



# Learn English Through Stories

T Series

Upper - Intermediate

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## **Banta Learning Past Tenses 3 by K S Sandhu**

### **The Indomitable Sky Chaser**

Steve Fossett was an intrepid adventurer who never stopped seeking excitement. Even as a young boy in the 1950s, he dreamed of pushing limits. After building a successful business career, he turned to extreme challenges. He swam the English Channel, sailed across oceans, and climbed high mountains. But aviation became his greatest passion — he flew hot-air balloons, gliders, and light aircraft with remarkable skill.

In 2002, Fossett achieved something extraordinary. He circumnavigated the globe alone in a hot-air balloon called Spirit of Freedom. The flight lasted nearly 15 days and covered over 33,000 kilometres. While strong winds pushed the balloon at speeds up to 320 km/h, Fossett stayed calm inside his small capsule, facing freezing temperatures and loneliness. This daring journey made him the first person to complete a solo, nonstop balloon circumnavigation.

Three years later, in 2005, he broke another record. He flew nonstop around the world in a jet plane, the Virgin Atlantic Global Flyer, in just 67 hours without refuelling. His endurance amazed everyone.

However, adventures often carried danger. In 1998, while he was attempting another round-the-world balloon trip, a sudden storm hit. The balloon was falling rapidly from the sky, and Fossett thought his life was over. Luckily, he survived that perilous moment.

Tragically, it was a simple flight that ended everything. On September 3, 2007, Fossett took off in a small single-engine plane from a ranch in Nevada. He was flying over the rugged Sierra Nevada mountains in California when strong downdrafts — powerful downward winds — caught the aircraft. The plane could not climb fast enough in the high-density altitude, and it crashed. Fossett vanished without a trace.

For over a year, huge search teams — planes, helicopters, and ground crews — looked everywhere but found nothing. Then, in October 2008, a hiker was walking through a remote mountain area when he noticed some personal items: money, a pilot's licence, and other remnants that belonged to Fossett. Soon afterwards, rescuers discovered the wreckage of the plane scattered on a steep slope. Later, they found Fossett's remains nearby.

Steve Fossett's indomitable spirit lived on in his 116 world records across five sports. He showed the world what courage and determination could achieve, even when the skies turned dangerous.

**Questions:**

Question 1: What did Steve Fossett do in 2002 that made him famous in ballooning?

Question 2: Why did Fossett have to stop his attempt to break the longest flight record in 2006?

Question 3: What happened to Fossett's balloon in 1998 while he was trying to fly around the world?

Question 4: What was Fossett doing on September 3, 2007, when the accident happened?

Question 5: How was Fossett's plane wreckage finally discovered in 2008?

**Answers:**

Answer 1: In 2002, he circumnavigated the globe alone in a hot-air balloon called Spirit of Freedom. It was the first solo, nonstop balloon flight around the world.

Answer 2: He had to stop because part of his engine had failed, but he still broke the record for the longest flight anyway.

Answer 3: While he was attempting another round-the-world balloon trip, a sudden storm hit and the balloon fell rapidly from the sky. He was in great danger but survived.

Answer 4: He was flying a small single-engine plane across the Nevada Desert — over the Sierra Nevada mountains when strong downdrafts caused the plane to crash.

Answer 5: A hiker was walking through a remote mountain area in southern California when he noticed some personal items belonging to Fossett. Soon afterwards, a search party found the wreckage of the plane (and later his remains).

## 32 Past simple or continuous?



Dr Livingstone was a Scottish explorer, famous for his work in Africa. **While he was searching** for the source of the River Nile, he **disappeared**. He had been quite ill, so people were worried about him, but he was found by Henry Stanley. He **was still trying** to find the source of the Nile **when he died** in 1873.

### 1 Completed or unfinished actions?

#### PAST SIMPLE

We use the past simple for single or repeated **completed** actions in the past:

*We **arrived** at the hotel at three o'clock.*

*He **went** on many expeditions to Africa.*

#### PAST CONTINUOUS

We use the past continuous to describe an **unfinished** action at or around a time in the past:

*When we arrived at the hotel, the maid **was cleaning** our room.*

*He **was searching** for the source of the Nile.*

### 2 Interrupted past or series of past actions?

We use the past continuous for an action in progress when something else happened:

*While he **was searching** for the source of the River Nile, he **disappeared**.*

*'Were you **playing** football when you **sprained** your ankle?' 'No, I **wasn't doing** anything like that. I **was running** downstairs and I **tripped** over my trousers!'*

- ⚠ We use *when* + past simple, followed by past simple, when one action happened **AFTER** another one. Compare:

