
A1 • BEGINNER

Under The Bridge

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Under The Bridge

Fiction · A1 · Beginner · Apex English Graded Readers

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How to use this reader

Read each chapter once without stopping, and don't worry about every word. Then read it again slowly and underline the language you want to keep. Use the **Ask the teacher** page at the end for your notes, doubts and favourite lines, and bring them to your next Apex class.

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CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER ONE

'Can I ask you some questions?' he said. Bea didn't want to listen. Questions were always bad.

Bea lived under a bridge. She had two bags. In the bags there was a coat, some brown shoes and an old, brown hat. It was very cold in winter. There was a book of photographs too, and a yellow baby's dress. These were important to Bea. Why? She didn't remember.

Every day Bea watched the river. She liked watching the people too. A lot of people came under the bridge, but they didn't look at Bea. They usually walked very quickly. They were happy because their lives were different from hers. They didn't want to see her or talk to her.

Bea didn't like talking, but she liked singing. Her songs were from a different life. Sometimes she remembered a house, children and a garden, but she didn't remember very much. Her head was an empty room. The bridge was her home now.

'Hello! My name's Martin.' A young man sat under the bridge near Bea.

Bea closed her eyes. 'I'm sleeping,' she said. 'Go away!'

The man smiled. 'Can I ask you some questions?' he said.

Bea didn't want to listen. Questions were always bad. She started to sing. 'La - la - la!' she sang loudly.

The man waited. Bea opened one eye. The young man had a nice smile. She remembered a young man with a nice smile.

'I'm Bea,' she said. 'Why are you sitting under my bridge?'

'You see that house?' He looked at a tall house across the river. It was old with dark windows. Then he looked at Bea. His eyes were very blue and very clever. 'I'm a policeman,' he said. 'I'm watching that house.'

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER TWO

There were policemen in the garden of the tall house. They moved quietly and looked in the dark windows.

Bea looked at Martin with big eyes. A policeman? She didn't like policemen. They usually had angry faces. 'You can't stay here. Move!' they said to Bea. She always moved, but then she always came back again. This was her bridge.

But this policeman was different. He looked into her eyes. He talked to her. She was a person to him - a person with feelings.

'Why?' she asked. 'You've got a job. You can't watch houses. You haven't got time.'

Martin smiled again. 'It is my job!' Bea was a strange person, but sometimes there was a clever light in her eyes. 'We don't know, but perhaps there are bad people in that house,' he said quietly.

'Yesterday some men took a little girl from her home in town. Her father has a lot of money. Perhaps the men want money from him. This is Em - Emily, the little girl.'

Martin had a picture. The girl had dark hair and a yellow dress and shoes.

Bea looked away. She sat quietly and looked at the river. It moved slowly under the bridge.

'Perhaps they took the little girl to that tall house...' Martin said.

'No!' Bea said suddenly, very loudly. 'I can't hear you.' Then her eyes went dark and she started to sing again. 'La - la - la!'

Martin looked away. He was wrong. Bea didn't understand. She lived in a dream. He started to move away. 'Goodbye, Bea...

Bea's hand was suddenly on his coat. 'No,' she said again. 'There aren't any people in that house. It's empty. I watch it.' Bea didn't like talking. It was difficult and her mouth felt strange.

'Was there a light in the house, Bea?' Martin asked. 'In the night?'

Bea's head was full. She closed her eyes. 'Questions! Questions!' she sang.

'Look, Bea. Look,' Martin said.

There were policemen in the garden of the tall house. They moved quietly and looked in the dark windows.

Bea watched. Where was the little girl? Where was Emily? She had a bad feeling. This was strange for Bea. She didn't have feelings. Sometimes she felt hot or cold, but she never felt happy or unhappy. Now she had a feeling and she didn't like it. She didn't want the feeling. Life was good with no feelings.

But she watched the policemen. Now they were at the door. The house was quiet. The door wasn't strong and it

opened. It was dark in the house. The policemen went in.

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER THREE

'Can we look in your house?'

Now she remembered an important thing. She put her hand on Martin's coat again. 'I was in there today,' she said.

Martin went across the bridge to the old house. A policeman came out. 'Emily?' Martin asked.

'No,' the policeman said. 'It's empty.'

Martin and the policemen went to every house in the street. The doors opened and the policemen asked the same question: 'Can we look in your house?' They looked, but they didn't find the little girl.

'Perhaps this is the wrong road,' Martin said. Where was Emily? Did Bea know? She watched the river and the houses every day. Martin went and sat down under the bridge again.

'She isn't there,' he said. 'We were wrong.'

'I know.' Bea started to like this young man. His eyes smiled.

Suddenly her head felt light. Usually it felt very heavy and full of strange noises. Sometimes she remembered things and it felt light. Now she remembered an important thing. She put her hand on Martin's coat again. 'I was in there today,' she said.

Martin waited. What did Bea know?

'Sometimes I go in the house because it's cold here,' she said.

'It was cold this morning,' Martin said.

'I went there. There wasn't a little girl. No bad people.' Bea's head was heavy again. She closed her eyes.

Martin waited, but Bea was quiet. He took some chocolate from his coat. 'Bea? Here's some chocolate.'

Bea opened an eye again. 'Mmm,' she said. Bea loved chocolate. She took it and put some in her mouth. It was good. Then she opened her bag. There was the baby's dress.

Martin smiled. 'That's nice!' he said.

'Look,' Bea said and she took out the book of photographs. 'Pictures.'

Martin opened the book. There was a picture of a beautiful young woman and a little girl. He looked at Bea. The young woman had the same eyes. 'Is that you?' he asked.

Bea smiled. 'I don't know,' she said quietly and she looked in her bag again. Suddenly she put a hand to her mouth. 'Oh!' she said. Her face was white.

