

Title: Mango Memories (Version Two)

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Level: Upper-intermediate to Advanced

Genre: Fiction (Childhood memories, Adventure)

Adapted and edited with author's permission by C. Brown. Drawings by Ahnaf Shariar Jarif.

Every year in the month of *Jaistho* and *Aashar*, the weather becomes gloomy and cloudy, and it rains frequently. However, even though this year the weather is not following its usual pattern, today is a different day. It is pouring down with rain. Mr. Mahmood is living in a small town in the countryside now. He is sitting in his favourite rocking chair in the corridor, often swinging slightly back and forth and reading Frank McCourt's "*Angela's Ashes*".

The rain is whooshing down from the sky, pitter-pattering on the mud and whirring off the leaves, **creating** a kind of soothing music which he is **finally** conscious of noticing after many years. These sounds of nature make him feel nostalgic. He closes the book, places it on a small, round brown table, and takes a sip of his coffee. It's his favourite flavour, and was made and offered to him just now by his wife, *Nuzairah Mahmood*. She seems to know exactly what he loves and never forgets to offer him a cup of dark black coffee whenever he needs it.

Little *Rafan*, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. *Mahmood*, is also following his father's example, and is taking tea and reading a poem - *Ay Chelera Ay Meyera* from a book of rhymes as he lies on a cozy bean bag chair. His legs are scattered lazily across the floor. For a second time, Mr. *Mahmood* sips his coffee and remembers how naughty he was in his childhood. Mr. *Mahmood* was born into a landed family, known as *Mondol* in the surrounding villages. They were well known by everyone back in the British **period**. When he was a child, *Mahmood* was also well-known... as the naughtiest child in his neighbourhood.

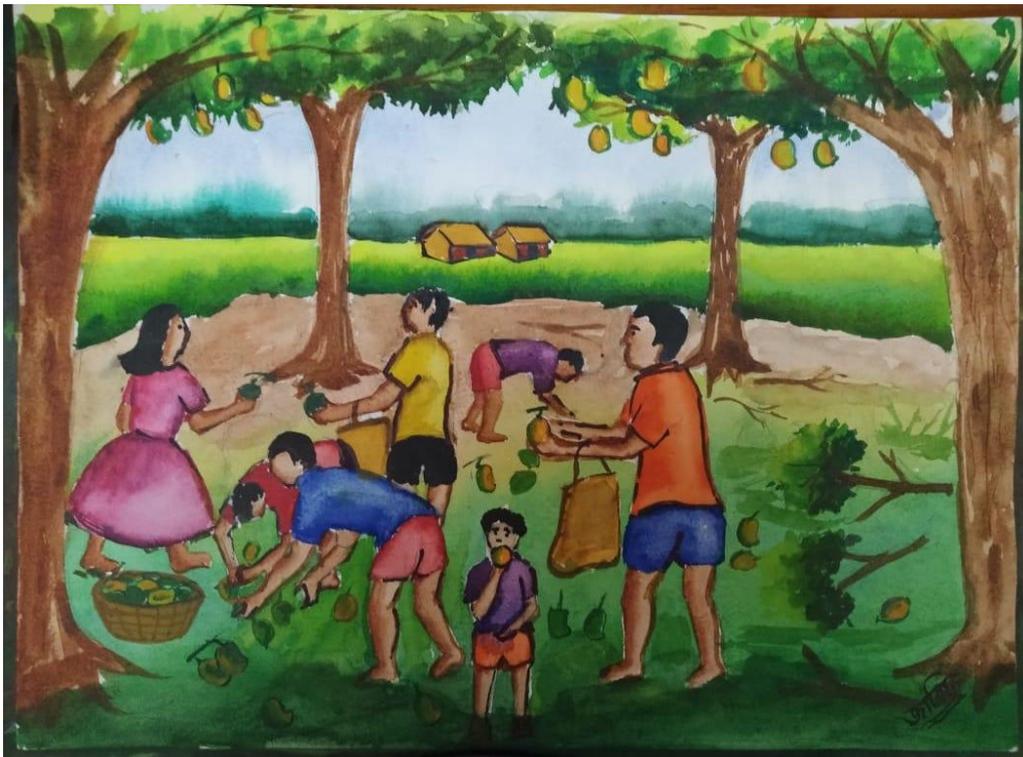
During *Boishak*, the village children in Bangladesh get up early in the morning. They get up early not because it is their habit, but because they have something special to do. Very early, just after dawn, they love to go to the nearby mango gardens, when the sleepy daylight peeps through the darkness and the local birds fill the whole sky with their sweet melody. Everywhere the sweet scents of different flowers - *mongo*, *lichi*, *krishnachura* - spread through the morning air. It's a wonderfully fragrant time of the day.

