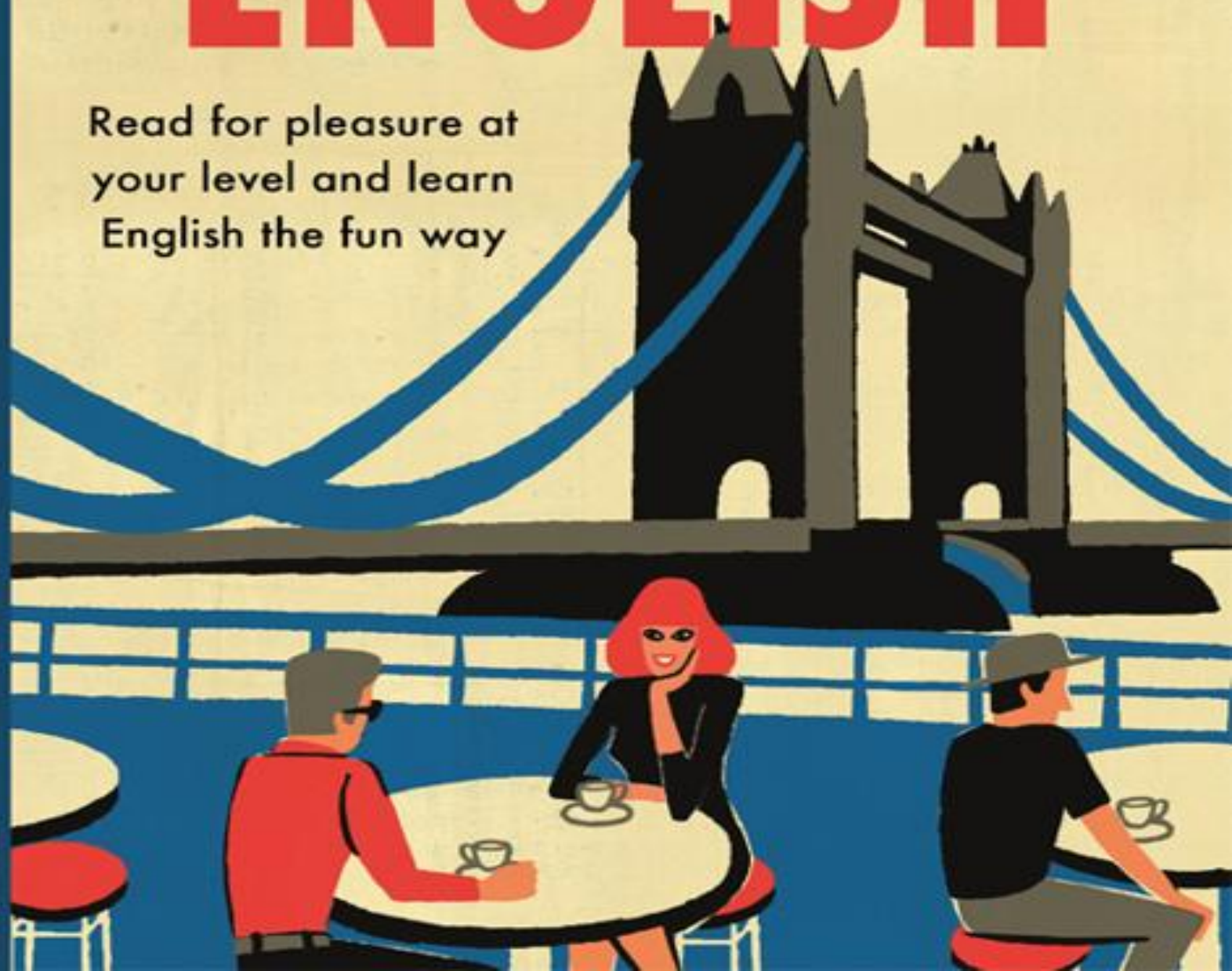


OLLY RICHARDS

for  
beginners

# SHORT STORIES **ENGLISH**

Read for pleasure at  
your level and learn  
English the fun way



# SHORT STORIES **ENGLISH**

Read for pleasure at your level and  
learn English the fun way!

