

GRAMMAR

Narrative tenses

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_3092G

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can identify and correctly use the narrative tenses.
- I can use the narrative tenses to describe an unusual experience I have had.



Warm-up

In this lesson, you will read texts about **coincidences**. Option: complete step 1 of the activity below **in breakout rooms**.

1. Which situation below could be described as a **coincidence**? Why?

2. Discuss your answers as a class.

Joe sets up a date between his two best friends, Lucy and Sarah. They have a great first date and eventually fall in love.

Two men enter an elevator at the exact same time. They are both going to the same floor, because they work at the same office.

Two strangers start talking in a café. They realise that they lived on the same street as children and now live in the same apartment building.



What a **coincidence**!



A **coincidence** is when something very unlikely happens, for example an unexpected connection between people or events.



Reading

Read the text and **answer** the questions below.

In 1979, twins who had been separated at birth met for the first time, at the age of 39. Until then, they had been living separate lives in cities in Ohio, only 40 miles apart. Soon, they discovered some very strange coincidences...

As kids, they owned dogs called Toy. Their adoptive parents had called them both James (Jim for short). They had both married women named Linda, divorced, and remarried women named Betty. They even drove the same car and smoked the same brand of cigarettes!

How old were the twins when they first met?

Where did the twins live?

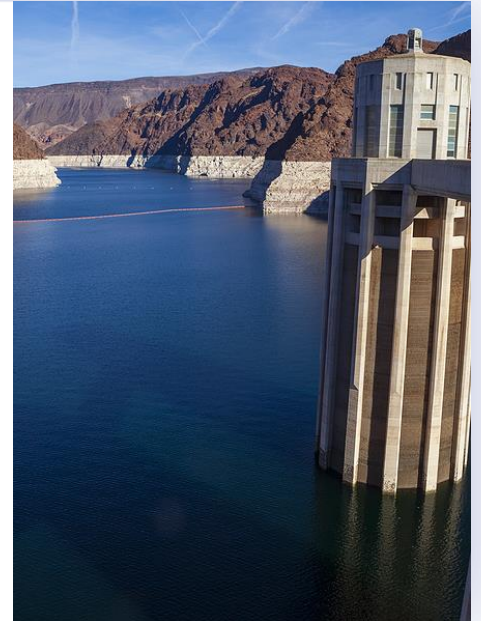
Name three similarities that the twins discovered between their lives.



Reading

Read the text and **answer** the questions below.

The first and last fatalities of the construction of the Hoover Dam in Nevada, USA, were a father and son. Patrick Tierney died on the 20th of December, 1935, when he fell from one of the towers. Fourteen years previously to the day, John Gregory Tierney was looking at potential sites for the new dam when he and his crew drowned in a flash flood.



Where is Hoover Dam located?

What was the relationship between Patrick Tierney and John Gregory Tierney?

What happened to the two men?

Narrative tenses

The narrative tenses are used together to talk about the past. They are often used to tell **stories and anecdotes**, describe **historical events** and give **biographical information**.



The narrative tenses =

past simple, past continuous, past perfect
and **past perfect continuous**

”

