

Consonant-le Stories

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How Dogs Help People to Hunt Truffles

(Story words: mushrooms, soil, fetch)

Truffles are like mushrooms, but truffles grow under the ground. People love truffles and will pay a hundred dollars for even a small amount of truffles. A pound of truffles can be sold for more than a thousand dollars.

Truffles cannot be planted by farmers. Truffles grow in damp soil under oak trees and other trees. It is the job of the truffle hunter to find these truffles and bring them to market for sale.

For a long time, pigs were used to help truffle hunters find truffles. Pigs love the smell of truffles and can sniff a truffle that is even three feet under the ground. The smell of truffles is said to be very much like the smell of a female pig who is in heat and wants to mate. When pigs find truffles, they go wild with glee. They want to find and eat the truffles as fast as possible. A truffle hunter has to first

find a way to restrain his pig before he can dig up and harvest the truffles.

Dogs are different. They are more like partners for the truffle hunter. Truffle hunters train dogs to like the smell of truffles. They put truffles in an old sock and play fetch with pups. In this way, the dogs grow up with a nose for truffles.

When a dog sniffs truffles, the dog wants to find them but not eat them. The truffle hunter will give the dog a simple treat to say, "Good job." The dog will wait as the truffle hunter harvests the truffles. Truffle hunters leave a small bit of truffles under the ground so that more truffles may someday grow in that spot.

Fran Hosts a Poker Game (Part 1)

(Story words: watching, pizza)

The weekend was coming, but Fran was not enthused. She felt like she and Bill were in a rut. She wanted to think of something new to do with Bill and their friends.

An idea popped into her mind. What if, instead of watching Netflix or getting pizza, they hosted a cards night for their friends?

She called Kevin and Rick and invited them for a poker night. Rick said, "That sounds fun! We have not played cards in so long that you will have to teach us the rules."

Fran was eager to prepare for the night. She borrowed poker chips from her dad. She bought two new decks of cards. She made ham and swiss cheese sandwiches and bought nuts, chips, soda, seltzer water and other snacks. She even found a green tablecloth to put on her table.

She went an extra step and made a playlist of songs so that there would be background music playing while they played cards. She had fun remembering old favorite songs she thought Bill and her friends would like to hear.

Bill could see that Fran was having fun planning for the night, and he became enthused too. Bill remembered that when he was a child his grandparents and parents loved playing cards. He hoped that the evening would be a knock-out for Fran's sake.

Fran Hosts a Poker Game (Part 2)

It turned out that Kevin had played more card games when he was a child than Fran had. He consulted his phone to look up the rules of High Low, Seven Card Stud, Texas Hold-em, and other poker games he remembered.

The group liked playing Texas Hold-em, a game in which some cards were put in the middle of the table turned up. Everyone could see and use those cards with the cards in their hands to create their best hands. The rules were a little complicated. Everyone teased Kevin who kept looking at his phone and explaining new details of the game.

“The game is half over, and I still don’t know how to play,” said Fran.

Kevin shuffled the decks like a pro which made everyone laugh.

Bill joked, “You only have to see Kevin shuffle to understand that we are playing with a card shark!”

Rick asked, “How did you learn to shuffle like that?”

Kevin said, “I spent a lot of time shuffling when I was a child. I know how to whistle too!” But when Kevin demonstrated his whistle, he was not as good as he remembered.

The group played for low stakes, with chips having the value of nickels and dimes. Bill turned out to be the big winner and won six dollars by the end of the night. Kevin was the best player, but luck was not with him, so he ended the night two dollars “in the hole.”

Everyone said that it would be fun to have another cards night, now that they knew how to play.

After her friends left, Fran felt exhilarated. Everyone said that the evening was the most fun they had had in quite a

while. Fran felt that her plan to do something new with friends was a triumph.

Mr. Payton Forms a Cribbage Club

(Story words: cribbage, thirty, board)

Mr. Payton was everyone's favorite math teacher at South Middle School. Mr. Payton loved math and was confident that students who struggled with math could master even math they found very difficult with his help and their effort. His students knew that he liked seeing them come to his classroom before or after school, or during lunch, whenever they struggled with math.

So when he told his classes that he was starting a lunch-time cribbage club, it was not surprising that many students expressed interest.

At first, students asked, "What is cribbage?"

Mr. Payton explained that cribbage is a card game that uses a board for scoring. Like chess and checkers, cribbage is most often a two-player game. The cribbage

board has little holes. Each player has two colored pegs that “walk” around the board as the player scores. The first player to get to the finish line wins.

Players score by combining cards to make pairs or triples (two or three of the same cards). Or, they can score with “runs,” which are multiple cards in a row, for example, a five, six, and seven or a ten, Jack, and Queen.

Players also score by combining cards that add up to the numbers fifteen and thirty-one. Mr. Payton felt that a cribbage club would be a fun way for students to spend a lunch hour and perhaps make new friends.

Mr. Payton also liked the fact that students had to use their brains to see all the ways that numbers combine to make the fifteens and thirty-ones. He found that playing games like cribbage made students add and subtract with more ease. Without being aware of it, his students were sharpening their math skills while having fun.

