

talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

First Flight



1. Watch and listen to the story

Click on the link below to watch a video of the story being read. Note the pronunciations of the words and read along using the subtitles.

[\(29\) A letter to God - YouTube](#)

2. Summary

The short story 'A Letter to God' is written by G.L Fuentes. It shows the unwavering faith of a farmer in the existence of God. Lencho, a farmer, has a field in which he grows corn. He is confident of reaping a decent harvest. Lencho is expecting some showers to nourish his field. He gets very excited when it starts raining. But to his utter dismay the rain turns into a hailstorm which destroys his crops completely. Lencho is very sad. However, he has a deep faith in God. He is certain that God will help him. So he decides to write a letter to God explaining his situation and asking for His help. In the letter he asks God to send him one hundred pesos. He goes to the town and posts his letter addressed to 'God'.

The postmaster is surprised to see a letter addressed to 'God'. Out of curiosity, the postmaster reads the letter. He is impressed by the deep faith the man has in God and decides to help him. He asks the employees of the post office for donations. He also gives a part of his salary. However, they are able to collect only 70 pesos. The postmaster puts the money in an envelope and addresses it to Lencho.

On Sunday, Lencho comes to the post office again to find out if he has received any letter. The postmaster gives him the envelope with 70 pesos, pretending it is a reply from God. Lencho is not surprised on seeing the money.

But when he counts it, he becomes angry. He again writes a letter to God requesting him to send the remaining 30 pesos, but not through the mail. He thinks that the post office employees are dishonest and that they have stolen the remaining amount!

This story is set in Mexico. Look at the maps below to see where Mexico is located. It is a country to the south of the United States of America; it is considered part of North America or Latin America.



This is what a corn field looks like.



See a video to understand how hail forms and why hailstones fall to the ground. Click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2tRw3ldt0w>

Click on the link below to see how a hailstorm and heavy rain has damaged a corn field.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDtn2ktuNe4>

3. Vocabulary

1. **Faith** – great trust or confidence in something or someone
After the trial she lost all **faith** in the judicial system.
2. **Delicately** – carefully, in order to not cause any harm
This is a very old sari and has to be handled **delicately**.
3. **Poses** – asks a question, especially in a formal situation such as a meeting
The question that was **posed** by the leader of the group was whether they should go ahead with the protest.

4. **Ruined** – destroyed or spoiled
The ancient **ruined** fort stood on the top of the hill.
5. **Pesos** - currency of several Latin American countries
The man stood begging for just a few **pesos** so he could buy some bread.
6. **Counter** – a long, flat, narrow surface or table in a shop, bank, restaurant, post office, etc. at which people are served
There was no one behind the **counter** at the shop and I had to wait to be served.
7. **Counter clerk** – a person who works behind the counter at a shop, bank, post-office, etc., who serves customers
The **counter clerk** stamped the envelope and put it on a pile of letters.
8. **Appropriate** – suitable or right for a particular situation or occasion
You should wear **appropriate** shoes while playing football, otherwise you might hurt your feet.
9. **Acknowledgement** – a letter or email saying that you have received something that someone sent to you
I have yet to get any **acknowledgement** that they have received the parcel.
10. **Counterfoil** – the part of a ticket, cheque, money order, etc. that is kept as a record of payment
Please keep the **counterfoil** of this cheque carefully as proof that you have paid the money.
11. **Record** – a piece of information or a description of an event that is written on paper or stored on a computer; also storage of music, audio or video
Mumbai has experienced the highest rainfall this year on **record**.
12. **Corresponding** – similar to, or connected with, or caused by something else
As the days become colder, there is a **corresponding** drop in the number of early morning walkers.

