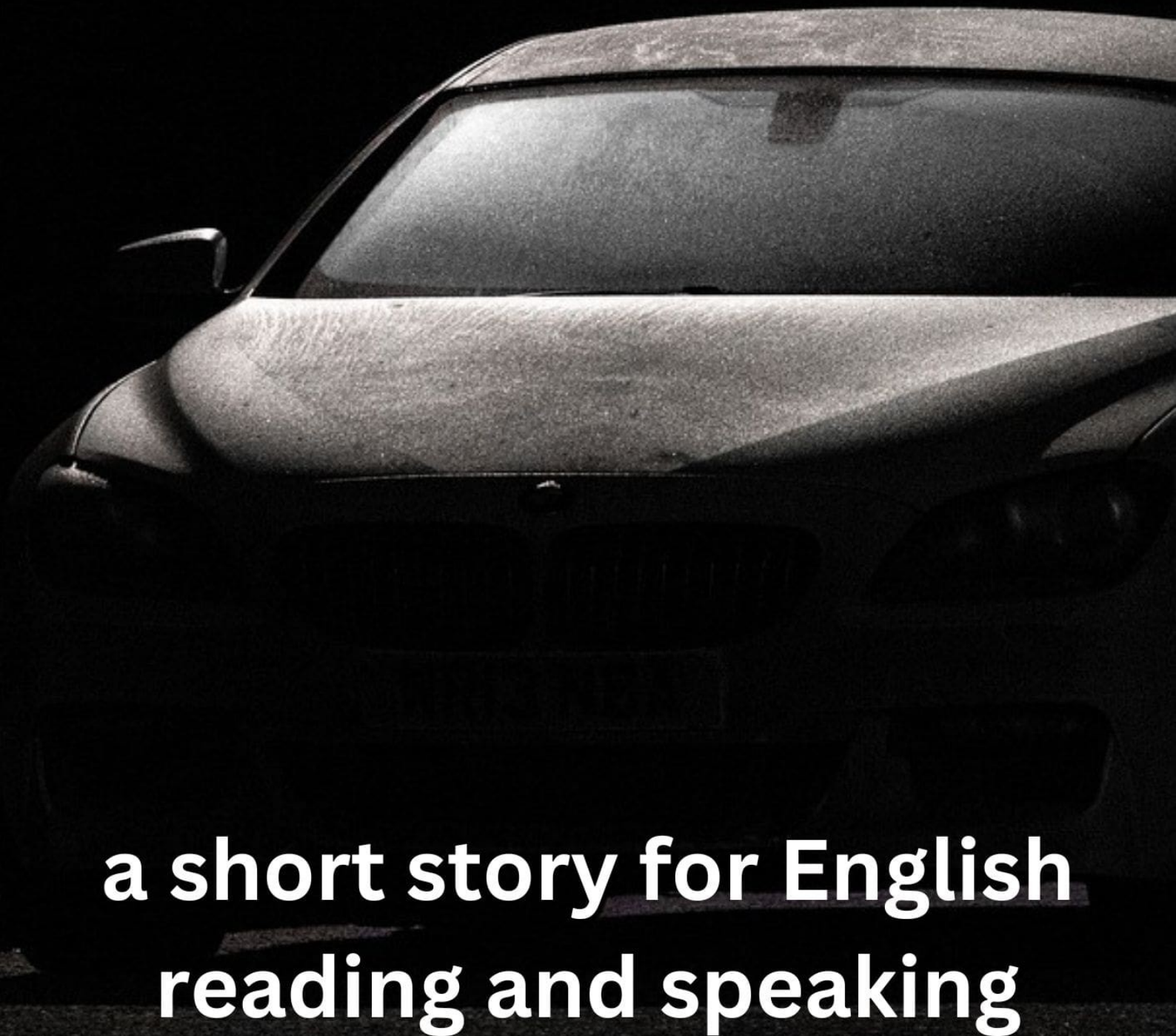


# Car Trouble



**a short story for English  
reading and speaking**

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# Introduction

What is car trouble?

Have you ever broken down in a car far from other places?

What if you had car trouble in the middle of the night?

What would you do?

Who could you call?

# Car Trouble

**The car engine shuddered. Then ground to a halt.**

Miles gripped the steering wheel tighter.

*What the...*

Miles steered his car to the side of the road and stopped.

He stared ahead into the pitch-black night and collected his thoughts.

