

Four Christmas Short Stories

at level C1

1. A Man in the Snow

based on a story by Armando Palacio Valdés

2. Christmas in the Forest

based on a story by André Theuriet

3. The Louis d'or

based on a story by François Coppée

4. A Christmas Party in Paris

based on a story by Alphonse Daudet



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Published by GLOBAL ELT LTD

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A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library.

Graded Reader - Level C1 - Four Christmas Short Stories ISBN: 978-1-78164-900-8

Four Christmas Short Stories at level C1

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Story 1

A Man in the Snow

CHAPTER

1

Juan's Childhood

Preview Questions

1. What would you miss most if you were blind?
2. Do relationships between siblings change over time?



Juan was born blind and he had been taught the one thing which the blind generally learn: music. In this he was especially gifted. His mother had died when he was still a child, and his father, who was the first cornetist of a military band, followed her to the grave a few years later. He had a brother in America from whom he had never heard; according to hearsay he was well off, married, and the father of two fine children.

Up until his death, the old musician, indignant at his son's ingratitude, forbade his name to be mentioned in his presence; but the blind boy's affection for his brother remained unchanged. He could not forget that this elder brother had been his childhood ally, taking his side when other boys caused trouble. He also remembered how his brother



had always spoken to him kindly. The sound of Santiago's voice as he entered his room in the morning, shouting, "Hey there, Juanito! get up, man; it's time to get up now!" still rang in Juan's ears; it was to him more pleasant than any tune you could ever hear played on any piano or violin. Was it possible that such a kind heart had grown cold? Juan could not believe that and he was always trying to make excuses for his brother having grown so distant. At times he blamed the post, or he imagined that his brother did not wish to write until he could send them a good deal of money; sometimes he told himself that his brother meant to surprise them by turning up one fine day at the modest entresol in which they lived,

laden with gold. But he never dared communicate any of these fancies to his father; only when the old man, wrought to an unusual pitch of exasperation, started bitterly castigating the absent son, he found the courage to say: "Don't despair, father. Santiago is good, and my heart tells me that we shall hear from him one day soon."

The father died, however, without word from his son. As he lay on his death bed he was flanked by a priest on one side offering words of consolation and the blind boy on the other, clinging desperately to his hand as if trying to detain him in this world by sheer force of will. The only other people there were the chambermaid and her little daughter.

When the old man's body was removed from the house, the boy seemed to lose his reason and, in a frenzy of grief, he struggled with the undertaker's men trying to prevent them from taking the body away. But to no avail.

They departed with his father and he was left alone.

And what loneliness was his! No father, no mother, no relatives, no friends; he was even deprived of the sunlight, which is the friend of all creation. He stayed two whole days in his room pacing the floor like a caged wolf, without eating. The chambermaid, assisted by a compassionate neighbour, succeeded in saving him from this drawn-out method of suicide. He was prevailed upon to eat and slowly he regained interest in life, he began praying and renewed his interest in music.



Review Questions

1. Why did Juan feel such a strong bond with Santiago?
2. Why would Juan have felt the loss of his father so acutely?

Workbook

- ❖ **Glossary**
- ❖ **Vocabulary Building Exercises**
- ❖ **Reading Comprehension Questions**

Story 1

A Man in the Snow

Chapter 1

hearsay *n* rumor

indignant *adj* feeling upset because sb has said or done sth to offended you

ingratitude *n* ungratefulness

ally *n* a person who associates or cooperates with another; supporter

modest *adj* having or showing a moderate opinion of one's merits, importance, etc.; not boasting

entresol *n* low floor between two higher floors, the lower one usually being a ground floor

laden *adj* burdened; heavily loaded

wrought *adj* worked; formed; made or done

exasperation *n* irritation, extreme annoyance

castigate *v* to reprimand or criticize severely

flanked *adj* surrounded

consolation *n* sth that makes sb feel better; comfort; solace

cling *v* to adhere closely; stick to

detain *v* to keep under restraint, delay

frenzy *n* extreme mental agitation, wild excitement

grief *n* sorrow, difficulty, trouble

undertaker *n* funeral director

to no avail without success

compassionate *adj* having sympathy for others and caring about how they feel, showing compassion

suicide *n* the intentional taking of one's own life

Chapter 2

hardship *n* deprivation, difficulty

fortnight *n* a period of fourteen night and days/two weeks

grand *adj* impressive in size, appearance, or general effect

requiem *n* a Catholic mass for the dead

repose *v* to lie down or be at rest, as from work or activity; lie and be peacefully calm and quiet

parish *n* a local church and the area or neighborhood assigned to it

cabinet *n* a piece of furniture with shelves, etc., for holding or displaying items

