

B1 TEENS

Time Traveller's Diary

Narrating past events using past continuous and past simple with when and while

B1 Intermediate | Grammar | Reading | 40 min

★ Lesson Objectives

- ✓ Read diary entries from a fictional time traveller
- ✓ Learn vocabulary for historical events, actions and settings
- ✓ Use past continuous for background actions, past simple for completed events
- ✓ Combine past continuous and past simple with when and while
- ✓ Tell stories about interrupted and simultaneous actions
- ✓ Write a diary entry about an imaginary trip to the past or future

1 Before You Read

- ▶ If you could travel to any moment in history, when would you go?
- ▶ What would be the most dangerous time period to visit?
- ▶ Would you rather visit the past or the future? Why?

2 Reading: Pages from a Time Traveller's Diary

Pages from a Time Traveller's Diary

Entry 1 -- Rome, 79 AD

I arrived near Pompeii on a warm August morning. People were walking through the market, children were playing in the streets, and merchants were selling fruit and bread. Nobody knew what was about to happen. While I was standing near the city gates, the ground suddenly started shaking. Mount Vesuvius was erupting. People were screaming and running in every direction. I grabbed my device and jumped back to the present just as the sky turned black with ash.

Entry 2 -- London, 1666

I landed in a narrow street near the Thames. It was very late at night. While most of the city was sleeping, I noticed a small orange light in a bakery on Pudding Lane. When I

looked more closely, I saw flames spreading from the oven. The Great Fire of London was starting right in front of me. While I was watching in shock, a man ran out of the bakery shouting for help. Within minutes, the fire was growing out of control. I was taking notes when the heat became too intense, so I pressed the button and returned home.

Entry 3 -- New York, 1969

I materialised in a living room in Brooklyn. A family was sitting around a small television. The children were eating popcorn while their parents were staring at the screen. When Neil Armstrong stepped onto the Moon, the whole room exploded with cheers. The mother was crying happy tears while the father was hugging his children. I was smiling too -- even though I already knew how the story ended. While everyone was celebrating, I quietly slipped out the back door and disappeared into the night.

3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
time traveller	person who moves between time periods	"Visited ancient Rome."
diary entry	writing about one day in a diary	"She wrote a diary entry."
merchant	person who buys and sells goods	"Merchants were selling fruit."
erupt	when a volcano explodes	"Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD."
ash	grey powder left after burning	"Sky turned black with ash."
flame	bright hot part of a fire	"Flames spreading from the oven."
spread	to cover a larger area	"The fire spread quickly."
out of control	impossible to stop	"Fire was out of control."
intense	very strong or extreme	"Heat became too intense."
materialise	to appear suddenly	"Materialised in Brooklyn."
device	equipment for a purpose	"Grabbed my time-travel device."
cheer	to shout with happiness	"Room exploded with cheers."
slip out	to leave quietly	"Slipped out the back door."
witness	to see an event happen	"Witnessed the Great Fire."
narrow	not wide; thin	"A narrow street near the river."
grab	to take quickly	"Grabbed my bag and ran."

Useful Collocations: diary entry • historical event • out of control • in every direction • right in front of me • slip out quietly • explode with cheers • just as / just when

4 Grammar: Past Continuous + Past Simple (when / while)

In the Text, You Saw...

while + past continuous, past simple: "While I was standing near the gates, the ground started shaking."

past continuous + when + past simple: "I was taking notes when the heat became too intense."

while + past cont., past cont.: "Children were eating while parents were staring at the screen."

Pattern	Use	Example
Past cont. + when + past simple	Longer action interrupted	I was walking when it started raining.
While + past cont., past simple	Background + sudden event	While she was cooking, the phone rang.
While + past cont., past cont.	Two simultaneous actions	While I was reading, he was sleeping.
When + past simple, past simple	One after another	When the alarm went off, I jumped up.

⚠ Common Mistakes

~~While I walked home, it started raining.~~ → While I was walking home, it started raining.

