

# FOOTPRINTS WITHOUT FEET

## **Summaries of the Lessons**

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### **1. A Triumph of Surgery (James Herriot)**

Tricki, a small dog, became hugely fat and ill because his rich mistress, Mrs. Pumphrey, overfed him. The narrator, Mr. Herriot, a veterinary surgeon, was worried about the dog's appearance and prescribed a strict diet and exercise, but Mrs. Pumphrey could not follow it. When Tricki became seriously ill, Mr. Herriot hospitalized him for observation, telling Mrs. Pumphrey it was the only way to save him. At the surgery, the dog was given no food for two days, only water. He slowly began to show interest in his surroundings and, by the third day, joined the other dogs. Tricki started running and playing with the other dogs, enjoying the "friendly scrimmages". He recovered rapidly without any medicinal treatment, transforming into a "lithe, hard-muscled animal". Mrs. Pumphrey, thinking Tricki needed strength, sent eggs, wine, and brandy, which the doctor and his partners enjoyed. After a fortnight, Mr. Herriot called Mrs. Pumphrey, who arrived in minutes. She was overjoyed when Tricki leaped into her lap. Seeing Tricki's complete recovery, Mrs. Pumphrey called it "a triumph of surgery".

- **Characters:** Tricki (the dog), Mrs. Pumphrey (mistress), Mr. Herriot (veterinary surgeon/narrator), Hodgkin (gardener), Joe, Tristan (other dogs/staff members).
  - **Key Words:** Pampered, overfed, listless, malnutrition, surgery, fortnight, observation, convalescing, triumph of surgery.
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### **2. The Thief's Story (Ruskin Bond)**

The narrator, Hari Singh, a fifteen-year-old thief, met Anil, a struggling writer of about twenty-five. Hari used flattery to get Anil to employ him, lying that he could cook. Anil agreed to feed him and taught him to write his name, whole sentences, and to add numbers. Hari was grateful for the education because he knew it could lead to much greater achievements than stealing. He worked for Anil for a month, making a small profit of about a rupee a day by cheating on the day's supplies. One evening, Anil came home with a small bundle of money and tucked it under the mattress. Hari decided to rob Anil, thinking he would waste the money on friends anyway and noting that Anil didn't pay him. He successfully crept in, took the 600 rupees in fifties, and ran toward the Lucknow Express train. However, he hesitated and missed the train, finding himself alone in the rain. Reflecting on his decision, he realized that learning to read and write would bring him more than a few hundred rupees, and Anil's sadness would be for the loss of trust, not the money. Hari crept back to the room and slipped the damp notes back under the mattress. The next morning, Anil gave him a fifty-rupee note, saying he would be paid regularly, and promised to start writing sentences.

- **Characters:** Hari Singh (the thief/narrator), Anil (the writer).
  - **Key Words:** Thief, flattery, trust, honesty, cheat, ambition, education, hesitation, loss of trust.
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### 3. The Midnight Visitor (Robert Arthur)

Ausable was a secret agent who did not fit the stereotypical image; he was fat and had a strong American accent. Fowler, a young and romantic writer, was disappointed after meeting him in the gloomy French hotel. Ausable told Fowler that a very important report concerning new missiles was coming to him and would affect history. As the light switched on, Fowler had his first authentic thrill: a man named Max stood in the room with an automatic pistol. Max was another secret agent who had entered with a passkey and demanded the important report. Ausable calmly complained that this was the second time someone had entered his room through the 'nuisance of a balcony'. Max said he didn't know about the balcony, which Ausable explained belonged to the next apartment but extended under his window. Suddenly, there was a loud knocking at the door, and Ausable claimed it was the police he had called for extra protection. Max, panicking and black with anger, quickly backed toward the window, saying he would wait on the balcony. He swung his leg over the sill and dropped, screaming shrilly, as the doorknob turned. The door opened, and a waiter named Henry entered with the drink Ausable had ordered. Fowler was astonished and asked about the man on the balcony, but Ausable revealed Max would not return because **there was no balcony**.

