



The Small Woman: The Heroic Story of Gladys Aylward

by Alan Burgess (a biography)

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- read with accurate pronunciation, appropriate pitch and voice variation suitable for fictional and nonfictional texts
- ask and answer higher-order questions to guide/assess reading
- evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader
- evaluate the particular elements of a story or drama (e.g., how the setting shapes the characters or plot)
- read, view and analyse a variety of reading grade-appropriate and high-interest books and texts from print and non-print sources: (formal letter, biography, news article)
- gather relevant information from multiple authentic available resources following research ethics to write and present their assignment
- engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues
- identify and use compound prepositions and prepositional phrases in writing
- write formal letters and emails to people in extended academic (professional) environments for various purposes
- write a descriptive composition (giving physical description and characteristics/traits of a person/object/place moving from general to specific), using correct punctuation and spelling, by using the process approach - brainstorming, mind mapping, and writing a first draft

Pre-Reading

- What do you know about Japan and China?
- Can participatory citizenship be beneficial for us?

The Small Woman: The Heroic Story of Gladys Aylward

The Chinese Nationalist officer was commanding the platoon. Scouting on the wrong side of the river, he looked back at the section of men straggling along behind him.

His wandering thoughts suddenly jarred to a standstill. A noise! An odd noise! A far-off, high pitched sound, wavering and uncertain. A plane? His men thought so.

He watched them rolling their eyes round the cloudless sky in an effort to locate it. There had been an unusual air activity up and down the Yellow River for the past week. Usually the Japanese planes patrolled and fired at anything that moved.

And yet this sounded almost high and momentous. He shook his head as though to clear it. The river at this point was a mile wide; there might be children left in the village on the other side of the river. Perhaps they were at school; but their voices carry this far. He mounted a slight rise, crawling carefully on the top. He raised himself to see better, and grunted in astonishment. He reached for his binoculars and focused. It was an astonishing sight. A great crowd of children were assembled on the bank, all seated in a circle and singing loudly. Some smaller ones were splashing and jumping in the shallows.

He mentioned his men back with a hand signal. "Wait here", he said. "It may be a trick. Be alert".

The Japanese had driven refugees before them on many other occasions. And who were these children? All refugees had left this area days ago. The river was officially closed. As he walked along the bank, he could clearly see that they were Chinese children. They saw him, the young ones, and raced towards him, gurgling and shouting with delight. They screamed, "Here's a soldier. A soldier!".



While-reading

What did the man in the platoon believe the odd noise to be?

A young officer noticed a small woman sitting on the ground. She was thin and hungry-looking. She got to her feet as he approached, and with a shock of surprise, he realized that she was a foreigner.

'Are you mad?' he said. 'Who are you?'

'We are refugees trying to reach Sian', she said simply.

Her Chinese was excellent. Although, she was small like own country- woman, and her hair dark, he knew she was a foreigner.

'This will soon be a battlefield', he said wearily.

'Are you in charge of these children?', he asked

'Yes, I am in charge of them. We were trying to cross the river', she said.

He looked at her directly. She was quite a young woman. Her dark hair were scrapped back into a bun, her clothes old and soiled; there were dark circles under her eyes, and her face had a swallow, unhealthy look.

'You are a foreigner?', he enquired.

'Yes, I am a foreigner'.

'For a foreigner-you chose a strange occupation', he said suspiciously.

She looked steadily at him as he said, 'I think I can get a boat. It will need three journeys to take you all across, and it is dangerous. If a Japanese plane comes over when you are half way cross, there will be little hope.'

'We must cross the river', she said.

'You will probably manage to get food in the village on the other side. The people do not like to leave their homes even when the Japanese come', the soldier said.

'I understand', she said. 'It was like that in Yang-cheng'.

He walked to the river edge, whistled loudly three times in peculiar, piercing manner. From across the river came three answering whistles. Two little figures far away on the other bank pushed a boat into the water and began to row it across.



Gladys Aylward with some of the children before they crossed the mountains to Sian

While-reading

Why did the officer think the woman was a foreigner?