13. **Subscription** – an amount of money that you pay regularly to receive a product or service
I have decided to pay for a **subscription** for the Competition Success magazine.
14. **Communication** – a message, letter or announcement
There was no **communication** from her father for a long time after he left home.
15. **Entire** – whole or complete
The **entire** world has been affected by the new virus.
16. **Valley** – an area of low land between hills or mountains
The Kashmir **valley** is one of the most beautiful places on earth.
17. **Crest** – top of a hill
The church on the **crest** of the hill is a famous tourist spot.
18. **Ripe** – completely developed and ready to be picked or eaten
The bananas look **ripe** and ready to eat.
19. **Harvest** – crops
The farmers loaded their **harvest** onto the trucks.
20. **Downpour** – a lot of rain in a short time
My friends and I ran out to play in the **downpour**.
21. **Intimately** – closely, in a personal way
They knew each other very **intimately** and have been close friends for many years.
22. **Supper** – typically a light meal eaten in the evening, dinner
As they sat down to eat **supper**, the doorbell rang.
23. **Predicted** – to say that an action / event will happen in the future
The meteorological department has **predicted** heavy rain over the weekend.
24. **Approaching** – to come near something
We could see the train **approaching** the station.

25. **Pleasure** – enjoyment, happiness, satisfaction
I feel great **pleasure** when I feed the stray dogs.
26. **Exclaimed** – to say or shout something suddenly because of surprise, fear, pleasure
She **exclaimed** loudly in fear when she saw the cockroach.
27. **Cent** – unit of money, usually one/hundredth of a dollar or peso
When he arrived in America, he did not have a **cent**.
28. **Satisfied** – pleased, happy
She was very **satisfied** with her students' results.
29. **Expression** – the look on someone's face, showing what they feel or think
The **expression** on her face was terrifying and all the students fell silent in fear.
30. **Regarded** – to look carefully at someone or something
The landlord **regarded** the tenant with suspicion when he walked in completely drunk.
31. **Draped** – put something like a cloth or a piece of clothing loosely over something
She **draped** the beautiful new cloth on the sofa to see how it would look.
32. **Hailstones** – small hard balls of ice that fall like rain
The garden, covered white with **hailstones**, was a beautiful sight.
33. **Resemble** – to look like someone
She **resembled** her mother a lot.
34. **Exposing** – to remove what is covering something so that it can be seen
She removed the bandage, **exposing** the wound.
35. **Remained** – to stay in the same place or condition
She **remained** unhappy despite doing well in her exams.

36. **Destroyed** – to damage something so badly that it cannot be fixed or used
The war left the city completely **destroyed**.
37. **Soul** – the spiritual part of a person which is believed to live on even after death
She suffered greatly while she was alive; let us now hope her **soul** rests in peace.
38. **Plague** – to cause worry or difficulty to a person over a period of time; disease
She has been **plagued** by bad health all her life.
The Black Death, or **plague**, was a pandemic that caused the death of 75-200 million people in the 1300's.
39. **Locusts** - insects which fly in big swarms (groups) and destroy crops
The **locusts** destroyed his entire crop this year.
40. **Solitary** – the only person or thing in a place
In the distance, we could see a **solitary** building.
41. **Instructed** – to order or tell someone to do something formally
She **instructed** the little children to stand in a line.
42. **Conscience** - an inner sense of right and wrong
Her **conscience** didn't allow her to take his share of the food.
43. **Daybreak** – sunrise, dawn, the time in the day when light from the sun starts to appear in the sky.
She set off for her walk at **daybreak**.
44. **Sow** – to put seeds in the ground so plants will grow
Every year, the farmers **sow** their seeds and pray for a good harvest.
45. **Envelope** – a paper container for a letter
She put her letter in the **envelope** and put a stamp on it.
46. **Troubled** – having problems or difficulties
In these **troubled** times, it's nice to hear some good news.
47. **Employees** – someone who is paid to work for someone else
The **employees** all got a bonus and a pay rise at Diwali.

48. **Heartily** – enthusiastically, energetically
She laughed **heartily** at the joke.
49. **Career** – occupation; job/jobs you do during your working life
She is hoping for a **career** in Bollywood.
50. **Postmaster** – the person who is in charge of the post office
The **postmaster** made sure that all the parcels were delivered on time.
51. **Amiable** - friendly and pleasant
She has a very **amiable** personality.
52. **Immediately** – now, without waiting or thinking
We need to leave **immediately** so that we don't miss the movie.
53. **Serious** – severe in effect, bad
Drugs have become a **serious** problem among the youth.
54. **Commented** – said or wrote something that expressed your opinion
The teacher **commented** on Susheela's neat handwriting while handing out the answer papers.
55. **Correspondence** – letters, especially formal business letters
Any further **correspondence** should be sent to my new address.
56. **Evident** – easily seen or understood
The full extent of the damage was **evident** only the next morning.
57. **Goodwill** – friendly and helpful feelings
The school has to rely on the **goodwill** of the parents to raise money.
58. **Resolution** – a promise to yourself to do or not do something; an official decision that is made after a group has voted
I made a **resolution** to give up eating chocolates.
59. **Obligated** – to feel that you must do something; grateful
The government is **obliged** to take care of the poor people in the country.
I am deeply **obliged** to my uncle because he helped me get a good job.

