

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

Source Text

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Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*
(Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

My story begins before I was born.

In our house there stood a large clock in the hall. It was tall, serious, and respectable. My father, Mr. Walter Shandy, took care to wind it once every month.

By an odd habit of the household, the same evening was also the evening on which my father and mother usually attended to the business of producing a child.

Because these two things happened on the same night, they became joined in my mother's mind. When that evening came, she naturally thought of both the clock and the child together.

On the night when my life began, my father was giving all his attention to one matter when my mother suddenly asked,

“Pray, my dear, have you not forgot to wind up the clock?”

The question stopped him at once.

My father believed that the state of a father's mind at that delicate moment might influence the nature of the child. Therefore this interruption appeared to him a most unfortunate event.

In later years he often said that my habit of wandering from one subject to another began there. If I tell my story in a distracted way, he would have said that the reason was fixed before I entered the world.

Whether he was right or not, I leave to the reader. But he believed it firmly.

And unfortunately, the beginning of my life did not improve afterward.

Part 2

My father was a man of systems and theories. He believed that very small events could shape the whole course of a human life.

If something went wrong, he wanted to know the cause. If something succeeded,

he wanted to know the principle behind it. He disliked chance. He preferred order.

For this reason he was deeply troubled by the interruption at my conception. In his mind, it was not a small domestic accident. It was the first wrong movement in a chain of consequences.

My uncle Toby, who was gentleness itself, listened patiently to these theories. He was never eager to argue, and he preferred peace to philosophy.

My father, however, loved philosophy.

He believed that beginnings mattered above all things: the beginning of thought, the beginning of education, the beginning of life itself.

Therefore he watched my expected birth with the greatest seriousness. He hoped that if the first event had been disturbed, at least the second might be properly managed.

This hope led him to call in a physician.

And that physician was Dr. Slop.

Part 3

In those days, children were commonly brought into the world with the help of a *midwife*. My mother expected such help.

My father, however, believed strongly in modern knowledge. He had heard of a physician named *Dr. Slop*, a man proud of his instruments and of what he called science. My father thought it safer and wiser to place confidence in such a man.

So Dr. Slop was called.

The doctor arrived with his bag of instruments and with complete faith in himself. The midwife trusted experience. Dr. Slop trusted tools. This was not a good beginning.

While my father waited in great anxiety, Dr. Slop took it upon himself to manage the difficult parts of the birth. In his eagerness to show the value of his methods, he used one of his instruments badly.

The result was disastrous.

Instead of merely assisting at my birth, Dr. Slop injured me. My *nose* was

crushed.

When my father learned of this, he was in despair.

Of all parts of the body, the nose seemed to him especially important. He did not see it as a small accident but as a grave injury to my future dignity.

Thus, before I had even properly entered the world, my father believed that I had suffered a second major misfortune.

Yet a still greater confusion was waiting only a short distance ahead.

Part 4

My father had a theory about noses.

He believed that the nose was not merely an ornament of the face. In his opinion it was connected with dignity, spirit, and the very appearance of character. A well-formed nose suggested force and distinction. A damaged nose suggested misfortune.

Therefore the injury done by Dr. Slop filled him with grief and anger.

My mother, more practical than philosophical, cared chiefly that the child should live. My father cared for that too, but he could not separate life from theory. He looked at me and saw not merely a baby but a future man whose beginning had already twice been spoiled.

First the interruption at conception.

Then the accident to the nose.

He walked about the house speaking bitterly of Dr. Slop, of instruments, and of rash confidence.

But before this sorrow had settled, another emergency arose.

I became very ill.

I was so weak that the fear spread through the house that I might die before I had been *named and baptized*. In a Christian household of that age, such a fear produced immediate action.

Everything was thrown into confusion.

Candles were lit.

Servants ran through the passages.

A clergyman had to be fetched at once.

And in the haste of that night, the greatest mistake of all was made.

Part 5

Because I seemed near death, my baptism could not wait.

The proper clergyman was too far away to be reached in time, so my father ordered that the *curate*, who lived nearer, must be fetched without delay.

The servant *Susannah* was sent out into the night.

My father was in great agitation. The child must be baptized as a Christian. But there was another matter no less important to him.

The child must be baptized under the *right name*.

For long before my birth, my father had chosen the name he wished me to bear.

