

Title: Mango Memories (Version One)

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Level: Pre-intermediate to Intermediate

Genre: Fiction. Childhood memories, adventure, danger

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

Every year in the month of *Jaistho* and *Aashar*, the **weather** turns dark and cloudy, and it often **rains**. However, this year the weather is nothing like it usually is. Today is a different kind of day.

Mr. *Mahmood* is living in a small town out in the country now. He is sitting in his favourite rocking **chair**, rocking back and forth, reading Frank MacCourt's famous book, "*Angela's Ashes*".

The rain is falling heavily from the sky, pitter-pattering on the wet earth outside and off the leaves of the trees. It is creating a kind of gentle music which, after many years, he has at last begun to notice. This awareness of nature makes him long for the past days of his childhood. He closes the book, places it on a small, round wooden table, and takes a little mouthful of his **coffee**. It's his favourite **flavour** and was made and offered to him by his wife, *Nuzairah Mahmood*. She knows what he loves and never forgets to offer him a **cup** of dark black coffee at different times of each day. She always seems to know just when he really needs it.

Little *Rafan*, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. *Mahmood*, is just like his father, and is taking **tea** and reading from *Ay Chelera Ay Meyera**, a book for children. He's lying on a large soft *beanbag**, and is spreading his **legs** across the floor. For a second time, Mr. *Mahmood* takes a drink from his coffee and, looking at his young son, remembers how *naughty** he was in his own childhood. He was born into a family of landlords, known from the British period as *Mondol**. In some of the surrounding villages, he, *Mahmood*, had been known to all as the naughtiest child in his neighbourhood.

In the time of the year known as *Boishak**, the village children in Bangladesh get up early in the morning. They get up early, not because they do this every day, but because they have something special to do. They love to go to the nearby mango gardens very early, when the sleepy early daylight appears through the darkness and many local birds fill the whole sky with their sweet song. Everywhere the sweet **scents** of different flowers - *mongo*, *lichi*, and the wonderful *Krishnachura* - spread through the early morning air.

Like other boys, Mr. 'Naughty' *Mahmood* also used to go with his friends to gather the mangoes which had fallen throughout the night, or sometimes had dropped because the wind shook the branches and made the mangoes fall onto the ground. Many children of his age used to gather the fallen mangoes to sell them for

two or five *taka** a **kilogram**. This gave them enough money to buy wonderful *shingara**, ice-cream, or *piyajju**.



Being the child of a family with money, *Mahmood* did not need to sell anything. Rather, he gave some of the mangoes to his mother to make into mouth-watering *tok daal**, but he kept the best ones to eat himself. He cut up the mangoes with a small **knife** or used a **sharp shell** to cut into the middle of the mangoes. Sometimes, he broke the mangoes against a wall or the hard trunk of a large tree. After that he put some salt and *peppermint** together and prepared a *masala**. Then he took each slice or smashed piece of mango and put a little of it lightly in the *masala* and ate it. It was a heavenly flavour. Many of his friends used to take those mangoes to school to eat during *tiffin** or after finishing each class, just before the next teacher entered the room.

Mr *Mahmood* thinks back, and remembers one particular time. It was the month of *Jaistho** in the year 2000. The sky was completely covered with a heavy dark cloud. The young *Mahmood*, along with his **cousin** *Sujon* and some of their friends, ran to the largest mango garden in their neighbourhood, which covered an area of 22 *bighas**. They took some *sacks** with them in the hope that a small **storm** would make it possible for them to gather sacks full of mangoes.

