

62 After the Fire

Firemen had been fighting the forest fire for nearly three weeks before they could get it under control. A short time before, great trees had covered the countryside for miles around. Now, smoke still rose up from the warm ground over the desolate hills. Winter was coming on and the hills threatened the surrounding villages with destruction, for heavy rain would not only wash away the soil but would cause serious floods as well. When the fire had at last been put out, the forest authorities ordered several tons of a special type of grass-seed which would grow quickly. The seed was sprayed over the ground in huge quantities by aeroplanes.



The planes had been planting seed for nearly a month when it began to rain. By then, however, in many places the grass had already taken root. In place of the great trees which had been growing there for centuries, patches of green had begun to appear in the blackened soil.

Comprehension and Précis

Answer these questions in *not more than 75 words*.

1. How long did it take the firemen to get the forest fire under control?
2. Had all the great trees been burnt or not? Was there danger that heavy rain would cause serious floods or not? Would the floods destroy the surrounding villages or not? (*Now that . . . which*)
3. Did the forest authorities order grass-seed to prevent this or not? For how long was it sprayed over the ground by planes? (*To prevent this . . . which . . .*)
4. Did it begin to rain or not? Where had the grass taken root? (*By the time that . . .*)

Composition

Rewrite the following sentences using the joining words in brackets:

1. The firemen cut down trees. They prevented the fire from spreading. (*in order to*)
2. The fire raged for two weeks. It caused millions of pounds worth of damage. (*which*)
3. Forest workers planted young trees quickly. The whole area would become a desert. (*so that . . . not*)

Letter-writing

Write six sentences beginning with each of the following phrases:

I am sorry . . . ; Forgive me for . . . ; I was so glad . . . ; I have not heard . . . ; What a surprise . . . ; It was very kind . . .

Key Structures

The planes had been planting seed for nearly a month when it began to rain.

a Do you remember these sentences: (KS 97b)

He *lived* in Scotland fifteen years *ago*.

He *had lived* in Scotland for fifteen years *before* he came to England.

Now compare these pairs of sentence :

b He had already finished work before I arrived.

He had been working in a factory for years before he got this job.

I asked him what he had lost.

I asked him what he had been doing all afternoon.

Exercises

A. Underline the verbs in the passage which tell us *what had happened* and *what had been happening*.

B. Give the correct form of the verbs in brackets. Do not refer to the passage until you finish the exercise:

1. Firemen (fight) the forest fire for nearly three weeks before they could get it under control. A short time before, great trees (cover) the countryside for miles around.
2. The planes (plant) seed for nearly a month when it began to rain. By then, however, in many places the grass already (take) root. In place of the great trees which (grow) there for centuries, patches of green (begin) to appear in the blackened soil.

C. What happened? What had happened? What had been happening? Give the correct form of the verbs in brackets:

After Howard Carter (discover) Tutankhamen's tomb, strange reports (appear) in the newspapers. Three of the people who (take) part in the discovery (die) soon afterwards. Though nothing (happen) to Carter himself, newspapers (claim) that these people (die) because of the 'curse of the Pharaohs'. These absurd stories have been forgotten, but Carter's great discovery remains. Archaeologists (search) the Valley of Kings for years, but until 1922 nothing (find).

Special Difficulties

Words Often Confused.

a Control (l. 3) and Check. Study these examples:

He controls a large business company.

A mechanic checked my car engine.

b Great (l. 4) and Big. Study these examples:

The Parthenon is a great building. (An important building.)

Skyscrapers are big buildings.

c Soil (l. 10) and Ground (l. 6).

Olive trees can grow in poor soil.

The ball fell to the ground.

Exercise

Choose the correct words in the following sentences:

1. The inspector (checked) (controlled) my ticket.
2. Nothing can grow in this poor (soil) (ground).
3. Have you (checked) (controlled) those figures?
4. Beethoven was a (big) (great) composer.