

# The Green Door by O. Henry

from The Gift of the Magi and Other Stories

This Level 1 ELLSA lesson can be accessed on the internet at

[http://www.rdlthai.com/ellsa\\_greendoor1.html](http://www.rdlthai.com/ellsa_greendoor1.html)

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## 1. SYNOPSIS

### 1a) Synopsis

A young man named Rudolf Steiner works in a music shop during the daytime. At night, he explores the city of New York, in search of romance and adventure. One evening, he walks by a man passing out pieces of paper to people passing by. He is given a piece of paper with three words written on it. The three words are The Green Door. Other people also receive bits of paper from the man, but throw theirs away. Rudolf compares the other pieces of paper with his, but nobody else seems to have received the mysterious invitation to The Green Door. The other pieces of paper all advertise the location of a doctor's office. Certain that he is destined for a special adventure, Rudolf enters a nearby building in search of a green door. The building is not very well lit, but on the second floor he finds a green door. He knocks on the door and a young girl answers. She is attractive, but very poor and hungry. She faints from hunger into Rudolf's arms.

He carries her to her bed. Seeing her hunger and poverty, Rudolf runs out to buy food and milk for her. Then, when he is ready to leave, he promises to see her again the next day. However, when he leaves her apartment, he soon realizes that every door in the building is painted green. He runs back down to the man on the street and asks him why he gave him that piece of paper with The Green Door written on it. The man shows him a theater across the street called The Green Door and tells Rudolf that the theater people paid him to hand out papers and that he had given invitations to The Green Door to other people as well. Rudolf is convinced that it could only be his destiny to meet the girl in this strange way. She is the adventure and romance he was hoping for behind the Green Door, even if it was the wrong door.

### 1 b) Vocab Checkpoint

- **passing out (phrasal verb)** To pass something out is to distribute, in this case the man was passing out pieces of paper. This should not be confused with another very common meaning of pass out, which is to faint (see next column).
- **passing by (phrasal verb)** To pass by is to walk or move past. You may be in a car or any other form of transport.

- **mysterious (adjective)** Mysterious means that the meaning or appearance of something is not known. It is very interesting to the person who wants to know.
- **location (noun)** The location of something is where it is. If a chair is next to a table, that is its location. The verb is 'to locate' and is often used in the passive voice '... is located...'
- **destined (verb)** Destiny is the noun of this verb. The verb is always used in the passive as we can not control our destiny. Our destiny includes things that will happen to us whatever we do. e.g. accidents, good luck, etc.
- **in search of (adverbial phrase)** In search of is to look for something and is used with verbs of motion like go or in this case, enter.
- **attractive (adjective)** Something that is attractive is pleasant to look at.
- **faints (verb)** To faint is to collapse or fall over unconscious. To pass out is an alternative phrasal verb that means the same (see previous column).
- **poverty (noun)** Poverty is the state of being poor, or having no money and no means to earning any money, like having a job.
- **convinced (adjective)** If you are convinced that something is going to happen, you are more than 90% sure or certain.

### 1 c) Try this exercise with a friend

Quickly read the synopsis again and choose just five words. These can be any five words, but they should be words that you think are important in describing the main characters. Write the words down and then compare them with a friend. Between you there are ten words. Some may be the same. From those words, choose the five you both think are most important. Try to describe Rudolf and the girl he meets behind the green door, but don't look at the synopsis. If you wish you could try to write these descriptions as an answer to the questions below.

- 1) Why did Rudolf choose to look for 'The Green Door'?
- 2) Was Rudolf wise to look for 'The Green Door'?
- 3) How did the girl feel when Rudolf knocked on her door?
- 4) How did Rudolf feel when he discovered that all the doors in the building were green?

When you have discussed these questions or written a description, read the synopsis again.

## 2. PRE-STORY

### 2a) Consider these questions

- Do you like travel and adventure?
- Do you like meeting people?
- Are you interested in sports?
- Do you prefer city life or country life?
- Do you prefer to go out at night or during the day?
- You've read a little about Rudolf Steiner. What kind of things do you think he would like?

### 2b) A lot of people say you can tell an author's personality from the characters that he or she writes about.

O. Henry created Rudolf Steiner. In which ways do you think Rudolf is similar to O. Henry? Think about the points mentioned below.

- O. Henry's jobs in a bank and his jobs working for a newspaper.
- Rudolf's job in a music store.
- Do you think they were confident people?
- Do you think they were happy at work?
- What did they want from life?

### 2c) Are you an adventurous person?

Go back to the first question on this page...

Do you like adventure? How did you answer?

Below are some questions to help you decide...