60. **Charity** – a system of giving free help to the needy
She does a lot of work for **charity**.
61. **Impossible** – something that cannot happen or be achieved
It was **impossible** for her to get any rest because of all the noise.
62. **Containing** – to have something inside or include something as a part
She lost the file **containing** top secret documents.
63. **Usual** – normal
This is his **usual** routine.
64. **Experiencing** – something happening to you that affects the way you feel
She was **experiencing** great pain and discomfort, lying on the hard ground.
65. **Contentment** – satisfaction
She gets great **contentment** from doing charity work.
66. **Performed** – to do an action or piece of work
Most of the students **performed** well in their exams.
67. **Deed** – an intentional act, specially a very good or bad one
A lot of evil **deeds** are done in the name of religion.
68. **Slightest** – smallest in amount or degree
My father's operation was not successful; there wasn't even the **slightest** improvement in his eyesight.
69. **Surprise** – the feeling caused by something unexpected happening
We were all very **surprised** when she topped the university in her final exam.
70. **Confidence** – quality of being certain of your abilities or trust in someone / something
I have complete **confidence** in her ability to do well.
71. **Mistake** – an action / decision that produces an unwanted result
I know you did it by **mistake**, but you must still say sorry.

72. **Denied** – to say that something is not true
He completely **denied** having stolen the money.
73. **Requested** – the act of politely or formally asking for something
He **requested** them to remain calm and silent.
74. **Wrinkling** – small lines or folds in skin or cloth
The **wrinkling** of her brow showed that she was worried.
75. **Effort** – physical or mental activity needed to achieve something
We must all make an **effort** to keep our city clean.
76. **Express** – to show an opinion or feeling
I would like to **express** my gratitude for your kindness.
77. **Affixed** – to stick one thing to another
She **affixed** a stamp to the envelope.
78. **Fist** – a hand with fingers and thumb held tightly inside
The protestors were shaking their **fists** at the police.
79. **Crooks** – dishonest persons, criminals or cheats
These politicians are just a bunch of **crooks**.

4. Questions

I. Activity

Now complete the following statements.

(i) *In addition to the sender, the form has to be signed by the*

(ii) *The 'Acknowledgement' section of the form is sent back by the post office to the _____ after the _____ signs it.*

(iii) *The 'Space for Communication' section is used for*

_____.

(iv) *The form has six sections. The sender needs to fill out _____ sections and the receiver _____.*

II. Oral Comprehension Check

1. What did Lencho hope for?
2. Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like 'new coins'?
3. How did the rain change? What happened to Lencho's fields?
4. What were Lencho's feelings when the hail stopped?
5. Who or what did Lencho have faith in? What did he do?
6. Who reads the letter?
7. What did the postmaster do then?
8. Was Lencho surprised to find a letter for him with money in it?
9. What made him angry?

III. Thinking about the Text

1. Who does Lencho have complete faith in? Which sentences in the story tell you this?
2. Why does the postmaster send money to Lencho? Why does he sign the letter 'God'?
3. Did Lencho try to find out who had sent the money to him? Why/Why not?
4. Who does Lencho think has taken the rest of the money? What is the irony in the situation? (Remember that the irony of a situation is an unexpected aspect of it. An ironic situation is strange or amusing because it is the opposite of what is expected.)

5. Are there people like Lencho in the real world? What kind of a person would you say he is? You may select appropriate words from the box to answer the question.

greedy	naïve	stupid	ungrateful
selfish	comical	unquestioning	

6. There are two kinds of conflict in the story: between humans and nature, and between humans themselves. How are these conflicts illustrated?