OLLY RICHARDS

Series and Development Editor  
Rebecca Moeller

[www.hodder.co.uk](http://www.hodder.co.uk)





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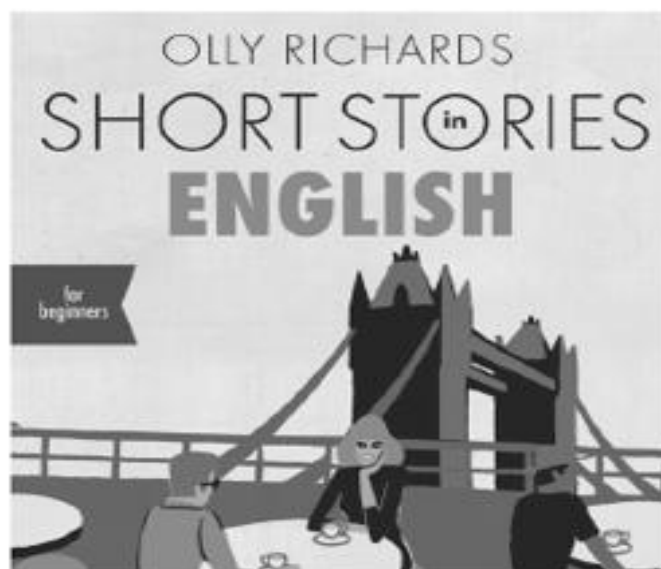
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# Don't forget the audio!



Listening to the story read aloud is a great way to improve your pronunciation and overall comprehension. So, don't forget – download it today!

The audio that accompanies this course is available to purchase from the Readers app and from [readers.teachyourself.com](http://readers.teachyourself.com).

Use **audio50** for 50% off any purchase.



# About the Author



Olly Richards, author of the *Teach Yourself Foreign Language Graded Readers* series, speaks eight languages and is the man behind the popular language learning blog *I Will Teach You a Language*.

Olly started learning his first foreign language at age 19 when he bought a one-way ticket to Paris. With no exposure to languages growing up, and no special talent to speak of, Olly had to figure out how to learn a foreign language from scratch.

Fifteen years later, Olly holds a master's in TESOL from Aston University as well as Cambridge CELTA and Delta. He has also now studied several languages and become an expert in language learning techniques. He collaborates with organizations such as the Open University and the European Commission, and is a regular speaker at international language events and in-person workshops.

Olly started the *I Will Teach You a Language* blog in 2013 to document his latest language learning experiments. His useful language learning tips have transformed the blog into one of the most popular language learning resources on the web. Olly has always advocated that reading is one of the best ways to improve your language skills and he has now applied his expertise to create the *Teach Yourself Foreign Language Graded Readers* series. He hopes that *Short Stories in English for Beginners* will help you in your language studies!

For more information about Olly and his blog, go to  
[www.iwillteachyoulanguage.com](http://www.iwillteachyoulanguage.com).

For more information about other readers in this series, go to  
[readers.teachyourself.com](http://readers.teachyourself.com).

# Using this Book – At a Glance

*Short Stories in English for Beginners* is designed for beginner to low-intermediate level learners\*. These stories offer:

- Exciting content and practice with the 1000 most common words in English.
- Interesting pictures to support reading.
- Shorter stories with chapters so you can progress easily.
- Texts written at your level.
- Summaries, vocabulary lists, and comprehension questions so you can understand more easily.

## **Getting the most from the stories**

- Read each story from beginning to end. This will give you a feeling of progress.
- Read often and a lot. This will improve your language skills.
- Remember that you will not understand everything you read. This is completely normal.

## **Handling words you do not know**

1. Look for similarities with words you know.
2. Re-read the sentence that uses the unknown word several times and guess what the word means.
3. Think about different forms of words you know. (You may not know *have gone*, but you may see that it is related to *go*.)
4. Note unknown words in a notebook, and check the meanings later.

## **The Six-Step Reading Process**

1. Look at the illustration and title. Think about what the story might be about. Then read the chapter. *Do not stop to look up unknown words.* Simply try to follow the story
2. Read the summary to see if you have understood everything



3. Go back and read the *same* chapter again
4. After you read again, read the summary again and review the vocabulary list
5. Work through the comprehension questions to check your understanding of the story
6. At this point, you can re-read the chapter or move on to the next chapter.