1. You are planning a holiday to the US. Would you prefer to...
  - a) go alone? r
  - b) go with a friend? r
  - c) go on a group tour? r

2. When you travel alone, do you...
- a) like to make new friends? r
  - b) get to know just a few people while you are traveling? r
  - c) keep to yourself? r
3. You are staying on an island in Florida. Which activity interests you the most?
- a) scuba diving r
  - b) collecting seashells r
  - c) playing volleyball r
4. While you are in Florida you find a bottle with a message inside. The message reads:  
I put this bottle into the ocean hoping someone would find it, so I would know how far it had traveled. If you find it, please write or e-mail me... Jane
- Will you...
- a) write to Jane? r
  - b) keep the message, but probably never write? r
  - c) throw the message and bottle away? r
5. If you travel to the US, will you...
- a) eat American food? r
  - b) try to find Asian restaurants? r
  - c) cook your own food? r
6. You plan to study English for one month at an American school during your trip.  
Would you like to...
- a) stay with an American family? r
  - b) share a dorm room with students from other countries? r
  - c) share a room with a student from your own country? r
7. Would you ever marry someone from another country?
- a) yes r
  - b) maybe r
  - c) don't know r
8. You are walking down a New York side street. You pass by a shop with no signs or windows. The door is wide open.  
Would you...
- a) walk straight in? r
  - b) take a look in the door? r
  - c) just walk by? r

## Answer Key

- a) If most of your answers are (a), you are quite adventurous. You love travel, adventure and excitement. You are what O. Henry calls "a true adventurer".
- b) If most of your answers are (b), or if your answers are evenly mixed, you enjoy traveling, but like to plan your trips carefully. You are curious, but not exactly adventurous. You are what O. Henry calls "a half-adventurer".
- c) If most of your answers are (c), you are not so interested in adventure. You may prefer a comfortable home life or well planned holidays.

## 3. IN-STORY

- 3a) **First line** Let us think about adventure.  
**Last line** For Rudolf Steiner was a true follower of Romance and Adventure.

**If you have already read the story**, look at the first and last lines above and try to remember what adventure the character, Rudolf Steiner, finds behind the green door.

**If you have not read the story yet**, look at the first and last lines above, together with the title, "The Green Door". What kind of adventure do you think Rudolf Steiner will find when he opens the green door.

- 3b) **True or False?**

"Rudolf Steiner was a true adventurer".  
This is how O. Henry describes his main character on Page 85 (paragraph 6).

**Which of the following statements are true about Rudolf?**

- 1. He tried to find different things to do every evening. True or false?
- 2. He liked staying at home. True or false?
- 3. He never got into trouble with the police. True or false?
- 4. He lost his money many times. True or false?
- 5. His watch was stolen one time. True or false?

**Look at the statements again** and make questions to ask about Rudolf. Here are some starters for you.

1. He tried to find different things to do every evening.
2. He liked staying at home.
3. He never got into trouble with the police.
4. He lost his money many times.
5. His watch was stolen one time.

**How about you?** Think about the questions and about Rudolf. Can you make some questions to ask your friends? Think about yourself too as your friends may have questions to ask you. Here are some sentence starters.

Do you ever...?

Do you like...?

Have you ever...?

Have you ever had...?

### 3c) Adjective Study: What kind of man is Rudolf Steiner?

Rudolf got into trouble with the police. Do you think he was a bad man?

Which of the adjectives listed below might describe Rudolf? The page (pg) and paragraph (par) numbers refer to sections of the story you can check to help you decide. Can you find other places in the story that support your choices?

		Yes 3	No 7	Maybe ?
1)	careful	pg 85, last par		
2)	curious	pg 86, par 5 - 8		
3)	rich	pg 86, par 1		
4)	shy	pg 86, par 1; p87 par 8		
5)	handsome	pg 86, par 2		
6)	generous	pg 88, par 3		
7)	brave	pg 87, par 8		
8)	adventurous	pg 86, par 1; pg 87 par 8		
9)	fatalistic	pg 89, last par		
10)	kind	pg 88, par 3		

### 3d) Final questions

- 1) What do you believe Rudolf was really hoping to find behind "The Green Door?"
  - Which aspects of his character make you think that?
- 2) What would you like to find behind a strange door?
  - Which aspects of your character make you say that?

## 4. EXERCISES

### 4a) Language work: collocations

Collocations are words which commonly go together, often forming familiar phrases or expressions. Black and white, an open door, best friend and pass a test are just a few examples. Below are some incomplete expressions and phrases from the story. Before you check the answer key, look through the story and write them down on a piece of paper. Phrases indicated with an asterisk \*, may appear in two or more different phrases in the story.

