The Girl in the Lobby

She stood by the elevator, phone in hand. Most people **assumed** she was waiting for someone. The receptionist **thought** she looked **nervous**, and the security guard **reported** that she **seemed upset**. A businessman **guessed** she had gotten **lost**. No one asked.

In reality, she had just walked out of a job interview that had gone badly. She was trying to **compose herself** before heading home.

Later, someone **claimed** she had been crying. Others **believed** she might have been in some kind of trouble. One person even **suggested** she had received bad news.

None of them knew that she had just made a life-changing decision — and that her silence was a choice, not a sign.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the assumptions people made about the girl in the lobby?

   _____

2. What was the real reason she was standing there?

   _____

3. Why didn't anyone approach her to ask directly?

   _____

4. What does the last sentence imply about the girl's intentions?

   _____

5. What message do you think the story sends about how people interpret others?

   _____

VOCABULARY EXERCISE 1 – Match the word to the definition

Vocabulary	Definitions
1. compose herself	a. to think or accept something is true without proof
2. assumed	b. to say something might be true without knowing for sure
3. claimed	c. said that something was a fact, often without evidence
4. believed	d. to regain control of emotions
5. guessed	e. accepted something as true or correct

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VOCABULARY EXERCISE 2 – Fill in the gaps

Use these words: **seemed – upset – nervous – lost – suggested**

1. She looked clearly _____ during the interview.
2. The receptionist said she _____ a bit strange.
3. Everyone thought the girl had gotten _____.
4. A man _____ she had received some bad news.
5. The security guard said she seemed _____.

GRAMMAR EXPLANATION

Advanced Reported Speech: Modals + Verbs of Perception/Assumption

When reporting **how someone appeared to feel, act, or react**, we often rely on **verbs of perception and assumption**. These are used to describe what people think, suspect, or infer — even if they're wrong.

Common verbs:

- **Perception**: seem, appear, look
- **Assumption & thought**: think, believe, assume, guess, suppose, claim, suggest, say, report

We often combine them with **modals of deduction** to express levels of certainty or doubt:

- **must have** (certainty)
- **might have / may have / could have** (possibility)
- **can't have / couldn't have** (impossibility)

Example Transformations:

Direct speech:
"She is crying."
"He must be tired."
"Maybe she left."

Reported speech:
→ They said she **seemed upset**.
→ They assumed he **must have been tired**.
→ He guessed she **might have left**.

⚠️ Tense changes apply (present → past) and modal usage should reflect speaker certainty.

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GRAMMAR EXERCISE 1 – Fill in the gaps

Complete with an appropriate reporting verb + a modal or linking verb (e.g. seemed, looked, might have, must have, was, etc.).

1. The guard _____ she might have forgotten her badge.
2. They _____ he must have misunderstood the question.
3. A witness _____ the suspect appeared to be hiding something.
4. The teacher _____ that James might have been copying.
5. The director _____ the meeting had already started.
6. She _____ he must have been joking.
7. They _____ she seemed to be avoiding eye contact.
8. The guide _____ that the hikers could have taken the wrong trail.
9. People _____ she looked pale and tired.
10. One colleague _____ he may have been under pressure.

GRAMMAR EXERCISE 2 – Multiple choice

Choose the correct reported version.

1. "He's probably tired."

   A. They guessed he might have been tired.

   B. They guessed he was being tired.

   C. They guessed he must be tired.

2. "She looks confused."

   A. I say she is confused.

   B. I thought she looked confused.

   C. I think she had looked confused.

3. "They must have left."

   A. He claimed they had to leave.

   B. He said they left.

   C. He assumed they must have left.

4. "She can't be serious."

   A. I reported she can't be serious.

   B. I thought she couldn't have been serious.

   C. I said she might be serious.

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5. “He might be lying.”

   A. They believed he might have been lying.

   B. They believed he may be lied.

   C. They believed he might be lie.

6. “She’s acting weird.”

   A. They claimed she acted weird.

   B. They claimed she had been acting weird.

   C. They claimed she is acting weird.

7. “I guess he forgot.”

   A. I thought he forgot.

   B. I guessed he had forgotten.

   C. I guess he had forgotten.

8. “She looks like she’s crying.”

   A. They said she looked like she had been crying.

   B. They said she looks like crying.

   C. They said she cries.

9. “He may have failed the test.”

   A. She assumed he may have failed the test.

   B. She assumed he might fail the test.

   C. She assumed he may failed.

10. “She must be angry.”

   A. They thought she was must angry.

   B. They believed she must have been angry.

   C. They believed she was angry must.

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