5. Grammar

Thinking about Language

- I. Look at the following sentence from the story.

Suddenly a strong wind began to blow and along with the rain very large hailstones began to fall.

'Hailstones' are small balls of ice that fall like rain. A storm in which hailstones fall is a 'hailstorm'. You know that a storm is bad weather with strong winds, rain, thunder and lightning.

There are different names in different parts of the world for storms, depending on their nature. Can you match the names in the box with their descriptions below, and fill in the blanks? You may use a dictionary to help you.

gale,	whirlwind,	cyclone,
hurricane,	tornado,	typhoon

1. A violent tropical storm in which strong winds move in a circle:

___ c ___

2. An extremely strong wind : ___ a ___

3. A violent tropical storm with very strong winds :

___ p ___

4. A violent storm whose centre is a cloud in the shape of a funnel: _ _ _ _ n _ _ _ _
5. A violent storm with very strong winds, especially in the western Atlantic Ocean: _ _ _ r _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
6. A very strong wind that moves very fast in a spinning movement and causes a lot of damage:
_ _ _ _ _ l _ _ _ _ _

II. Notice how the word 'hope' is used in these sentences from the story:

- (a) I hope it (the hailstorm) passes quickly.
- (b) There was a single hope: help from God.

In the first example, 'hope' is a verb which means you wish for something to happen. In the second example it is a noun meaning a chance for something to happen.

Match the sentences in Column A with the meanings of 'hope' in Column B.

A	B
1. Will you get the subjects you want to study in college? I <i>hope</i> so.	— a feeling that something good will probably happen
2. I <i>hope</i> you don't mind my saying this, but I don't like the way you are arguing.	— thinking that this would happen (It may or may not have happened.)
3. This discovery will give new hope to HIV/AIDS sufferers.	— stopped believing that this good thing would happen
4. We were <i>hoping against hope</i> that the judges would not notice our mistakes.	— wanting something to happen (and thinking it quite possible)
5. I called early <i>in the hope of</i> speaking to her before she went to school.	— showing concern that what you say should not offend or disturb the other person: a way of being polite
6. Just when everybody had <i>given up hope</i> , the fishermen came back, seven days after the cyclone.	— wishing for something to happen, although this is very unlikely

III. Relative Clauses

Look at these sentences

- (a) All morning Lencho — *who knew his fields intimately* — looked at the sky.
- (b) The woman, *who was preparing supper*, replied, “Yes, God willing.”

The italicised parts of the sentences give us more information about Lencho and the woman. We call them relative *clauses*. Notice that they begin with a *relative pronoun who*. Other common relative pronouns are *whom, whose, and which*.

The relative clauses in (a) and (b) above are called *non-defining*, because we already know the identity of the person they describe. Lencho is a particular person, and there is a particular woman he speaks to. We don't need the information in the relative clause to pick these people out from a larger set.

A non-defining relative clause usually has a comma in front of it and a comma after it (some writers use a dash (—) instead, as in the story). If the relative clause comes at the end, we just put a full stop.

Join the sentences given below using *who, whom, whose, which*, as suggested.

1. I often go to Mumbai. Mumbai is the commercial capital of India. (*which*)
2. My mother is going to host a TV show on cooking. She cooks very well. (*who*)
3. These sportspersons are going to meet the President. Their performance has been excellent. (*whose*)
4. Lencho prayed to God. His eyes see into our minds. (*whose*)
5. This man cheated me. I trusted him. (*whom*)

Sometimes the relative pronoun in a relative clause remains 'hidden'. For example, look at the first sentence of the story:

- (a) The house — the only one in the entire valley — sat on the crest of a low hill.

We can rewrite this sentence as:

- (b) The house — *which* was the only one in the entire valley — sat on the crest of a low hill.

In (a), the relative pronoun *which* and the verb *was* are not present.