- |     |                    |                          |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1)  | * make you _____   | pg 84 par 1              |
| 2)  | bread and _____    | pg 84 par 2, pg 88 par 3 |
| 3)  | It _____ nothing   | pg 84 par 2              |
| 4)  | Ready for _____    | pg 85 par 2              |
| 5)  | * look _____       | pg 85 par 4              |
| 6)  | Over your _____    | pg 84 par 2              |
| 7)  | _____ else         | pg 85 par 5              |
| 8)  | * strange _____    | pg 85 bottom             |
| 9)  | * lose your _____  | pg 85 bottom             |
| 10) | * around the _____ | pg 85 bottom             |
| 11) | * _____ the street | pg 85 bottom             |
| 12) | young _____        | pg 86 par 1              |
| 13) | _____ -looking     | pg 86 par 1              |
| 14) | * _____ shop       | pg 86 par 1              |
| 15) | _____ door         | pg 86 par 3              |
| 16) | a _____ 's office  | pg 86 par 3              |
| 17) | * turn _____       | pg 86 par 5              |
| 18) | the other _____    | pg 86 par 5              |
| 19) | * a piece of _____ | pg 86 par 8              |
| 20) | a crowd of _____   | pg 87 par 2              |
| 21) | * ground _____     | pg 87 par 2              |
| 22) | furnished _____    | pg 87 par 3              |
| 23) | come _____         | pg 88 par 2              |
| 24) | a _____ of milk    | pg 88 par 4              |

25)	wild _____	pg 88 par 8
26)	_____ alone	pg 88 bottom
27)	* _____ your eyes	pg 89 par 1
28)	_____ asleep	pg 89 par 1
29)	say good _____	pg 89 par 3
30)	_____ a question	pg 89 par 4
31)	a _____ pain	pg 89 par 6
32)	* _____ light	pg 89 bottom
33)	point a _____	pg 89 bottom

#### 4b) Treasure hunt: collocations

Can you find some other phrases in the story that are similar to the ones above marked with asterisks\*?

For example, for \* \_\_\_\_\_ the street, O. Henry uses *along* the street, *across* the street and *down* the street.

When you have done that, check your answers below.

After you have finished, look at the phrases not marked with asterisks and see if you can make some new phrases by changing one word. For example, *fall asleep* can be changed to *fall down* or *sound asleep*, by changing either the first or second word.

You can check your new answers in a dictionary to see if they are common collocations.

#### 5) FOLLOW-UP

##### Story writing project: The 'X' Door

Write a short story about a colored door. You can follow ideas from The Green Door. Perhaps your door will be blue or purple. It's your choice...

Make yourself the main character. What adventure or experience will you find behind your door?

Your story could be based on a true experience or the experience of a friend or member of your family. Think about these things as they may help you to work out the details of the elements of your story.

## Guidelines

Your title should read "The \_\_\_\_\_ Door" (put a color of your choice in the space).

- Use ten of the phrases from the collocation exercises you have done.
- Draw and color the door in your title for a cover.
- Place your stories around your class room for others to read.
- Read and compare other people's stories.
- Discuss how discoveries behind the doors reflect the stories' characters.

## ANSWER KEY

### 4a) Language Work: Collocations—answer key

1)	* make you laugh	pg 84 par 1
2)	bread and butter	pg 84 par 2, pg 88 par 3
3)	It means nothing	pg 84 par 2
4)	Ready for anything	pg 85 par 2
5)	* look back	pg 85 par 4
6)	Over your shoulder	pg 84 par 2
7)	everyone else	pg 85 par 5
8)	* strange places	pg 85 bottom
9)	* lose your money	pg 85 bottom
10)	* around the corner	pg 85 bottom
11)	* along the street	pg 85 bottom
12)	young man	pg 86 par 1
13)	good-looking	pg 86 par 1
14)	* music shop	pg 86 par 1
15)	open door	pg 86 par 3
16)	a doctor's office	pg 86 par 3
17)	* turn over	pg 86 par 5
18)	the other side	pg 86 par 5
19)	* a piece of paper	pg 86 par 8
20)	a crowd of people	pg 87 par 2
21)	* ground floor	pg 87 par 2
22)	furnished room	pg 87 par 3
23)	come back	pg 88 par 2
24)	a cup of milk	pg 88 par 4
25)	wild animal	pg 88 par 8
26)	all alone	pg 88 bottom
27)	* close your eyes	pg 89 par 1
28)	fall asleep	pg 89 par 1
29)	say good night	pg 89 par 3
30)	ask a question	pg 89 par 4
31)	a sudden pain	pg 89 par 6
32)	* electric light	pg 89 bottom

33) point a finger

pg 89 bottom

**4b) Treasure hunt: collocations—answers**

- make you laugh — make you feel sad pg 84 par 1
- piece of paper — piece of bread pg 84 par 2, piece of cloth pg 84 par 2
- look back — look at pg 89 par 6, look around pg 87 par 10, look up pg 87 par 2
- along the street — across the street pg 86 par 7, in the street pg 86 par 8, down a side street pg 84 par 2
- music shop — hat shop pg 87 par 3
- ground floor — top floor pg 87 par 3
- electric light — gas light pg 87 par 5
- turn over — turn red pg 85 par 1
- lose you money — lose your job pg 88 par 9, lose hope pg 88 par 9
- close your eyes — open your eyes pg 89 par 1
- strange places — strange way pg 89 par 7
- other side — other end pg 89 par 9
- around the corner — on the corner pg 89 bottom