He pushed the start button, but nothing came from the car. No satisfying growl as the engine fired into life.

Miles pushed again. And again.

The vain hope that it would start on the third time, the fourth, maybe the fifth.

**But nothing at all.**

He slammed his hands on the steering wheel and cursed out loud.

This was all he needed. Three hours on the road and only another hour to go before he was home.

That last hour might as well be eight hours now.

He pressed the button again, but it was dead.

Of all the luck... He had only had this car for about six months. Second-hand, sure, but the dealer he bought it from said that everything was in fine working order.

*Nothing to worry about, sir, he said.*

**Yeah, right.**

Miles picked his phone up from the passenger seat. Then he wondered who he could call. He wasn't a member of any car recovery service.

He looked out the window.

He wasn't even sure where he was right now.

Miles tapped on the screen of his phone to bring it to life.

The phone lit up for a second. Then the screen went dark again.

Miles tapped on the screen again.

***Nothing.***

He tapped twice, three times.

The screen remained blank.

*What the hell is this...*

Again he stared out into the dark road ahead, hoping an answer would appear.

He pressed the car ignition again, but all heard was the click of the button.

He tapped at the phone screen. Nothing.

Then he turned and grabbed his computer bag off the back seat. His phone charger was in the bag.

Then the realisation that he would not be able to charge his phone as the car was dead.

Miles cursed out loud again.

***This could not be happening.***

Why was this happening now? Of all the times...

Miles opened the car door and stepped out onto the empty road. On either side of him, trees that shushed and whistled in the breeze. Beyond the trees, just pitch black.

He couldn't see further than his own arm's length. Not a fragment of light around.

His mind still hoped that something would happen. A light would come on in his car. Or the phone would just burst into life.

But then he realised that he had to do something.

Walk.

*But where?*

***And how far?***

He squinted into the darkness of the road ahead. He couldn't see anything.

He turned the other way and hoped for a small flicker of light somewhere. A road sign. Maybe a gas station.

But he couldn't remember passing anything along the way. He was just lost in his thought after driving for so long.

He gritted his teeth and leaned back into the car for his jacket. He grabbed his phone and his keys. Then locked the car.

The locks made a defined clunk in unison.

Then another noise from the trees.

What was that? An animal of some kind.

He put his jacket on, thrusting his arms into the sleeves.

Then the sound again.

***Like someone whispering.***

Miles froze in place. He stopped breathing and tilted his head to hear more clearly.

Just the wind hissing through the trees.

That was all he needed now. His mind to start playing tricks on him.

He stepped away from the car. He could just about make out the tarmac on the road.

He took two steps and heard the whispering again.

***Miles.....***

He jolted to a stop and clenched his hands into two tight balls.

*What was that?*

He swallowed and focused his hearing on the wide open space around him.

The wind rustled through the leaves and branches again. He assured himself it was just the wind.

But then at the end of a rising gust of air, the whispering voice again.

***Miles.....***

Miles spun around. He blinked into the black void all around him. Sparks of bright light shot up into his line of vision but nothing real, only from the rising state of panic he was feeling.

He made turns this way and that. Looked up and down the road and into the trees. But he could see nothing.

*Who's there?* He called out.

Then fear gripped at his throat as he now felt more vulnerable, more isolated.

The wind picked up in a strong gust and blew through the leaves of the surrounding trees.

It swallowed up any other sound, and he waited for it to die down.

As the wind trailed off into the darkness, Miles strained to hear another noise.

The night air swallowed him up.

**Not a single sound came.**

Miles took a step back to his car.

He waited. Kept his breathing to shallow breaths. The muscles in his body tense.

*Hello?* He called out.

Nothing.

Miles took a deep breath and exhaled.

How stupid of him.

He had been driving too long. He was tired. And the pitch black all around him was making him imagine things.

There was nothing there at all.

***Just some trees.***

In the daylight, the trees would line an uneventful road. And on either side, just boring terrain. Nothing to see.

Miles pulled the collar of his jacket tighter around his neck and took a long stride down the road.

There had to be a sign of life somewhere. He would find someone. And get his car repaired. Figure out what was wrong

with his phone and then....

***MILES.....***

A clear voice called out to him. Clear as a bell. Like the person was standing right next to him.

And Miles ran.

***Fear took over, and he ran.***

# Reading Comprehension Multiple Choice

Go through all the questions below. The questions are related to what happened in the story.

Each question has a choice of FOUR possible answers. Choose the right answer.

