About the story
Tom and Elena live a simple life in a small cottage. They are poor, but they have everything they need: a goat for milk, a garden to grow vegetables, hens and geese for eggs. Imagine their surprise when one morning Tom goes to collect the eggs as usual, only to discover that one egg is solid gold.

A goldsmith pays Tom handsomely for the egg, so Tom decides to treat Elena to a dress. Elena is not impressed. They need to fix the roof, not spend money on clothes. But when the same goose lays a golden egg the next day – and the next and the next – they have enough money to fix the roof, buy more clothes, build a bigger house, and even to have servants...

Unfortunately, being rich just makes the pair greedy for more. Elena suggests killing the goose to get all the gold at once, but when they cut the goose open and there's no gold inside her at all, they realise their days of riches are over. They've been too greedy, and now they're left with nothing.

About the author
Some of the world's best-known fables and folktales are attributed to Aesop (e.g. The Boy who cried Wolf, The Fox and the Crow, The Hare and the Tortoise) as well as many familiar English expressions (“sour grapes”, “crying wolf” and so on). However, the writer himself remains a mystery.

Tradition has it that Aesop was a slave in Ancient Greece, living from around 620-564BC. He is mentioned by the Classical authors Aristophanes, Herodotus and Plutarch, and there are a number of biographical details that are impossible to confirm – it was said, for instance, that he was physically very ugly but famous for his wisdom, and that he was given his freedom and became an adviser to kings and city-states, before insulting the people of Delphi and being sentenced to death on a trumped-up charge.

Aesop's fables have been retold countless times, and translated into many languages around the world.
The Goose that laid the Golden Eggs • Teacher’s notes

Before reading
Ask the class if they think having more money would make them happier. What would they spend the money on? What do they want that they haven’t already got? Once they bought those things, would they be happy or would they start wanting more?

Ask the students if they know any stories about people finding a magical way to get rich or to get everything they wish for. [Stories may include Aladdin, Jack and the Beanstalk…]

Ask if anyone in the class keeps hens or geese, or if anyone in their family does. Have they helped to collect the eggs before? Where do you find them? How often do the birds lay their eggs? Describe the eggs. Are they hard or soft, warm or cold, heavy or light, tough or fragile?

Show the cover of this book. Does anyone know the story? How would students feel if they found a golden egg? What would they do with it?

Reading or listening
You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

pp4-5 How would you describe the place where Tom and Elena live?  p35 Would you like a big house with lots of servants?

p7 What’s Tom doing?  p38 Does this sound like a good idea?

p8 What’s Elena doing? Do Tom and Elena look happy?  pp42-43 Are Tom and Elena happy to go back to their old life?

p13 Would you like to live like this?  p44 Do you know any more of Aesop’s fables?

p16 What do you think it is?  p45 Why do you think the stories are still popular today?


p22 What would you have spent the money on?  p47 Do you know any other morals, or similar short sayings?

p25 How would you describe Elena’s reaction?  Sensible? Ungrateful?

p29 How would you describe the goose in this picture?

After reading
Ask the students what they think of Tom and Elena. In their place, would you have killed the goose?

What do the class think about Tom and Elena’s life before they found the golden egg? And after?

Write two headings on the board, PRO and CON. The pros here are the positive things about Tom and Elena’s life before they found the golden egg, the cons are the negative things. Ask the students to suggest points for each column. What some see as a pro, others might see as a con, e.g. a quiet life. If so, write it down in both columns. When the students have suggested all they can, look at the lists together and ask whether the pros are more (or matter more) than the cons, or vice versa. It doesn’t matter if students don’t entirely agree – encourage them to discuss their different viewpoints.