

Where Have You Been?

a short story for English
reading & speaking

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Where Have You Been?.....	4
Reading Comprehension Questions.....	10
Essential Vocabulary.....	12
Discussion Questions.....	13
Credits.....	15

Introduction

Is there such a thing as time travel?

Can people suddenly move from one time to another?

Would you like to do this?

Where Have You Been?

"Where have you been?"

Sam looked at his wife, Claire, and shook his head.

"The shop."

He held up the pint of milk as if to provide proof.

She stood in front of him, staring at him, her eyes like saucers.

Sam laughed, and edged past her.

What was up with her today? She had been fine when he left twenty minutes ago.

He put the milk in the fridge and filled the kettle with water.

Things looked different in the kitchen. He couldn't put his finger on what exactly it was that was not the same, but something.

Sam called out to Claire. "Coffee?"

There was no response, and he turned his head to look over his shoulder.

She stood by the doorway, her mouth still open in the shocked expression she had when he opened the front door.

Sam let out another short laugh. "So that's a no, then."

"Sam, where have you been?"

He spooned coffee into two cups.

"Only the shop. Where did you think I went?"

He turned round to face her. Her expression had not changed since he came through the door.

"What's the matter, love?"

She stared back at him, slowly shaking her head.

"Three days, Sam." For the first time, she closed her mouth and swallowed.

Sam saw the alarm in her eyes, that flicker of fear. This better not be another bust-up with her brother again.

"Three days? What do you mean?"

"You've been gone for three days."

He stared back at her. He'd only been out the door for less than thirty minutes. What was she talking about?

Claire picked up a piece of paper on the kitchen table in a rapid movement and thrust it at him. He took it. A police report, something about a missing person, a description, where last seen and a photograph of him.

He read it, reread it. It didn't make sense.

He looked up at Claire and tried to find answers in her face. He just saw panic.

"I have no idea what this is. What is it?"

He looked back at Claire to find an answer. A practical joke, a prank.

She stared back at him, her eyes wide and her mouth open.

She spoke: "Sam, you walked out that door three days ago. You said you were going to the shop. All you had was the shirt you are wearing now, those same jeans and shoes. You had about five pounds in loose change. I know because I asked you if you needed more cash and you showed me."

She shook her head.

"But you didn't come back," she said, her voice quiet. "You walked out of the door and you were gone for three days. I had no idea where you were."

Tears welled up in her eyes.

Sam stared back at her. He shook his head, looked back at the missing person's report to find an answer.

"I don't know what you're talking about, love," he said. "I've only been gone about half an hour."

"Then why do I have this?" She snatched the missing person's report from his hand. "Why are the police looking for you now?"

Sam didn't move. He just stood in the middle of the kitchen,

looking back at Claire.

"You walked out of here on Sunday morning," she continued.

"You said you would be half an hour — just like you always do — and it got to an hour and I started to wonder where you were."

She smacked the missing person report on the kitchen table.

"I thought perhaps you'd bumped into Colin and you'd gone to his place. It got to two hours, and I was getting angry. I sent a message to Colin, and he said he hadn't seen you. That's when I went to the shop and asked if they had seen you. They said you'd been in there almost two hours earlier."

Sam shook his head.

"This can't be right. It's silly. I know I've only been gone for thirty minutes. I know I have."

He moved to the window, then he pulled out his phone. The time and date would be on there.

It said the time was nine-twenty. The date Sunday, the fifteenth of September.

He smiled at Claire. "There you go. Look." He showed her his phone. He nodded at the police report on the table. "I don't understand what this is though."

Claire's face showed no sign of any expression. She took her

phone from her pocket, tapped at the screen, and showed it to him.

It said the date was Wednesday, the eighteenth.

Sam stared back at her phone in disbelief. He shook his head. He refused to believe this.

He went from the kitchen into the living room and turned on the TV. That would solve it once and for all.

Breakfast TV was on one of the channels, and the date showed at the bottom of the screen. It said it was the eighteenth.

He stared at the TV screen, unable to make any sense of what he saw before him.

"Where did you go, Sam?" Claire joined him in the living room. "I was worried about you. I thought something terrible had happened to you."

Thoughts fired through Sam's brain in quick succession.

"Claire. I didn't go anywhere. I swear on my life. I went to the shop — that's it. I left here no more than thirty minutes ago."

Claire stared back at Sam, slowly shaking her head. A tear rolled down her cheek.

"Three days, Sam. Three days. I wondered what had happened —"

Clair's face began to crease into different lines. Her voice crackled like it was coming from a radio. Right before Sam's eyes, he watched as she flickered on and off.

Then she was gone.

He stood still, his mouth wide open.

He turned his head to look around the room. Maybe she had just stepped to the side. But she was nowhere in the room.

She was gone.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Who are the two people in this story?

Where are they?

Where has Sam just been? What did he go? What did he do?

What does he have in his hand?

What is Sam wearing?

How much money does he have on him?

How long has Sam been out of the house?

What does Sam do with the milk?

What does he want to make in the kitchen?

How does Claire greet him? What is her facial expression? How do you think she feels right now?

How long does Claire say Sam has been out of the house?

Who does Sam think Claire has had an argument with?

What does Claire give Sam?

What is written on the paper?

Does Claire cry in the story?

What day does Claire think it is?

What day does Sam think it is?

Who did Claire think Sam met?

Did Claire try to search for Sam? How?

How does Sam check the date?

How does Claire check the date?

How does Sam confirm the date?

What happens to Claire at the end of the story?

Essential Vocabulary

Shop	Shock	Disappearance
Milk	Confusion	Reality
Kitchen	Time	Uncertainty
Coffee	Date	Bizarre
Missing person	Jeans	Memory
Police report	Shoes	Paranoia
Sunday	Kettle	Vanishing
September	Expression	Unexplained
Phone	Fear	Bewilderment
TV	Prank	Distortion
Breakfast TV	Practical joke	Doubt
Living room	Clothes	Hallucination
Tears	Cash	Hesitation
Panic	Change	Haunting
Flickered	Angry	Surreal
Disbelief	Message	

Exercise

There may be a lot of new or unfamiliar vocabulary to you in

the story. This is the perfect time to get to know these new and strange words and phrases.

Write down all the new words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look up the meaning of the new vocabulary in a dictionary or online and write down the meaning next to the word or phrase.

It should look something like this:

Shook – *past tense of the verb to shake. To move an object with rapid, jerky movements.*

Pint – *a unit of liquid measurement.*

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

I shook the water from my umbrella, then went inside.

Gordon always went to his local pub on a Friday night to drink a pint of beer.

If you do this correctly, it will help you learn many new words and phrases. This will build your English vocabulary and writing

down all the words and phrases, making sentences of your own, will all help you to remember all of this new vocabulary.

Discussion Questions

What happens in this story?

What happens to Sam?

Why does he think happens to him?

How is it possible for a man to leave his house for only thirty minutes, but for his wife to believe he was gone for three days?

What is a time dimension?

Do you think Sam went into a different time dimension?

How did he do this?

Did something help him do this?

Do you believe in time travel?

Is it possible to travel into the past and future?

Would you like to travel through time? Why/why not?

What would be the dangers of time travel?

Do you think time travel will be possible in the future?

What do you think happens to Claire at the end of the story?

Where does she go?

If you were Sam in the story, how would you feel if you returned home and Claire was so distraught? How would you

react?

If you were Claire in the story, how would you react when Sam comes home?

What are your feelings about time travel?

Say three positive things about time travel.

Now say three negative things about time travel.

Credits

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