GRAMMAR past continuous

Read two sentences about the article in 1.

In 1972, Jane was living in London and she was working for an advertising agency.

When Cartier-Bresson took the photo, Jane and her boyfriend were looking at an owl in a tree.

Look at the highlighted verbs. Which verbs describe...?

1 an action in progress at a specific moment in the past
2 the situation at the beginning of the story

2B past continuous: *was / were* + verb + *-ing*

At 8.45 last Saturday I **was walking** in the park. 2.11
The birds **were singing**. It **wasn't raining**.
A **Was** it **raining** when you got up? **B** No, it **wasn't**.
A What **were** you **doing** at 11 o'clock last night? **B** I **was watching** TV.

+	I / He / She / It	was working.	You / We / They	were working.
−	I / He / She / It	wasn't working.	You / We / They	weren't working.
? ✓ ✗	Was he working?		Yes, he was. / No, he wasn't.	
	Were they working?		Yes, they were. / No, they weren't.	

- We use the past continuous to describe an action in progress at a specific moment in the past.
- We often use the past continuous to describe the situation at the beginning of a story, e.g. *In 1972 I was living in London.*

past simple or past continuous?

We **were walking** in the gardens when he **took** a photo of us. 2.12
My sister **arrived** when I **was having** lunch.

- We often use the past continuous and the past simple together in the same sentence. We use the past continuous to talk about a longer action that was happening in the background when the shorter past simple action happened.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

a **Complete the sentences with the verb in the past continuous.**

I *was eating* dinner, so I didn't answer the phone. (eat)

1 I took this photo when we _____ in Greece. (travel)

2 He met his wife when he _____ in Japan. (live)

3 _____ she _____ a coat when she went out? (wear)

4 The sun _____ when I went to work. (shine)

5 What _____ you _____ at 7.30 last night? (do)

6 I _____ when you gave the instructions. (not listen)

7 They _____ TV when I arrived. (not watch)

8 It started to rain when we _____ in the park. (run)

b **Put the verbs into the past simple or past continuous.**

She *arrived* when we *were having* dinner. (arrive, have)

1 I _____ my arm when I _____ football. (break, play)

2 _____ you _____ fast when the police _____ you? (drive, stop)

3 It _____ when we _____ the pub. (snow, leave)

4 I _____ the match because I _____. (not see, work)

5 When you _____ me, I _____ to my boss. (call, talk)

6 We _____ in Cambridge when we _____. (study, meet)

7 _____ they _____ in Rome when they _____ their first baby? (live, have)

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

c 2.13 In pairs, listen to the sounds and write a sentence using the past continuous and the past simple.

They were playing tennis when it started to rain.

1

2

3

4

5

6

LIVEWORKSHEETS