

Nowhere to Go but Forward

James had always dreamed of being a writer. However, for years, he did nothing about it—just kept the idea buried under daily responsibilities. He kept telling himself he wasn't ready.

But one rainy afternoon, something changed. He was nearly finished with his workday when his boss called and unexpectedly let him go. James stared at his desk and thought, "Now, I've got nothing left to lose."

Even though he was unemployed, he didn't feel hopeless. In fact, it was the first time in years he felt free. If he hadn't lost his job, he would never have started writing. Sometimes, life pushes us when we're not ready—yet we move anyway.

He spent the next weeks writing stories from a coffee shop. The baristas saw himself in his work—they said they could even feel his emotions in the characters. One day, he submitted a short story to a contest. If it had won, he would have been thrilled—but it didn't. Still, that didn't stop him.

Had he stayed at his job, he would still be dreaming instead of doing. "Sometimes," he wrote in his journal, "we wait for the perfect moment. But the truth is, the moment is far from perfect, and we just have to take it."

He didn't win that contest, but a few months later, another story got published. He now says: "If you're waiting until you feel ready, you'll go nowhere. Just start."

Reading Comprehension

1. Why had James not pursued his dream earlier?

- a) He was too young
- b) He didn't believe in himself
- c) He was focused on daily responsibilities
- d) He didn't like writing



2. What triggered the change in James's life?

- a) He won a contest
- b) He lost his job
- c) He moved cities
- d) He read an inspiring book

3. What does the word "even" emphasize in the phrase: "they could even feel his emotions in the characters"?

- a) Surprise at the emotions being present
- b) Anger from the baristas
- c) Lack of feeling
- d) Success in winning a contest

4. What is the tone of the passage?

- a) Sarcastic and negative
- b) Regretful and passive
- c) Hopeful and reflective
- d) Informative and factual

5. What would have happened if James had stayed at his job?

- a) He would have become a successful writer
- b) He would still be dreaming instead of doing
- c) He would have moved abroad
- d) He would have become a journalist

Keyword Transformation

For questions 1-6, complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given. For example:

A very friendly taxi driver drove us into town.

DRIVEN

We a very friendly taxi driver.

Answer: WERE DRIVEN INTO TOWN BY

1) "Have you been on holiday recently, Jane?" asked Tony.

BEEN

Tony asked Jane on holiday recently.

2) I was too tired to go to the party.

THAT

I was I couldn't go to the party.

3) There's no point asking Lynda to help as she's really busy.

WASTE

It's asking Lynda to help as she's really busy.

4) I'm sure it was Ana I saw in town as I recognised her coat.

MUST

It Ana I saw in town as I recognised her coat.

5) We demanded to see the hotel manager to make our complaint.

SEEING

We the hotel manager to make our complaint.

6) The boss wouldn't object to you going early today.

OBJECTION

The boss would not you going early today.

Mixed Conditionals Exercise

Fill the gaps using the verbs in brackets.

1.a. She will take care of the children for us next weekend because her business trip was canceled.

1.b. But, she (take, not) would not be taking care of the children for us next weekend if her business trip (be, not) had not been canceled.

2.a. Tom is not going to come to dinner tomorrow because you insulted him yesterday.

2.b. But, he (come) if you (insult) him.

3.a. Marie is unhappy because she gave up her career when she got married.

3.b. But, Marie (be) _____ happy if she (give, not) _____ up her career when she got married.

4.a. Dr. Mercer decided not to accept the research grant at Harvard because he is going to take six months off to spend more time with his family.

4.b. But, Dr. Mercer (accept) _____ the research grant at Harvard if he (take, not) _____ six months off to spend more time with his family.

5.a. Professor Schmitz talked so much about the Maasai tribe because she is an expert on African tribal groups.

5.b. But, Professor Schmitz (talk, not) _____ so much about the Maasai tribe if she (be, not) _____ an expert on African tribal groups.

6.a. I am unemployed because I had a disagreement with my boss and I was fired.

6.b. But, I (be, not) _____ unemployed if I (have, not) _____ a disagreement with my boss and I (be, not) _____ fired.

Phrasal Verbs with Get

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the phrasal verb in brackets. Use the right tense.

get round
get up to

get away with
get over

get on my nerves
get through

get out
get out of

I meant to reply to her email, but I haven't _____ it yet.

What did you _____ while I was gone? You look suspicious.

He always _____ cheating in class and never gets caught!

It took me weeks to _____ the flu, but I finally feel better.

That repetitive sound is really starting to _____!

She was really nervous, but she managed to _____ the presentation without any mistakes.

I hope he'll _____ the breakup soon. He seems really down.

They told us we had to _____ of the building because of a fire drill.

I promised to help them move, but I'm trying to _____ it without seeming rude.

Reflexive Pronouns

Complete the sentences using the correct reflexive pronoun (myself, yourself, etc).

- Julia looked in the mirror and smiled at _____.
- We taught _____ how to cook during lockdown.
- Be careful with that knife, or you'll cut _____.
- The children made the costumes _____.
- My cat often entertains _____ by chasing shadows.

Confusing Words

Choose the correct word from the pair in parentheses to complete each sentence.

- After years of conflict, the countries finally signed a treaty of lasting _____. (peace / piece)
- Her speech received the unanimous _____ of the board. (assent / ascent)
- The teacher tried to _____ a response from the class with a tricky question. (elicit / illicit)
- One important _____ of democracy is free speech. (principal / principle)

Metaphors

Match each metaphor (Column A) with its correct meaning (Column B). You may write the correct letter next to each number.

1. To hit the sack	A. To do something too soon or without preparation
2. Salad days	B. To be in trouble or facing consequences
3. To have a lot on your plate	C. A youthful time of innocence or inexperience
4. To jump the gun	D. To have many responsibilities or problems
5. To be in hot water	E. To go to bed or sleep
6. To break the ice	F. To make people feel more comfortable in a social setting