
UNIT 4

Structure

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall ask you to read a story of mystery and detection and set some exercise on vocabulary. In the section on grammar and usage we shall bring out the difference between the past indefinite (simple past) tense and the past perfect tense. We shall also ask you to continue the story that you have read, in three different ways. After completing this unit you should be able to

- understand a short story dealing with crime and detection,
- use some of the words occurring in the story and their opposites,
- distinguish between the past indefinite (simple past) tense and the past perfect tense, and use them correctly, and
- continue a story that you have read, in your own way.

4.1 READING COMPREHENSION

4.1.1 Study Guide

Here is a story of mystery and detection—‘Death in the Kitchen’. Some of the words have been explained for you in the glossary given at the end of the story.

Try to understand the story and answer the comprehension questions set on it. You should then check your answers with those given by us at the end of the unit.

4.1.2 Passage for Reading

Death in the Kitchen

by Milward Kennedy

- A Rupert Morrison was a respected and very rich man. When he was younger he had done something foolish and criminal. The only other person who knew about this was an old school fellow, George Manning. He had some papers that were written by Morrison. Manning had been in prison for a number of years and when he was free again he decided to blackmail Morrison. He thought he could get a lot of money by keeping silent about Morrison’s past. But Morrison was no longer a weak man who was easily afraid. He paid Manning some money and then decided to stop the blackmail.
- B He planned very carefully and one evening he went to Manning’s cottage. There he put some medicine into the whisky. When Manning was unconscious, Morrison put his head in a gas oven. He then intended to turn on the gas so that it would look as if Manning had killed himself.
- C Rupert Morrison straightened up and took a deep breath. He looked around the little kitchen and at the body which lay on the floor. The position of the body was not very natural, but Morrison hoped it was good enough for this strange situation. It was strange because the head was inside the rusty gas oven.
- He had put a cushion underneath the head and now he wondered whether it looked very natural or not. But he decided that if he were to kill himself he would make himself comfortable.
- He had taken off his shoes and was walking silently about the room. The curtains had been drawn very carefully and he could leave all the lights on without fear. He quickly began his work. Nothing must be left behind to connect him with Manning in any way. What was he to do about the parcel from the store? It was addressed to Morrison but had been delivered to Manning. It was probably a mistake. He put it to one side and would look after it later.

The dangerous letters

D Where did Manning keep his papers? He was a careless man and would not hide things very cleverly. Ah, here were the letters, in the writing desk. All six of the letters Morrison wanted were there. He looked at them and his cheeks turned red. These were very dangerous letters. No one else should have them. He had been so foolish in his young days. But at least he had remembered the letters when Manning had appeared suddenly one day and started his blackmail.

Manning had been very careless. He had not tried to find out if Morrison had changed in all these years.

E Morrison was wearing gloves and he found it difficult to put the letters into the inside pocket of his coat. But there was little to worry about as he had plenty of time. Manning had few friends and none would be likely to call on him. He had a servant, an old woman who lived in a distant village. She would not come back until tomorrow.

But he had to take care with everything, do it properly, and he must not forget anything. He did not have a false story to tell the police, but he would not need one if everything was done with care. Who would suspect him if there were no reason for murdering Manning? People only knew that they had been school friends many years ago, but they had little to do with each other now. No one would suspect him.

F He checked the two bedrooms and was satisfied with them. All the rooms were very untidy. After returning to the living room he looked around once more. There was the parcel from the store and, of course, the two glasses. There must be only one. He went into the kitchen to wash both of them. One was put back into the cupboard and the other was placed on the table. It had a little whisky in it. Morrison had carefully pressed Manning's fingers on it so that the glass would have only one set of fingerprints on it. Everything was ready now. The glass stood on the table and beside it was the nearly empty bottle. Manning certainly had drunk a lot. That was why he did not notice when Morrison had put the medicine into the drink. Maybe he had given him too much. That would spoil the whole plan. But he had checked the pulse just a few minutes ago and it was normal.

G There was one last thing to do. He had to put the half sheet of paper on the table. It was folded like a note so that it would be noticed. He had been afraid to write anything on it because he would not be able to imitate Manning's handwriting. Morrison thought, 'How lucky these words just fit on the half-sheet of paper'. When he received the note months ago he knew immediately how useful it would

be. The words on the paper were : ‘I am tried of it all. Who can blame me for taking the easiest way. So I will take it—smiling : George Manning’. But Manning had meant to take the money with a smile. He did not mean the gas that was to kell him.