- **Characters:** Ausable (secret agent), Fowler (writer/guest), Max (rival secret agent), Henry (waiter).
  - **Key Words:** Secret agent, disappointed, report, Max, pistol, balcony (non-existent), presence of mind, wit, outwit.
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### 4. A Question of Trust (Victor Canning)

Horace Danby, a fifty-year-old locksmith, was thought to be a good, honest citizen but secretly loved rare, expensive books. To fund his hobby, he successfully robbed a safe every year. He meticulously planned his latest robbery at Shotover Grange for two weeks. Horace entered the house by taking a key from a hook and, wearing gloves to avoid fingerprints, quieted the house dog, Sherry. He suffered from a bout of hay fever triggered by the flowers and had to sneeze while preparing his tools. While working on the safe hidden behind a painting, a young woman dressed in red appeared in the doorway. She calmly claimed to be the owner's wife who had returned unexpectedly. Horace offered to leave if she would forget she had seen him. She laughed and said she needed the jewels from the safe, having forgotten the numbers and wanting them for a party that night. Horace, eager to avoid prison and to please her, took off his gloves and broke open the safe for her. Two days later, a policeman arrested Horace for the jewel robbery. His fingerprints were found all over the room, as he had removed his gloves to handle the lighter for the woman. Horace realized he had been tricked by another thief—the charming, clever young woman who was not the owner's wife.

- **Characters:** Horace Danby (the thief), Sherry (the dog), the young lady in red (the real culprit), the gray-haired wife (the actual owner).
  - **Key Words:** Locksmith, rare books, hay fever, alibi, safe, fingerprints, trust, trickery, honour among thieves (false).
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## 5. Footprints without Feet (H.G. Wells)

Two boys in London were surprised to see fresh, muddy footprints of bare feet that appeared from nowhere and then disappeared altogether. The mystery was explained by Griffin, a brilliant but lawless scientist who had discovered how to make the human body transparent. He became invisible after swallowing rare drugs and removing his clothes to escape after setting his landlord's house on fire. Being mid-winter, he was shivering and found warmth and clothes in a big London store. The next morning, he escaped the store's assistants by removing his newly found clothes, becoming invisible and naked once more. He travelled to a theatrical company shop on Drury Lane, where he dressed in bandages, dark glasses, a false nose, and a large hat to become visible. To get away, he robbed the shopkeeper after callously attacking him. He then took a train to the village of Iping, booking two rooms at a local inn, explaining his appearance was due to an accident. He was later suspected of a burglary at the clergyman's house and was confronted by Mrs. Hall, the landlord's wife, about entering a locked room. In his fury, the scientist ripped off his clothes and facial disguise, revealing a headless man. When the constable, Mr. Jaffers, tried to arrest him, Griffin threw off his remaining garments. He became completely unseen, struggled with the policeman, and knocked him unconscious, shaking himself free.

- **Characters:** Griffin (the invisible scientist), Mrs. Hall (inn owner's wife), Mr. Jaffers (the constable), the clergyman.
  - **Key Words:** Invisible, transparent, lawless, landlord, theatrical company, bandages, Iping Inn, burglary, headless.
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## 6. The Making of a Scientist (Robert W. Peterson)

Richard H. Ebright was a former "scout of the year" who excited the scientific world with a new theory on how cells work. His journey into science began with his childhood fascination for **butterflies** and a driving curiosity. His mother was his only companion and constantly encouraged his interest in learning, providing him with telescopes, cameras, and helping him with learning activities. A turning point was a children's book, *The Travels of Monarch X*, which opened the world of science by inviting readers to tag monarchs for research. In the seventh grade, he lost a county science fair with a simple display and learned that winners did **real experiments**. Based on ideas from Dr. Urquhart, he undertook prize-winning projects, including testing the theory that viceroy butterflies copy monarchs. In high school, he discovered an unknown insect hormone produced by the **twelve tiny gold spots** on a monarch pupa. This research eventually led to his new theory, co-written with his college roommate, explaining how the cell can 'read' the blueprint of its **DNA**. Ebright's success stemmed from his first-rate mind, curiosity, and the will to win for the right reasons (doing the best job he could).

- **Characters:** Richard H. Ebright (scientist), Mrs. Ebright (mother), Dr. Frederick A. Urquhart (scientist/mentor), James R. Wong (college roommate), Richard A. Weiherer (teacher/adviser).
  - **Key Words:** Monarch butterfly, science, curiosity, experiment, cell, DNA, hormone, gold spots, academic excellence.
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## 7. The Necklace (Guy de Maupassant)