'I cannot thank you enough,' she said. 'I thought it was the end of us when we could not cross the river'.

The young officer noticed her sway a little as one of the children pushed against her.

He looked at her cautiously. 'You are ill', he said. 'You should find a doctor. The Nationalist troops on the other side of the river will have a doctor.'

'I am alright', she said. When we get to Sian, I shall be alright'. The soldiers ferried them rapidly to the other side. They returned and more of the children piled it. On the third journey the soldier helped the small woman into the boat with the last group of children.

His platoon ad gathered round to help. As the boat moved away from the bank, he called his men to attend and salute the children. He called, 'Good luck, foreigner!'

He turned to walk back along the bank to his platoon. As he walked, he looked into the sky, and listened for the drone of Japanese planes. None came. If this had been close to a large city or a settlement, he could have understood it, but wandering across a battlefield escorting an army of ragged Chinese children; that was, indeed, very curious and satisfying

The above is an excerpt from the biography called "The Small Woman: The Heroic Story of Gladys Aylward" by Alan Burgess (1957).

Alan Burgess (1st February 1915 - 10th April 1998) was an English Royal Air Force pilot and author who wrote several biographical and non-fiction books between the 1950s and the 1970s.

He wrote biography of Gladys Aylward, a British born Christian missionary, who worked in China. Aylward became a national of the Republic of China in 1936 and was a revered figure among the people, taking in orphans and adopting several herself. In 1938, the region was invaded by Japanese forces, and Aylward led more than 100 orphans to safety over the mountains, despite being wounded and sick, personally caring for them. She moved to British-administered Hong Kong, and finally settled in Taiwan in 1958. There, she founded the Gladys Aylward Orphanage,[9] where she worked until her death in 1970.

Post-reading

- Why did the platoon commander ask his soldiers to salute the children at the end?



Glossary

Given below are the difficult words from the unit. Look at their meanings and give synonyms of each in the given column. The first one is done for you. Also use these words in your own sentences.

Words	Meanings	Synonyms
binocular	an instrument that makes the objects seem nearer and clearer	field or opera glasses
bun	hair twisted into a round shape at the back of the head	
curious	a strong desire to know about something	
ferried	to carry people or goods in a boat	
gurgling	boat that carries people	
jarred	to have an unpleasant and annoying effect	
platoon	a group of soldiers that is a part of a company	
ragged	old and torn clothes	
scraped	pulled hair tightly at the back, away from the face	
scull	small oars used to row a boat	
straggling	the last or slowest person moving in a group	
sway	to move slowly from side to side	



Reading and Critical Thinking

a. Read the story carefully and answer the following questions:

1. What is the officer's main responsibility and concern when he encounters the children and the foreign woman by the river?
2. What is the setting of the story?
3. Describe the foreign woman's appearance and her reason for being with the children.
4. Why does the officer consider it dangerous for the group to cross the river?
5. How does the officer's attitude towards the foreign woman change throughout the passage, and why do you think it changes?
6. In your opinion, what might be the symbolic significance of this encounter between the officer, the children, and the foreign woman during wartime?

b. Answer the given short questions by choosing the correct answer:

- i. The Chinese Nationalist officer became suspicious when he noticed a group of children singing loudly on the other side of the river, especially because:
 - a) the children were refugees fleeing from the Japanese.
 - b) the river was officially closed, and all refugees had left the area.
 - c) the Japanese had driven refugees before them in similar situations.
 - d) the officer recognized some of the children as his own.
- ii. The foreign woman, in charge of the children, was attempting to cross the river to reach Sian because:
 - a) she was a foreign spy.
 - b) she was trying to escape from the Japanese.
 - c) she believed there would be food in the village on the other side.
 - d) she wanted to join the Nationalist troops on the other side for safety.
- iii. The soldier helped the foreign woman and the children cross the river because:
 - a) he wanted to gather information about the foreign woman.
 - b) he was sympathetic to their plight and offered assistance.
 - c) he was ordered to do so by his superiors.
 - d) he planned to capture them once they reach the other side.

c. Read the story and fill the given table below with the elements of the story, "The Small Woman".