H The windows were shut tight and Morrison turned on the gas. Had he left any foot-prints ? No, that’s why he had taken off his shoes. He now put them back on, and went out of the back door. He was carrying only the parcel from the store and his walking stick.

He did not meet any one while he was walking home. He burned the letters and the cover from the parcel and threw the ashes into the drain in the kitchen. He did the same with the parcel and then he breathed a sigh of relief.

He knew that the police would ask him about the event. He was an important man in the village and he had talked to Manning a few times. He talked to everyone in the village and that was one of the reasons everybody liked him. He would tell the police that poor Manning had seemed ill and very upset the last time they talked.

A visit from the police

Next morning a police officer did come to see Morrison but he had planned it all very carefully. Even the smile was arranged. ‘Yes, I know him, but not very well.’ He almost said, ‘knew,’ and he would have to be more careful.

‘Do you recognize this, sir?’ asked the policeman. Good God! What was the man holding up? It was the blue wallet with the letters R. M. on it in golden letters. He felt his inside pocket but there was nothing there. Could it have fallen out while he tried to put the letters into his pocket? Could it have been left lying on the carpet?

I He reached for it, but could not say anything at all. He took it and was surprised that the officer let him hold it. He could not deny it was his. All he could do was to look at it stupidly.

He could barely understand the officer’s words

‘The boy from the store, sir. He made a mistake last night and delivered a parcel to the wrong place. It was supposed to be delivered here. He went to the cottage this morning to get it back, but no one answered the door. He went to the back door, which was open, and he went in. He should not have, of course, but—.’ What was the officer talking about? What was he suggesting? He wanted to shout, ‘Go on with the story! My heart won’t stand it.’

‘There was a light on in the kitchen and Manning was lying with his head inside

the oven. The poor boy got an awful shock. He came to get me on his bicycle and I went there as fast as I could. I found the wallet and thought I would tell you. You see, this Manning has been in prison and we are always a bit suspicious of people like him.'

Here the policeman stopped for a moment. Morrison wondered if he was supposed to say something now. But he could not say a single word. He could only look at the officer and his lips trembled.

'You didn't give it to him. Sir? May be it dropped by accident.' Morrison could hardly bear it now. He did not understand what was happening at all. The officer went on, 'It's not just that he was in prison. There is something very strange about this Manning. I thought you could help me. It looks as if he tried to kell himself, doesn't it?'

'Yes, I suppose it does,' Morrison managed to say. It did not sound like his own voice at all.

Drink or madness

J 'There was a bottle of whisky on the table this morning. It was nearly empty. It only came from the store yesterday. May be that's what did it—'. When Morrison heard these words he was frightened. What did the officer mean by 'it'? How had he found out what had happened ?

"Well, I don't know if it was the drink or just madness, but I don't understand it. How could he have put his head in the oven and forgotten that the gas was turned off last week because he had not paid the bill ? He seems to have forgotten what happened last night. May be it was all the whisky. This morning he still looked drunk to me, but—sir! What's the matter ?"

K Rupert Morrison was lying on the floor.

4.1.3 Glossary

The sections of the story are marked A, B, C, etc.

A **criminal** : related to crime; guilty of breaking a law

blackmail (v.) : obtain money from (someone) by blackmail

(n.) : the obtaining of money by threatening to make known unpleasant facts about a person

B **unconscious** : having lost consciousness (**consciousness** : the condition of being awake or able to understand what is happening)

oven : enclosed box-like space used for cooking

turn on : cause of flow by unscrewing a tap

rusty : covered with rust (the reddish brown surface that forms on iron when attacked by water and air).

E **suspect** (v.) : believe to be guilty

F **pulse** : the regular beating of blood, as felt by a doctor at the wrist

H **wallet** : a small flat pocked-size leather case for keeping papers and paper money

I **suspicious** : not trusting

[n. = noun, v. = verb]

J **gas oven** : a very large cooking oven operated by gas supplied from a pipeline.

4.1.4 Comprehension Questions

Exercise 1

(Letters of the alphabet mark different sections of the story; the same letters of the alphabet are given against the questions given below. You will find the answer to a question in the section marked with the corresponding letter of the alphabet. For example, the answers to the three questions given under the letter A will be found in the first paragraph of the story, marked A.)

A 1 Pick out the two words used to describe Rupert Morrison.

.....

2 a) What had Morrison done when he was a young man?

.....

b) How many people knew about it? Name them/him.

