



Learn English Through Stories

T Series

Upper - Intermediate

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Past Tenses 5 by K S Sandhu

A Journey of Courage

Leyton stared at the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean in front of him. He had finally come to the end of his long journey. The waves crashed loudly against the rocks, and a cool wind blew through his hair. He felt tired but proud.

Several months earlier, Leyton had not known if such a trip would ever be possible. He had only just recovered from a serious illness that had kept him in bed for many weeks. The doctors had told him to rest and avoid stress, but the illness had changed something inside him. It had made him realise that life was too short to wait. That was why he had decided to walk the entire length of the country – from the northernmost point to the southernmost – all on his own.

After he made the decision, Leyton spent a few weeks planning carefully. He had worried a lot about his health and the weather, but he refused to give up. He packed a small backpack with essential things: warm clothes, a tent, water, and some food. Then, one sunny morning in early spring, he set out. He started walking from the cold, windy cliffs in the north. Every day he walked many kilometres, sometimes through rain, sometimes under bright sunshine.

During the journey, Leyton met kind people who had offered him food and a place to sleep. One evening, he stopped at a small village. There, an old man recognised him because they had met years before at a friend's wedding. The man was very pleasant and invited Leyton to dinner. They talked for hours about life and dreams. Leyton felt that he had said goodbye to his old, fearful self.

Another time, in a quiet town, Leyton saw two girls standing by the road. They were still there, exactly where he had seen them earlier that morning. One of them, called Liesel, had never travelled far from home. She dreamed of adventure, so when a farmer's old car was passing by, Leyton waved it down and offered her a short ride just to the next village.

Liesel climbed in with wide eyes and a huge grin. As soon as the car started moving, she let out a delighted squeal — she had never been in a car before! But then, halfway through the short journey, the farmer suddenly slammed on the brakes because a chicken had wandered onto the road. Liesel screamed in surprise, grabbed Leyton's arm like it was a life raft, and accidentally pulled the window crank so hard that the window shot down with a loud clunk. Feathers

flew everywhere as the startled chicken flapped away, and Liesel burst out laughing so hard she nearly cried.

Leyton couldn't help laughing too. The farmer just shook his head and muttered, "City folk and chickens — never a dull day." When they reached the village, Liesel stepped out still giggling, her hair full of tiny feathers, and thanked Leyton as if he had given her the trip of a lifetime.

That small, ridiculous moment reminded Leyton why he had started this challenge — to prove that even after difficult times, people could still achieve great things... and sometimes those great things involved screaming at chickens and ending up looking like a surprised bird.

Now, standing at the southern coast, Leyton realised that this journey had been the most exhilarating experience he had ever had – and probably ever would have. He had overcome his fears, his weak body, and his doubts. The illness had seemed hopeless at first, but it had become the reason for his determination.

He sat on a rock and looked at the horizon. The sun was setting, painting the sky in orange and pink. Leyton smiled. He had achieved his aim, and that was enough.

Questions:

Question 1: Where did Leyton finally arrive at the end of his journey?

Question 2: Why did Leyton decide to walk the length of the country?

Question 3: What surprising thing happened during Liesel's short car ride?

Question 4: How did Leyton feel when he realised what the journey had meant to him?

Question 5: What did the old man in the village remind Leyton of when they met?

Answers:

Answer 1: He arrived at the southernmost point of the country, at the Atlantic Ocean.

Answer 2: He decided to do it because he had been seriously ill, and the illness made him realise that life was too short / to prove that it was possible even after difficult times.

Answer 3: The farmer suddenly braked because a chicken had wandered onto the road, Liesel screamed, grabbed Leyton's arm, accidentally opened the window, and feathers flew everywhere.

Answer 4: He felt proud / he realised it was the most exhilarating experience he had ever had (and probably ever would have).

Answer 5: The old man reminded him that they had met years before at a friend's (Adam's) wedding.

34 Past perfect simple

1 Form

We form the past perfect with *had* + past participle.
The regular past participle ends in *-ed* (e.g. *finished*).


POSITIVE	<i>I had already seen the film. She had met him before. We had finished early.</i>
NEGATIVE	<i>I had not (hadn't) seen it before. He had not (hadn't) met her before. They had not (hadn't) finished the job.</i>
QUESTIONS	<i>Had you seen the film? (Yes, I had.) Had they finished the job? (No, they hadn't.) Where had he met her before?</i>

Irregular past participles, e.g. *seen*, *met*, ► page 348

Pronunciation ► 1.15

2 The order of past actions

We can use the past perfect to show which action happened first:
(2) *Before I finally found a job, (1) I had been to about thirty interviews.*

 If one action happens immediately after the other, we use the past simple for both:

X When Colin had arrived at the door, Sheila opened it straight away.

✓ When Colin arrived at the door, Sheila opened it straight away.

