off a vine? Why do you let that silly business come in her brain?"

"She is very sick and weak," said Sue, "and the disease has left her mind full of strange ideas."

"This is not any place in which one so good as Miss Johnsy shall lie sick," yelled Behrman. "Some day I will paint a masterpiece, and we shall all go away."

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to cover the window. She and Behrman went into the other room. They looked out a window fearfully at the ivy vine. Then they looked at each other without speaking. A cold rain was falling, mixed with snow. Behrman sat and posed as the miner.

The next morning, Sue awoke after an hour's sleep. She found Johnsy with wide-open eyes staring at the covered window.

"Pull up the shade; I want to see," she ordered, quietly.

Sue obeyed.

After the beating rain and fierce wind that blew through the night, there yet stood against the wall one ivy leaf. It was the last one on the vine. It was still dark green at the center. But its edges were colored with the yellow. It hung bravely from the branch about seven meters above the ground.

"It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall today and I shall die at the same time."

"Dear, dear!" said Sue, leaning her worn face down toward the bed. "Think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer.

The next morning, when it was light, Johnsy demanded that the window shade be raised. The ivy leaf was still there. Johnsy lay for a long time, looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was preparing chicken soup.

"I've been a bad girl," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how bad I was. It is wrong to want to die. You may bring me a little soup now."

An hour later she said: "Someday I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

Later in the day, the doctor came, and Sue talked to him in the hallway.

"Even chances," said the doctor. "With good care, you'll win. And now I must see another case I have in your building. Behrman, his name is -- some kind of an artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man and his case is severe. There is no hope for him; but he goes to the hospital today to ease his pain."

The next day, the doctor said to Sue: "She's out of danger. You won. Nutrition and care now -- that's all."

Later that day, Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, and put one arm around her.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mister Behrman died of pneumonia today in the hospital. He was sick only two days. They found him the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were completely wet and icy cold. They could not imagine where he had been on such a terrible night.

And then they found a lantern, still lighted. And they found a **ladder** that had been moved from its place. And art supplies and a painting board with green and yellow colors mixed on it.

And look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it is Behrman's masterpiece – he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

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About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.





CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.






CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.







Metacognitive Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set goals. -Plan the task or content sequence. -Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies). -Preview a text.
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Check your progress on the task. -Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem? -Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task. -Assess how well you have used learning strategies. -Decide how effective the strategies were. -Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determine how you learn best. -Arrange conditions that help you learn. -Seek opportunities for practice. -Focus your attention on the task.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task. - Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge. -Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.
Make Inferences	 Use Clues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use context and what you know to figure out meaning. -Read and listen between the lines. -Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.
Make Predictions	 Crystal Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anticipate information to come. -Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text. -Make an estimate (math). -Make a hypothesis (science).
Personalize	 Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.


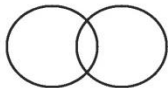


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language. -Recognize cognates.
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.
  USE YOUR SENSES		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information. -Use or draw a picture or diagram.
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding. -Sound out/vocalize. - Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.






Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language. -Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.
  USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS		
Find/Apply Patterns	 abacus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply a rule. -Make a rule. -Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules. -Identify patterns in literature (genre). -Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.
Classify/Sequence	 Life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Categorize words or ideas according to attributes. -Classify living things; identify natural cycles. -Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies. -Sequence events in history.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading. -List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
 		
USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES		
Access Information Sources	 <p>Look it up!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials. -Seek out and use sources of information. -Follow a model -Ask questions
Cooperate	 <p>Together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 <p>I can do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.