.....

3 Give examples in support of the following statements :

a) Manning was clever.

.....

b) Manning had done something that was not legal.

.....

B 4 How did Morrison decide to stop the blackmail ?

.....

C 5 Why was the position of the body not very natural ?

.....

D 6 Morrison had written a few letters when he was young.

His cheek 'turned red' when he saw his own letters. Why ?

a) he felt ashamed;

- b) he was shocked;
- c) he was horrified;
- d) all three above.

(Choose the correct answer.)

.....
E 7 Why was Morrison wearing gloves ?

.....
.....
8 Usually thieves and murderers are in a haste to leave the scene of the crime. Why was Morrison not in a hurry to leave? Give two reasons in support of your answer.

.....
.....
.....
F 9 Why did Morrison wash the two glasses ? Give two reasons.

.....
.....
.....
G 10 Manning had written to Morrison, "I'm tired of it all. Who can blame me for taking the easiest way ?"

Was Manning tired of

- a) i) a life of crime?
- ii) committing murder?
- iii) life?
- iv) life in prison?

(Choose the correct answer.)

.....
b The easiest way he decided to take was

- i) to commit suicide, or
- ii) to blackmail Morrison.

Which ?

c) Morrison had received the note months ago. He had decided *at that time* to use it. This proves that Morrison was

- i) clever,
- ii) planning to murder Manning, or
- iii) far-sighted.

(Choose the correct answer.)

.....

Give a reason in support of your choice.

H 11 What other steps did Morrison take to prevent the police from catching him?

.....
.....

I 12 When the policeman gave Morrison his wallet, why was he not able to say anything ?

.....

J 13 i) What saved Manning ?

.....
.....

ii) The police thought that he had forgotten about the non-payment of his gas bill because he

- a) was a little mad,
 - b) had been in prison,
 - c) was drunk,
- or
- d) was careless.

(Choose the correct answer.)

.....

4.2 VOCABULARY

Exercise 2

a) Match the words of opposite meaning :

Example

innocent — guilty

innocent — forgets

foolish — a few

younger — guilty

a lot of — wise

remembers — older

.....

.....

.....

b) Now use these words in the blanks below :

- 1 Morrison was but the shopkeeper was
- 2 People who save money for the future are whereas those who spend everything they earn are a little
- 3 people generally get worked up quickly whereas people keep their cool.
- 4 There are birds and animals in the park but only children.
- 5 The learned professor always to carry his books to the university but he often his lunch packet.

Exercise 3

Complete the following crossword puzzle with the help of the clues given below :

1	2		3		4	5		6	
							8		
					9				
					10				
				11		12			
									13
14						15			
	16					17			

Clues Across

- 1 When Manning came out of prison, he decided to Morrison.
- 8 The past tense form of 'eat'
- 9 I was very to see my friend before he went abroad.
- 10 We were able to hear the lions
- 12 Please turn the on; I need some hot water.

- 14 Please on; I am listening.
- 15 The gas had been turned off because Manning had not paid the
- 16 Morrison had very foolish in his younger days.
- 17 Manning's was inside the oven.

Clues Down

- 1 To keep fit we should practise deep
- 2 It is a bit dark here; please turn the on.
- 3 It is to blackmail anyone.
- 4 The punishment for is death by hanging.
- 5 If you have any difficulty, just for help.
- 6 Morrison was able to recover all the from Manning's house.
- 7 Morrison put some medicine into Manning's
- 11 We shall prepare a cake in our
- 13 Morrison's schoolfellow Manning knew his secret.

4.3 GRAMMAR AND USAGE

The events in this story took place in the past. We use different tenses to describe events in the past. Let's examine two of them.

4.3.1 The Past Indefinite (Simple Past) Tense

Examples

Morrison went to Manning's cottage one evening.

He put some medicine into Manning's whisky.

As already pointed out in Unit 3 we use this tense to describe an action or an activity that took place in the past and is not related to the speaker's present.

4.3.2 The Past Perfect Tense

Examples

a) Before Morrison put Manning's head in the oven *he had taken* off his shoes.

b) He *had put* a cushion under Manning's head, but it did not look natural.

Let's examine the sequence (the order) of the two past actions/activities/events referred to in each of the above sentences :

1st action/activity/event	2nd action/activity/event
a) had taken off (his shoes)	(then put (Manning's head in the oven)
b) had put (a cushion under Manning's head)	(then he realized it) did not look (natural)

Notice that for the earlier action/event the past perfect is used and for the later action/event the simple past is used. The past perfect is thus used to describe an earlier event looked at from a point of time in the past. It is formed by using *had* with the past participle from (the third form) of the verb.