*When Isabel **joined** us, we **watched** a DVD. (= Isabel came and then we watched a DVD.)*

*When Isabel **joined** us, we **were watching** a DVD. (= We were already watching a DVD at the time Isabel came.)*

### 3 *when* and *while*

We can use either *when* or *while* before an unfinished action or the interrupted past. It means 'during the time':

*The post came **when** I **was having** my breakfast.*

***While** he **was searching** for the source of the River Nile, he disappeared.*

We can use *when* before the unfinished (continuous) or the completed (simple) action:

*He was trying to find the source of the Nile **when** he **died** in 1873.*

*He died in 1873 **when** he **was trying** to find the source of the Nile.*

- ⚠ We don't use *while* before a completed action:

*✗ ~~While the post came, I was having my breakfast.~~*

*✓ **When the post came, I was having my breakfast.***

*✓ The post came **while/when** I **was having** my breakfast.*

We can use *as* instead of *while*:

*As/While I was driving to work this morning, I saw a deer by the side of the road.*

## Practice

- 1 Look at the pictures and complete the sentences, using the verbs in brackets. Use the past simple or past continuous. #0 2.63 Listen and check.



- 0 When we *arrived* ..... at the resort, *it was raining* ..... (arrive, fall)  
 1 We ..... when the storm ..... (run, start)  
 2 We ..... for shelter when the storm ..... (run, start)  
 3 I ..... the bank when the robber ..... (leave, arrive)  
 4 I ..... the bank when the robber ..... (leave, arrive)

- 2 **GRAMMAR IN USE** Read the article and choose the correct words in *italics*. #3 2.64 Listen and check.

## Steve Fossett

Steve Fossett was always looking for adventure, even as a boy in the 1950s. After some years in business, he (0) *began* / *was beginning* his well-known adventures, from swimming the English Channel to sailing round the world. But Fossett is best-known for his adventures in the air – in hot-air balloons, gliders and light aircraft.

In 2005 he (1) *broke* / *was breaking* the record for non-stop flying when he flew round the world in 67 hours without stopping for fuel. A year later, as he (2) *attempted* / *was attempting* to break the record for the longest flight, he had to stop because part of his engine had failed – but he *broke* the record, anyway.

Fossett's adventures often put him in danger – in 1996, while he (3) *travelled* / *was travelling* around the world in a balloon, he almost died (4) *while* / *when* the balloon fell from the sky. In the end, it was a routine flight that (5) *took* / *was taking* his life – he was flying a small plane across the Nevada Desert in September 2007 when he (6) *disappeared* / *was disappearing*. No one could find him, then, some months later, a hiker (7) *walked* / *was walking* through the mountains in southern California when he (8) *noticed* / *was noticing* some personal items which (9) *belonged* / *were belonging* to the adventurer, and soon afterwards a search party (10) *found* / *was finding* the wreckage of the plane. Some time later, Fossett's body was found – his adventures were over.



ADVENTURER

- 3 Write true answers to the questions.

What were you doing, or what was happening when ...

- 0 you received your last text message? *I was watching TV.*  
 1 you received your last text message? .....  
 2 you lost something important? .....  
 3 you saw something unusual? .....  
 4 you heard some shocking news? .....  
 5 you lost your temper? .....

## Answers

### UNIT 32

- 1 1 We were running when the storm started.  
2 We ran for shelter when the storm started.  
3 I was leaving the bank when the robber arrived.  
4 I left the bank when the robber arrived.
- 2 1 broke 2 was attempting 3 was travelling  
4 when 5 took 6 disappeared 7 was walking  
8 noticed 9 belonged 10 found
- 3 **Model answers**
  - 1 *I was eating my breakfast.*
  - 2 *I was running for a bus.*
  - 3 *A bird was attacking my cat!*
  - 4 *I was talking to my brother.*
  - 5 *My sister was annoying me.*





## Answers

### UNIT 30

- 1** 1 became 2 gave 3 went 4 heard 5 met  
6 sold 7 took 8 travelled
- 2** 1 became 2 sold 3 heard 4 joined 5 did  
not/didn't go 6 went 7 explored 8 traded  
9 travelled 10 gave 11 didn't enjoy 12 died
- 3** 1 The slave trade stopped over 200 years ago.  
2 Who did you like most at your last school?  
3 We didn't understand the lecture last week.  
4 When did you take your last exam?  
5 When Jack arrived, he told us the news.  
6 Why did you start learning English?
- 4 Model answers**
  - 1 *The last major festival in my country was last summer.*
  - 2 *I liked the history teacher most at my last school.*
  - 3 *I took my last exam just over a year ago.*
  - 4 *I started learning English because I had to study it at school.*