Fantastic Finds of Ann and Ron

Stories in Verse for Bright Youngsters

by Professor Cedric
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Illustrated by Amanda Davidson
[picture 2, for tale 1]
1. Ann and Ron Seek Treasure

Young Ann and Ron were lively kids
   Who dreamt of finding treasure.
They’d seen some films where lucky folk
   Found wealth almost past measure.

Ron’s birthday neared, and so he asked
   Their Mum and Dad to buy
A present both kids yearned for,
   A device they longed to try:

A metal-detector, which would bleep
   When they went round the garden,
If it sensed metal objects there.
   They felt their resolve harden.

(They “felt their resolve harden”?
   Simply, they “grew more keen”:
Clear words. I beg your pardon
   For obscurity: that’s mean.)

Ron’s birthday came; the gift unwrapped:
   A detector for the youth.
“It’s very simple, very light”,
   Said Dad, who spoke the truth.
It was indeed a cheap device –
   Would not probe very deep.
(Some birthday gifts are faddish things
   Which kids don’t always keep.)

In went the detector’s battery, and
   They switched the gadget on;
They tested it first on metal that was
   Within the house; and Ron

And Ann found that it bleeped quite well
   At locks and, to their glee,
At plastic window frames: these had
   A metal core, you see.

Now Ann and Ron took it outside
   To search the garden soil.
In turn, they swung the thing around
   Above the grass: their toil

Went on and on. At last it made
   A lively bleeping sound.
“Just here”, said Ann; “Ron, dig just here!”
   His trowel went down and round

The grassy place. Up came the turf,
   And deeper grew the hole.
Ann fetched a spade, and she dug too
   As fast as any mole.
And so they found – a rusty can
That once held amber beer.
They both were glum. Ann said to Ron
“We’ve found no treasure here;

But if at first you don’t succeed,
Just try and try again.”
So they went on, and searched and searched,
Ignoring the light rain.

It bleeped once more! “Perhaps this time”,
Said Ann, “we shall not fail.”
They dug again with trowel and spade.
This time: a long bent nail.

“The third time lucky, so they say;
Some treasure must be here!”,
Said Ron. They searched the flower-beds.
Again, it sounded clear.

Moaned Ann: “I’m getting tired of this.”
But still they dug in hope;
And there they found a broken hinge,
Two worms, and some old rope.

Now, Ann was sad; Ron was enraged,
And yelled “Enough’s enough!
We’ll dig some more, and bury deep
This gadget with that stuff!”

They dug and dug to dump for good
    That metal-detector, deep;
But when they swiftly flung it in,
    It gave a frantic bleep!

And where it landed in the hole,
    A sudden glint shone out:
A broken pot of clay was there,
    And coins spilled all about! –

A heap of Roman coins, “worth
    A fortune”, said their Dad.
The moral of this story is:
    “When failure drives you mad,

It does no harm if privately
    You vent your grief and woe.
This may indeed transform your luck,
    And boost you.” Now you know!
[picture 3 for story 2]
2. Ann, Ron and the Lonely Ghoti

As Ann and Ron walked through a wood,
They stopped, because before them stood
   The oddest creature they had seen:
   A creature, all betwixt and ’tween

One thing and then another. For
   Two curved horns sprouted from its head,
Which seemed a goat’s; its brown chin wore
   A goatee beard; and you’d have said

The legs were like a goat’s, except
   A goat has four and this had two,
And where the rear ones should have been,
   A fish’s tail came into view!

Mermaids we know, but this was weird:
Half goat, half mermaid, it appeared.
   As Ann and Ron gazed in surprise,
Big tears fell from its goatish eyes.

“Oh help me, help me, children”, cried
   The creature, speaking English well;
“I feel so sad, I wish I’d died!”
   It added: “Stay, and I shall tell

My story, if you promise not
To laugh or jeer, for my dire lot
    Is tragic, not a cause for jest;
A victim, I. Let me attest

I’m deemed a child of Bernard Shaw,
A famous man, who did deplore
    The silly spellings English has,
So he campaigned with razzmatazz

To tidy up the spelling rules,
Which, he maintained, seemed set by fools
    To make life difficult for us,
Who do our best, without much fuss,

But still find English inconsistent,
And spelling often quite resistant
    To reason. Take the ending ‘ough’,
Which sounds like ‘a’ and ‘ooh’ and ‘uff’:

Yes, ‘uff’ in ‘rough’ but ‘ooh’ in through,
And ‘a’ in ‘borough’: that’s quite true.
    And as for ‘ch’, it’s ‘k’ in ‘school’,
But ‘ch’ in ‘church’, so where’s the rule?