***Then check all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.***

What was Miles' initial reaction when his car engine shuddered and stopped?

- a) He called a car recovery service.
- b) He pressed the start button repeatedly.
- c) He started walking towards home.
- d) He cursed at his bad luck.

How long had Miles been driving before his car broke down?

- a) Three hours.
- b) Eight hours.
- c) Six months.
- d) One hour.

Why couldn't Miles call for help using his phone?

- a) His phone was dead.
- b) He had lost his phone.
- c) He didn't know how to use his phone.
- d) He didn't have a phone charger.

What did Miles hope to find when he looked out into the darkness?

- a) A gas station.
- b) A restaurant.
- c) A hotel.
- d) A friend's house.

What was the noise that Miles heard from the trees?

- a) A car engine starting.
- b) An animal.
- c) Whispering voices.
- d) Strong wind.

How did Miles feel when he heard the whispering voice?

- a) Calm and relaxed.
- b) Excited and curious.
- c) Panicked and fearful.
- d) Angry and annoyed.

Why did Miles believe he was hearing voices?

- a) He thought he was hallucinating due to exhaustion.
- b) He believed people were hiding in the trees.
- c) He suspected his car's engine was making strange sounds.
- d) He thought he had lost his sense of hearing.

How did Miles react when he heard the clear voice calling out his name?

- a) He calmly walked towards the source of the voice.
- b) He ignored it and continued walking.

- c) He ran in fear.
- d) He shouted back, asking who it was.

What was Miles' immediate goal after hearing the voice?

- a) To find a safe place to sleep.
- b) To repair his car.
- c) To locate a phone charger.
- d) To find someone for help.

What was Miles' emotional state as he ran in fear?

- a) Confident and determined.
- b) Relieved and hopeful.
- c) Scared and panicked.
- d) Calm and collected.

Why did Miles believe he was imagining things?

- a) He was tired and had been driving for too long.
- b) He had a history of hearing voices.
- c) He was lost and disoriented.
- d) He had been drinking alcohol.

What did Miles think about the trees in the daylight?

- a) They were scary and menacing.
- b) They were blocking his way.
- c) They were hiding something.
- d) They were just part of a normal road.

What caused Miles to finally start running in fear?

- a) A sudden noise from the trees.
- b) The sight of a gas station.

- c) The feeling of exhaustion.
- d) A clear voice calling his name.

## True or False?

The following sentences are true or false statements about the story.

Go through them all one by one and say whether it is true or false.

***You can check all your answers at the end of the lesson plan.***

The story starts with the car engine shuddering and eventually coming to a halt.

Miles was driving during the day.

Miles had owned the car for six months.

The car was brand new when Miles bought it.

Miles tried starting the car multiple times, hoping it would eventually start.

Miles was a member of a car recovery service.

Miles' phone screen lit up when he tapped it to check for a signal.

Miles had a phone charger in his bag, so he could charge his phone.

Miles could see clearly into the pitch-black night.

Miles heard strange whispering voices coming from the trees.

The whispering voices in the story were confirmed to be the wind.

Miles encountered a gas station on the road.

Miles realized he was just imagining things due to exhaustion.

Miles decided to continue walking down the road to find help.

A clear voice called out Miles' name, causing him to run in fear.

# Reading Comprehension Questions

Who is the main character in the story?

Where does the story take place?

What time does the story take place?

What happened to the car engine at the beginning of the story?

How does Miles react when his car breaks down?

What does Miles try to do to start the car's engine?

How long has Miles been on the road when his car breaks down?

How does Miles feel about the situation he's in?

What does Miles try to do with his phone when he realizes he's stranded?

Does Miles have a phone charger?

Why is Miles unable to charge his phone?

Why does Miles decide to start walking?

What is Miles hoping to find as he walks down the road?

What makes Miles freeze in place when he begins to walk away from his car?

What does Miles hear while he's walking that startles him?

How does Miles react when he hears his name being whispered?

Why does Miles start running?

How does Miles rationalize his fear while he's running?

Can you describe the surroundings as Miles runs in fear?

What does Miles ultimately think about the voice he heard?

Why does Miles run away when he hears the voice a second time?

How does Miles react to the voice the second time compared to the first time?