It was *Trismegistus*.

He had chosen it with the greatest care. To him it was a name of dignity, learning, and wisdom. It was not a common name, nor an easy one, but that was no objection in his eyes. Greatness, he thought, did not come in small and convenient forms.

When *Susannah* was sent for the curate, my father gave the necessary instructions in great haste.

But haste is a dangerous companion to long names.

Susannah, excited and frightened by the thought that the baby might die, did not clearly remember what she had been told. The name was unfamiliar to her ear, and before she reached the curate it had already altered in her mind.

The curate came quickly.

The household gathered.

The ceremony began.

And then, before anyone could stop it, the wrong name was spoken.

Part 6

The curate, having received the name from Susannah and not from my father himself, baptized me as *Tristram*.

The moment the words were spoken, the error was fixed.

My father, when he understood what had happened, was struck with horror. The noble *Trismegistus* had disappeared, and in its place stood *Tristram*.

The mistake had not come from malice. It came from confusion, haste, fear, and the natural weakness of memory when burdened with a difficult name in the middle of the night.

Susannah had not meant harm. But harm, in my father's opinion, had certainly been done.

Once the ceremony was finished, the name could not simply be taken back as if it had never been uttered. That was what made the accident so painful.

I had lived only a short time in the world, and already my father saw three disasters behind me:

the interruption of the beginning,
the crushing of my nose,
and the loss of my proper name.

To most people this might have seemed excessive. To my father it seemed exact.

He stood in deep distress, unable to forgive fate, Dr. Slop, or Susannah. Above all, he could not forgive the name now given to me.

Part 7

The name *Tristram* was especially hateful to my father for a reason that appeared to him very strong.

It reminded him of the French word *triste*, which means *sad*.

Therefore he regarded the name not only as wrong but as unlucky. To begin life with a name that suggested sorrow seemed to him a kind of sentence passed in advance.

He had intended wisdom and greatness.

He believed he had received sadness.

My uncle Toby again tried to calm him. A name, he thought, was not the whole of a man. But my father would not hear of such simplicity.

If the name could not be repaired, then something else must be done.

It was at this point—*after* my birth, *after* my naming—that my father formed his great plan of education. Since accidents had already wounded my beginning, education must save what chance had injured.

Thus he resolved to compose a complete system for the raising of his son.

This system he called the *Tristrapaedia*.

Part 8

My father began the *Tristrapaedia* with great seriousness.

It was to be a full guide to my education from the earliest age onward. Nothing important would be left uncertain. Every year would have its proper lessons, habits, rules, and impressions.

If the wrong name had been forced upon me, then the right education would oppose it.

If my beginning had been confused, my training would be exact.

So my father sat down and wrote.

He wrote slowly, because he wished to write perfectly. Each principle had to be carefully stated. Each sentence had to satisfy his judgment. He could not hurry.

The work delighted him because it united two of his greatest pleasures: theory and fatherhood.

Yet there was a practical problem.

The child for whom the book was written did not remain still while the author composed it.

Part 9

By the time my father had carefully explained how a child should be managed

during the *first year*, that first year had already passed.

When he moved on to the *second year*, I had already advanced beyond it.

Thus the Tristrapaedia suffered from a fatal defect.

It always arrived too late.

My father wrote with perfect care; I grew with perfect speed.

The result was that page after page became useless almost as soon as it was finished. The system might have been admirable if only the child had agreed to pause while the father wrote instructions for him.

But children do not pause for philosophy.

My uncle Toby noticed this with quiet amusement. My father noticed it with quiet pain.

Yet he did not abandon the work. He could not. The theory remained too beautiful to surrender, even if reality had already escaped it.

And while my father pursued education in his study, my uncle Toby pursued war in the garden.

Part 10

My uncle Toby had once served as a soldier.

During the *siege of Namur*, he received the wound that ended his military life. A cannonball struck the wall near him, and a fragment of stone flew off and injured him severely.

He survived, but he never returned to active service.

During his recovery he took to studying military books and plans. He wished to understand clearly the fortifications and movements of armies that he had seen only in the confusion of real battle.

But the plans on paper did not satisfy him.

They were too flat, too small, too abstract.

It was *Corporal Trim*, his loyal companion, who proposed the better method: if a plan on paper was hard to understand, why not build it in the garden?

