

# ITALIAN SHORT STORIES FOR BEGINNERS

Olly Richards



8 Unconventional Short Stories to  
Grow Your Vocabulary and Learn  
Italian the Fun Way!

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**OLLY RICHARDS**

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***Italian Short Stories for Beginners: 8 Unconventional Short Stories to Grow Your Vocabulary and Learn Italian the Fun Way!***

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# **Free Masterclass: How To Read Effectively In A Foreign Language**

As a special thank you for investing in this book, I invite you to attend a FREE online workshop. You'll learn my advanced techniques for effective reading, so you can make the most of these stories.

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Italian translation by  
Annalisa Distefano

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## Introduction

This book is a collection of eight unconventional and entertaining short stories in Italian. Written especially for beginners and low-intermediate learners, equivalent to A1-A2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), they offer a rich and enjoyable way of improving your Italian and growing your vocabulary.

Reading is one of the most effective ways to improve your Italian, but it can be difficult to find suitable reading material. When you are just starting out, most books are too difficult to understand, contain vocabulary far above your level, and are so lengthy that you can soon find yourself getting overwhelmed and giving up.

If you recognise these problems then this book is for you. From science fiction and fantasy to crime and thrillers, there is something for everyone. As you dive into these eight unique and well-crafted tales, you will quickly forget that you are reading in a foreign language and find yourself engrossed in a captivating world of Italian.

The learning support features in the stories give you access to help when you need it. With English definitions of difficult words, regular recaps of the plot to help you follow along, and multiple-choice questions for you to check important details of the story, you will quickly absorb large amounts of natural Italian and find yourself improving at a fast pace.

Perhaps you are new to Italian and looking for an entertaining challenge. Or maybe you have been learning for a while and simply want to enjoy reading whilst growing your vocabulary. Either way, this book is the biggest step forward you will take in your Italian this year.

So sit back and relax. It's time to let your imagination run wild and be transported into a magical Italian world of fun, mystery, and intrigue!

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## About the Stories

A sense of achievement and a feeling of progress are essential when reading in a foreign language. Without these, there is little motivation to keep reading. The stories in this book have been designed with this firmly in mind.

First and foremost, each story has been kept to a manageable length and broken down into short chapters. This gives you the satisfaction of being able to finish reading what you have begun, and come back the next day wanting more! It also reduces the extent to which you feel overwhelmed by how much you have left to learn when starting to learn Italian.

The linguistic content of the stories is as rich and as varied as possible, whilst remaining accessible for lower-level learners. Each story belongs to a different genre in order to keep you entertained, and there are plenty of dialogues throughout, giving you lots of useful spoken Italian words and phrases to learn. There is even a deliberate mix of tenses from one story to the next, so that you get exposure to common verbs in a mixture of past, present and future verb forms. This makes you a more versatile and confident user of Italian, able to understand a variety of situations without getting lost.

Many books for language learners include English translations for the entire story, known as parallel texts. Although these can be popular, parallel texts have the major disadvantage of providing an “easy option”. Learners inevitably find themselves relying on the English translation and avoiding the “struggle” with the original Italian text that is necessary in order to improve. Consequently, instead of including a parallel text, *Italian Short Stories for Beginners* supports the reader with a number of learning aids that have been built directly into the stories.

Firstly, difficult words have been bolded and their definitions given in English at the end of each chapter. This avoids the need to consult a dictionary in the middle of the story, which is cumbersome and interrupts your reading. Secondly, there are regular summaries of the plot to help you follow the story and make sure you haven't missed anything important. Lastly, each chapter comes with its own set of comprehension questions to test your understanding of key events and encourage you to read in more detail.

*Italian Short Stories for Beginners* has been written to give you all the support you need, so that you can focus on the all-important tasks of reading, learning and having fun!

## How to Read Effectively

Reading is a complex skill, and in our mother tongue we employ a variety of micro-skills to help us read. For example, we might *skim* a particular passage in order to understand the gist. Or we might *scan* through multiple pages of a train timetable looking for a particular time or place. If I lent you an Agatha Christie novel, you would breeze through the pages fairly quickly. On the other hand, if I gave you a contract to sign, you would likely read every word in great detail.

However, when it comes to reading in a foreign language, research suggests that we abandon most of these reading skills. Instead of using a mixture of micro-skills to help us understand a difficult text, we simply start at the beginning and try to understand every single word. Inevitably, we come across unknown or difficult words and quickly get frustrated with our lack of understanding.

Providing that you recognise this, however, you can adopt a few simple strategies that will help you turn frustration into opportunity and make the most of your reading experience!

\* \* \*

You've picked up this book because you like the idea of learning Italian with short stories. But why? What are the benefits of learning Italian with stories, as opposed to with a textbook? Understanding this will help you determine your approach to reading.

One of the main benefits of reading stories is that you gain exposure to large amounts of natural Italian. This kind of reading for pleasure is commonly known as *extensive reading*. This is very different from how you might read Italian in a textbook. Your textbook contains short dialogues, which you read in detail with the aim of understanding every word. This is known as *intensive reading*.