Like other boys, Mr. Naughty *Mahmood* also went with his friends to collect the mangoes which had fallen throughout the night. Sometimes a gentle or even a heavy wind shook the branches and made the mangoes fall onto the ground. Many children of *Mahmood's* age used to collect the fallen mangoes and sell them to vendors at two or five *taka* a kg, which gave them enough money to buy *shingara*, coconut ice-cream, *or*

piyaju. Being the child of a well-off family, he did not need to sell anything. Instead, he gave the extremely sour mangoes to his mother to cook mouth-watering *tok daal* and kept the tasty ones for eating fresh.

He used to peel and slice the mangoes with a small curved knife or with an oyster shell - he could make a small hole in the middle of the mango by sharpening the oyster shell on a hard surface. Sometimes, he smashed the mangoes against a wall or the hard trunk of a large tree. He then mixed salt with peppermint and prepared a *masala*. When that was done, he took each slice or smashed piece of mango and dipped a corner lightly into the *masala* and ate it. It was a heavenly flavour. Many of his friends also took their mangoes to school to eat during *tiffin* or after finishing each class before the next teacher entered the classroom.

Mr. *Mahmood* casts his mind back to one occasion in particular. It was the month of *Jaistho* in 2000. The sky was completely overcast with a heavy, thick, dark cloud. *Mahmood* along with his cousin, *Sujon*, and some friends had rushed to the largest mango garden in their neighbourhood, which covered the **area** of twenty-two *bighas* (five and a half hectares). They took some *jute* sacks in the hope there might be a small storm and that they could collect sacks full of mangoes.



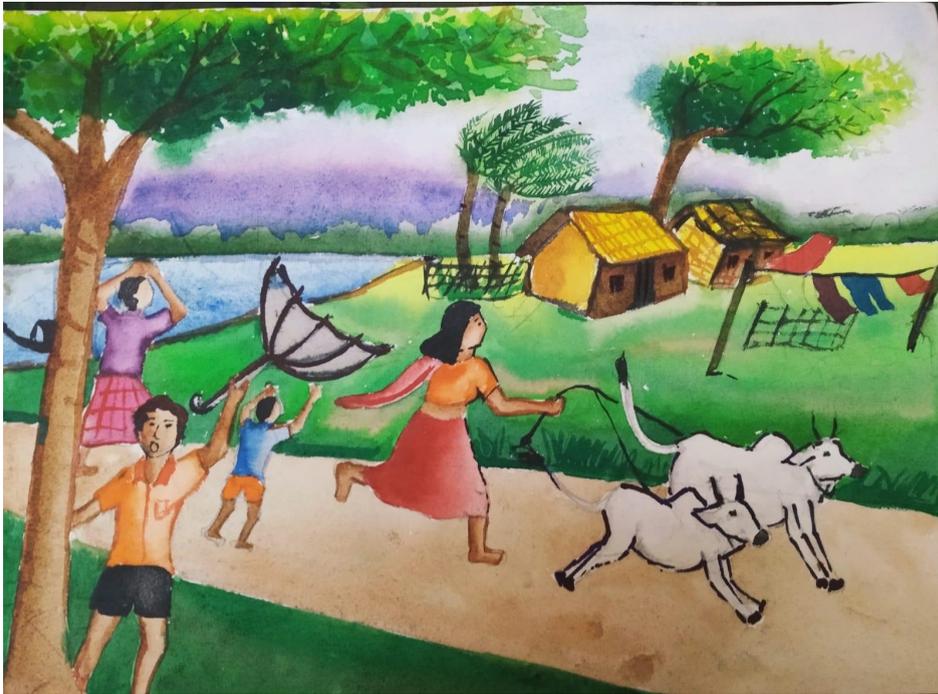
When they reached the mango garden, their hopes melted away since there was no wind. At the same time, it started drizzling. They had become utterly disappointed. However, *Mahmood* was cunning and decided on a tricky plan to pick mangoes. All the trees in the garden were laden with various types of mangoes - *Fazlee*, *Bombai*, *Langra*, *Gopalbogh*, and *Harivanga*. *Mahmood* started to run from one tree to another. He ran so

fast that he was able to distract the *mali* successfully, whose **job** was to care for the garden. He hit the mangoes with some lumps of hard earth until they fell from the trees, then quickly grabbed them and ran away again before he was caught. With all this running across the hard earth, *Mahmood's* feet soon began to hurt as he had been in a rush to leave his house that morning and had forgotten to put on his sandals.