Thus began one of the most peaceful sieges ever undertaken.

Part 11

Here I must explain one of my own favorite ideas: the theory of the *hobby-horse*.

Every person, I believe, has some ruling interest to which his thoughts return again and again.

My father's hobby-horse was theory.

My uncle Toby's was military history.

Once a man is mounted on his hobby-horse, he rides it over every road he can find.

My uncle Toby rode his hobby-horse with perfect innocence. He did not love war for bloodshed or glory. He loved to understand how things were arranged: walls, trenches, approaches, defenses.

And because he was gentle by nature, even his war became peaceful.

Part 12

At first the model in the garden was small.

There were simple trenches, little walls of earth, and a few markers to represent positions.

But with Trim's help, the thing steadily grew.

A bridge was added.

Then another line of defense.

Then cannon.

Then gates and paths.

My uncle Toby would stand over the model, studying it with great attention, while Trim explained or altered the arrangement.

No general ever took greater pleasure in a line of earthworks than my uncle Toby took in his quiet garden fortifications.

And all this, though it came from war, brought him peace.

Part 13

The battlefield grew until it became more than a few trenches. It became a *miniature fortified town*.

There were little houses inside the walls.

There were bridges crossing streams.

There were cannon placed in proper order.

The whole thing became a world.

Visitors came to see it. Some laughed. Some admired it. My uncle Toby remained serious, modest, and happy.

It was during this peaceful period that another episode showed the true goodness of his heart: his kindness to *Captain Le Fever*, a sick soldier, and to the boy left behind after Le Fever's death.

In helping that dying man and protecting his child, my uncle Toby proved more clearly than ever what sort of person he was.

It was also during this period that *Widow Wadman* entered the story.

Part 14

My uncle Toby's kindness to Captain Le Fever was remembered by all who saw it.

He did not help the man for glory or for praise. He helped him because suffering moved him at once.

This same softness of heart prepared the way for his connection with *Widow Wadman*.

She was lively, intelligent, observant, and very capable of managing her own affairs. She soon became interested in my uncle Toby.

At first she came under the excuse of seeing the garden and its remarkable fortifications.

My uncle Toby, delighted to explain his hobby, walked with her among the

miniature defenses.

It was during one of these walks that she made use of the little device by which she drew him near: she pretended that something had entered her eye.

My uncle Toby came close to examine it.

Nothing was there.

But the moment served its purpose.

His feelings toward her deepened.

She, however, had another concern in mind.

She wished to know the truth about the old wound from Namur.

Part 15

Widow Wadman's curiosity about the wound was not ordinary curiosity.

She was thinking of *marriage*.

But in that age a lady could not openly ask the question that truly concerned her: whether the wound had left my uncle Toby less capable, in a bodily sense, than a husband ought to be.

Therefore she proceeded indirectly.

She asked about the siege.

She asked about the wound.

She listened carefully.

My uncle Toby, innocent as always, suspected nothing.

He believed her interest was interest in himself as a person, and perhaps in his history.

But *Trim* observed more sharply.

He saw the widow's attention to that particular subject. He saw what my uncle Toby did not see.

And at last he resolved that his master ought to know the truth.

Part 16

One evening, after Widow Wadman had gone, *Corporal Trim* spoke privately to my uncle Toby.

Trim explained as delicately as he could that the widow's concern about the wound was not mere compassion, nor simple curiosity about the battle.

She wished to know whether the wound had affected my uncle Toby in such a way as to matter in marriage.

When this was made clear to him, my uncle Toby was deeply disappointed.

He had hoped she valued his heart.

Now he understood that she had been trying to judge his body.

He was not angry. Anger was not in his nature.

But he was wounded in another sense.

The tenderness he had felt for Widow Wadman faded away. Their connection did not end in a dramatic quarrel; it ended in disappointment.

My uncle Toby returned to his peaceful fortifications.

My father returned to his theories.

And I, whose life had begun with a clock, a crushed nose, a mistaken name, and a father too slow to educate me according to his own book, have now brought this account to its end.

It has been a foolish story in many ways.

But if it has made the reader smile, then it has done some good.

For, as I say at the end:

Every time a man smiles — but much more so, when he laughs — it adds something to this Fragment of Life.