To put it another way, while textbooks provide grammar rules and lists of vocabulary for you to learn, stories show you natural language *in use*. Both approaches have value and are an important part of a balanced approach to language learning. This book, however, provides opportunities for extensive reading. Read enough, and you'll quickly build up an innate understanding of how Italian works - very different from a theoretical understanding pieced together from rules and abstract examples (which is

what you often get from textbooks).

Now, in order to take full advantage of the benefits of extensive reading, you have to actually read a large enough volume in the first place! Reading a couple of pages here and there may teach you a few new words, but won't be enough to make a real impact on the overall level of your Italian. With this in mind, here is the thought process that I recommend you have when approaching reading the short stories in this book, in order to learn the most from them:

1. Enjoyment and a sense of achievement when reading is vitally important because it keeps you coming back for more
2. The more you read, the more you learn
3. The best way to enjoy reading stories, and to feel that sense of achievement, is by reading the story from beginning to end
4. Consequently, reaching the end of a story is the most important thing... more important than understanding every word in it!

This brings us to the single most important point of this section: **You must accept that you won't understand everything you read in a story.**

This is completely normal and to be expected. The fact that you don't know a word or understand a sentence doesn't mean that you're "stupid" or "not good enough". It means you're engaged in the process of learning Italian, just like everybody else.

So what should you do when you don't understand a word? Here are a few ideas:

1. Look at the word and see if it is familiar in any way. If English is your mother tongue, there are often elements of Italian vocabulary that will be familiar to you. Take a guess - you might surprise yourself!
2. Re-read the sentence that contains the unknown word a number of times over. Using the context of that sentence, and the rest of the story, try to guess what the unknown word might mean. This takes practice, but is often easier than you think!
3. Make a note of the word in a notebook, and check the meaning later
4. Sometimes, you might find a verb that you know, conjugated in an unfamiliar way. For example:

**parlare** - to speak

**parleranno** - they will speak

**parlassi** - I would speak (subjunctive)

You may not be familiar with this particular verb form, or not understand why it is being used in this case, and that may frustrate you. But is it absolutely necessary for you to know this right now? Can you still understand the gist of what's going on? Usually, if you have managed to recognise the main verb, that is enough. Instead of getting frustrated, simply notice how the verb is being used, and then carry on reading!

1. If all the other steps fail, or you simply “have to know” the meaning of a particular word, you can simply turn to the end of the chapter and look it up in the vocabulary list. However, this should be your last resort.

The previous four steps in this list are designed to do something very important: to train you to handle reading independently and without help. The more you can develop this skill, the better able you'll be to read. And, of course, the more you can read, the more you'll learn.

Remember that the purpose of reading is not to understand every word in the story, as you might be expected to in a textbook. The purpose of reading is to enjoy the story for what it is. Therefore if you don't understand a word, and you can't guess what the word means from the context, simply try to keep reading. Learning to be content with a certain amount of ambiguity whilst reading a foreign language is a powerful skill to have, because you become an independent and resilient learner.

## The Six-Step Reading Process

1. Read the first chapter of the story all the way through. Your aim is simply to reach the end of the chapter. Therefore, do not stop to look up words and do not worry if there are things you do not understand. Simply try to follow the plot.
2. When you reach the end of the chapter, read the short summary of the plot to see if you have understood what has happened. If you find this too difficult, do not worry.
3. Go back and read the same chapter again. If you like, you can read in more detail than before, but otherwise simply read it through one more time.
4. At the end of the chapter, read the summary again, and then try to answer the comprehension questions to check your understanding of key events. If you do not get them all correct, do not worry.
5. By this point, you should start to have some understanding of the main events of the chapter. If you wish, continue to re-read the chapter, using the vocabulary list to check unknown words and phrases. You may need to do this a few times until you feel confident. This is normal, and with each reading you will gradually build your understanding.
6. Otherwise, you should feel free to move on to the next chapter and enjoy the rest of the story at your own pace, just as you would any other book.

At every stage of the process, there will inevitably be words and phrases you do not understand or cannot remember. Instead of worrying, try to focus instead on everything that you *have* understood, and congratulate yourself for everything you have done so far.

Most of the benefit you derive from this book will come from reading each story through from beginning to end. Only once you have completed a story in its entirety should you go back and begin the process of studying the language from the story in more depth.

*Annessi ad ogni capitolo*

- Riassunto
- Vocabolario
- Domande a risposta multipla
- Soluzioni

*Appendices to each chapter*

- Summary
- Vocabulary
- Multiple-choice questions
- Answers

# **RACCONTI**



# 1. La Pizza Pazza

## Capitolo 1 – L’aereo

- Daniel, vieni qui! – mi dice Julia dalla porta di casa.
- Che c’è, Julia? – le chiedo.
- Oggi partiamo per l’Italia. Lo sai, no?
- Certo che lo so! Sto preparando lo **zaino**.

Il mio nome è Daniel. Ho 24 anni. Julia è mia sorella e viviamo nella **stessa** casa a Londra. Lei ha 23 anni. I nostri genitori si chiamano Arthur e Clara. Ci stiamo preparando per il nostro **viaggio** in Italia. Siamo **studenti di intercambio**, stiamo imparando la lingua italiana e sappiamo già abbastanza.