IV. Using Negatives for Emphasis

We know that sentences with words such as *no*, *not* or *nothing* show the absence of something, or contradict something. For example:

- (a) This year we will have no corn. (Corn will be absent)
(b) The hail has left nothing. (Absence of a crop)
(c) These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. (Contradicts the common idea of what the drops of water falling from the sky are)

But sometimes negative words are used just to emphasise an idea. Look at these sentences from the story:

- (d) Lencho...had done *nothing else but* see the sky towards the north-east. (He had done only this)
(e) The man went out for *no other reason than* to have the pleasure of feeling the rain on his body. (He had only this reason)
(f) Lencho showed *not the slightest surprise* on seeing the money. (He showed no surprise at all)

Now look back at example (c). Notice that the contradiction in fact serves to emphasise the value or usefulness of the rain to the farmer.

Find sentences in the story with negative words, which express the following ideas emphatically.

1. The trees lost all their leaves.

2. The letter was addressed to God himself.

3. The postman saw this address for the first time in his career.

V. Metaphors

The word *metaphor* comes from a Greek word meaning 'transfer'. Metaphors compare two things or ideas: a quality or feature of one thing is transferred to another thing. Some common metaphors are

- *the leg of the table*: The leg supports our body. So the object that supports a table is described as a leg.
- *the heart of the city*: The heart is an important organ in the centre of our body. So this word is used to describe the central area of a city.

In pairs, find metaphors from the story to complete the table below. Try to say what qualities are being compared. One has been done for you.

<i>Object</i>	<i>Metaphor</i>	<i>Quality or Feature Compared</i>
Cloud	Huge mountains of clouds	The mass or 'hugeness' of mountains
Raindrops		
Hailstones		
Locusts		
		An epidemic (a disease) that spreads very rapidly and leaves many people dead
	An ox of a man	

6. Speaking

Have you ever been in great difficulty, and felt that only a miracle could help you? How was your problem solved? Speak about this in class with your teacher.

7. Listening

Listen to the letter (given under 'In This Lesson') read out by your teacher/on the audio tape. As you listen fill in the table given below.

The writer apologises (says sorry) because	
The writer has sent this to the reader	
The writer sent it in the month of	
The reason for not writing earlier	
Sarah goes to	
Who is writing to whom?	
Where and when were they last together?	

In This Lesson

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

- Introduced students to the story that they are going to read.
- Related a thought-provoking story about the nature of belief.
- Helped students, through an interesting activity, to understand something that happens in the story — how to send money using a money order.
- Guided them through the reading activity by providing periodic comprehension checks as they read, and checked for holistic understanding at the end of the reading activity.
- Provided interesting exercises to strengthen students' grasp of the specific vocabulary found in the story, and also introduced them to related vocabulary.
- Explained specific areas of grammar — non-defining relative clauses and the use of negatives for emphasis — providing illustrations from the text, and exercises for practice.
- Explained what metaphors are, and helped students identify metaphors in the text by providing clues.
- Provided a context for authentic speaking.
- Provided an interesting listening activity.

Given below is the passage for listening activity.

**Bhatt House
256, Circuit Road
Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India
25 January 2006**

Dear Arti,

How are you? I'm sorry I haven't written for a very long time. I think I last sent you a birthday card in the month of September 2005.

We have just moved house (see our new address above). This is our new home. Sarah has just about started going to school. We have admitted her to 'Little Feet' as this is very close to our new home.

I'm sitting here by the window sill, writing to you. There is a slight drizzle outside and I'm reminded of the good times we had together at Bangalore last year.

Do write back. Love,

Jaya

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Before You Read: Encourage students to share their ideas about what will happen in the story.

Activity: Before filling out the form, get the students to read through the form and decide which parts they should fill out, and which parts will be filled in by the postal department. Ask a few students to volunteer to actually send a money order (the amount need not be large) and share the experience with the rest of the class.

Reading: Break the text up into manageable chunks for reading (three paragraphs, for example), and encourage students to read silently, on their own. Give them enough time to read, and then discuss what they have read before going on to the next portion. Use the ‘Oral Comprehension Checks’ in the appropriate places, and use the ‘Thinking about the Text’ questions at the end of the passage to help them go beyond the text.

Grammar: After they have done the exercise, ask students to make their own sentences with non-defining relative clauses — for example, ‘Meena, who’s a very clever girl, is always first in class.’ Or, ‘Our gardener, who knows a lot about plants, loves to talk about them.’

Speaking: Take the first turn — talk to the students about an instance from your own life, or from that of someone you know.