[\\*](#) Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels A2–B1

# Introduction

Reading in a foreign language is one of the most effective ways for you to improve language skills and expand vocabulary. However, it can sometimes be difficult to find engaging reading materials at an appropriate level that will provide a feeling of achievement and a sense of progress. Most books and articles written for native speakers are too difficult for beginner language learners to understand. They often have very high-level vocabulary and may be so lengthy that you feel overwhelmed and give up. If these problems sound familiar, then this book is for you!

*Short Stories in English for Beginners* is a collection of eight unconventional and entertaining short stories that are especially designed to help high-beginner to low-intermediate-level English learners\* improve their language skills. These short stories offer something of interest for everyone and have been designed to create a supportive reading environment by including:

- **Rich linguistic content in different genres** to keep you entertained and expose you to a variety of word forms as well as 1000 of the most common words in the English language!
- **Interesting illustrations** to introduce the story content and help you better understand what happens.
- **Shorter stories broken into chapters** to give you the satisfaction of finishing the stories and progressing quickly.
- **Texts written especially at your level** so they are more easily comprehended and not overwhelming.
- **Special learning aids** to help support your understanding including:
  - **Summaries** to give you regular overviews of plot progression
  - **Vocabulary lists** to help you understand unfamiliar words more easily
  - **Comprehension questions** to test your understanding of key events and to encourage you to read in more detail.

So perhaps you are new to English and looking for an entertaining way to learn, or maybe you have been learning for a while and simply want to

enjoy reading and expand your vocabulary, either way, this book is the biggest step forward you will take in your studies this year. *Short Stories in English for Beginners* will give you all the support you need, so sit back, relax and let your imagination run wild as you are transported to a magical world of adventure, mystery and intrigue – in English!

\* **Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels A2–B1**

# How to Read Effectively

Reading is a complex skill. In our first languages, we employ a variety of micro-skills to help us read. For example, we might skim a particular passage in order to understand the general idea, or gist. Or we might scan through multiple pages of a train timetable looking for a particular time or place. While these micro-skills are second nature when reading in our first languages, when it comes to reading in a foreign language, research suggests that we often abandon most of these reading skills. In a foreign language, we usually start at the beginning of a text and try to understand every single word. Inevitably, we come across unknown or difficult words and quickly get frustrated with our lack of understanding.

One of the main benefits of reading in a foreign language is that you gain exposure to large amounts of words and expressions used naturally. This kind of reading for pleasure in order to learn a language is generally known as ‘extensive reading’. It is very different from reading a textbook in which dialogues or texts are meant to be read in detail with the aim of understanding every word. That kind of reading to reach specific learning aims or do tasks is referred to as ‘intensive reading’. To put it another way, the intensive reading in textbooks usually helps you with grammar rules and specific vocabulary, whereas reading stories extensively helps show you natural language in use.

While you may have started your language learning journey using only textbooks, *Short Stories in English for Beginners* will now provide you with opportunities to learn more about natural English language in use. Here are a few suggestions to keep in mind when reading the stories in this book in order to learn the most from them:

- **Enjoyment and a sense of achievement when reading is vitally important.** Enjoying what you read keeps you coming back for more. The best way to enjoy reading stories and feel a sense of achievement is by reading each story from beginning to end. Consequently, reaching the end of a story is the most important thing. It is actually more important than understanding every word in it!

- **The more you read, the more you learn.** By reading longer texts for enjoyment, you will quickly build up an understanding of how English works. But remember: in order to take full advantage of the benefits of extensive reading, you have to actually read a large enough volume in the first place. Reading a couple of pages here and there may teach you a few new words, but it won't be enough to make a real impact on the overall level of your English.
- **You must accept that you won't understand everything you read in a story.** This is probably the most important point of all! Always remember that it is completely normal that you do not understand all the words or sentences. It doesn't mean that your language level is flawed or that you are not doing well. It means you're engaged in the process of learning. So, what should you do when you don't understand a word? Here are a few steps:
  1. Look at the word and see if it is familiar in any way. Remember to look for vocabulary elements from your first language that may be familiar. Take a guess – you might surprise yourself!
  2. Re-read the sentence that contains the unknown word several times. Use the context of that sentence, and the rest of the story, to try to guess what the unknown word might mean.
  3. Think about whether or not the word might be a different form of a word you know. For example, you might encounter a verb that you know, but it has been conjugated in a different or unfamiliar way:

*go*  
*went*  
*have gone*

You may not be familiar with the particular form used, but ask yourself: *Can I still understand the gist of what's going on?* Usually, if you have managed to recognize the main verb, that is enough. Instead of getting frustrated, simply notice how the verb is being used, and carry on reading. Recognizing different forms of words will come intuitively over time.