'What is it, Bea?' Martin asked.

Bea slowly took two small, yellow shoes from the bag. She remembered. 'I took them. For my little girl. They were in that tall house.'

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER FOUR

'It was only a dream.'

There was a room with a lot of lights and people. There was music too, and a little girl in a yellow dress danced.

'We were right,' Martin said. 'The bad people were in the house with Emily. They came and then they went again. Perhaps they know about the police.'

There were tears in Bea's eyes. She put the shoes and the dress near her face. She remembered a little girl in the dress, her little girl. Were the tears for that little girl or for Emily? She didn't know.

Martin put his hand on Bea's. 'Bea, we want to find Emily. My men are going to watch the house again at night. Perhaps the bad people are going to come back with Emily. Can you watch it too?' Then Martin went away.

Night came. It was dark under the bridge, but there were lights in the road. There was a car near the tall house. It was a police car. But the road was empty.

Bea wanted to sleep. Her head was full of strange pictures, but she didn't want them. She wanted her old, quiet life. But she wanted to find Emily too. She looked at the tall house. It had a big roof. Every house in the street had a big roof and some houses had windows there. In one window there was a light and a young man sat with a book.

Bea had a new picture in her head now. There was a room with a lot of lights and people. There was music too, and a little girl in a yellow dress danced. 'Look, Mama!' she said to Bea. 'New shoes!' Then the picture went and Bea was under the bridge again.

Suddenly her eyes went to the tall, dark house. Why did she look there? Was there a person? The windows were dark but there, up in the roof, there was... Bea looked and looked. It was difficult in the dark. What was it? Bea's mouth opened. It was a small, white face. It was the face of a little girl. Bea closed her eyes and waited. Then she opened them. There was no face, no little girl. It was only a dream. Bea closed her eyes again, this time for sleep.

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER FIVE

'She's in the house!'

'No!' the man in the water said. 'I can't swim!'

'Good morning, Bea,' Martin said. It was early. It was a nice day. The sun was hot, but it wasn't hot under the bridge. He sat down.

Bea smiled. She liked the sun and she liked Martin. She took the book of photographs out of her bag. She wanted to look at the pictures again with her new friend. They looked at a picture of a big house.

'Did you live there?' Martin asked.

'Perhaps,' Bea said. She started to sing again. Martin listened.

Today Bea's song was beautiful. It was a slow love song. Martin remembered the song. Perhaps his mother sang it to him.

Bea looked at the dress and the yellow shoes. 'I dreamed about my little girl,' she said quietly. 'She danced and I sang a song for her.'

'Did she like the song?' Martin asked.

'Yes. Then it went dark again. Her face was at the window.' Bea was unhappy. There were tears on her face.

'Where was the window in your dream, Bea?'

'Up there, in the roof Martin looked across the river. The window was dark, but... He looked again. What was that on the window? Yes - there were some letters. Martin took his phone. 'Quick - she's in the house - in the roof!'

Bea watched. Martin and the policemen went into the house quickly. They didn't see a man in the garden, but Bea did. The man came out of a window and went across the garden and then across the bridge. His legs moved quickly. His face was very red. He came under Bea's bridge, but he didn't see Bea. She was very quiet. Was this the man? Did this man take little Emily?

Suddenly Bea had a new feeling. She was angry. This was a very bad man. He took children. The man came near Bea and she put her foot in front of him. He didn't see it and he went into the water. There was a loud noise.

The policemen came out of the house and looked at the river.

'No!' the man in the water said. 'I can't swim!'

The policemen took the man from the river. Then they put him in a police car. The policemen took the man away in a police car.

Martin came out of the tall house. There was a little girl with him. She had dark hair. She looked across the river at Bea and smiled.

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER SIX

She had a family. People loved her. She put her hand on Martin's. 'I went away,' she said quietly. 'I remember now.'

Martin was happy. Emily was at home with her mother and father. The man was at the police station. But Martin wanted to know about Bea. The bridge wasn't a good place for her. Was there a home for Bea too? Martin remembered the photographs and her songs. Then he went on his computer and he looked at some old newspapers.

'Yes!' he said after a lot of work. There was a picture of a famous young woman and a little girl in a yellow dress - the picture in Bea's book! There was a story with the picture: Where is Beatrice?

Bea looked up at Martin. 'Hello!' she smiled. 'How is Emily?'

Martin sat down. 'She's well. She says "thank you". The police went into the house and she was in a small room in the roof. She was in the house. We didn't know. But you did.'

Bea's face went red and she looked at the river.

'Bea,' Martin said quietly. 'I know your name.'

Bea didn't understand. 'Yes. I'm Bea.'

'Your name is Beatrice. And you were a singer. A good singer.'

'I like singing,' Bea said.

'And you had a family and a daughter. Her name was Gr -'
'Grace,' Bea said quickly. There was a light in her eyes.
'Her name was Grace. I remember.'

'There was a car accident. You weren't well. You didn't remember things. Then one day you weren't in your room. Your family looked for you. The police looked for you. But they didn't find you.'

Bea's head felt very light. She had a family. People loved her. She put her hand on Martin's. 'I went away,' she said quietly. 'I remember now.'

Martin felt tears in his eyes. 'Look, Bea - Beatrice.' A car stopped near the bridge. A young woman came out. She was tall and beautiful and her dress was yellow.

'Mama?' she said and she put out her hand.

Bea looked at the woman and she had a good, happy feeling. There was love in her eyes. Then she looked at Martin. 'Thank you,' she said.

And Bea went away from the bridge, away from her two bags. She went to her new life.

Martin watched her. 'No, Bea,' he said. 'Thank you'. And he looked at the tall, old house with the dark windows. It was empty again.

Ask the teacher

Notes, doubts and favourite lines to take to your next class:

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