Mahmood managed to collect two or three mangoes in that way. After a few minutes, the rain stopped drizzling, and as the boys began to head towards their homes, a gentle wind started to blow. The boys looked at each other, and paused. Wind! That meant they might be able to gather fallen mangoes after all! They stopped and waited.

The wind became stronger and stronger, until it began to rage. Suddenly, it turned into a gale. The wild wind began to shake the entire garden fiercely. At first, the boys were delighted and began collecting as many fallen mangoes as they could. Now, there were mangoes everywhere and the brown earth of the field turned bright green with the fallen fruit. The wind increased, until suddenly it swept away the *mali's* tent into another distant field. The tent was the only place of shelter in the whole garden. Now, there was no place at all for anyone to take shelter. Meanwhile, the rain was pouring down, and all around them was the terrible, frightening roar of booming thunder.

Mahmood tried to protect himself from the rain with his grandfather's big wooden umbrella. He had at least remembered to bring that with him. But as soon as he tried to open it, the wind turned the umbrella upside down and in a blink of an eye, it tore the umbrella completely out of his hands and blew it up and away. *Mahmood* was shocked to see how quickly and violently the umbrella flew away. It seemed to go on endlessly, for miles and miles!



Fallen leaves, broken branches and mud now covered the whole garden. The pitch-black clouds engulfed the entire sky. Nobody could see anything. The howling of the wind made *Mahmood* forget all about collecting mangoes, even though there was now a huge heap of mangoes under his feet. The wind continued to roar in the branches of the trees all around him. Without understanding what he was doing, *Mahmood* dashed to a small tree nearby and grabbed it firmly with his arms. He gasped for breath. The wind was wailing all around him, and now big branches were crashing to the ground. Some were even lost as the wind wrenched them from the trees and lifted them high into the sky.

Mahmood could hear the frightening cracking sounds of big branches of mango trees as they began to break. It sounded so close to where he was standing. He felt as if he was about to take his last breath. Never before, in his whole life, had he felt so terrified. He tried to call out to his cousin, “*Sujon*, where are you? Are you there?” but his voice died away in the wind. His mouth felt so dry that he could not keep calling out any more. The wild wind continued to toss and sway the tree he was clinging to. It pushed and pulled the tree backwards and forwards in such a way that he felt as if he were being rocked like a baby in a cradle. He clung to the trunk tighter than before. The rough bark of the tree cut into his arms and belly. It felt as if the wind was trying to pull him off the tree and into the air. This weird, wild storm seemed to go on and on, without end.

The rain continued pouring down. After what seemed an eternity, the wind began to lose its strength, and the gale gradually calmed down. At last, the perilous moment was over, but by now, *Mahmood* was shivering violently, and his teeth were chattering uncontrollably.

Eventually, the sky became clearer, but here and there he could see there were still some small black puffy clouds scattered across the sky. At last, Mahmood could see his cousin and the other children. Everywhere around them there was nothing but battered trees, branches, and heaps of mangoes. Slowly, they began to gather the mangoes and pile them up under each tree. Meanwhile, other children and grown-ups - males and females - came into the garden to join them. *Sujon* ran home and brought back some more sacks, as the ones they had originally brought with them were not **sufficient** to hold all the many mangoes that had fallen during the storm. After collecting them all, there were so many they had to take all the mangoes home in a van. When they got back, they poured the mangoes into the centre of their courtyard and **distributed** the mangoes among their relatives and neighbours.

The next day, *Mahmood* went to school. Even though he felt sick, and had a fever and a runny nose, he was excited to share what had happened yesterday afternoon. He had to wait until the fourth period, because there were three consecutive classes before there was a break. At the start of the fourth period class, *Mahmood's* Bangla teacher came into the room. *Mahmood's* heart sank and filled with fear since he had not been able to complete his homework. All the students were supposed to read an excerpt of a novel from their *Bangla Sohopath*. **Nevertheless**, no one was able to retell the **required** part of the story when they were asked to do so.

Mahmood was so tired, and because he was also feeling sick, he had already begun to fall asleep on his desk.