Past simple review

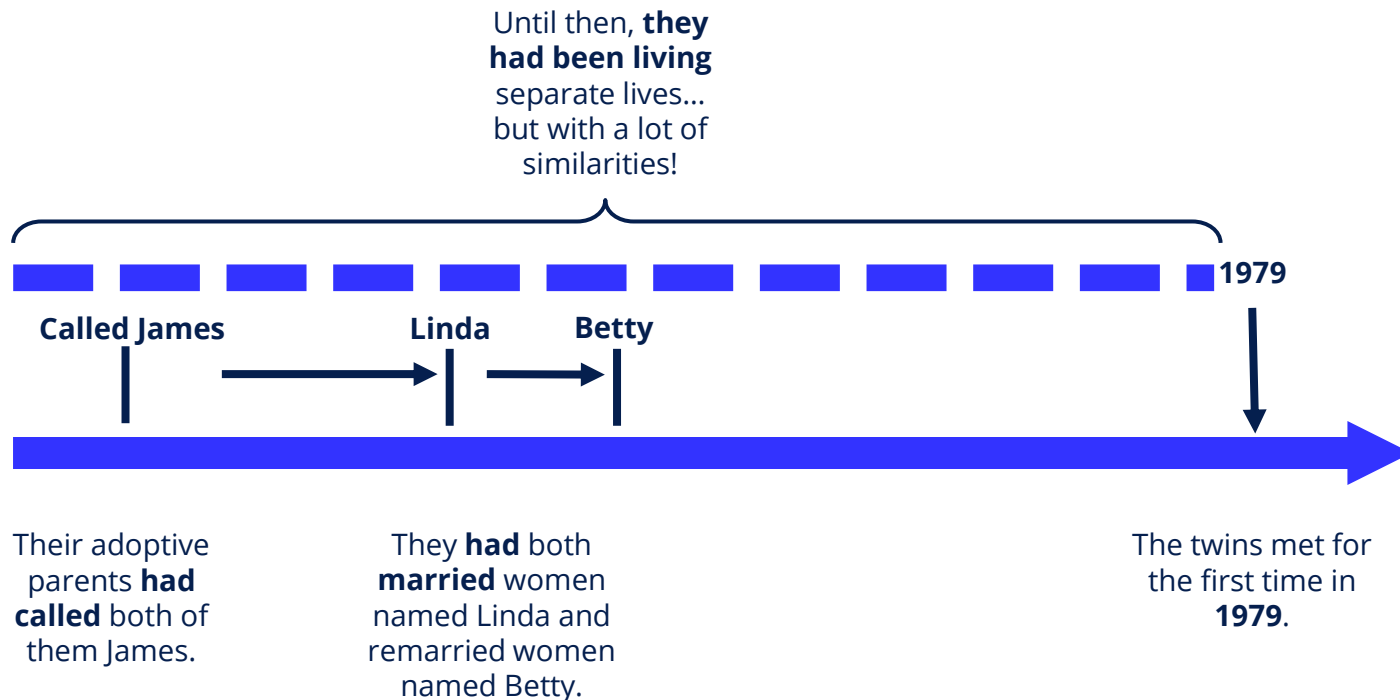
Read the example sentences from the text and the definition in the blue box.

In 1979, a set of twins **met** for the first time, at the age of 39.
Soon, they **discovered** some very strange coincidences...

- The **past simple** tense is used for **completed actions** or **states** in the past.
- We often give the **specific time** that they happened.

Past perfect

1. **Read** the examples on the timeline (starting on the right) and the definitions in the blue box.
2. **Identify** examples of the **past perfect simple** and **past perfect continuous**.



- The **past perfect** is used to talk about an action that happened **before a particular time** in the past.
- The **continuous** form is used to show that the action was **ongoing**.

Past continuous

Read the example sentence below and **complete** the blue boxes.

John Gregory Tierney **was looking** at potential sites for the new dam...



...**when** he and his crew **drowned** in a flash flood.

- We use the **past continuous** to give **background information**.
- Often, the action described by the past continuous is **interrupted** by an action in the past simple.

- Look at the two clauses of the sentence above. Which action happened first? Which action interrupted it?
- What word is used to join the clauses?



Complete the sentences

Complete the sentences below using the verb in brackets in the **correct narrative tense**.

- 1 I _____ (**walk**) down the street last Monday morning on my way to work, when I _____ (**realise**) that I had left my phone at home. So, I went back to get it, which made me late for my train.
- 2 I _____ (**start**) running, hoping that I could still catch it. It _____ (**rain**) heavily now.
- 3 The traffic light was red, but I _____ (**not, notice**) and I stepped straight out onto the road. Somebody _____ (**grab**) me from behind, just as a motorbike raced past.
- 4 I _____ (**turn**) around and _____ (**see**) the person who _____ (**save**) my life. And then I _____ (**get**) another surprise...
- 5 He was very familiar, but at first I (**not, know**) _____ where I _____ (**meet**) him before. Then, I realised – it was the actor who _____ (**play**) my favourite superhero from childhood!

Describe an unusual experience

Use the narrative tenses to describe an unusual experience you have had.



Where were you when it happened?



What was happening around you at the time?



What events had led to this situation?



How did it end? Did you make a surprising discovery?



End of the lesson

Idiom

What are the chances?

Meaning: An expression used when something very surprising or unlikely happens.