4.3.3 Exercises on Tenses

Exercise 4

Use the Past Perfect forms of the verbs given in brackets in these sentences :

- 1 The farmers showed the seeds after they.....(plough) their fields. It started raining before they.....(finish) sowing the seeds.
- 2 We returned home later at night and were very hungry. My mother..... already.....(cook) rice and vegetable. After we.....(wash) our hands we had out dinner..Mother.....also.....(make) some sweets. We had the sweets and then went to bed.

Exercise 5

Complete the following paragraph using the correct Simple Past or the Past Perfect forms of the verbs given in brackets :

Early in the morning Jim Corbett and his dog Robin went to the forest. The previous evening Corbett.....(wound) a leopard. They went to the spot Corbett.....(fire) from. Robin.....(examine) the ground where the leopard.....(stand). He.....(come) to the bushes where the leopard.....(leave) a lot of blood. Corbett.....(fire) at the leopard at short range. He.....(see) the bullet enter the leopard's body. He.....(know) the leopard was dangerous as he.....(have) fifteen hours to nurse his anger against men. Robin.....(lead) Corbett into the thick jungle. Suddenly the dog.....(stop). Corbett saw what.....(attract) the dog's attention. He.....(see) the leopard's tail. He.....(see) the tip of the tail moving. He knew the leopard would attack him. Corbett just.....(get) the rifle on his shoulder when the leopard sprang at them.

(Adpated from Jim Corbett : *Man-Eaters of Kumaon.*)

4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have given you practice in

- i) understanding a short story dealing with crime and detection.
- ii) using some of the words occurring in the story and their opposites.
- iii) distinguishing between the use of the past indefinite (simple past) tense and the past perfect tense; and
- iv) continuing the story that you have read, in three different ways.

4.6 KEY WORDS

clue : an idea that suggests a possible answer to a problem

crime : an offence for which there is severe punishment by law

crime fiction : novels in which the detection of crime is the chief interest

crossword puzzle : a puzzle in which words have to be written (from numbered clues vertically (=clues down) and horizontally (=clues across) in spaces on a chequered square or oblong

detection : discovering the identity of somebody guilty of wrong-doing

opposite : a word or thing that is contrary.

4.7 SUGGESTED READING

- 1 Stories by Arthur Conan Doyle
- 2 Agatha Christie : *Best Detective Stories*
- 3 *Tales of Crime and Detection*, Sunbird Readers, Grade 3 (Oxford University Press)
- 4 Jim Corbett : *Man-Eaters of Kumaon*.

4.8 ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

Exercise 1

- A 1 Respected and very rich.
- 2 a) Something foolish and criminal.
b) Only one—Manning.
 - 3 a) He thought of a plan to get money without doing any work.
b) He had been to prison.

- B 4 By killing Manning.
 C 5 Because the head was inside the gas oven.
 D 6 d
 E 7 Because he didn't want to leave his finger-prints behind; he didn't want the police to suspect him.
 8 i) He knew no one would come because Manning had no friends.
 ii) Morrison had to do everything carefully.
 F 9 i) He didn't want the police to know that Manning had drunk whisky with a friend.
 ii) He didn't want the police to find the trace of the medicine in Manning's glass.
 G 10 a) i)
 b) ii)
 c) ii)
 He preserved the note.
 H 11 He left no footprints behind and went out of the backdoor.
 I 12 Because he was afraid, or because he was shocked.
 J 13 i) Manning had not paid the gas bill and so there was no supply of gas.
 ii) c)

Exercise 2

- a) innocent — guilty
 foolish — wise
 younger — older
 a lot of — a few
 remembers — forgets
 b) 1 guilty, innocent
 2 wise, foolish
 3 younger, older
 4 a lot of, a few
 5 remembers, forgets

Exercise 3

Across : 1 blackmail 8 ate 9 eager 10 roar 12 gas 14 go 15 bill 16 been 17 head
 Down : 1 breathing 2 lights 3 criminal 4 murder 5 ask 6 letters 7 whisky 11 oven
 13 old

Exercise 4

1. had ploughed, had finished
 2 had cooked, had washed, had made

Exercise 5

had wounded, had fired, examined, had stood, came, had left, had fired, has seen,
 knew, had had, led, stopped, had attracted, had seen, had seen, had got.