# Essential Vocabulary

gripped	realisation	thrusting
steering wheel	car was dead	whispering
pitch-black	happening	clenched
collected his thoughts	empty road	jolted
start button	shushed	vulnerable
satisfying growl	whistled	isolated
engine fired into life	pitch black	rising gust of air
vain hope	flicker	panic
slammed	road sign	turned this way and that
cursed out loud	gas station	night air
recovery service	gritted his teeth	tense
passenger seat	lost in his thought	daylight
bring it to life	jacket	boring terrain
blank	defined clunk	collar
ignition	animal	stride
sign of life	clear as a bell	ran
repaired	fear took over	

## Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Gripped** — *Past tense of grip. To take and keep a firm hold of something; to grasp tightly.*

**Steering wheel** — *The device used for steering the vehicle and moving it in the right direction.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

***The train started moving, and John gripped the handrail.***

***Mike braked suddenly and almost hit his head on the steering wheel.***

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills — reading, writing, speaking and

listening.

## Discussion Questions

What is the initial problem that Miles faces in the story?

How does Miles react when his car engine stops?

Why is Miles frustrated with his situation?

What would you have done if you were in Miles' situation?

Would you have stayed in the car or ventured out into the darkness?

Do you think Miles' frustration is justified, given the circumstances?

How would you have reacted in his place?

How does the story create a sense of tension and suspense in the story?

What does Miles do to try to start his car? Why do you think he keeps trying?

How does Miles feel about his car breaking down? How would you feel in a similar situation?

What thoughts go through Miles' mind as he waits for the car to start?

How does the description of the night and the darkness

contribute to the mood of the story?

Why does Miles try to use his phone? How does he react when it doesn't work?

How does the realization about the phone charger affect Miles' situation?

What is Miles' plan for finding help? Why does he decide to walk?

How does the author describe the setting when Miles steps out of the car? How does this setting contribute to the story's atmosphere?

How does Miles react to the whispering sounds in the trees? Why does he become fearful?

Do you think the voice Miles hears is real or imagined? Why?

How does the wind contribute to the sense of fear and isolation in the story?

What does Miles' decision to run reveal about his emotions at that moment?

How does the story create a sense of uncertainty and mystery around the voice Miles hears?

Have you ever experienced a situation where you were alone in the dark? How did you feel?

How does the story use Miles' fear to build suspense and keep the reader engaged?

What do you think might happen next in the story? How do you think Miles' situation will be resolved?

Imagine you are one of the characters passing by on the road and you see Miles stranded. Would you offer help? Why or why not?

Why do you think Miles' mind starts playing tricks on him in the darkness? How does fear affect our perception of reality?

Discuss the significance of the voice Miles hears. Do you think it's a real person or something else? Share your theories.

What role does the setting of the story (dark, isolated road) play in creating a sense of fear and tension? How does it impact your emotions as a reader?

Some people believe in supernatural occurrences. Do you think there could be a supernatural explanation for the voice Miles hears? Why or why not?

Put yourself in Miles' shoes. Would you have locked your car when you left? How does this decision impact his sense of security?

How might the story be different if it took place during the daytime instead of at night? How would Miles' actions and emotions change?

If you were to continue the story, what do you think Miles would discover as he walks down the road? What challenges might he encounter?

Think about the whispering voice. What could it symbolize or represent in the story? Share your interpretations.

Debate the idea of whether Miles' fear is rational or irrational. Is he overreacting to the situation, or is his fear justified?

How might modern technology, like GPS or mobile apps, have changed the outcome of this story? Would Miles have been in the same predicament?

Discuss the concept of isolation in the story. How does the physical isolation reflect Miles' emotional state?

Do you think the story is more about Miles' external struggles (car trouble) or his internal struggles (fear and uncertainty)? Why?

# Guess The Right Synonym

Look at the table below.

Match the word on the left with the correct synonym on the right.

Synonyms are words of similar meaning.

***You can check your answers at the end of the lesson plan.***

Car	Gloomy
Engine	Activate
Stopped	Evening
Road	Disoriented
Start	Startup
Luck	Radiance
Phone	Halted
Dark	Alarm
Ignition	Chance
Lost	Murmuring
Walk	Automobile
Light	Dread
Whispering	Stroll
Wind	Mobile
Sound	Woodland

Panic	Alone
Isolated	Motor
Fear	Noise
Trees	Street
Night	Breeze

# Guess The Right Antonym

Look at the table below.

Match the word on the left with the correct antonym on the right.

Antonyms are words of opposite meaning.