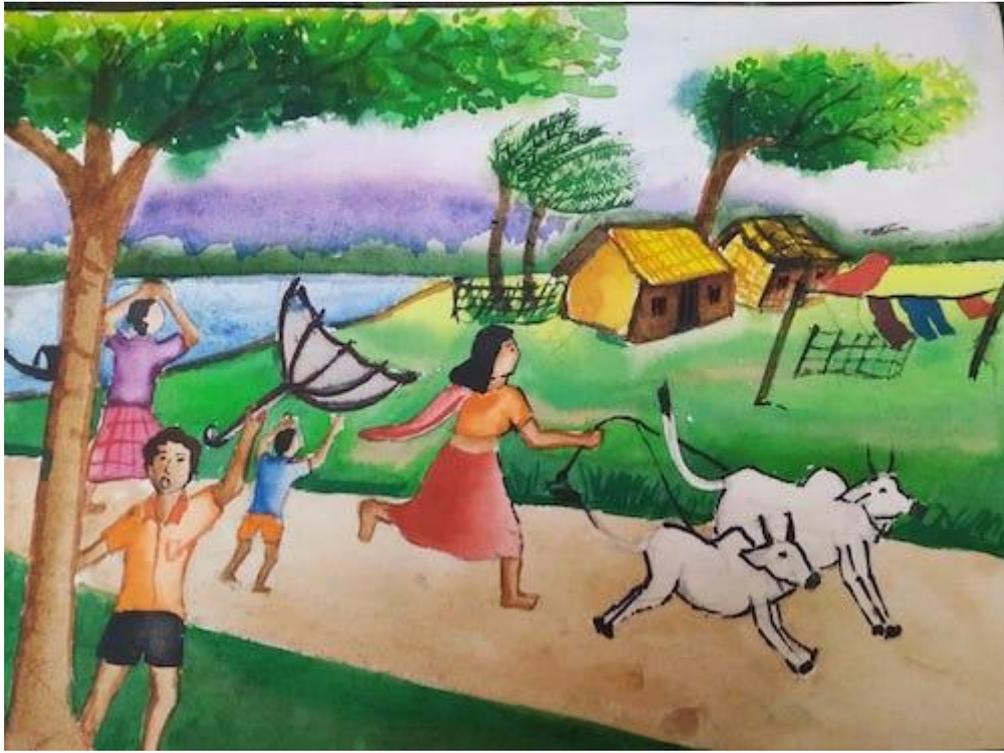
However, when they reached the mango garden, their hopes disappeared since there was no wind and then it started to rain. They were so sad about this, and talked of going home. But *Mahmood* did not want to give up. He was a **clever** child, so he made another plan to gather mangoes. All the trees in the garden were full of mangoes. There were so many different types of mangoes, *Fazlee*, *Bombay*, *Langra*, *Gopalbogh*, and

Harivanga. Mahmood started to run from one tree to another. He ran so fast that he was able to successfully escape from the *mali** who was there to care for the garden. *Mahmood's feet* began to hurt as he, being late to meet his friends that morning, had forgotten to put on his *sandals**.

He threw some handfuls of hard earth at the mangoes until they fell from the trees. In this way, he was able to gather two or three mangoes without being caught by the *mali*. A few minutes later, the rain stopped, and just as the boys were ready to head towards their homes, a gentle wind started to blow. All of a sudden, the wind became stronger, and then it began to blow more and more until, surprisingly, it turned into a wild **storm**. The **angry** wind began to shake the trees until the whole garden was *twisting and turning** wildly.

At first, the boys were full of joy and gathered as many newly fallen mangoes as they could. There were so many mangoes everywhere that the wet earth under the trees had turned bright green. The wind grew stronger, and blew away the **tent** which was the only shelter for the *mali*. Off it flew into another field. Now there was no safe place for them to go to get out of the storm either! The rain continued to fall heavily, the angry wind grew even stronger and stronger, and the fearful sound of angry **thunder** shook the air.

Mahmood tried to open his **grandfather's** big wooden **umbrella** that he had brought with him, but he just couldn't get it to open. The angry wind turned the umbrella *inside out**, and *in the blink of an eye**, it blew the umbrella right out of his hands and carried it far away. *Mahmood* was so surprised to see how **quickly** and roughly the umbrella was carried away by the wind. It seemed like it would continue to fly like this for miles and miles!



Mahmood looked around himself. Fallen leaves, broken branches and heavy wet earth covered the whole area. Once again, thick clouds started to cover the sky. The daylight disappeared. Nobody could see anything. The wild sound of the wind made *Mahmood* forget the mangoes completely, even though a great **pile** of mangoes was lying there, right there under his feet! The wind blew even more angrily in the branches of the trees. The weather was becoming so bad that *Mahmood* began to feel fearful.