Matilda Loisel was a pretty, young woman, born into a family of clerks, who felt she was meant for a life of luxury and constantly suffered from the poverty of her apartment. Her husband, a petty clerk, returned one evening with an invitation to a grand party hosted by the Minister of Public Instruction. Instead of being delighted, Matilda became irritated because she had nothing suitable to wear. Her husband gave her his savings of four hundred francs to buy a dress, sacrificing his plan to buy a gun. A new problem arose as she had no jewellery to wear with the dress. On her husband's suggestion, she borrowed a superb **diamond necklace** from her rich friend, Mme Forestier. At the ball, Mme Loisel was a great success, elegant and full of joy. Upon returning home, she was horrified to discover the necklace was missing from her neck. After a frantic search proved futile, they decided to replace the jewel, writing to Mme Forestier that they had broken the clasp. They found a chaplet of diamonds exactly like the lost one, valued at forty thousand francs but purchased for thirty-six thousand, using all their savings and borrowed money. This immense debt forced the Loisels into ten years of horrible poverty, living in an attic and doing hard, menial work to restore the money. Ten years later, a worn-out Matilda met Mme Forestier and confessed the entire truth. Mme Forestier was shocked and revealed that her original necklace was **false** and was not worth more than five hundred francs.

- **Characters:** Matilda Loisel (Mme Loisel), M. Loisel (her husband), Mme Forestier (her friend).
  - **Key Words:** Luxury, clerk, ball, diamond necklace, lost, debt, poverty, sacrifice, false.
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## 8. Bholi (K.A. Abbas)

Sulekha, the youngest daughter of Numberdar Ramlal, was called **Bholi**, the simpleton, because a childhood head injury made her backward. She also had deep pock-marks from small-pox and stammered, causing other children to make fun of her. When a primary school was opened in the village, the Tehsildar advised Ramlal, as a revenue official, to set an example by sending his daughters to school. Ramlal's wife suggested sending Bholi, arguing her 'ugly face and lack of sense' meant she had little chance of marrying anyway. Bholi was frightened of going to school but felt she was being taken to a better place when she was bathed and given a clean dress. In class, her teacher spoke softly and soothingly, which touched Bholi's heart and helped her overcome her stammer for the first time. The teacher encouraged her to read and learn, promising that education would stop people from laughing at her and give her respect. Years later, Bholi's parents accepted the marriage proposal of Bishamber Nath, an old, lame grocer with grown children, because he was well-to-do and did not ask for a dowry. At the wedding, Bishamber demanded a dowry of five thousand rupees after seeing Bholi's pock-marks. Having gained confidence through her education, Bholi suddenly spoke clearly, threw away her veil, and ordered her father to take back the money. She rejected the "mean, greedy and contemptible coward" of a groom and, to comfort her father, promised to serve him and teach in her school in his old age. The teacher watched, deeply satisfied, having successfully completed her **masterpiece**.

- **Characters:** Sulekha/Bholi (the girl), Ramlal (father/Numberdar), Ramlal's wife, Bholi's teacher, Bishamber Nath (the groom).
- **Key Words:** Simpleton, small-pox, stammer, school, teacher, dowry, humiliation, self-respect, education, masterpiece.

## 9. The Book That Saved the Earth (Claire Boiko)

The Historian, in the twenty-fifth century, introduces a play about the Martian invasion of Earth in 2040, which was stopped by a single book. Great and Mighty Think-Tank, the Commander-in-Chief of the Martians, was depicted as having a huge, egg-shaped, "balloon brain". Think-Tank ordered his space probe crew (Captain Omega, Lieutenant Iota, and Sergeant Oop) to invade the Earth. The crew landed in the Centerville Public Library, which they mistakenly identified as a "storage barn" or a "refreshment stand". Think-Tank declared that the books were sandwiches and ordered a crew member to eat one to "confirm" his opinion, which Oop did unhappily. Apprentice Noodle, the clever Martian, suggested the Earthlings did not eat the "sandwiches" but used them as a communication device. Think-Tank, after the crew took intelligence vitamins, ordered them to decipher the code (the writing) in a large, colorful book. The book turned out to be **Mother Goose**, a book of nursery rhymes. Think-Tank misinterpreted the rhymes, believing they described a high-level civilization where Earthlings grew metals and taught animals space techniques. He panicked when Oop read the *Humpty Dumpty* rhyme and showed a picture of the character, whom Think-Tank thought resembled his own "Great and Mighty Balloon Brain". Fearing a counter-invasion, Think-Tank screamed, ordered his fleet to retreat from Mars, and escaped a hundred million miles away to Alpha Centauri. Thus, the book of nursery rhymes saved Earth by causing the mighty Martian leader to run away in terror.

- **Characters:** Historian, Great and Mighty Think-Tank, Apprentice Noodle, Captain Omega, Lieutenant Iota, Sergeant Oop.
- **Key Words:** Martian, invasion, Think-Tank, Mother Goose, library, nursery rhyme, misinterpretation, intelligence, communication device, retreat.