

Reading for pronunciation practice: **That Quail, Robert**

by Margaret A. Stanger Philadelphia & New York: J. B. Lippincott. © 1966. p. 47-49

1. Mark each *pause | + continu*ation rise | with a vertical *line (|).
2. Mark *longer pauses | with a *double vertical line (||).
3. Underline the *stressed* *syllables.
4. Mark the **tonic* stresses | with an *asterisk (*).

One day suddenly Robert was very different. He did not get up until nearly noon, and when he did come out to the kitchen, he was not interested in orange juice or toast; not even in crisp lettuce. Robert did not feel well. As the day went on we became more concerned. Something was very wrong. He wanted to be held constantly. (His method of asking to be held was to back up to a human foot, squat down, and push with his tail till he was picked up and cuddled.) He wanted nothing to eat when lunch was served, and spent the time at the table nestled within the crook of Tommy's elbow, making sad little sounds, not of contentment but of distress. By now there was a general feeling of anxiety throughout the house, as there is when a child is not himself.

Robert stayed with Tommy until the dishes were done, then went to Mildred, who devoted herself to trying to comfort the poor little creature. When Tommy came into the house after working an hour or two in the rose garden (alone, as Robert did not want to go with him), Mildred said:

“I must get the roast ready for dinner. You take him for a while.”

Remembering that a letter had to be written and ready for the evening mail, Tommy went to his desk, still holding Robert. He carefully put Robert down between his feet, forming an angle with heels together, which usually pleased Robert. He settled down, halfway resting on his side, and Tommy went on with the letter.

All of a sudden there was a scream. It can't be described any other way – it was a scream. Mildred came running in from the kitchen, and Tommy looked down in consternation, fearing that he had inadvertently moved his feet and hurt the tiny thing. Robert stood up, shook himself, gave a contented little chirp and walked off...leaving an egg!

Such excitement! I was telephoned to immediately, as were several other devoted friends. (To our surprise, the next issue of the local paper contained an article with a large headline: ROBERT SHRIEKS, LAYS FIRST EGG. There was by this time considerable local and even state-wide interest in Robert, so this was quite an event.)

Immediately after accomplishing this feat, Robert rushed to his (excuse me, I mean HER) tray and began eating as though she had never seen food before. And how she drank! As for the egg, she could not have cared less. She completely ignored it and seemed glad that the whole business was over. It was a full-sized egg, not a smaller, pullet-sized variety such as newly laying hens produce. It was the real thing. When we knew that Robert did not want to have anything to do with it, it was carefully placed in a little velvet-lined box to be admired by many callers.

After the first astonishment at seeing the egg on the floor at his feet, Tommy had worn a queer half-smile on his face. Now, as he stood looking down at the box on the coffee table, he said, “I'm not saying, ‘I told you so,’ but I felt all along that only a female could have survived the vicissitudes that have befallen Robert. I guess we have the little girl we always wanted. I suspected this, and now the evidence is beautifully conclusive. Well done, Robert, well done.”

Mildred had picked Robert up and stood murmuring comforting, congratulatory and female communications to her, adding, “Well, once again you have taught us something. It may take a while for us to learn to call you ‘she’ instead of ‘he,’ but we will, we will.”