4. Make a note of the unknown word in a notebook and check the meaning later. You can review these words over time to make them part of your

active vocabulary. If you simply must know the meaning of a bolded word, you can look it up in the vocabulary lists at the end of each chapter or in the glossary at the back of this book or use a dictionary. However, this should be your last resort.

These suggestions are designed to train you to handle reading in English independently and without help. The more you can develop this skill, the better you'll be able to read. Remember: learning to be comfortable with the ambiguity you may encounter while reading a foreign language is the most powerful skill that will help you become an independent and resilient learner of English!

# The Six-Step Reading Process

In order to get the most from reading *Short Stories in English for Beginners*, it will be best for you to follow this simple six-step reading process for each chapter of the stories:

- 1 Look at the illustration and read the chapter title. Think about what the story might be about. Then read the chapter all the way through. Your aim is simply to reach the end of the chapter. Therefore, *do not stop to look up words and do not worry if there are things you do not understand*. Simply try to follow the plot.
- 2 When you reach the end of the chapter, read the short summary of the plot to see if you have understood what has happened. If you find this difficult, do not worry; you will improve with each chapter.
- 3 Go back and read the *same* chapter again. If you like, you can focus more on story details than before, but otherwise simply read it through one more time.
- 4 When you reach the end of the chapter for the second time, read the summary again and review the vocabulary list. If you are unsure about the meanings of any words in the vocabulary list, scan through the text to find them in the story and examine them in context. This will help you better understand the words.
- 5 Next, work through the comprehension questions to check your understanding of key events in the story. If you do not get them all correct, do not worry; simply answering the questions will help you better understand the story.
- 6 At this point, you should have some understanding of the main events of the chapter. If not, you may wish to re-read the chapter a few times using the vocabulary list to check unknown words and phrases until you feel confident. Once you are ready and confident that you understand what has happened – whether it's after one reading of the chapter or several –

move on to the next chapter and continue enjoying the story at your own pace, just as you would any other book.

Only once you have completed a story in its entirety should you consider going back and studying the story language in more depth if you wish. Or, instead of worrying about understanding everything, take time to focus on all that you *have* understood and congratulate yourself for all that you have done so far. Remember: the biggest benefits you will derive from this book will come from reading story after story through from beginning to end. If you can do that, you will be on your way to reading effectively in English!





# Crazy Paella

## Chapter 1 – Getting Ready

‘Daniel, I’m here!’ Julia calls. She is at the front door of the house.

‘What is it, Julia?’ I reply.

‘We’re going to Spain today! You remembered, right?’

‘Of course I did. I’m packing!’ I call.

My name is Daniel. I’m 24 years old. Julia is my sister. She is 23. We’re both at university. We share a house in London. Our parents are Arthur and Sarah Bell.

Julia and I are getting ready for a trip. We’re going to Barcelona, Spain. We’re both earning degrees in Spanish. We already know a lot of the language, but we want to learn more. We’re going to be [exchange students](#) this term.

I’m tall, about six feet. I have longish brown hair. My eyes are green and I have a wide mouth. I have a strong build. My legs are strong due to hours on the tennis courts. I’m a very good basketball player as well.

My sister Julia also has brown hair. Her hair is longer than mine. She doesn’t have green eyes. She has brown eyes like my dad. I have the same colour eyes as my mum.

My parents both work. My dad is an [electrician](#). He works for a major electric company. My mum is a writer. She also owns a company. It sells [science fiction](#) books.

My parents are really great. They always help us to reach our goals. They both speak Spanish well. They often speak to us in Spanish. It helps Julia and I practise. They really encouraged us to become exchange students. We are leaving for Spain today.

My dad comes in my room. He looks at me in surprise. Why? Because I'm not dressed. 'Daniel! Why aren't you dressed?' Dad asks.

'Dressed? I just got up. I had a [shower](#) five minutes ago. I'm not even dry yet!'

'Come on! We don't have much time. I want to take you to the [airport](#). But I have to go to work, too.'

'Don't worry, Dad. I'm getting dressed now.'

'Where's your sister?'

'She's in her room.'