Setting	
Plot	
Characters	
Point of view	
Theme	
Conflict	

**Oral Communication**

We are member of a global community, making this planet our home and all the people living on it our community. SDG stands for Sustainable Development Goals, which are a set of 17 global objectives adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals serve as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by the year 2030. The 17 goals can be seen in the poster shared below. These goals are designed to address serious global challenges and provide a charter for governments and common people to collaborate and work towards a more sustainable and equitable future.

The SDGs aim to promote economic growth while safeguarding the environment and ensuring that no one is left behind, leaving a lasting impact on people and the planet for generations to come.



Activity

- Discuss how the SDGs are interconnected. For example, how achieving Goal 1 (No Poverty) can positively impact Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) and Goal 4 (Quality Education).
- Arrange a speech competition in your class. Divide the 17 SDGs mentioned in the poster among students. Ask them to read and collect information on the selected SDG. Don't forget to mention the role of young people in achieving the SDGs. The hold the speech competition, where each participant will have 2-3 minutes to talk about his selected SDG.



Vocabulary and Grammar

1. Cataphoric reference: (Forward Reference)

Cataphoric reference means that a word in a text refers to another later in the text and you need to look forward to understand. It can be compared with anaphoric reference, which means a word refers back to another word for its meaning.

For example:

When he arrived, Ali noticed that the door was open. (he refers to Ali)

If you want them, there are cookies in the kitchen. (Them refers to cookies)

2. Anaphoric reference: (Backward Reference)

Anaphoric reference means that a word in a text refers back to other ideas in the text for its meaning. It can be compared with cataphoric reference, which means a word refers to ideas later in the text.

For example:

Sana dropped the plate. It shattered loudly. (it refers back to plate)

The music stopped, and that upset everyone. (that refers back to stopping of music)

1) Indicate anaphoric and cataphoric references used in the sentences below:

- When he arrived home, Naseem went to sleep.
- I went out with Ayesha on Sunday. She looked beautiful.
- Samuel left because he was tired.
- I can't believe it. We won!

- v. A large grey cat was lying on the stairs, and I had to step over it.
- vi. If you want some, here's some strawberry ice-cream.
- vii. After he had received his orders, the soldier left the building.
- viii. If you want them, there are cookies in the kitchen.

2) Read the text of the story carefully and find cataphoric and anaphoric references from it.

3. Preposition:

A preposition is a word or group of words used before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show direction, time, place, location, spatial relationships, or to introduce an object. Some examples of prepositions are: - "in", "at", "on", "of" and "to". Prepositions in English are highly idiomatic.

Types of Preposition

Prepositions of Time: - Prepositions of time show the relationship of time between the nouns to the other parts of a sentence. On, at, in, from, to, for, since, ago, before, till/until, by, etc. are the most common preposition of time.

For Example:

He started working at 10 AM.

She has been ill since Monday.

Prepositions of Place and Direction: - Prepositions of place show the relationship of place between the nouns to the other parts of a sentence. On, at, in, by, from, to, towards, up, down, across, between, among, though, in front of, behind, above, over, under, below, etc. are the most common prepositions of place/direction.

For Example:

The police broke into the house.

I live across the river.

Prepositions of Agents or Things: - Prepositions of agents or things indicate a causal relationship between nouns and other parts of the sentence. Of, for, by, with, about, etc. are the most used and common prepositions of agents or things.

For example:

This article is about smartphones.

Most of the guests have already left.

Phrasal Prepositions: - A phrasal preposition is not a prepositional phrase, but they are a combination of two or more words which functions as a preposition. Along with, apart from, because of, by means of, according to, in front of, contrary to, in spite of, on account of, in reference to, in addition to, in regard to, instead of, on top of, out of, with regard to, etc. are the most common phrasal prepositions.

For example:

They along with their children went to Atlanta.

According to the new rules, you are not right.

a) Choose the correct preposition for time and place.

- i. They caught the fugitive _____ the corner of the street. (in , on , at)
- ii. He will wait _____ three o'clock; then he'll have to leave. (since, until, still)
- iii. They are rarely _____ home at lunch time. (up, towards, at)
- iv. I'll be home _____ 10 minutes. (before, by, until)

b) Identify preposition of agent and direction in the given sentences.