His friend nudged him. The teacher noticed him and became irritated, saying in a husky voice,

“Why are you absent-minded today? Why are you falling asleep?”

Someone whispered that *Mahmood* had become sick because he had gone to collect mangoes in yesterday's terrible weather. The teacher became furious and said roughly,

“Oh! I see! That's what's the matter! Why don't you come forward, and stand in front of everyone and retell your story?”

Mahmood had no choice but to go and stand in front of the class. Trembling with fear, he said,

“I couldn't study.”

“Why?” demanded the teacher.

Mahmood was so nervous that he started gabbling. At last, the teacher managed to understand *Mahmood's* situation and became more sympathetic. Patting *Mahmood* on the back, he said,

“Tell us what happened last afternoon.”

At last, *Mahmood* became steady and more confident. The memory of yesterday's events was still vivid in his mind. He began to relate his adventure, and once he started he found he was able to keep on going. At

last, the tiffin bell rang. The teacher was amazed at Mahmood's lively storytelling and once again patted him on the back, praising him,

"You know, your storytelling skills are exceptional *Mahmood*. But you still need to study the excerpt, OK? I'll give you all another chance to tell it tomorrow." The class cheered. *Mahmood* felt like a hero. He was so relieved.

At last, Mr. *Mahmood*'s thoughts return to the present. He has forgotten to finish his coffee. He looks across the room at *Rafan*. He leaves the book where it is on the table and calls his little son to him. He holds *Rafan*'s tiny hands and asks, "*Abbu*, would you like to go to your grandparents' house tomorrow?" *Rafan* knows just what this means. He jumps on his father's lap, kisses him with delight, then jumps down again and runs towards his mother shouting with joy...

"Mangoes!" he cries.

List of Bangla Words

Bighas = A unit of land measurement in Bangladesh. (22 bighas is about five and a half hectares)

Boishak, Jaistho, Aashar = The first three months of the Bangla calendar

Lichi = A small round kind of fruit, that is white inside, with a large stone and red skin. Sometimes written as 'lychee'

Mondal = a family title

Krishnachura = a red and yellow flowering tree. The common English name is '*Royal Poinciana*'

Shingara = kind of stuffed fried snack shaped like a water nut

Taka = the currency (money) of Bangladesh

Piyaju = kind of fried snack (or fritter) made of minced onion and pulses

Tok daal = a creamy sour soup prepared from lentils and green mangoes

Mali = the person who protects a mango garden

Abbu = father

Glossary

Ay Chelera Ay Meera = one of the most popular Bangla rhymes among the children in Bangladesh

Beanbag = a large, soft floor cushion filled with small plastic or foam beads

Bangla Sohopath = a textbook which contains parts of popular novels, dramas, short stories etc. for Bangladeshi high school students (grade 6-10)

Mango(es) = a sweet yellow fruit with a large stone in the centre

Tiffin = usually this refers to a light meal or snack time

Learning Activities

Vocabulary

1. High frequency words from the Academic Word List (AWL)

area	creating	distributed	eventually	finally
job	nevertheless	period	required	sufficient

2. Off List words

These words are not so common in English, and you may already know some of them. You should only spend time learning these words if you already know all of the AWL words in number 1 above.

In the list below, circle the words you don't know. Next, read the story again and find the words you do not know in the story. **Highlight** them in the story with a bright colour so they are easy to find.

amazed bark battered belly blink booming casts chattering classroom clinging/clung coconut consecutive corridor countryside courtyard cozy cradle cunning dashed dawn distract drizzling engulfed eternity excerpt fragrant furious gabbling gale gasped gloomy grabbed hectares hero homework howling huge husky irritated jute laden lap mango/mangoes melody naughtiest/naughty nervous nostalgic novel nudged overcast oyster patting peel peeps peppermint perilous puffy rage rhymes runny sacks sandals shivering sip slice smashed soothing storytelling sway tasty terrified tiny toss tricky ups utterly van vendors vivid wailing weird whirring whooshing wrenched

Collocations and Phrasal Verbs

- Find these expressions in the story and highlight them
- Check the meanings of each one
- Find some other examples of these expressions (in a dictionary, or on the Internet)
- Try to use each one in your own original sentence. (Ask someone to check your sentences when you have finished.)