My dad goes into my sister's room. He wants to talk to her. He enters and Julia looks at him. 'Oh, hi, Dad. Do you need something?' asks Julia.

'Yes. Your brother's getting dressed. Here.' My dad gives Julia a [wad of cash](#). 'I want you to both have this.'

Julia is surprised. 'Dad! There's a lot of money here!' she says.

'Your mother and I have saved this money. We want to pay for part of your trip to Spain.'

'Thanks, Dad!' says my sister. 'It will be very useful. I'm going to tell Daniel!'

Julia turns to leave. She almost runs into me. She and Dad didn't notice that I was coming in. My dad sees me. 'Oh, Daniel, you're here!' he says. 'And you're dressed! Great!'

My dad points to the money. 'That money is for the two of you. It's to help with the trip.'

'Thanks, Dad. It'll be really helpful,' I reply.

Julia smiles.

'Now we must get ready,' Dad says. 'We have to leave for the airport! Come on!'

Shortly after we eat, we leave the house. We [head for](#) the airport in Mum's car. Julia is very [nervous](#).

'Julia,' Mum says, 'are you all right?'

'I'm really nervous,' Julia answers.

‘Why?’

‘I don’t know anybody in Spain. I’ll only know Daniel.’

‘Don’t worry,’ Mum replies. ‘There are a lot of very nice people in Barcelona. Especially Daniel’s friend Armando.’

‘Yes, Mum. I’m sure you’re right. But I still feel nervous ... What if something happens?’

‘It will be all right,’ says Dad.

At the airport there are lots of people checking in. Many of them are travelling for work. Some are travelling for fun. I go over to Julia. Then I ask, ‘Are you more relaxed now?’

‘Yes, Daniel. I was really nervous in the car.’

‘Yes, I know. But everything’s going to be fine. My friend Armando is really nice. He often helps exchange students like us.’

Our parents hug us warmly. We all wave goodbye as Julia and I leave. ‘We love you both!’ they call. That’s the final thing we hear. An hour later, our plane takes off. We are headed for Barcelona!

## Chapter 1 Review

### *Summary*

Daniel and Julia are students. They live in London. They study Spanish at university. They are going to Spain today. They will be exchange students in Barcelona. Their parents take them to the airport. Julia is very nervous in the car. She relaxes at the airport. She and Daniel leave for Spain.

### *Vocabulary*

**exchange student** a student studying in another area or country

**electrician** someone whose job is to put in or repair electrical equipment

**science fiction** stories that take place in an imagined future or in other parts of the universe

**shower** a piece of bathroom equipment that produces a flow of water that you stand under to wash yourself

**airport** a place where passengers get on and off aircraft

**wad of cash** a pile of paper money

**head for** (*slang*) go to

**nervous** worried or frightened

**check in (for a flight)** to tell the people at an airport that you have arrived

**relaxed** feeling calm, comfortable and not worried

**hug** to put your arms around someone and hold them

**take off** when an aeroplane leaves the ground and goes up into the air

## **Comprehension Questions**

Select one answer only for each question.

- 1) Daniel and Julia live in \_\_\_\_.
  - a. the same house in London
  - b. different houses in London
  - c. the same house in Barcelona
  - d. different houses in Barcelona
- 2) Daniel and Julia's parents \_\_\_\_.
  - a. speak Spanish, but they don't practise with their children
  - b. speak Spanish and practise with their children
  - c. don't speak Spanish
  - d. don't live in London
- 3) Daniel and Julia's father gives them a present for the trip. What is it?
  - a. a car
  - b. a trip to the airport
  - c. a science fiction book
  - d. money
- 4) During the trip to the airport, Julia feels \_\_\_\_.
  - a. sad

- b. happy
- c. nervous
- d. frightened

- 5) At the airport, there \_\_\_\_.
- a. are a lot of Daniel's friends
  - b. are a lot of businesspeople
  - c. aren't many people
  - d. are a lot of children

## Chapter 2 – Spain

Our plane lands in Barcelona. My friend Armando is waiting at the airport. 'Hi, Daniel!' he says. He gives me a big hug. 'I'm so happy you're here!'

'Hi, Armando! It's great to see you!' I reply.

Armando looks at my sister Julia. I introduce them. 'Armando, my friend, this is my sister Julia.'

Armando turns to Julia. He kisses her on each cheek. 'Hi, Julia. Pleased to meet you!'