Folks think that Shaw then made a word
That looked peculiar and absurd:
    It’s ‘ghoti’. That’s the word he made,
They claim. It’s tricky, I’m afraid.
Some readers say ‘goatee’ aloud
When they read ‘ghoti’, but a crowd
   Of other sounds can soon arise
When you reflect, and for some eyes

It could be read as ‘fish’! In ‘tough’,
That ‘gh’ could sound like ‘eff’. And ‘rough’
   Makes ‘gh’ say ‘eff’ again, you see;
   It’s making sense to you and me.

In ‘women’, ‘o’ makes an ‘i’ sound,
So that gives ‘fi’; and just to round
   The matter off, ‘ti’ sounds like – what,
   In words you know (yes, quite a lot)?

Say aloud ‘patient’ or try ‘potion’
Or ‘quotient’: you’ll soon gain the notion
   That ‘ti’ can sound like ‘sh’ in fish;
   So ‘ghoti’ can be ‘fish’! I wish

He hadn’t made that brand-new word,
Because, although it seems absurd,
   A word can make a real thing. True?
   Just think of ‘unicorn’. No zoo

Contains one, but we all can see
A unicorn: we make it be
   In our imaginations, real
   And clear, so we can almost feel
Its snow-white sides and pointed horn.
So ‘ghoti’ (word) made ghoti born:
    In people’s minds, the word soon formed
Myself. And here I stand forlorn,
    Alone, and strange. I feel so sad.
    If you could help me, I’d be glad!”

Now Ann and Ron felt sorry for
The ghoti’s plight, and wanted more
    Than anything to help him out.
    And this is what they brought about:

They both made up a tale in rhyme
In which two ghotis, in no time
    At all, met and became good friends.
    And so imagination mends

The ghoti’s plight, for thus he gained
A playmate; and the words maintained
    The special world he lived in, where
    His fellow ghoti helped him. There

They played and frolicked all day long,
And sang a lengthy ghoti song.
    It started with two lines you know:
        You heard them not so long ago.

“As Ann and Ron walked through a wood,
They stopped, because before them stood” –
But you know how the ghotis’ song
Continued: you just can’t go wrong.

This story’s moral is quite clear:
“A word can make a thing appear
(In our minds) very real, and
The opportunities are grand!

Just dream a name up, and you find
That name creates a creature;
A lively circus fills your mind,
With beasts a vivid feature:

Amazing beasts like *bumbernolts*
And *nibes* or lively *litelopes*:
You’ll see them do their somersaults
And dance along the tight-ropes!”
[picture 4, for story 3]
3. The Lithe Litelope’s Mishap

Each year, a circus comes to town,
   And Ann and Ron go there.
Performing animals are banned,
   Except for one, quite rare.

The litelope, as its name suggests,
   Is agile, soft and smooth;
It’s like a slender pony, but
   Much smaller: that’s the truth.

I’m sorry that my “smooth” and “truth”
   Are only eye-rhymes here;
The “th” sounds clearly vary
   In your mind and in your ear.

The “th” in “smooth” is “soft”, dons say;
   The “th” of truth is “hard”.
“Hard” – “difficult”? No: “emphatic”.
   I’m such a pedantic bard!

(“Pedantic” means “with teacher’s style,
   And fussy about detail”
– As here. A bard’s a songster
   Or a poet.) On with the tale!

Meanwhile, the patient litelope waits
To show his unique skill:
He hopes to do a somersault
On a tight- rope, and thus thrill

The folk who in the circus-tent
Have paid to see the show.
They watch the elegant litelope
From their seats, far, far below.

Aloft, he walks a step or two,
Along the trembling rope;
He wobbles, pauses, walks again,
And has so little scope

For error, that we hold our breath.
He stops, grows tense and leaps
Head over heels, but comes to rest
Back on the rope, and keeps

His balance, wobbly, then at rest.
We give him wild applause.
A somersault by such a beast
Deserves acclaim, because

It’s hard enough for two-legged men
And women, as you know;
So when a four-legged beast succeeds,
He nimbly “steals the show”!
I don’t mean he commits a theft;  
I mean, his seems the best  
Of all the circus acts that day:  
He’s bolder than the rest.

Why? He was born to do it:  
That is shown by his strange name.  
“Litelope” and “tight-rope” rhyme so well,  
They almost sound the same.

And as he has the perfect name  
For tales of circus deeds,  
A tale by magic then appears:  
The magic language feeds!

The clapping crowds affected him:  
He loved to please them all.  
As weeks went by, he grew too proud,  
And pride precedes a fall.

One day he did a somersault,  
And tried to do it twice  
At speed. His luck at once ran out,  
And he fell in a trice!