rousing *adj* exciting

vesper *adj* a religious service in the late afternoon or evening

solemn *adj* serious; earnest; sincere

insubordination *n* disobedience

recess *v* a temporary withdrawal from or stopping of the usual work or activity; a break

pawn *v* to leave (something valuable) as security, as for money borrowed, esp. with a pawnbroker

serenity *n* tranquility, calmness

heirloom *n* a family possession handed down from generation to generation

overdue *adj* having passed the time when due or expected

seize *v* to take hold with force; grasp

trunk *n* a large, sturdy box or chest for holding or transporting clothes, personal effects, or other articles

in lieu of instead of

acquaintance *n* a person whom one knows casually

anguish *n* distress, suffering, pain

toss *v* to throw or send from one to another

wander *v* move around without purpose, roam

fray *v* to become untidy at the edges, as cloth; ravel out

cliente *n* clients or customers thought of as a group

petenera a kind of Spanish dance

GLOSSARY

fandangos a kind of Spanish dance
shudder *v* tremble
hovel *n* a small, shabby house

Chapter 3

nurture *v* help sb to be the best they can be
forlorn *adj* miserable, lonely and sad
pillar *n* an upright, tall, narrow shaft used as a building support, or standing alone, as for a monument
acid *adj* strong in taste or smell, bitter
odour *n* scent, smell
sputter *n* popping or sizzling sound
nave *n* the principal, longer area of a church, from the main entrance to the space around the altar, with aisles of less height on the sides
canticle *n* a hymn or chant chiefly from the Bible, used in church services
strife *n* argument or difficulty
sob *v* cry very much
thoroughfare *n* a major road or highway
utter *v* speak, pronounce
grope *v* to feel about with the hands; feel one's way hesitantly

Chapter 4

proffer *v* offer
congregate *v* come together, assemble
incite *v* cause to happen
riot *n* a noisy violent public disorder
gruffly *adv* in a low and harsh way
impel *v* urge forward, force to action
infringe *v* violate, interfere with
meagre *adj* thin or emaciated, deficient in amount, quality or extent
filthy *adj* very dirty
huddle *v* gather, crowd together
relentlessly *adv* in an unrelenting way
hoarse *adj* having a weak, rough or unclear voice

squirt *v* to send out (liquid) in a quick, sudden jet or spurt
penetrate *v* to pierce or pass into or through

Chapter 5

muffle up *v* to wrap or cover in a shawl, etc., esp. to keep warm or protect the face and neck
dismal *adj* causing gloom or dejection; cheerless
rumble *n* a deep, heavy, somewhat muffled, continuous sound
rustle *n* a slight, soft sound of gentle rubbing, as leaves
implore *v* beg, beseech
in vain without effect, to no purpose
succumb *v* surrender, give in
stumble *v* to strike the foot against something, as in running, so as to trip or fall
husky *adj* (of the voice) somewhat hoarse
artillery *n* troops or military units specializing in using such guns
intermingle *v* mingle or mix one with another

Chapter 6

vague *adj* not clearly stated or expressed
contradictory *n* opposing or inconsistent
traipse *v* to walk idly or without finding or reaching one's goal
frank *adj* direct, honest
joyful *adj* cheerful, jolly
come to a halt stop
broth *n* a thin soup in which meat, fish, or vegetables have been cooked in water
restless *adj* not quiet, uneasy, always in motion
parlour *n* living room
startling *adj* disturbing, frightening

GLOSSARY

stately *adj* majestic; impressive or imposing in magnificence
ablaze *adj* on fire
stupor *n* inability to think correctly, or to feel or sense things, as caused by disease, narcotics, etc.; a state of near unconsciousness
emit *v* to send forth (liquid, light, particles, etc.); discharge
tarnish *v* to (cause a metal surface to) be dull; (cause to) be discolored
wither *v* to become small, dry and old looking
limb *n* a large or main branch of a tree
ceremonious *adj* carefully observant or fond of ceremony
mincing *adj* showing great style
promenade *v* to go for or take part in a stroll or walk
lithe *adj* moving easily due to good health and fitness; flexible
roseate *adj* tinged with rose; rosy
crescent *n* a shape resembling a half circle or like a half moon
brow *n* the forehead; the area over the eye

Chapter 3

disperse *v* spread, scatter over a large area
awe *n* a powerful feeling of reverence, fear, or wonder produced by someone or something overwhelming
hallucination *n* sth that you think you can see but does not actually exist
marvel *v* to be filled with wonder (at)
crest *n* a formal design that symbolizes a rich family, organisation, military regiment etc.
immoderately *adv* excessively
chortle *v* laugh
foam *n* a collection of tiny bubbles on the surface of a liquid
vivacity *n* liveliness
conjure up *phr v* to make, produce, or cause to appear by or as if by magic
ether *n* the clear sky
emerald *n* a green gem
lackey *n* a person who is treated like a servant

Story 1: A Man in the Snow

Chapters 1-3

Exercise A

Complete the sentences by choosing the correct answer A, B or C.

