

9 Strange Stories

In this unit you will ...

- use time expressions: *after*, *before* and *when*.
- learn to identify the main parts of a narrative.
- practise ordering the events in a narrative in a logical way.
- write a paragraph about interesting or unusual experiences.

1 Look at the picture. What do you think is happening? Share your ideas with a partner or group. Then read the paragraph below and check your guesses.

A UFO Sighting

¹ I never believed in aliens before one night last year. ² It was a cold, dark winter evening, and I was walking home from a friend's house. ³ I stopped to tie my shoe. ⁴ When I looked up again, I saw a round object coming towards me. ⁵ It was very large and shiny. ⁶ I couldn't believe what I was seeing. ⁷ Before I could shout or run, the object suddenly moved and then disappeared. ⁸ After the object disappeared, I ran all the way home and called my best friend. ⁹ When she picked up the phone, I couldn't say anything. ¹⁰ I knew she would think I was crazy. ¹¹ I never told anyone about my UFO sighting.



2 Read the paragraph in exercise 1 above again and answer these questions.

- a. Which sentence is the topic sentence?
- b. How is this paragraph developed?
 1. by telling a story
 2. by giving reasons
 3. by describing objects with details
- c. What does sentence 2 do?
 1. It gives details about the topic sentence.
 2. It tells the reader when and where the event happened.
 3. It lets the reader know the paragraph will talk about UFOs.
- d. Is sentence 11 a concluding sentence?

Language focus: Using time expressions

One way to order two events is to use *after*, *before*, or *when*.

After shows the first event:

I played football after school. (school happened first; not football)

After school, *I played football.*

Before shows the second event:

I couldn't play the guitar before I took lessons. (lessons happened second)

Before I took lessons, *I couldn't play the guitar.*

When shows that the first event happened just before the second event:

I told him the news when he called. (he called first; then I told him the news)

When he called, *I told him the news.*

Note: When *after*, *before*, or *when* begin a sentence, use a comma after the event.

3 Join these ideas with *after*, *before*, or *when*. Add a comma if necessary.



a. *After* the film, we went home.



d. I left my house you called.



b. We left the class we handed in our assignments.



e. Please finish your homework you watch TV!



c. I woke up the alarm clock rang.



f. the dog barked, the baby cried.

Language focus: Using time expressions

One way to order two events is to use *after*, *before*, or *when*.

After shows the first event:

I played football after school. (school happened first; not football)

After school, I played football.

Before shows the second event:

I couldn't play the guitar before I took lessons. (lessons happened second)

Before I took lessons, I couldn't play the guitar.

When shows that the first event happened just before the second event:

I told him the news when he called. (he called first; then I told him the news)

When he called, I told him the news.

Note: When *after*, *before*, or *when* begin a sentence, use a comma after the event.

3 Join these ideas with *after*, *before*, or *when*. Add a comma if necessary.



a. *After* the film, we went home.



d. I left my house you called.



b. We left the class we handed in our assignments.



e. Please finish your homework you watch TV!



c. I woke up the alarm clock rang.



f. the dog barked, the baby cried.

- 4 Look at these pictures. What strange thing happened? Share your guesses with a partner.

a



c



b



d



- 5 Read the paragraph *Sleeping in a Farmhouse* to see if your guess in exercise 4 above was correct. Then complete the paragraph with *after*, *before*, or *when*.

Sleeping in a Farmhouse

The strangest experience in my life happened a year ^a I finished school. I was sixteen years old and my best friend Mark was fifteen. He invited me to visit him during the summer. I was staying with him in his farmhouse in the middle of the countryside. I shared a room with Mark, and our beds were separated by a table. Every morning, Mark's mum brought us a cup of hot tea in bed ^b we woke up. While we were sleeping one night, I could feel my bed moving. I thought I was dreaming. The next morning, Mark's mother brought us hot tea as usual. ^c she turned on the lights, we saw that our beds were pushed together and the table had moved. Mark said he didn't do it, and I didn't do it. We still don't know how the beds moved! What do you think?

- 6 With a partner, think of different explanations for why the beds moved. (You can draw a picture of what happened to help explain.) Then share your ideas with another pair or the whole class.

Writing focus: Narrative paragraphs

Narratives tell stories. Everyone has read narratives, watched them on television or at the cinema, or heard them from other people. A narrative paragraph tells a short story or describes an event.

The paragraph *Sleeping in a Farmhouse* is a narrative about two boys on holiday. In the story their beds move in the middle of the night, and they don't know how it happened.

The events (stages of the story) are told in a logical order:

1. Background information

A narrative paragraph usually starts with background information to set the scene for the story and provide context. It can tell **when** and **where** a story happened:

The strangest experience in my life happened a year before I finished school. I was sixteen years old and my best friend Mark was fifteen. He invited me to visit him during the summer.

2. Beginning of the story

The beginning of a narrative usually tells what happened first in the story:

I was staying with him in his farmhouse in the middle of the countryside. I shared a room with Mark, and our beds were separated by a table. Every morning, Mark's mum brought us a cup of hot tea in bed after we woke up.