~~I was reading when the phone was ringing.~~ → I was reading when the phone rang.

~~When I was arriving, everyone cheered.~~ → When I arrived, everyone cheered.

5 Match the Halves

#	Beginning	Ending
1	While I was walking through the market,	I heard a loud explosion.
2	She was reading a book	when the lights went out.
3	While they were watching TV,	someone knocked on the door.

#	Beginning	Ending
4	When the teacher arrived,	the students were already sitting.
5	I was having dinner	when my phone rang.
6	While he was playing football,	it started to rain heavily.
7	When the music stopped,	everyone looked at the stage.
8	While the children were sleeping,	their parents were wrapping presents.
9	I was taking a photo	when a bird flew into the frame.
10	When she opened the door,	her friends were standing with a cake.

6 Comprehension Quiz

1. What were people doing before the eruption?

Answer: Walking, playing and selling at the market

2. Where did the Great Fire start?

Answer: In a bakery on Pudding Lane

3. What was the family doing during the Moon landing?

Answer: Sitting around a television

4. How did the time traveller leave?

Answer: Using a device to return to the present

5. Which is the background action: 'While I was standing, ground started shaking'?

Answer: I was standing (past continuous)

6. Which pattern shows simultaneous actions?

Answer: While + past continuous, past continuous

7. 'I was reading when the phone ____.'

Answer: rang

8. Which is WRONG?

Answer: While I walked home, it was raining.

7 Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: was walking | rang | were watching | started | arrived | was sleeping | were playing | saw

1. While I _____ to school, I _____ a car accident.

2. She _____ when the alarm _____.

3. While the children _____ outside, it _____ snowing.

4. When the teacher _____, the students _____ a video.

Answers: 1. was walking, saw | 2. was sleeping, rang | 3. were playing, started | 4. arrived, were watching

8 Speaking & Writing

◆ Discussion Questions

If you could witness one historical event, which would you choose?

What were you doing yesterday at exactly 8 PM?

Tell about a time something unexpected happened while you were doing something normal.

Would time travel be more useful for scientists, historians, or ordinary people?

If you travelled to 2200, what would people be doing differently?

◆ Example Dialogue

A: So, where did you travel to this time?

B: London, 1666. I was standing near the river when I noticed a fire starting in a bakery.

A: What were people doing?

B: Most of the city was sleeping. While I was watching, a man ran out shouting.

A: That sounds terrifying! What did you do?

B: I was taking notes when the heat became too intense, so I pressed the return button.

✍ Writing Task

Write 80-120 words: a diary entry from a time traveller. Use at least 4 sentences combining past continuous and past simple with when/while:

Option A: Travel to a famous historical event. Describe what was happening when you arrived.

Option B: Travel to the year 2300. What were people doing when you materialised?

9 Time Tense Challenge -- The Game

Interactive game available online. Choose the correct tense for 10 sentences.

#	Sentence	Answer
1	While I ___ (walk) to school, I saw a friend.	was walking
2	She ___ (read) when the doorbell rang.	was reading
3	When the fire ___ (start), everyone was sleeping.	started
4	While they ___ (play) football, it began to rain.	were playing
5	I ___ (take) a photo when a bird flew past.	was taking
6	When he ___ (arrive), we were already eating.	arrived
7	While she ___ (cook), he ___ (watch) TV.	was cooking / was watching
8	The phone ___ (ring) while I was in the shower.	rang
9	When the teacher came in, students ___ (talk).	were talking
10	I ___ (not listen) when she told me.	was not listening

10

Review Checklist

- ✓ I can understand diary entries describing past events
- ✓ I can use vocabulary for historical events
- ✓ I can use past continuous for background actions
- ✓ I can combine past continuous and past simple with when and while
- ✓ I can tell stories about interrupted and simultaneous actions
- ✓ I can write a diary entry using narrative tenses

Congratulations!

You have completed this lesson: Time Traveller's Diary