***You can check your answers at the end of the lesson plan.***

Car	Stillness
Stopped	Stand
Start	Deactivation
Luck	Day
Dark	Shadow
Ignition	Halt
Lost	Engaged
Walk	Silence
Light	Pedestrian
Whispering	Clearing
Wind	Jinx
Sound	Moving
Panic	Courage
Isolated	Located

Fear	Radiant
Trees	Composure
Night	Yelling

# Guess The Right Meaning

Look at the table below.

Match the word on the left with the correct meaning on the right.

*You can check your answers at the end of the lesson plan.*

Shuddered	The act of becoming fully aware.
Gripped	Make a low guttural sound.
Steered	Confused as to time or place.
Pitch-black	Grasp tightly.
Vain	A dull, heavy sound.
Growl	Lack of regard for the danger or consequences of one's actions.
Slam	Far away from other places, buildings, or people.
Recklessness	A service that assists in repairing or rescuing vehicles that have broken down.
Recovery service	The faculty or action of forming new ideas, images, or concepts not present to the senses.
Disoriented	A brief flash or movement.

Realization	Shake suddenly and violently.
Charger	Close with force and loud noise.
Vulnerable	Make a clear, high-pitched sound by forcing breath through a small hole between one's lips.
Flicker	Extremely dark
Unison	Sudden uncontrollable fear or anxiety.
Isolated	Useless; futile.
Panic	Control the movement or direction of.
Clunk	A device used to supply electrical energy to recharge a battery or phone.
Whistle	A process in which all elements behave in the same way at the same time.
Imagination	Susceptible to physical or emotional harm.

# What Happened To Miles?

**This is a classroom debate activity.**

Look at all the ideas below. These are theories about Miles' situation in the story you read before.

Which of these ideas do you think could be true?

Are there any ideas below that could not be true? If not, why?

One by one, go through all the suggestions below and discuss them in class.

*Mechanical Failure: The car's engine experienced a mechanical failure, causing it to shudder and come to a halt.*

*Car Battery Issue: The car's battery might be dead, leading to the inability to start the engine or charge the phone.*

*Bad Fuel: The car may have been filled with bad or contaminated fuel, resulting in engine trouble.*

*Electrical Malfunction: There could be an electrical issue in the car, causing both the engine and phone to malfunction.*

*No Cell Service: Miles might be in an area with poor or no cell phone reception, explaining why he can't call for help.*

*Isolated Location: Miles could be stranded in a remote or unfamiliar area where there are no nearby gas stations or assistance.*

*Imagined Noises: Miles might be imagining or hearing sounds due to fatigue and stress from driving for a long time.*

*Wildlife Noises: The whispering sounds could be natural noises from animals or the wind rustling through the trees, misinterpreted as voices.*

*Psychological Stress: Isolation and darkness could be causing psychological stress, leading Miles to imagine and overreact to perceived threats.*

*Suspenseful Atmosphere: The story might be building suspense and mystery for dramatic effect, making the reader question the source of the voices.*

*Supernatural Element: The story could introduce a supernatural element, such as a ghostly presence, to add*

*intrigue and tension.*

*Character's Imagination: Miles might be experiencing heightened imagination and paranoia, making him hear things that aren't actually there.*

*Prank or Trickery: Someone could be playing a prank on Miles, whispering his name to frighten him.*

*Mental Exhaustion: Miles' mental and physical exhaustion from driving could be affecting his perception and judgment.*

*Plot Twist: The story might take an unexpected turn, revealing that Miles is actually in a simulation or dream, contributing to the eerie atmosphere.*

# Writing

**This is a creative writing exercise.**

You are going to write what happens next in the story that you read at the beginning of the lesson.

Take a look at the prompts below and choose one. Then write your ideas into a story of what happens next.

*Imagine Miles decides to follow the whispering voice despite his fear. Describe what he discovers and how it leads him to safety.*

*Create a new ending where Miles uses his phone charger creatively to signal for help and gets rescued by a passing truck driver.*

*Write a dialogue between Miles and a wise old tree he encounters along the road, sharing his troubles and seeking guidance.*

*Miles discovers a hidden cabin in the woods. Describe his experience inside the cabin and how it changes his situation.*

*Imagine Miles meets a group of travellers who invite*

*him to share his story around a campfire. Write a dialogue between Miles and the travellers.*

*Write a reflection piece from Miles' perspective after he is rescued, discussing what he learned from the experience and how it changed him.*

*Miles finds a mysterious key on the road. Describe how he uses the key to unlock a hidden door that leads to a surprising discovery.*

*Write a continuation of the story, where the whispering voice becomes a guardian spirit that leads Miles to a mystical place of safety and guidance.*

### **Write your story.**

When you have finished writing, read your story out loud in front of your classmates.