- I'll be as quick as I can with this meeting as I don't want to you any longer than I have to.
A. pawn B. detain C. grope
- What is that strange? It smells like something has gone bad in the kitchen.
A. odour B. hovel C. anguish
- The children the ball back and forth to each other.
A. seized B. tossed C. wandered
- Nobody must a word about this as it is a confidential matter.
A. repose B. shudder C. utter
- I was just admiring the beautiful crystal glasses in your
A. requiem B. cabinet C. parish
- He looked very after his girlfriend moved to another city.
A. forlorn B. rousing C. modest

Exercise B

Complete the sentences below by using the correct form of the words in the box. There are two extra words that you do not need to use.

hearsay	indignant	grief	nurture
clientele	ally	cling	heirloom

- The frightened child to his mother's legs.
- It is the job of a parent to their child's natural talents.
- This silver cup is an old family
- George was extremely when I accused him of cheating.
- It will take her a long time to deal with the of losing her husband.
- Don't believe the rumours about the factory closing, it's only silly

Exercise C

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the word given in CAPITALS at the end of each sentence.

- I'm shocked by his after all the help you have given him. (GRATEFUL)
- If it's any, I'm really sorry that you have lost your job. (CONSOLE)
- I have many in the financial world but I do not consider any of them to be a close friend. (ACQUAINT)
- You need to be a person if you are going to be a nurse. (COMPASSION)

Story 1: A Man in the Snow

Chapters 4-6

Exercise A

Complete the sentences by choosing the correct answer A, B or C.

1. Although he said I was forgiven, he couldn't his disappointment in me.
 A. conceal B. proffer C. wager
2. I knew the storm was approaching when I heard a of thunder in the distance.
 A. quiver B. rustle C. rumble
3. When I asked Tom what had happened he gave me a very answer so I don't think he wanted to talk about it.
 A. vague B. hoarse C. jovial
4. Mark is in hospital as he has to the deadly virus.
 A. squirted B. penetrated C. succumbed
5. The police tried to break up the in the streets by charging in to the crowds.
 A. riots B. artillery C. broth
6. The frightened puppies were together in a cardboard box when I found them.
 A. traipsed B. huddled C. implored

Exercise B

Complete the sentences below by using the correct form of the words in the box. There are two extra words that you do not need to use.

congregate	dismal	stumble	frank
meagre	startling	cease	corpse

1. The police were called when a was found in the woods.
2. I don't know how he survives on such a amount of money.
3. A large crowd of people were in the park hours before the festival began.
4. Can you please just give me a answer because I need to know the truth?
5. I'm not surprised that he's so depressed because he lives in a apartment.
6. David and then fell into the river because he was drunk.

Exercise C

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the word given in CAPITALS at the end of each sentence.

1. He tried to persuade her to go out with him but she never gave in. (RELENT)
2. We keep hearing versions of what happened and I suspect we will never learn the truth. (CONTRADICT)
3. Why are you so this morning, are you waiting for something to happen? (REST)
4. There was much in the house next door so I suspect it was someone's birthday. (MERRY)

Story 2: Christmas in the forest

Chapters 1-3

Exercise A

Complete the sentences by choosing the correct answer A, B or C.

- I don't really want to go out for a walk on such a cold and day.
A. rugged B. bleak C. fleecy
- A few of smoke could be seen coming from the chimney of the cottage.
A. puffs B. cuds C. hearths
- We thought Tony was recovering from the illness but sadly he seems to have this week.
A. vitrified B. lulled C. relapsed
- The thick snow under our feet as we walked down the path.
A. swathed B. sealed C. crunched
- As it's such a cold day I think I will make a nice hot for dinner.
A. stew B. stub C. slat
- We ran inside when a of bees flew across the garden.
A. countenance B. swarm C. vapour

Exercise B

Complete the sentences below by using the correct form of the words in the box. There are two extra words that you do not need to use.

moss	dormitory	cordiality	devour
drowsy	linger	impervious	apprentice

- The path is covered with green because no one has walked on it for months.
- She was to the comments made behind her back because she assumed everyone liked her.
- There were ten children sleeping in the so it was quite noisy when they first went to bed.
- The hungry boy the sandwich in minutes.
- You mustn't drive when you take this medicine as it will make you feel
- Although the woman was rude to the waiter, he treated her with all the time.

Exercise C

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the word given in CAPITALS at the end of each sentence.

- He lost his during the argument and started to shout at her. (COMPOSE)
- I have no in recommending Joe as an excellent electrician. (HESITATE)
- She tried to think of an excuse for not finishing the work on time. (FEEBLE)
- He prefers to work quietly in when he's writing a book. (SECLUDE)