My sister is very shy. She's especially shy when she meets new people. 'Hello ... Armando,' she says. Her face turns red. Then she becomes quiet.

'Your sister is really shy, isn't she?' Armando says to me, smiling.

'Yes she is, but she's lovely,' I say.

A short while later we head for Armando's flat. We are staying there for the term. We get a taxi. After 30 minutes, we arrive in Barcelona centre. The taxi costs 41 euros and 50 cents. Armando says it's the usual rate to this section of the city. We pay for the taxi and get out.

It's a short walk to Armando's flat. It's June and it's really hot. But there is a nice wind to cool us.

We arrive at the flat at lunchtime. My sister and I are really hungry. 'Armando,' I say, 'where can we eat?'

'There are a couple of good restaurants in the area.'

'What types of food do they have?'

'One of the restaurants, *La Paella Loca*, has a great paella. I really recommend it. You can take the bus there. The other one has lovely fish. It's just next door.'

'Julia, do you want to have paella?' I ask my sister.

'Yes! I'm so hungry!' she replies.

Armando can't come with us. He is a teacher and he has a class. So Julia and I head for the paella restaurant. It's a short walk to the bus station.

‘Hmm ... Now, which bus goes to the paella restaurant?’ I ask Julia.

‘I don’t know ...’ she replies. ‘Let’s ask.’ She points to a man in a white shirt.

We walk over to the man. He smiles. ‘Hello! Can I help you?’

‘Hi. How do we get to *La Paella Loca* restaurant?’ I ask.

‘It’s easy! The number 35 bus goes in that direction. It goes right to *La Paella Loca*. However, there’s a small problem.’

‘What’s that?’ I ask.

‘That bus is normally **packed** at this time.’

‘OK. Thank you!’ we say.

As we walk to the nearest bus stop, Julia and I talk. She is not **comfortable** with taking the bus. ‘Daniel,’ she says, ‘Let’s just eat at the fish restaurant. It’s easier. I don’t want to take a packed bus.’

‘I know ...’ I begin. Then I have an idea. ‘Wait! I’ll take the bus to *La Paella Loca*. You go to the fish restaurant.’

‘Why?’

‘Because that way we can compare the two restaurants.’

‘Oh. Good idea. OK. Enjoy! I’ll call your **mobile** later,’ she calls and walks off.

I get on the next bus and sit down. I’m very **tired**. I quickly go to sleep. The bus system in Barcelona is very good. I know there is nothing to worry about.

I **wake up** a while later. The bus has stopped. There’s no one else on it except for the driver. ‘Excuse me,’ I say. ‘Where are we?’

‘We’ve arrived in Valencia,’ he replies.

‘What? Valencia? We’re in Valencia? How can that be?’ I say.

‘Well this is the **express bus**. It goes directly from Barcelona to Valencia,’ he tells me.

I can’t believe it. I took the wrong bus. But what can I do?



I thank the driver and get off the bus. Then I take out my mobile. I want to call my sister, but I can't turn it on. My **battery has died**! I check my watch. It's just after five o'clock in the afternoon. My sister doesn't know where I am. She must be really worried. I have to contact her. I need a **phone box**!

I ask a woman on the street for a phone box. 'There's one,' she says, pointing. 'It's just over there.'

I thank her and head for the phone box. But when I get there, I realize something. Julia's phone number is in my mobile's memory. I can't turn my mobile on. I finally have a phone, but I don't have a number! Now what?

I think for a while. Then I realize something. I'm really hungry. I haven't eaten since breakfast! I decide to find a restaurant. I can think about my problems later.

I find a restaurant up the street. The waiter comes to my table. 'Good evening!' he says happily.

'Good evening,' I reply.

'What would you like?' he asks slowly in Spanish.

I look quickly at the **menu**. 'I'd like ... paella?' I say in Spanish.

'Sorry? I didn't understand you,' he answers in Spanish.

I try again. My Spanish can't be that bad. 'Um ... I'd like paella?' I point **madly** at the word *paella* on the menu. Then I say it again in English.

Finally, the waiter then smiles and says in English, 'Thanks. I'm not from here. I'm new and my Spanish isn't that great.'

I start to laugh very loudly. A lot of people in the restaurant turn and look. At this point, I'm **embarrassed**. I didn't need to laugh so loudly. But I don't care. **It's all too much**. This whole situation is just so strange! My sister and I wanted to have paella together. And now here I am, eating paella – but alone in Valencia! And my sister doesn't know where I am. It's so **ironic**!