Shawaan Considers Making Waffles at Home (Part 1)

(Story words: waffles, iron, oil, recipe)

Shawaan always orders waffles when she goes to the diner. She said to her roommate Pam, “Maybe I should buy a waffle iron, so we can make waffles at home.”

Pam said, “I think my mom has a waffle iron that she does not use a lot. Maybe I should ask her if we can borrow it?”

Shawaan thought that was a wonderful idea. The next weekend Pam’s mom dropped off the waffle iron.

Shawaan looked up recipes for waffle batter on the internet and chose one. The recipe she chose was simple, containing just milk, flour, and eggs.

Shawaan plugged the waffle iron in and waited for it to get hot. An indicator light turned from yellow to green when the iron was ready. She bought a spray can of oil to spray on the hot waffle iron so that the batter would not stick.

She poured the batter into the waffle iron and closed the lid. A small amount of batter leaked out onto the outside of the iron and dripped on the counter. Another indicator light showed that the waffle was done. Shawaan opened the iron and had no problem peeling the waffle off with a fork. The waffle tasted just as good as the waffles at the diner!

Shawaan made another waffle for Pam and could not wait for her to taste it.

Pam said, "Well done! This waffle is fantastic."

Shawaan Considers Making Waffles at Home (Part 2)

(Story words: warm, oven)

As fun as it was to make a few waffles for Pam and herself, Shawaan started to have second thoughts about buying a waffle iron. For one thing, Shawaan had been thinking that it would be fun to host a brunch for her friends and serve waffles.

Shawaan realized that to make enough waffles for a whole group would take a very long time. Her friend Dave could eat three waffles by himself in a matter of seconds. In order for everyone to eat at the same time, she would have to keep the first waffles warm in the oven, while making more. Making pancakes on a griddle was so much faster.

Cleaning the waffle iron was a bit of a hassle too. You have to be careful not to put something with an electric cord under the water. Thus, Shawaan used a damp cloth to get all the batter and oil off the waffle iron. Her pancake

griddle was not electric—just something she put on the stove, and she could clean it in the sink in no time. The waffle iron was also quite large. The cabinets in their kitchen were already pretty full, and she wondered where they would store it.

Shawaan called Pam’s mom to thank her for lending them the waffle iron. She told her how fun it was to make waffles but that for now she was going to resist buying one for herself. She might prefer not having to store and clean her own waffle iron—better to just continue getting a waffle once in a while at the diner for a treat.

Pam’s mom said, “I love waffles, but I understand your feeling. And you can borrow my waffle iron whenever you want. I am sure that you can see why my waffle iron is most often put away and getting little use!”

Is a Fiddle the Same as a Violin?

(Story words: country, dancing, nylon)

Many people wonder whether a fiddle is the same as or different from a violin. In most respects the violin and fiddle are the same. The instruments have the same exact shape and the same number of strings. Both instruments are played with a bow, and both can be plucked or strummed too. Violin and fiddle bows are made of horse hair. It may take as many as 160 strands of hair to make a single bow.

Violinists play classical music or jazz, whereas a fiddler plays folk and country music. Irish folk music often includes fiddling. Fiddlers play music made for square dancing and other dancing. Fiddlers also play Cajun, bluegrass, and other music which makes you want to tap your toes to a beat.

With both instruments, it is the strings that vibrate and create the sound. The strings of a violin are most often catgut (which is made from sheep intestines) or nylon.

Many fiddlers prefer steel strings for their fiddles. One reason is that steel strings keep in tune. Thus, you will see a fiddler pick up his fiddle and start playing without needing to tune his instrument first. In contrast, a classical violinist always tunes the strings before starting to play. Another reason is that steel strings have a brighter, sharper sound, and fiddlers like to make music that has a strong beat.

Some players say that violins and fiddles are not different instruments. They become different instruments based on the music the owner selects to play.

Sayings About Sports (Part 1)

(Story words: language, watch, ball, football, shoot, hoop)

Many people like to play or watch sports, and so it is not surprising that our language has many sayings that involve sports. In sports, players are competing against one another to win, so when people are competing or attempting to realize a goal, the things they say often use terms from sports.

Many sports, such as basketball, baseball, football, and tennis, are played with balls; and, in all these sports, dropping a ball is a bad thing. In football, a player fumbles the ball, allowing the other team to take it. Sometimes the fumble is the result of opposing players tackling him.

In everyday speech, you may hear people say something like, “She really fumbled that proposal,” or, “We better tackle this problem now if we don’t want to be accused of dropping the ball.”

In basketball, when a player shoots for the hoop from faraway, it is called a long shot. People will describe lots of things as “long shots.” For example, “It’s a long shot, but I do plan to run for class president.” Or, “It may be a long shot, but Ms. Franklin may let us perform the talent show on her porch if we ask her.”

In baseball, when a batter hits the ball “out of the park” it results in a “home run.” People will express that something is a triumph with phrases such as these: “I just read your essay, and you hit it out of the park!” Or, “Gram was so thrilled by her birthday bash. It was a home run.”