Both Ann and Ron yelled in dismay  
As he plunged from on high:  
Head-over-heels he spiralled down,  
And made a wailing cry.
But do not fear: we live in times
     Of “health and safety” laws,
He fell into a safety-net,
     Which saved him; to applause.

The moral is: “To take a risk
     Is sometimes worth a try.
But if you do, make sure you have
     A safety-net close by!”
4. Ann and Ron Find Mikey, the Caterpillar

Ann and Ron, in their garden,
   Grew flowers, and, yes, a weed
Or two, and healthy lettuces
   Which ripened well, indeed,

Until one day a hole appeared
   In one and then another.
The culprit? “Caterpillars”,
   Said their shrewd observant mother.

And on one leaf, guess what they found?
   A caterpillar, grey,
But twenty centimetres long,
   And he had much to say.

“Don’t kill me, children”, said the pest.
   “And listen to my plea;
For when you’ve heard my story
   You’ll be merciful to me.

Yes, I can talk in English, as
   The ghoti was my teacher,
Because he knows the languages
   Of folks and any creature.
Now note my names.” Ann fetched a pen
    And wrote down on a pad
The names that he dictated
    (But her spelling could be bad):

“Mikey”, she wrote, “Chris-Alice” and
    Then “Sikey”. He looked sad.
“I must explain where you went wrong:
    The last name that you had.

‘Mikey’ is good, ‘Chris-Alice’ too
    (My pun on ‘chrysalis’),
But ‘Sikey’ should be ‘Psyche’, and
    It really matters, this:

For ‘Psyche’ is an old Greek word
    For ‘soul’ and ‘butterfly’!
When I thus learnt my destiny,
    I swelled with pride. That’s why

I’m twenty centimetres long.
    Your lettuce? I must eat
And eat to build my strength, because
    I must perform a feat

You’ll envy. Through apparent death
    My soul lives on again;
Mikey the caterpillar
    Becomes ‘Chris-Alice’ with no pain:
Although the chrysalis seems dead
    As it hangs from a leaf,
A small pale hard thing, with a point,
    Its lifespan is not brief,

But lasts for months; and, next, it starts
    To undergo some changes:
The chrysalis goes dark and soft,
    And, from it, there then ranges

A butterfly, that dries his wings
    And soon prepares for flight:
Then soars aloft, in colours red
    Or orange, yellow, white,

Or blue or even crimson – such
    A splendid soaring sight!
He’ll meet a mate: she lays some eggs,
    And there they cluster tight

Upon some leaf of lettuce, till
    Their time comes: the eggs hatch
And make new caterpillars –
    An extremely hungry batch

Of creatures that you may call ‘pests’
    But I call ‘little Mikeys’,
Who then will become chrysalis
And they in turn form Psyches.”

(Say ‘chris-a-leez’ and not ‘chris-ailz’
   In that quite tricky verse
And then you’ll get the rhythm right;
   If not, you’ll make it worse.)

“The moral of this story”, says
   The caterpillar, shrewdly,
“Is, think before you kill a ‘pest’,
   Or name a creature rudely.

For every ‘pest’ deserves a chance
   To grow and learn and change,
It may look very ugly now,
   But yet within its range

There may lie futures filled with flight
And colour; such a sight
   To please and fill you all with glee;
So lose some lettuce – but spare me!”
5. Angry Animals Beset Ann and Ron

The ghoti taught some animals
To speak and even read;
The outcome was quite shocking,
For they angrily took heed

Of ways in which their names were used
By human beings when
Some trait was put in vivid words:
For soon it happened then,

The animal came off badly. As in:
“This man ate like a pig”,
Or “She was very sheepish”, or
(The list grows very big)

“He was a silly ass”. So Ann
And Ron were shocked one day
When animals on a protest march
Went to and fro, to say

Their say. “Now hear”, said one, an ass,
“I’m surely not a fool.
So don’t treat me as if I were:
I’m really very cool.”

(He didn’t mean “I’m almost cold”):
He meant “I’m very good”;
But “cool” is slang he rather liked:
He used it when he could."

The pig then said: “I often eat
     With gusto; that’s my right;
But not with greed, I merely feed
     A hearty appetite.”

The sheep in turn said “ ‘Sheepish’?
     But I’m simply peaceful, meek,
And don’t like noise and bother;
     These are features you should seek:

So don’t use ‘sheepish’ as a term
     To mock and often pass
An insult. Folks are really daft
     And should look in a glass,

Because the things men do to men
     Are worse than we can do
To our own kinds. Think of your wars
     And all the crimes caused, too;

Whereas a peaceful hive of bees
     Or colony of ants
Show how to live together
     Without anger or nasty rants
To stir up trouble. What d’you say
   To our defiant charge?”
“Just wait a moment”, answered Ann.
   “You’ll find that by and large

You gain as much as you may lose:
   We say ‘strong as an ox’,
‘Brave as a lion’, ‘wise as an owl’,
   And ‘cunning as a fox’.