Without really thinking about what he was doing, *Mahmood* ran to a small tree nearby and held onto it **tightly** in his arms. It was so hard to **breathe**. The wind was so strong that tree branches were falling heavily to the ground around him, and some were breaking off the trees completely and flying off into the sky. *Mahmood* heard the sounds of big branches of the mango trees breaking off very near the place he was standing. He felt as if his life was about to end. He had never been so afraid in his whole life. He called out to his cousin, “*Sujon*, where are you? Are you there?” but his lips were dry and the wind carried his voice away. It blew the tree he was holding onto back and forth, and made it move in such a way that *Mahmood* felt as if he were being rocked like a crying **baby**. He held onto the tree more tightly than ever. The roughness of the tree hurt his arms and cut into his **stomach**. The wind was so strong, it felt as if it was trying to force him to let go of the tree. This was the most unusual and dangerous storm he had ever experienced. It seemed to go on and on, without end.

The rain continued to fall heavily. After what seemed like a lifetime, the storm finally lost its strength, and little by little the wind began to **calm** down. At last, this dangerous time was over. *Mahmood* noticed he was shaking from the cold and *his teeth were chattering** uncontrollably.

At last, the sky became clear, but here and there, there were still a few small, black, angry clouds in the sky. At last, *Mahmood* could see his brother and his other friends. Everywhere around them there was nothing but broken trees, branches, and piles of fallen mangoes. They gathered the mangoes and piled them under each tree. After a while, some other children and grown-ups, both men and women, came into the garden.

Sujon ran home to get some more sacks, as the ones they had brought earlier were simply not enough to hold all the fallen mangoes. There were so many! After filling all the sacks, they took the mangoes home in the back of a *van**. They turned the sacks *upside down** so that the mangoes fell into the centre of their courtyard and then they gave most of them to their relatives and neighbours.

The next day, *Mahmood* went to school. Even though he was very **sick**, and had a **fever** and a *runny nose**, he really wanted to share what had happened the day before. But the school day was so **busy**, and he did not get the chance. At last, in the fourth period, *Mahmood's Bangla* teacher arrived. *Mahmood* was filled with fear since he had not completed his homework. All the students had been told to read part of a story from their *Bangla Sohopath**. However, no-one was able to retell any of the story when they were asked.

Mahmood was so sleepy. His friend pushed him gently to try to **wake him up**. The teacher noticed how sleepy he was and became very angry. He spoke to *Mahmood* in a rough voice and asked, "Why does your mind seem so far away today? Why are you sleeping in class?" Someone answered that *Mahmood* had become sick because he had gone to gather mangoes in yesterday's stormy weather. The teacher became angry and said roughly, "Oh! I see! That is what the matter is! Well then, since you cannot share your homework with us, why don't you come here, to the front of the room, and tell everyone your story?"

Mahmood had no choice but to go and stand in front of the whole class. He was shaking with fear. "I couldn't study," he said.

"Why not?" asked the teacher. *Mahmood* was so fearful that at first his words made no sense at all. Little by little, the teacher was able to understand *Mahmood's* situation and he slowly became more understanding. *Patting** him on the back, he said, "Tell us more about what happened yesterday."

At last, *Mahmood* became calmer and more sure of himself. The memory was still so clear in his mind. He began to explain his adventure and kept on going until he had finished telling them everything. The time

passed quickly, and soon the **bell** rang. The teacher was so surprised at his story and once again patted him on the back again saying,

“You know, you are so great at telling stories. You can study the story from the *Bangla Sohopath* later. There’s always another chance to retell that story on another day.”

Mr. *Mahmood* comes back to the present moment. While remembering his childhood, he has forgotten to finish his coffee. He looks at his son *Rafan*, and then at the book he had put on the table earlier. He looks back at his son again and calls to him. *Rafan* runs to his father. Mr. *Mahmood* holds *Rafan*’s small hands and asks, “*Abbu*, shall we go to your **grandparents**’ house tomorrow?” *Rafan*’s eyes grow big and round. He knows just what this means. At his grandparents’ house, there will be... mangoes! He **jumps** with great joy onto his father’s lap, and **kisses** him, then jumps down again and runs to his mother.