We often use adverbs of time and linking words with the past perfect:

Four years earlier, she had become the first American female pilot in space. (adverb)

I'd never liked Japanese food before but the meal Yuki cooked was lovely. (adverb)

By the time Grace decided to apply for the job, the position had been filled. (linking phrase)

We often use the past perfect in stories to show a series of events in the past:

There was no answer from the house. No face at the window. Time had stopped here ... Where was she? Where had she gone? The grass had grown thick ... (from *Ghostwalk*, by Rebecca Stott)

3 Past perfect or past simple?

We usually use the past simple, not the past perfect

- if the order of actions is clear: *I got my first job after I left university.*
- if the order of actions is the same as the order of the verbs in the sentence. Compare:
When I got to the café, everyone ordered their drinks.
(= First, I got to the café, then everyone ordered their drinks.)
When I got to the café, everyone had ordered their drinks.
(= First, everyone ordered their drinks, then I got to the café.)

4 Giving reasons

We can use the past perfect to give a reason for an action or situation, often with *because*:

Eileen Collins became the commander because she had already flown as a space pilot.

Emily was unhappy – her husband hadn't bought her a birthday present.

5 Superlatives

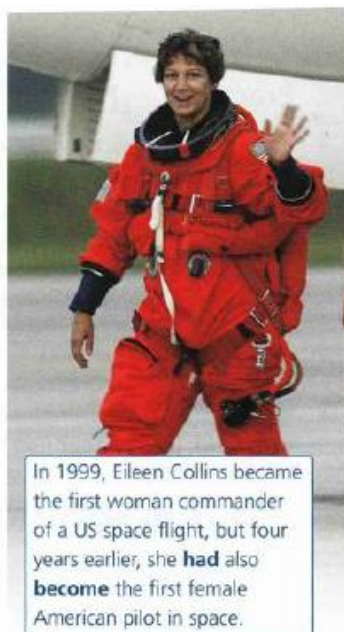
We often use the past perfect (and *ever*) with superlative adjectives:

It was the worst meal I had ever eaten! I never went there again.

We also use the past perfect after *it was the first, second, etc*:

We went to Egypt in 1996. It was the first time we'd travelled outside Europe.

Present perfect + superlatives ► Unit 37.4



Practice

1 Which action comes first in each sentence? Write 1 or 2 after the verbs.

- 0 Russell realised [2] his mistake only hours after he had sent [1] the money.
 1 When Kris arrived [] at the station, the group had already left [].
 2 When Kris arrived [] at the station, the group left [].
 3 Mandy had asked [] her father to lend her the car before, but this time he agreed [].
 4 Sam had been [] in the room for some time before he realised [] it was the wrong class.
 5 By the time the builders completed [] the work, we had already moved in [].
 6 When the builders had completed [] the work, we moved in [].
 7 Jelena started [] the course because she hadn't found [] a job.
 8 Kevin got [] the job because he had been [] the best interviewee.

2 Read these sentences from novels and choose the correct words in *italics*.

▶ 3.03 Listen and check.

- 0 Her mother *had* / *had had* a beautiful voice, both when she *sang* / *had sung* and when she *talked* / *had talked*.
 1 The girls were still there, standing where he *saw* / *had seen* them earlier.
 2 Liesel's treat was a ride in a car. She *was never* / *had never been in* one before.
 3 The man was very pleasant, reminding him that they *met* / *had met* at Adam's wedding.
 4 As Joe walked away, he *felt* / *had felt* that he *said* / *had said* goodbye to the last phase of his youth.
 5 She stepped out of the bath, *reached* / *had reached* for the towel the maid *left* / *had left* for her and *wrapped* / *had wrapped* it around her.

3 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the text with the verbs in brackets. Use the past simple or past perfect. ▶ 3.04 Listen and check.

Leyton stared at the expanse of the Atlantic Ocean in front of him. He (0) *had finally come*... (finally / come) to the end of his journey. Several months ago he (1) (not / know) whether the journey would really be possible. After all, he (2) (recover) from his illness only weeks before he (3) (make) the decision – well, it was because of the illness that he (4) (decide) to do this, to prove it was possible. Then, after a few weeks of planning and worrying, he (5) (set out), starting from the northernmost point of the country and walking, on his own, to the southernmost point. And here he was, at the end of his journey – he (6) (achieve) his aim. And he (7) (realise) now that it was the most exciting thing he (8) (ever / do) – and probably ever would do – in his life.



Answers

UNIT 34

1 1 2, 1 2 1, 2 3 1, 2 4 1, 2 5 2, 1 6 1, 2
7 2, 1 8 2, 1

2 1 had seen 2 had never been 3 had met 4 felt (same time as 'walked'), had said (something that had happened before 'walked') 5 reached (series of actions – stepped, reached, wrapped), had left (an action before the series of actions), wrapped

3 1 didn't know (hadn't known also possible) 2 had recovered 3 made 4 had decided 5 had set out 6 had achieved 7 realised 8 had ever done