

## Murder mystery by Simon Mumford

**Age:** Adults and young adults  
**Level:** Intermediate  
**Objective:** Revising past tenses  
**Key skills:** Speaking, reading  
**Materials:** One copy of worksheets 1 and 2 for each student; board

### Introduction

Grammar exercises in which students write the verb in the correct tense are a common way of contrasting tenses and consolidating grammatical knowledge. However, once students have found the answers, there is little reason to look at the sentences again. This lesson uses a grammar exercise as a basis for discussion, in which all sentences in the exercise are linked to the accompanying reading exercise.

### Procedure:

1. Give out Worksheet 1 and ask students to complete it either individually, in pairs or in small groups. Give students ten minutes for this exercise. Deal with any vocabulary but do not give any help with the answers at this stage.
2. While the students are completing the exercise, write the following questions on the board:

*Why were Lord Robert's letters in the Butler's room?*

*Why did Sir George cancel his appointment?*

*Were Lord Robert and Lady Jane happily married?*

*How was Lord Robert feeling when he died?*

*Who do you think killed Lord Robert? Lady Jane, the Butler, Sir George or someone else?*

3. Without giving the answers to the gap-fill exercise on Worksheet 1, point out that all the sentences belong to the same story: a murder mystery. Ask students to reread the sentences and discuss the questions on the board in groups. Encourage students to be creative in their theories.
4. After ten minutes, ask for feedback. Try to collect a number of theories from different groups.
5. Give out Worksheet 2. Tell the students that, as well as giving the solution to the mystery, Inspector Simpson's report also gives the answers to the gap-fill exercise. However, more detective work is needed because the answers are hidden.

For example, the answer to the first sentence in the gap-fill exercise (*The doctor \_\_\_\_\_ (say) Lord Robert \_\_\_\_\_ (kill) between 9 and 11pm.*) is given in the first sentence of the report (*The doctor told us that Lord Robert was shot around 10 o'clock in the evening.*). However, the words are a little different. *Told* is replaced by *said* and *killed* by *shot*.

Tell students to find the answers for the remaining nine gap-fill sentences and that, although some of the verbs are different, the tenses are the same as in the gap-fill exercise. Also tell students that the information in Inspector Simpson's report is in a different order to the clues in the gap-fill exercise.

6. Give the students time to read Inspector Simpson's report, and to find and check their answers.
7. Finally, discuss the answers with the whole class. Deal with any grammar questions students might have. As with all such grammar exercises, alternative answers may sometimes be possible.

**Worksheet 1 key:**

1. said, was killed; 2. found; 3. was playing, heard, thought, did; 4. had arranged, cancelled; 5. was watching, was locking, saw; 6. were found, denied; 7. sat; 8. had lost, would lose; 9. were, had been seen; 10. had been

**Worksheet 2 key:**

**Note:** The question numbers from Worksheet 1 are given at the end of each relevant sentence in brackets.

The doctor told us that Lord Robert was shot around 10 o'clock in the evening (1). The butler discovered him at midnight in the library, where he spent every night drinking whisky (2,7). Of course he was depressed, he had just lost half a million pounds! Also, he expected he would lose more in the next year (8). But there were other problems. For example, the letters that were hidden in the butler's room which he denied knowing about: very strange! (6) Also, the butler's mother had been unwell for years and needed an operation (10). The butler needed money for this: this is why he used the letters to blackmail Lord Robert. But, as we know, he didn't kill him. He was watching a film on TV with his wife all evening. The butler knew nothing until he noticed the light on in the library while he was locking up the house, and found the body. (5)

That leaves Lady Jane and Sir George. George had made an appointment to visit that evening, but then he suddenly cancelled (4). Why? We know he and Lady Jane were both keen horseriders, and had often been seen out riding together (9). A maid at the house confirmed that they were lovers.

So, that leads me to the conclusion that Lord Robert killed himself. He was depressed. He had lost money, his wife was having an affair and he was being blackmailed. It was Lady Jane who gave the butler his letters. She knew that Lord Robert was planning to kill himself that evening, so she warned her lover to stay away. She pretended she was playing the piano, so, when she heard the shot, she said she believed it was a car and didn't do anything (3).

## Worksheet 1

Complete the gaps in the sentences using the correct forms of the verbs in brackets.

1. The doctor \_\_\_\_\_ (say) Lord Robert \_\_\_\_\_ (kill) between 9 and 11pm.
2. The butler \_\_\_\_\_ (find) the body at midnight in the library.
3. Lady Jane \_\_\_\_\_ (play) the piano at 10.30 when she \_\_\_\_\_ (hear) a noise. She said she \_\_\_\_\_ (think) it was a car and \_\_\_\_\_ (do) nothing.
4. Sir George Square \_\_\_\_\_ (arrange) to visit Lord Robert on the night of his death but \_\_\_\_\_ (cancel) the appointment.
5. The butler \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV with his wife all evening. When he \_\_\_\_\_ (lock up) the house, he \_\_\_\_\_ (see) the light on in the library and found the body.
6. Some of Lord Robert's letters \_\_\_\_\_ (find) in the butler's room. The butler \_\_\_\_\_ (deny) knowing anything about them.
7. Lord Robert usually \_\_\_\_\_ (sit) in the library by himself drinking whisky in the evenings.
8. Just before his death, Lord Robert \_\_\_\_\_ (lose) a lot of money in business. He thought he \_\_\_\_\_ (lose) more money soon.
9. Sir George and Lady Jane \_\_\_\_\_ (be) keen horse riders, and sometimes they \_\_\_\_\_ (see) riding together.
10. The butler's mother \_\_\_\_\_ (be) ill for a long time and needed an expensive operation.

## Worksheet 2

### Inspector Simpson's report

The doctor told us that Lord Robert was shot around 10 o'clock in the evening. The butler discovered him at midnight in the library, where he spent every night drinking whisky. Of course he was depressed, he had just lost half a million pounds! Also, he expected he would lose more in the next year. But there were other problems. For example, the letters that were hidden in the butler's room which he denied knowing about: very strange! Also, the butler's mother had been unwell for years and needed an operation. The butler needed money for this: this is why he used the letters to blackmail Lord Robert. But, as we know, he didn't kill him. He was watching a film on TV with his wife all evening. The butler knew nothing until he noticed the light on in the library while he was locking up the house, and found the body.

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So, that leads me to the conclusion that Lord Robert killed himself. He was depressed. He had lost money, his wife was having an affair and he was being blackmailed. It was Lady Jane who gave the butler his letters. She knew that Lord Robert was planning to kill himself that evening, so she warned her lover to stay away. She pretended she was playing the piano, so, when she heard the shot, she said she believed it was a car and didn't do anything.