Example: What are the chances of meeting you here?!



Additional practice



Match the sentences

Match (1-5) with (a-e) to complete the sentences.

1 We use the past continuous...

2 Often, the action described by the past continuous...

3 We often give...

4 The past simple...

5 The past perfect...

a is used for completed actions or states in the past

b the specific time in the past simple

c is used to talk about an action that happened before another action in the past

d to give background information

e is interrupted by an action in the past simple



Build sentences

Build sentences in the correct narrative tenses, using the prompts below.

- 1

I / to wait / for my friend
(past continuous)

>

I was waiting for my friend.
- 2

She / to answer / the phone
(past simple)

>
- 3

He / to speak / with his boss
(past perfect simple)

>
- 4

We / driving / to the airport
(past continuous)

>
- 5

They / to talk / for hours
(past perfect continuous)

>
- 6

My brother / to apply / for lots of jobs
(past perfect continuous)

>



Free practice

Practise building stories in the past by using the narrative tenses in the order below.
Write your stories into the chat.



Past perfect

- Part 1

I hadn't seen my friend in a long time.
She had been travelling the world.
She hadn't texted or called in months.



Past continuous

- Part 2

Then last week, while I was buying my groceries at the local supermarket, I saw her in the next aisle.



Past simple

- Part 3

I was very surprised to see her. I wondered why she hadn't told me she was back...



Free practice



**Now use the
narrative tenses in
a different order**

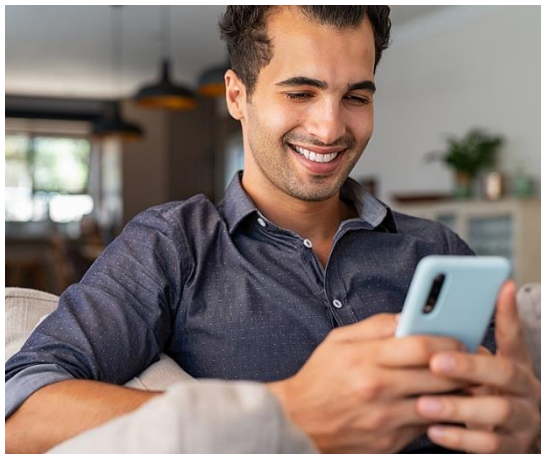
**Try organising the stories from
S.18 differently. Share them
with your teacher**





Discuss

Talk about the experiences below using the narrative tenses.



Use all the narrative tenses in different orders to organise your story

1



First day in a new city

2



First week in a new job

3



Last day on holiday

4



An unusual journey

5



A restaurant experience



Answer key

P.5: 1. 39 years old 2. Ohio

3. They both owned dogs called Toy as kids. / They were both called James (Jim for short). / They had both married women called Linda. / They had both remarried women called Betty. / They drove the same car. / They smoked the same brand of cigarettes.

P.6: 1. Nevada, USA 2. Father and son 3. They died on the same day, fourteen years apart

P.11:

1. was walking; realised

2. started; was raining

3. didn't notice; grabbed

4. turned; saw; had saved; got

5. didn't know; had met; had played

P.16: 1. d 2. e 3. b 4. a 5. c

P.17: 2. She answered the phone 3. He had spoken with his boss 4. We were driving to the airport 5. They had been talking for hours. 6. My brother had been applying for lots of jobs



Summary

Using narrative tenses:

- The narrative tenses are used together to talk about the past.
- They are often used to tell stories and anecdotes, describe historical events.
- You can also give biographical information using the narrative tenses.

Past simple:

- Subject + verb 2 (*drove, ate, made, saw, completed, lived* etc...)
- The **past simple** tense is used for **completed actions** or **states** in the past.
- We often give the **specific time** that they happened.

Past continuous:

- Subject + *was/were* + verb-*ing*
- We use the **past continuous** to give **background information**
- Often, the action described by the past continuous is **interrupted** by an action in the past simple.

Past perfect simple and continuous;

- Subject + *have/had* + past participle; subject + *have/had* + *been* + verb-*ing*
- **The past perfect** is used to talk about an action that happened **before a particular time**
- The **continuous** form is used to show that the action was **ongoing**.



Vocabulary

coincidence

flash flood

anecdote

fatality

construction