- i. He was hit by a ball. _____
- ii. Put it inside the house. _____
- iii. His success results from careful planning. _____
- iv. They drove through the tunnel. _____

c) Underline phrasal preposition in the given sentences.

- i. In spite of his hard work, he failed the test.
- ii. According to the doctors, smoking can cause cancer.
- iii. I am standing here on behalf of my colleagues.

d) Punctuate the given lines,

are you mad he said who are you?

we are refugees trying to reach sian she said simply

e) Use the following phrasal verbs in sentences.

grow up _____

hand out _____

hand over _____

hang in _____

hang on _____

hang up _____



Writing

Letter of Complaint:

A complaint letter is written with the aim and hope of finding a suitable solution for a problem that has not been resolved. There are various problems faced by people. Making complaints to bring these problems to the attention of the higher authorities is the only way to resolve the problems.

Making complaints against someone is never easy, and doing it in writing is far more challenging because everything would be recorded. In light of this, extreme caution should be used while writing a complaint letter.

Format of a complaint Letter:

Sender's address

DD/MM/YY

Receiver's address

Subject: _____

Sir/Ma'am, (Salutation)

- Body of the Letter explaining the reason for your letter and the complaint.
- State the issue and its causes
- State the problems arising from the issue
- Give some suggestion/recommendations

Thanking you.

Yours faithfully,
XYZ

A sample complaint letter is shared below. Look at the different parts and also observe the formal style and language used.

HEADING 1: Address of the applicant, can be written on right or left hand corner. Either no punctuation or the given format should be used. Use formal format of date. Don't use 12-10-13

HEADING 2: Address of the person you are writing to. Should be written in a box form. Designation + Name of the Office + city. Notice the punctuation marks.

Subject: Write the subject clearly and underline it so it becomes highlighted.

Salutation: It should be according to the rank and the writer's relation to him. Use Sir/Madam or Dear Sir/Madam, or Respected Sir/Madam with a comma at the end.

Body: Body of the application/letter can be written in several paragraphs depending on the subject. It can be indented, starting after a small space of three or four letters or in a BLOCK STYLE, starting from the margin. There has to be one-line space between two paragraphs. Important points can be written in a bulleted form.

Ending: "Yours" WILLNOT have a comma. Yours is WRONG. Different ending salutations can be used according to the designation and the relation. Most commonly used are "Yours truly" and "Yours sincerely". Put a comma after it.

Examination Hall,
City, ABC,
17th January, 2016.

The Chairman,
Union Council-23,
ABC.

Subject: Defective Drainage System.

Sir,

I would like to bring into your notice the extremely bad condition of the drainage system of my locality. Here are some facts for your consideration:

- The underground drains along the smaller roads or street get chocked every second or third month with dirty water overflowing from the manholes.
- The rainwater is not properly drained out with the result that roads and streets get broken. The flooded roads become a great problem for traffic. The clothes of passersby get soiled and their movement becomes risky.

It is suggested that the present drainage system be cleaned thoroughly and repaired completely. New drains should be dug where necessary.

I hope you will try to solve this grave problem at your earliest.

Waiting for a favourable response.

Yours sincerely,
XYZ

I. Now keeping the above format in mind, write a letter to the Chairman FBISE about correction of the spellings of your father's name in your Secondary School Certificate.

- Read on the life and achievements of Bilquees Edhi and her contribution to the welfare of orphans in Pakistan and write a tribute to pay homage to her. One of the articles to read:
<https://thefridaytimes.com/20-Apr-2022/tribute-to-bilquis-edhi-by-one-of-the-children-to-whom-she-gave-a-new-life>



Teacher's Point



- Engage the students to participate in extended discussions and critique taking into account other speakers' viewpoints and presenting one's own with clarity.
- Explain the format of formal letters and emails to people in extended academic (professional) environments for various purposes
- Help the students to search SDGs over the Internet. Explain the 17 goals briefly.
- Help students get a copy of the article to be used in the writing activity. Encourage pair work.