3. Middle of the story

The middle of the narrative is usually the main part and tells most of the events in the story:

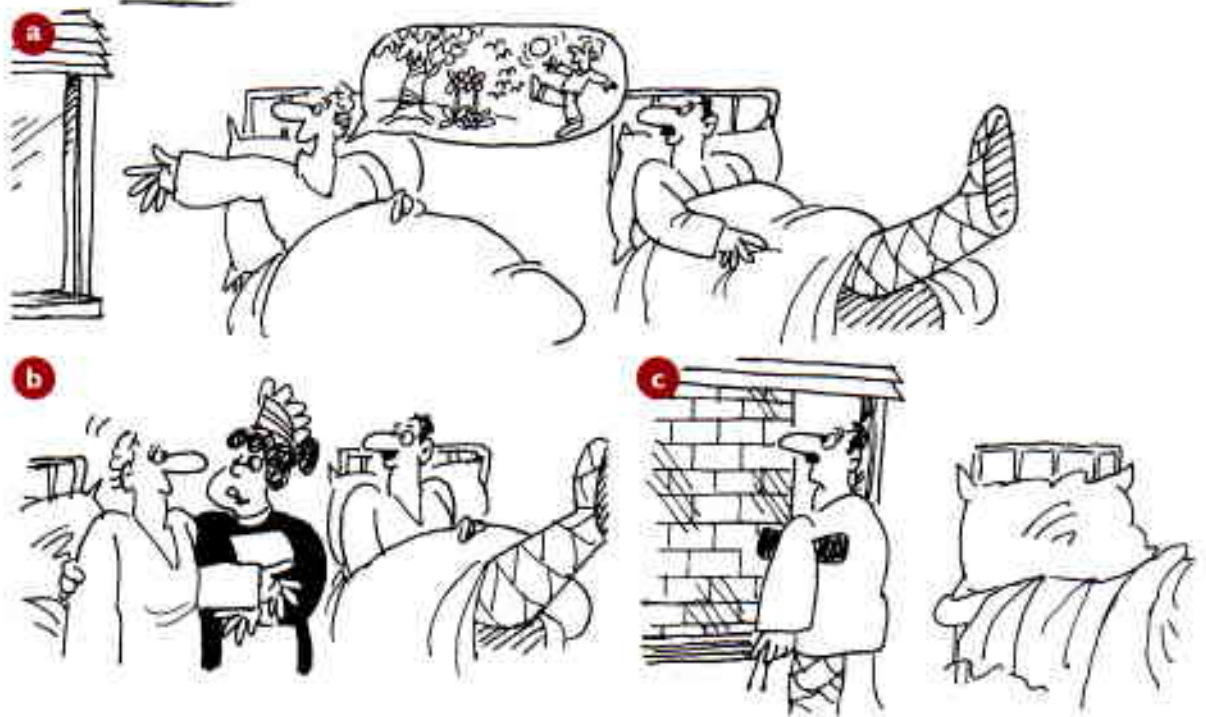
While we were sleeping one night, I could feel my bed moving. I thought I was dreaming. The next morning, Mark's mother brought us hot tea as usual. When she turned on the lights, we saw that our beds were pushed together and the table had moved.

4. End of the story

The end of a narrative concludes the story. It tells the final event, and has a concluding remark:

Mark said he didn't do it, and I didn't do it. We still don't know how the beds moved! What do you think?

7 Look at these pictures from a story. In a small group, describe what happened.



8 Read these parts of a paragraph about the pictures in exercise 7 above. Decide if the parts are ...

- background information.
- from the beginning of the story.
- from the middle of the story.
- from the end of the story.

Then number the parts in the correct order. (There are two parts of the middle section.)

a.

A few days later my father was able to go to the window to look for himself. But all he could see was an ugly brick wall.

b.

A strange thing happened to my father when he was in hospital to have an operation.

c.

The next day he asked the nurse why the man described a beautiful park. The nurse looked confused and told my father, 'That man was blind'.

d.

My father didn't feel well. He asked the other man to describe the view outside the window because he wanted to feel better. After the man talked about the beautiful view from the window, my father was able to fall asleep. Before my father woke up, the man left the hospital.

e.

After his operation, my father woke up sharing a room with another man. The other man's bed was next to the window.

9 Read the parts below of two stories, *A Fright in the Forest* and *A Strange Day in Class*. Number the parts in the correct order and decide if they are ...

- background information.
- from the beginning of the story.
- from the middle of the story.
- from the end of the story.

Note: The middle parts are not complete!

A Fright in the Forest

- a.
Suddenly, I felt very cold and scared.
- b.
I grew up in a small village in the countryside. Near my house was a large forest, and my parents told me not to play there.
- c.
After that day, I never went back to the forest.
- d.
One day, I was playing in the forest with some of my school friends.

A Strange Day in Class

- a.
I have been studying English for a few years and I really enjoy the classes.
- b.
I heard everyone laughing. I woke up and realised it was a dream.
- c.
One day something unusual happened in class.
- d.
The teacher was explaining grammar when I saw something strange out of the window.

10 With a partner, brainstorm what happened in each story. Then write sentences to complete the middle part of each story. Share your paragraph with another pair or the class.

Remember

Brainstorming ...

- helps you collect ideas.
- helps you be creative and imaginative.
- can be done by discussing ideas.

Put it together

- 11** Choose one of these topics.
 - a. A coincidence
 - b. A strange experience
 - c. A funny story

- 12** Choose one of the methods of brainstorming you have practised, and brainstorm the story.
 - making a list
 - making a word map
 - freewriting
 - discussion

- 13** Edit your brainstorming.
 - Cross out ideas you don't want to use and add more ideas if necessary.
 - Share your brainstorming with a partner, and explain your choices.

- 14** Write a paragraph about your topic and then check your writing.

- 15** Exchange papers with a partner. Include your brainstorming.
 - Fill out the Peer Review Form on page 108.
 - Talk with your partner and go over each form.

- 16** Work with a new partner. Tell him / her about the story that you read in exercise 15 above. Listen to your partner tell someone else's story.

- 17** Read your paragraph again.
 - Think about the comments from your partner.
 - Make any additions or changes to your paragraph that would make it stronger or more interesting.

- 18** Hand in the second draft of your paragraph to your teacher.