Collocations		
Pitch black	Perilous moment	In one's whole life
Wild/fierce/angry/violent/heavy/gentle... wind	Back and forth (or 'backwards and forwards')	Husky voice
Take a sip of (a drink)	A 'landed family'	Dip (something) into
Push and pull	Cozy bean bag (chair)	

Phrasal Verbs

Pour down Melt away Turn (something) upside down Cling to (simple past tense 'clung') Die away Calm down	Scatter across Turn into Fill with Decide on (a plan) Cut into Cast (one's mind) back (to the past)	Get up Sweep away Care for Be laden with (fruit) Peep through Call out to (someone) Pile up
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Comprehension Questions

Remembering

1. Why do the village children get up early?
2. What was the title of Mahmood's family?
3. What was the size of Mr. Mahmood's largest mango garden?
4. Why were the boys so upset after reaching the mango garden?
5. How did the boys manage to get all the fallen mangoes home?

Understanding

1. "*He began to relate his adventure and kept on going.*" What do you think is the purpose of the writer's using the word 'adventure' in this line?
2. What is the meaning of the expression '*casts his mind back*'?
3. What is the meaning of the expression '*his heart sank*'?
4. Why didn't *Sujon* answer Mahmood, when *Mahmood* called out to him?
5. Why did *Mahmood's* teacher's attitude change after hearing *Mahmood's* story?

Inferring

1. Where did *Rafan's* grandparents live?
2. Why couldn't *Mahmood* open the umbrella?
3. How big was the tree that *Mahmood* was holding? How can you say that?
4. What do you think would have happened if Mahmood had let go of the tree?
5. Why did *Mahmood* go to school even though he was sick?
6. How long did he take to express what had happened the previous day?
7. Do you think that little *Rafan* is free to enjoy his leisure time? Why or why not?
8. Why does Mr. *Mahmood* want to take his son to his grandparents' house?

Critical Thinking Questions

Applying

1. What would you have done if you were in a storm in a situation like *Mahmood's* situation?
2. If you had the opportunity to spend a couple of days in a different village or a country town, would you go? How do you think you would spend your days?
3. *Mahmood* was utterly terrified during the storm. Has there been any incident in your life, which made you feel like you were 'about to take your last breath' or the incident seemed to go on and on 'without end'?
4. Do you think that you get enough leisure time? Do you have any suitable natural places to roam around in during your leisure time? Describe them. If not, what do you do instead?

Analysing

1. What kind of person was *Mahmood's* Bangla teacher, do you think? List some suitable adjectives and use them to describe his characteristics as a teacher?
2. The story describes many different kinds of sounds (see the list below). The term for the use of 'sound' words is *Onomatopoeia*. Onomatopoeic words "evoke the actual sound of the thing they refer to or describe" [from <https://www.litcharts.com/search?query=onomatopoeia>]. It is not so important to learn these words unless you already know all the other vocabulary. However, you should check their meanings in a dictionary. Write the meaning next to each word. (You can do this in your own language if you wish.)

boom	howl	whirr
chatter	husky	whoosh
crack	pitter-patter	wail
crash	roar	
gabble	wail	

Which words relate to sounds that people make? Which words relate to the sound that things make? Which words can be used for both people and things? Think about this, then discuss your ideas with your classmates.

Choose five of the words. Can you think of situations in which you might use each of the words you chose? Describe the situations to someone in English, and use the words as you speak. You may need to change the form of the word to fit the grammar of your sentence.

Evaluating

1. Do you think going to collect mangoes during stormy weather is a good or a bad idea? Why?
2. How important is it for people to reflect on their childhood experiences? Give a reason for your answer and some examples to illustrate your point of view.
3. Discuss the following questions...
 - a. Have you ever failed to do an important piece of homework? What was it? Why didn't you do it?
 - b. In your view, how should teachers deal with students who don't do their homework? What kind of punishment (if any) is suitable for students who do not do their work?

Creating

1. Why do you think the story has been entitled "*Mango Memories*"? Can you think of another title for this story?
2. Find a recipe in your own language for a dish that uses mangoes. Translate it into English. If possible, make your dish and share it with someone. If you can't make the dish, in English, describe

how it is made and what is needed to make it. Use your written recipe to help you remember what to say, but do not read from it directly. Try to explain each step in your own words.

3. Choose one part of the story. Write and perform a short play in English about your part of the story. You should try to find a way to make some of the noises listed in the 'Analysing' question section above. If possible, ask someone to make a short video of your story as you perform it. When you have finished, review your video. Think about the quality of your English. What did you say well? What could you improve?