***Or you can hand it in to your teacher for review.***

# Reading Comprehension Multiple Choice — Answers

Check the correct answers below.

*How many did you get right?*

What was Miles' initial reaction when his car engine shuddered and stopped?

b) He pressed the start button repeatedly.

How long had Miles been driving before his car broke down?

a) Three hours.

Why couldn't Miles call for help using his phone?

a) His phone was dead.

What did Miles hope to find when he looked out into the darkness?

a) A gas station.

What was the noise that Miles heard from the trees?

c) Whispering voices.

How did Miles feel when he heard the whispering voice?

c) Panicked and fearful.

Why did Miles believe he was hearing voices?

a) He thought he was hallucinating due to exhaustion.

How did Miles react when he heard the clear voice calling out his name?

d) He shouted back, asking who it was.

What was Miles' immediate goal after hearing the voice?

d) To find someone for help.

What was Miles' emotional state as he ran in fear?

c) Scared and panicked.

Why did Miles believe he was imagining things?

a) He was tired and had been driving for too long.

What did Miles think about the trees in the daylight?

d) They were just part of a normal road.

What caused Miles to finally start running in fear?

d) A clear voice calling his name.

## True or False? — Answers

Take a look at the correct answers below.

*How many did you get right?*

The story starts with the car engine shuddering and eventually coming to a halt. - True

Miles was driving during the day. - False

Miles had owned the car for six months. - True

The car was brand new when Miles bought it. - False

Miles tried starting the car multiple times, hoping it would eventually start. - True

Miles was a member of a car recovery service. - False

Miles' phone screen lit up when he tapped it to check for a signal. - True

Miles had a phone charger in his bag, so he could charge his phone. - True

Miles could see clearly into the pitch-black night. - False

Miles heard strange whispering voices coming from the trees. - True

The whispering voices in the story were confirmed to be the wind. - False

Miles encountered a gas station on the road. - False

Miles realized he was just imagining things due to exhaustion. - False

Miles decided to continue walking down the road to find help. - True

A clear voice called out Miles' name, causing him to run in fear. - True

# Guess The Right Synonym — Answers

Check the correct answers for all the synonyms below.

*Did you get them all right?*

Car	Automobile
Engine	Motor
Stopped	Halted
Road	Street
Start	Activate
Luck	Chance
Phone	Mobile
Dark	Gloomy
Ignition	Startup
Lost	Disoriented
Walk	Stroll
Light	Radiance
Whispering	Murmuring
Wind	Breeze
Sound	Noise
Panic	Alarm
Isolated	Alone
Fear	Dread

Trees	Woodland
Night	Evening

## Guess The Right Antonym — Answers

Now check all the correct answers below.

*How many did you get right?*

Car	Pedestrian
Stopped	Moving
Start	Halt
Luck	Jinx
Dark	Radiant
Ignition	Deactivation
Lost	Located
Walk	Stand
Light	Shadow
Whispering	Yelling
Wind	Stillness
Sound	Silence
Panic	Composure
Isolated	Engaged
Fear	Courage
Trees	Clearing
Night	Day

# Guess The Right Meaning — Answers

Below are all the correct meanings for the words.

*Did you get them all right?*

Shuddered	Shake suddenly and violently.
Gripped	Grasp tightly.
Steered	Control the movement or direction of.
Pitch-black	Extremely dark
Vain	Useless; futile.
Growl	Make a low guttural sound.
Slam	Close with force and loud noise.
Recklessness	Lack of regard for the danger or consequences of one's actions.
Recovery service	A service that assists in repairing or rescuing vehicles that have broken down.
Disoriented	Confused as to time or place.
Realization	The act of becoming fully aware.
Charger	A device used to supply electrical energy to recharge a battery or phone.

Vulnerable	Susceptible to physical or emotional harm.
Flicker	A brief flash or movement.
Unison	A process in which all elements behave in the same way at the same time.
Isolated	Far away from other places, buildings, or people.
Panic	Sudden uncontrollable fear or anxiety.
Clunk	A dull, heavy sound.
Whistle	Make a clear, high-pitched sound by forcing breath through a small hole between one's lips.
Imagination	The faculty or action of forming new ideas, images, or concepts not present to the senses.

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