I finish dinner and pay the bill. Then **reality sinks in**. What do I do now? My mobile doesn't work. There is a phone box, but I don't have my sister's number. What can I do? Then I remember. I can call London! I know the number to my mum and dad's house.

I go back to the phone box. I call my parents' number. It rings four times. Finally my mum says 'Hello?'

'Hi, Mum. It's Daniel.'

'Daniel?' she says. 'How are you? How's Barcelona?'

'It's good. Um ... Mum. I have a problem.'

'What's wrong? Has something bad happened?'

'No, nothing bad, Mum. Can you call Julia, please? Tell her that I'm in Valencia. And tell her that my mobile battery has died.'

'In Valencia? What are you doing in Valencia?!'

'It's a long story, Mum. I'll tell you the details later.'

We say goodbye.

I decide to get a hotel room. There is one available up the street. I can go back to Barcelona tomorrow. Right now, I need sleep.

I pay for a night's stay in cash. I use the money from my dad. I have no credit cards with me. I go to my room. I take off my clothes and get into bed. I turn off the light and go to sleep. I'm really tired. What a [crazy](#) day!

## Chapter 2 Review

### *Summary*

Daniel and Julia arrive in Barcelona. Daniel's friend Armando meets them at the airport. They all go to Armando's flat. Daniel and Julia are hungry. Armando suggests two restaurants. Julia walks to a fish restaurant. Daniel takes a bus to a paella restaurant. On the bus, Daniel falls asleep. He wakes up in Valencia! His phone isn't working. He doesn't know his sister's phone number. He eats paella in a restaurant. In the end, he calls his mother. Then he stays at a hotel for the night.

### *Vocabulary*

**kiss** to touch someone with your lips, especially on their mouth or face

**shy** nervous and not confident when meeting and speaking to people

**quiet** having or making little or no noise

**flat** a set of rooms that someone lives in, and which are part of a larger building

**taxi** a car with a driver that you pay to take you from one place to another

**restaurant** a place where you can buy and eat a meal

**paella** a Spanish dish made of chicken, rice, seafood, vegetables and seasonings

**station** a building where trains, buses, or other vehicles stop to allow people to get on and off

**packed** very full

**comfortable** happy and relaxed (about doing something)

**mobile** a telephone that you carry with you

**tired** feeling that you need a rest

**wake up** to stop sleeping

**express bus** a large vehicle with a lot of seats for passengers that travels quickly between big cities, without stopping

**(mobile) battery has died** there is no longer power to run a device or telephone

**phone box** a small booth or box, usually on a street, with a telephone you can pay to use

**menu** a list of the food available in a restaurant

**madly** in an excited way

**embarrassed** feeling ashamed or stupid

**It's all too much.** (Something) is more than a person can handle or manage

**ironic** surprising, often because it is the opposite of what is expected

**reality sinks in** (*expression*) when you one begin to understand the truth of what is happening

**crazy** out of control, unexpected

## **Comprehension Questions**

Select one answer only for each question.

6) Armando is \_\_\_\_.

- a. an airport worker
  - b. a friend of Julia and Daniel's parents
  - c. Julia's friend
  - d. Daniel's friend
- 7) In Barcelona, it's \_\_\_\_.
- a. cold
  - b. hot
  - c. neither hot nor cold
  - d. hot in the mountains and cold near the Mediterranean Sea
- 8) After going to Armando's flat, Julia and Daniel head for \_\_\_\_.
- a. a restaurant
  - b. Armando's friend's flat
  - c. the train station
  - d. Valencia
- 9) Daniel can't contact his sister because \_\_\_\_.
- a. his mobile battery has died
  - b. he has no money
  - c. there is no phone box
  - d. he forgot his mobile
- 10) Daniel spends the night \_\_\_\_.
- a. in a hotel in Barcelona
  - b. on the bus
  - c. in a hotel in Valencia
  - d. at the airport

# Acknowledgements

If my strength is in the ideas, my weakness is in the execution. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many people who have helped me take these books past the finish line.

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To my parents, for an education that equipped me for such an endeavour.

Lastly, to JJ and EJ. This is for you.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Olly', with a stylized, flowing script.

Olly Richards