NARRATIVE TENSES

Use the **PAST SIMPLE** for completed actions in the past which tell the main events in a story. *Ex. She picked up the phone and asked for a taxi*

Use the **PAST CONTINUOUS** to set the general scene/background of a story or to talk about actions in progress at or around a particular point in a story, often interrupted by another (short) action or event (past simple). *Ex. He was talking to his girlfriend when the waiter brought the bill.*

Use the **PAST PERFECT SIMPLE** to talk about actions or situations completed before another action in the story. The actions are often mentioned out of time sequence, and the past perfect makes the order clear.

Use the **PAST PERFECT CONTINUOUS** to talk about longer actions or situations which started before and continued up to a point in the story. Ex. She *had been studying* all the afternoon when she found out the exam was cancelled.



A. Complete the text below using the appropriate narrative tenses.

"One afternoon, Socrates _____ (stand) outside the gates of Athens when he _____ (notice) a traveller who _____ (stare) him for a long time. Socrates _____ (ask) the man why he _____ (come) to Athens. "I'm thinking of moving to Athens," he said. "What is like to live here?" Socrates _____ (look) at him. "First, would you tell me what was it like in your city?" The man replied, "Oh, it was awful." Everyone stabs you in the back and wants to make money from you. Frowning, Socrates _____ (tell) him, "Well, you'll find the same things here. I suggest you to go somewhere else".

Socrates _____ (stand) there a few hours more when another man _____ (approach) him. This man too _____ (just arrive) in Athens and _____ (consider) moving to the city. He too asked Socrates, "Can you tell me what is like to live here" Socrates asked, "First would you tell me what was like to live in your previous home city?" "Where I come from the people work together and help each other", said the man. "Kindness is everywhere and you are never treated with anything but respect". "Well," _____ (reply) Socrates, "you'll find the same thing here. Welcome to Athens".

B. Choose the correct alternative. Then, say if these extracts come from a detective story (D), a folk tale (F) or a biography (B).

1. The old man *fished/was fishing* as usual when he *saw/was seeing* something strange. .....
2. In 1995, Ella *was teaching/taught* in Sudan and *became/had become* well-known. .....
3. I *'d known/'d been knowing* Javier for many years and when I *read/was reading* he *was/had been* in prison, I *knew/was knowing* there was a mistake. .....
4. The prince *had been searching/was searching* in the forest for ten hours and *was beginning /had begun* to lose hope. .....
5. He *noticed/was noticing* that somebody *had left/had been living* a briefcase. .....
6. Ella *had been looking/had looked* through old photos when she *heard/was hearing* a knock on the door. .....
7. We *had driven/had been driving* for 30 km when the engine suddenly *stopped/had stopped;* somebody *had taken/took* the petrol out of the car. .....
8. By that evening, children *were/had been* exhausted because they *were walking/had been* walking all day. .....



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