Sayings About Sports (Part 2)

(Story words: ball, court, pool, racing, race, marathon)

In tennis, people take turns serving and returning balls on a court which is divided by a net. Balls are either on one side of the court or the other. The phrase, “The ball is in his court,” means that it is the other person’s turn to act or respond. People may say, “I have not reached out to Frank again about dinner; after all, the ball is in his court.” People often have a firm idea about whose turn it is to make a text or call and may often wait for the person whose turn it is to make the next move.

When playing pool, players score by hitting balls (which have numbers on them) and “sinking them” into the pockets of the pool table. In some games, to score you must first “call the shot” by predicting where the ball will go, saying something like, “Three ball in the corner pocket.” When people say that someone is “calling the shots,” they are saying that a person is directing the plans. For example, someone might say, “Meg is calling the

shots for the fundraiser: the bake sale will be Friday and the cake walk will be Saturday, rain or shine.”

There are also sayings that refer to horse racing (which in the past was more popular than today). When people say something is a “photo finish” or “down to the wire” they are referring to the end of a horse race. Horses are so fast and run so close together that it is hard to see which horse finishes first. In the old days, they strung a wire across the finish line to help them detect the winner. Often a horse would win “by a nose.”

When competitors are very even, people say that the outcome will go “down to the wire.” For example, if two very skilled firms are competing for the same contract, someone might say something like, “Winning the contract will go down to the wire.” Or, “I think Widder Incorporated has it by a nose.”

People also run in races, and these races can be short or long. A sprint may be 100 or 200 meters, whereas a

marathon is 26.2 miles. While a runner runs “all out” in a sprint, runners should not run “all out” in a marathon, or they will run out of steam before the end. People use the phrase, “This is a marathon not a sprint,” to express the idea that when doing a long, hard project you have to be careful to conserve some power and not get too tired out.

Sayings About Card Games

(Story word: language)

Whether you like to play cards or not, you will find that there are many sayings in our language that relate to card games. In poker people compete and bet on their “hands” (made up of a number of cards). Showing your hand to the opponent would be a big mistake. You will hear people say, “Let’s not show our hand just yet,” to express the idea of keeping some plans a secret.

In poker, people take turns betting, putting chips in the middle of the table which is called “the pot.” If a player thinks he has a weaker hand than his opponents, he may stop betting and “fold” (thus, giving up his claim to the pot). Sometimes players with weak hands will keep betting as if they have a fantastic hand in the hopes that all the other players will fold, letting them win the pot with a weak hand. This is called “bluffing,” and it sometimes works! If the other players suspect that an opponent is “just bluffing,”

they may keep betting and say, “I am going to call your bluff.”

As you might think, people use the phrase “bluffing” and “calling your bluff” in many contexts. For example, I might say, “Mike says he won’t go out to lunch unless we go to Taco Bell. Well, I am going to call his bluff.” This means that I think Mike will go for lunch even without picking the lunch spot. People also talk about folding when a person gives up in a sudden way: “Yesterday, Abigail seemed so intent on winning the contract, but today she just folded.”

At the end of the rounds of betting, it will be time for all players who have not folded to “lay their cards on the table” to see who has the best hand. A rude way to express this moment is “Put up or shut up.” This is the time when whoever has the best cards will win. People might say, “Let’s lay our cards on the table,” to indicate that the time for debating is over and that they want come to an agreement or settle a dispute.

Metaphors about games (and sports) may make discussing everyday things more fun. Speakers may be reminded of fun times they have had playing games while discussing more mundane subjects.

A Whole Weekend of Apples

(Story words: month, wheelbarrows, recipe, sugar)

Linda's friends know that October is her favorite month of the year.

"The trees are so beautiful when they turn color, the air is so crisp and fresh, how can anyone not love October?" she will say.

Every year she invites her friends to spend a "weekend of apples" with her. On day one, the group drives to a farm to go apple picking. They spend a fun day with ladders, bags, and wheelbarrows picking a whole lot of apples.

Linda always prepares a casserole before the weekend starts. Then, on Friday, she buys salad stuff to go with it. She knows they will be tired after a long day of apple picking and exploring a farm.

In the morning, the friends discuss their plans for the apples. They always make jars of apple butter to take home and to give to coworkers and friends. Apple butter,

despite its name, does not contain butter, but is more like jam. A lot of time in the morning is spent peeling and chopping the apples.

When the apple butter is done, they have fun discussing what baked goods they will make. They find lots of recipes on the internet to consider.

Linda often wants to make an apple crumble, because she likes the no-fuss way it comes together. She likes sweet toppings that are made with oats and brown sugar. She also likes apple cobblers because they are also uncomplicated to make with a topping that is a little less sweet.

Debra likes cakes, so she often picks a recipe for a loaf, cake, or muffins. Her friends at work like her baked goods, so she likes to make mini-loafs or muffins that are simple to wrap and distribute. She even makes some of them gluten-free for folks at work who cannot tolerate wheat flour.

Rona likes to make apple dumplings. She is not fond of sweet things, but her grandma used to make apple dumplings. She likes to take dumplings to her mom and dad who love them.

The thing that Linda likes better than eating apple treats is spending the weekend with her friends during her favorite time of year.