Io sono alto, misuro 1 metro e 87, ho i capelli **castani** e un po’ **lunghi**. Ho gli occhi verdi e una bocca **grande**. Il mio corpo è piuttosto tonico perché faccio molto sport. Le mie gambe sono lunghe e forti perché vado a correre ogni mattina.

Anche mia sorella Julia ha i capelli castani, però molto più lunghi dei miei. Lei non ha gli occhi verdi, ha gli occhi marroni **come** mio padre. Io ho lo stesso colore degli occhi di mia madre.

I miei genitori lavorano. Mio padre Arthur fa **l’elettricista** e lavora per un’**azienda** molto grande. Mia madre è un’imprenditrice ed è proprietaria di un’azienda che vende **libri di fantasia** e di **fantascienza**. Loro sanno l’italiano e ci parlano in italiano per **fare pratica**.

Mio padre mi guarda e vede che **non sono ancora vestito**.

- Daniel! Perché non ti vesti?
- Mi sono appena svegliato. Ho fatto la doccia 5 minuti fa e non sono ancora asciutto.
- Sbrigati. Devo andare a lavoro e ho poco tempo.
- Non ti preoccupare, papà. Adesso mi vesto.
- Tua sorella dov’è?
- È in camera sua.

Mio padre va nella camera di mia sorella per parlare con lei. Julia lo guarda.

– Ciao, papà. Ti serve qualcosa?

– Sì, Julia. Tuo fratello adesso si sta vestendo. Voglio che prendiate questi.

Mio padre le mostra una **mazzetta di banconote**. Julia è molto **sorpresa**.

– Questi sono un sacco di soldi! – dice.

– Tua madre ed io **abbiamo risparmiato** parecchi soldi. Vogliamo **darvi** una piccola parte per il viaggio in Italia.

– Grazie, papà. Vado a dirlo a Daniel.

Loro non sanno che sto ascoltando da dietro la porta. Finalmente mio padre mi vede.

– Oh, Daniel! Sei qui! Ti sei già vestito! Questi soldi sono per tutti e due.

– Grazie, papà. **Saranno molto utili!**

– Adesso vostra madre ed io vi accompagniamo all'aeroporto in macchina. Andiamo!

Pochi minuti dopo e dopo aver fatto colazione, usciamo di casa e andiamo verso l'aeroporto con la macchina di mia madre. Julia è molto **nervosa**.

– Julia, **tesoro**, – le dice mia madre. –Stai bene?

– Sono molto nervosa! – le risponde.

– Perché?

– Non conosco nessuno in Italia. Conosco solo Daniel!

– Non preoccuparti, di sicuro a Roma c'è un sacco di gente gentile e simpatica.

– Sì, mamma. Sono sicura di questo, però sono **ansiosa**.

All'aeroporto c'è una **coda** molto lunga. Ci sono molte persone provenienti da diverse parti dell'Inghilterra che stanno comprando il **biglietto**. Molti sono impiegati e **uomini d'affari**. Alcuni di loro stanno già salendo sull'aereo. Mi avvicino a Julia e le dico:

– Sei un po' più tranquilla?

– Sì, Daniel. In macchina ero molto tesa.

– Sì, questo è certo! Dai, andrà tutto bene! A Roma ho un amico

molto gentile che aiuta gli studenti di intercambio come noi.

I nostri genitori ci abbracciano con **affetto** e ci salutano con la mano mentre noi saliamo sull'aereo.

– Vi vogliamo bene, ragazzi!

Questa è l'ultima cosa che abbiamo sentito. L'aereo decolla... direzione Roma.

## Annexo al capitolo 1

### **Riassunto**

Daniel e Julia sono due fratelli che vivono a Londra. Sono studenti di intercambio e vanno a fare un viaggio in Italia. Sanno l'italiano e lo praticano con i loro genitori. I genitori accompagnano i loro figli all'aeroporto. Julia è molto nervosa prima di prendere l'aereo, però alla fine si tranquillizza.

### **Vocabolario**

- **lo zaino** = rucksack
- **la stessa/lo stesso** = the same
- **il viaggio** = travel, trip
- **gli studenti di intercambio** = exchange students
- **castani** = brown
- **lunghi** = long
- **grande** = big (in this case, *large mouth*)
- **come** = as well as
- **l'elettricista** = electrician
- **l'azienda** = company
- **i libri** = books
- **la fantasia** = fantasy
- **fantascienza** = science fiction
- **fare pratica** = to practise
- **non sono ancora vestito** = I'm not yet dressed
- **voglio che prendiate questi** = I want you to take this
- **mazzetta di banconote** = a wad of bills
- **sorpresa** = surprised
- **abbiamo risparmiato** = we've been saving (money)
- **darvi** = to give to you
- **saranno molto utili** = it will be very useful (money)
- **nervosa/o** = nervous
- **tesoro** = darling, dear, honey, love
- **ansiosa/o** = anxious