And so, you see, folks aren’t as bad
   As you make out. What’s more,
You’ve learnt our language, without which
   You couldn’t argue for

Your rights. So let us call us a truce,
   And have some peace and quiet.
But thank you for your warning
   That some words can cause a riot.”

The moral of this story is:
   “If animals could speak,
They might well put as all to shame:
   So think of what words wreak!”
6. Ann, Ron and the Unlucky Unicorn
As Ann and Ron walked mid the trees
   Of a dense wood, one wintry day,
They heard a groaning, moaning sound:
   It seemed not very far away.

They hurried on, and in a glade
   They saw an oak tree, old and dense;
And at its side a creature writhed
   And moaned and groaned, and then went tense

Because it saw them watching it.
   And they, in turn, were greatly shocked:
The creature was a unicorn,
   Snow-white and horse-like, but now locked

Into the oak’s trunk by its horn,
   Its long white horn with spiral shape,
Embedded deeply in the trunk:
   The unicorn could not escape.

Ann then approached the beast, and asked:
   “Now tell us, how did you get stuck?”
“Last night the fog was dense”, it said,
   “And I encountered some bad luck.

My path led through the land of myth
   And legends, which was right;
But in the fog I took a turn
Which, in that murky night,
Led me into this real-life wood
That suddenly appeared;
And as I, panic-stricken, dashed,
It seems this tree I speared;

And now, the more I struggle here,
The more I’m getting stuck.
If you could help to get me out
That would be true good luck.”

So Ann and Ron went close and put
Their backs against the tree,
And tried to push the beast away,
But found their hands went free:

They made no contact with the beast,
As if it were just air;
Their hands went through the image:
So this gave them quite a scare.

But Ron then saw the problem:
“Ah, the wood”, he said, “is real;
But unicorns are mythical:
They’re things we cannot feel.

We see him, but he has no mass,
Like creatures in a dream;
So how are we to pull him free?
   Not even a rugby team

Could get a grip on this poor beast;
   They would be quite unable,
As with any other creature who
   Belongs to myth and fable.

The pointed horn, of course, was hard
   And solid, just to show
A myth can make a truthful point
   About the world we know.”

“I see a way”, said Ann: “We’ll call
   A friend to help us here.
The ghoti has a nature that
   Can free him. Have no fear.”

And so they called the ghoti up
   (Still pronounced “goatee”, now),
Who gladly, when it heard their call,
   Appeared; and to allow

The unicorn to be released,
   It backed against the tree,
And pushed the beast’s head carefully
   Until the horn came free.

It took a bit of twisting too;
The effort was quite tough.  
But then the unicorn, released,  
    Was soon relaxed enough

To offer rides as a reward  
    To ghoti, Ann and Ron;  
But Ann and Ron fell through it;  
    Just the ghoti could stay on.

The unicorn’s born of dreams and words,  
    And so made, you can see,  
Like gryphons and chimeras  
    And the ancient talking tree

(The tree that, various websites claim,  
    Long, long ago, one day  
Joined in the chat when two wise men  
    Had many things to say).

“Never mind”, said the unicorn  
    To the baffled Ron and Ann;  
“I’ll visit you in frequent dreams;  
    In those, I’m sure you can

Stay on my back and go for rides  
    In legendary lands,  
Through ancient forests, ice and snow,  
    And silky desert sands,
And back in time for breakfast!
    That’s the best that I can do
To thank you both for your good deed.
    I bid you now – adieu!”

So off he went, the ghoti too,
    And left them standing there;
But soon they hurried home to tea,
    To speedily prepare
To have an early night, so that
    The unicorn could keep
His promise; as he kindly did:
    They rode miles in their sleep!

The moral of this story is
    Not “Be prepared”: that’s trite;
It’s rather, “Use intelligence
    To put a setback right;
And learn what all good stories teach,
    The knowledge fiction brings:
That legends penetrate the world
    Of real and solid things:
They bring ideas that shape our lives,
    The world around us too;
Yes, fiction and reality
    Make one sustaining brew!”
The End (for now).

[part of a picture here?]
Fantastic Finds of Ann and Ron
Professor Cedric’s book contains six tales of Ann and Ron, adventurous youngsters who make fantastic finds.
1. A metal detector lets them down but then springs a great surprise.
2. They try to rescue a bizarre ghoti (yes, a ghoti) from a lonely fate.
3. They witness the all-too-perilous performance of the acrobatic litelope.
4 & 5. A caterpillar and some animals prove argumentative.
6. Ann and Ron attempt to free a trapped unicorn. In return, they learn how legends shape our lives.