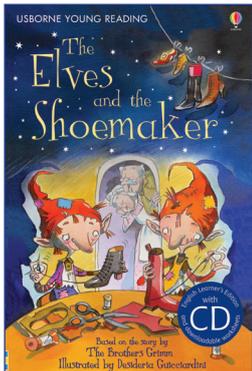


The Elves & the Shoemaker • Teacher's notes



Author: based on a story by the Brothers Grimm

Reader level: Upper Intermediate

Word count: 1367

Lexile level: 550L

Text type: Traditional fairy tale

About the story

An old shoemaker has a profitable business making fine shoes by hand, until a rival shoe seller sets up a bargain stall down the street and steals his customers. Finally, the shoemaker is down to his last few pieces of leather and goes to bed, exhausted and discouraged. Overnight, the leather is transformed into a handsome pair of shoes, which fetches a handsome price. With enough money for twice as much leather, the shoemaker leaves the new pieces out and retires to bed. In the morning he finds two more gorgeous pairs of shoes, which he sells to buy leather for four more... and so the pattern continues.

Meanwhile, the rival shoe seller is losing custom because his shoes are so flimsy. He accuses the shoemaker of stealing his helpers, prompting the shoemaker and his wife to wait up and find out just who is making their shoes. To their surprise, they spy two elves dressed in rags, who have escaped from the shoe seller's workshop, and they overhear the elves' plan to put the shoe seller out of business and free the other workers. The shoemaker and his wife want to repay the elves, so they make them two little outfits. The elves are delighted, the shoe seller is driven out of town and the elves' friends are freed and make their escape. Even without their tiny helpers, the shoemaker and his wife are sure to prosper.

About the authors

Many of our best-known fairy tales were collected and retold by the brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785-1863 and 1786-1859), from Hanau in north-west Germany. After studying law, the brothers became interested in philology and linguistics. They began collecting folk tales originally as part of their study of the German language, publishing these "Children's and Household Tales" in 1812-14. They continued to add stories until 1857. Their collections were hugely popular even in their own lifetime, and have since been translated into over 160 languages, as well as inspiring countless movies, musicals, opera, ballet and other artworks, and being endlessly retold and reinvented for both children and adults.

Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words in the story.

	elves	p11	awful	p19	solid	p30	rags	pelting	
p3	workshop		delighted		change [as	p31	chatter	p39	proper
p4	leather	p13	miserable		in money]		rotten	p42	outfits
	sewed	p14	afford	p21	fancy		attic		scrambled
p6	soles		ruined	p22	puzzled	p32	wicked	p44	spells
	needle	p15	yawned		customers	p34	astonished		celebrate
p8	spied		sighed		gorgeous		forcing		
	cart	p16	amazement	p24	plenty	p35	revenge		
p10	crafty	p17	neatly	p27	snorted		discussed		
	poor [as in		buckles		scowl	p37	cheat		
	bad quality]		baffled		stormed	p38	mob		



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Key phrases

p8	spied trouble	p23	couldn't believe his luck	p36	to go bust
p10	at a bargain price		And so it went on	p38	to shake your fists
p11	to put somebody out of business	p24	This is the life	p39	to breathe a sigh of relief
p14	to run out of money		business was booming		How can we ever
p17	What's more	p25	to have... to deal with	p44	to give up
p19	just what I'm looking for		word had spread		to fall apart
p21	...and all	p32	to put... out of business	p46	in business again
		p34	no wonder		

Before reading

Search for pictures of shoes, the more elaborate the better. You could look for both high fashion and historical examples. Share them with the class, and ask them to choose which they like best and least.

Ask the whole class if they know how shoes used to be made, before mass production in factories. Are there many shoemakers around today? Do the students know a story about one? If they do, ask what they remember about The Elves and the Shoemaker and write the bare bones of the story on the board.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

pp4-6	Can you think of some words to describe the shoemaker at work? [patient, careful, skilled, etc.]	p27	Why does the shoe seller study a shoe? What do you think he is looking for?
p7	Do you ever look through shop windows? Which shops do you like looking in most?	p29	Do you know who they're going to see? Can you see a clue on the page? [Look above the chapter heading.]
p11	Would you rather buy your shoes from the shoemaker or the shoe seller? Why?	p32	What's their plan? How are they going to put the shoe seller out of business?
pp16-17	How has the illustrator shown the shoemaker and his wife's surprise? Who else is surprised? [The cat and bird.]	p37	Can you see the graffiti on the shoe seller's cart?
p23	Why don't the shoemaker and his wife try to find out who made the shoes? [Maybe they don't want to stop the magic?]	p40	Do you think the elves will be pleased?
		p44	The cheap shoe seller is giving up selling shoes... what do you think he might do instead?

After reading

Ask students why they think the elves were so good at making shoes – maybe because they could work very neatly, with small stitches; maybe because they could use magic. If students had their own elf helpers, what would they ask them to do?

Ask students to think about choosing and buying shoes for themselves. What do they look for? You could brainstorm adjectives, e.g. comfortable, fashionable, classic, cheap, bright, etc.

Try a game: give each student a piece of paper and ask them to draw their perfect shoe. Then collect all the papers, shuffle them and see if students can match the shoe to the person.