“Yay!” he cries, “Mangoes!”

List of non-English 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

Idioms, Collocations and Words that Describe Sounds

In the blink of an eye = very quickly

Chattering teeth = when someone is so cold or very afraid that their teeth bang against each other noisily.

Inside out = when the wrong side of something shows in place of the right side

Pitter-patter = a sound of small drops of water hitting a hard surface, or the sound of small footsteps on the floor

To have a runny nose = when someone has a cold, and their nose is filled with watery liquid (mucus)

Twisting and turning = unplanned movements in every direction

Upside down = when something at the top is at the bottom instead, and whatever is at the bottom is at the top. (E.g. the letter A, when written 'upside down' looks like this)

Learning Activities

Vocabulary

1. Words from the second 1000 high frequency General Service Word List (GSL)

angry baby bell breathe busy calm chair clever coffee cousin cup feet fever flavour grandfather/grandparents hurt ice cream jumps kilogram kisses knife legs nose pile quickly rain scents sharp shell sick stomach storm tea teeth tent thunder tightly twisting umbrella wake (up) weather

2. Words from the high frequency Academic Word List (AWL)

area awareness creating finally period

3. **Off-list words** - These words are not used so often in English so it is less important to learn them.

Only learn these words if you already know all the words in lists 1 and 2 above.

courtyard, lap, homework, naughty, patting/patted, peppermint, sacks, sandals, van

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 children so upset after reaching the mango garden?
5. Why couldn't *Mahmood* open the umbrella?
6. Why did he go to school even if he was sick?
7. Why was *Mahmood* afraid in the classroom?
8. What made the teacher angry?

Understanding and Inferring

9. Where did *Rafan's* grandparents live? How do you know this?
10. How big was the tree that Mahmood was holding? How can you say that?
11. Why did *Mahmood* hold the tree tightly?
12. How long did he take to express what happened the previous day?
13. Why does Mr. Mahmood want to take his son to his grandparents' house?
14. What kind of person was *Mahmood's* Bangla teacher? How do you know?
15. Why did *Rafan* run towards his mother?
16. Why did Mr. Mahmood want to take *Rafan* to *Rafan's* grandparents' house?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. **Applying:** Do you think that you get enough free time to roam around your neighbourhood? If you do, where do you go? What do you do there? If you do not get enough free time to go where you want to go, what do you do?
2. **Applying:** What would you do if you were in a bad storm, as in *Mahmood's* situation? How would you keep yourself safe?

3. **Applying:** *Mahmood* was very fearful during the storm. Have you ever experienced a time which made you feel as if your life was in danger, or when the situation seemed to be ‘without end’? Describe what happened.
4. **Applying:** If you had an opportunity to spend a couple of days in a village or a country town, what would you do? How would you spend your days?
5. **Analysing:** Do you think that little *Rafan* can enjoy his free time? Why or why not?
6. **Analysing:** Make a list of things you do during your free time. Put your activities into the right box in this chart...

sports activities	cultural activities	learning activities	other activities

Now, share your activities with your classmates. Say when and why you do these things. Which activities do you enjoy the most, and which do you not enjoy so much?

7. **Evaluating:** Do you think going to collect mangoes during stormy weather is a good or a bad idea? Why?
8. **Evaluating:** Do you think it was OK for *Mahmood* and his friends to take mangoes from someone else’s garden? Why? Why not?
9. **Creating:** Find a recipe that has mangoes in it. If it is not in English, work with a friend and translate it. If you can, try to cook it. If you can’t cook it, work with others in a small group and explain how to make your recipe.
10. **Creating:** Work in groups. Each person should plan and draw a cartoon picture that shows one part of the story about *Mahmood’s* mango adventure. Add some English words that explain what is happening in your picture, or what the people in the picture are saying or thinking. Everyone in your group should draw a different part of the story. When you have finished, put your pictures into the same order as the events in the story. Decide who should speak first, second, third and so on, and then take turns to explain your picture so that you tell the whole story from beginning to end.