



# AISLE THREE

A SHORT STORY FOR ENGLISH READING AND SPEAKING

# Aisle Three

**Level:** B2–C1 (Upper-Intermediate to Advanced)

**Skills:** Reading · Vocabulary · Speaking · Writing

**Story word count:** ≈365 words

## What's inside

- Full short story: *Aisle Three*
- Story & Questions by Section (4 sections · 16 questions)
- Reading Comprehension — Full Question Bank (with model answers)
- Essential Vocabulary pack (12 key items) + notebook routine
- 5 Vocabulary Exercises (synonyms, antonyms, gap-fill, usage prompts, word–meaning) with answer key
- Discussion Questions (10)
- Short Classroom Play version of *Aisle Three*
- Creative Writing Prompts (5)

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# Introduction

In this stage, go around the class and take turns asking and answering the questions. Encourage students to share their ideas in full sentences, and follow up with additional questions to deepen the discussion.

- Do you enjoy going shopping for food? Why or why not?
- Do you prefer small local shops or big supermarkets? What are the differences?
- Have you ever bumped into someone you know in an unexpected place? What happened?
- How would you feel if you met someone you hadn't seen in many years?
- Do you think it's easy to recognise someone after a long time? Why or why not?
- Have you ever had a memory suddenly come back to you when you saw someone or something?

## Aisle Three — full story

In this stage, the story is read aloud by the students. Each student should read a short section in turn. After each section, pause to check comprehension and ask simple follow-up questions to ensure understanding.

I was wandering around the small supermarket down the road, the one I used when I only needed a couple of things.

Not the big place on the edge of town where I did the Big Shop — toothpaste, laundry powder, everything under one roof.

This place was more expensive, stocked with unknown brands in smaller packets, but it was convenient. Less than ten minutes from my flat.

That morning I needed two things: washing-up liquid and onions. My glamorous life.

It was quiet — Tuesday morning, no one around. I found a small bottle of washing-up liquid, tossed it in my basket, and headed for the vegetable section.

As I walked, my mind drifted to the dull article I had to write that afternoon: Ten Simple Things You Can Do To Keep Your Fridge in Tip-Top Condition.

That's when I saw him.

Another man, about my age, standing in front of me in the aisle.  
He stared. I stared back.

His face was familiar, just out of reach in my memory. Then it  
clicked — college, years ago.

Nights out, stumbling down the path to town, the same bars, the  
same music.

‘I know you,’ he said.

‘Yeah. College,’ I replied.

We both nodded, smiling faintly.

And then, like a shadow creeping across a wall, another memory  
slid into place — something about him leaving suddenly in our  
final year.

‘Do you live around here?’ he asked.

‘Just down the road,’ I said.

‘I’m across the street,’ he told me, smiling weakly.

The memory sharpened.

A car. A crash. He was the driver.

Too much to drink. Another passenger. Only one survivor.

The police couldn’t prove much. And then... he was gone.

He asked what I did now. I told him I was a writer, but the words  
faded as the rest of it flooded back — the screech of tyres, the  
shattering glass, the smell of fuel.

And the moment I realised I wasn’t walking away.

He saw it in my eyes. He knew I remembered.

‘Well, good seeing you,’ he said quickly, and turned for the door.

I stood there in the silence of the empty supermarket.

It was him all right.  
The man who killed me.

# Aisle Three — Story and Reading Comprehension Questions

The story is divided into shorter sections for easier classroom use. After a student reads a section, ask the accompanying comprehension questions. Invite different students to respond and encourage them to explain their answers.

**Model answers are provided at the end of the lesson plan.**

## Section 1

I was wandering around the small supermarket down the road, the one I used when I only needed a couple of things.

Not the big place on the edge of town where I did the Big Shop — toothpaste, laundry powder, everything under one roof.

This place was more expensive, stocked with unknown brands in smaller packets, but it was convenient. Less than ten minutes from my flat.

That morning I needed two things: washing-up liquid and onions. My glamorous life.

It was quiet — Tuesday morning, no one around. I found a small bottle of washing-up liquid, tossed it in my basket, and headed for the vegetable section.

As I walked, my mind drifted to the dull article I had to write that



afternoon: Ten Simple Things You Can Do To Keep Your Fridge in Tip-Top Condition.

That's when I saw him.

## **Reading Comprehension Questions**

1. Why did the narrator choose the small supermarket instead of the big one?
2. What two things did the narrator need to buy?
3. How does the narrator describe his own life?
4. What was he supposed to write later that day?

## **Section 2**

Another man, about my age, standing in front of me in the aisle. He stared. I stared back.

His face was familiar, just out of reach in my memory. Then it clicked — college, years ago.

Nights out, stumbling down the path to town, the same bars, the same music.

'I know you,' he said.

'Yeah. College,' I replied.

We both nodded, smiling faintly.

And then, like a shadow creeping across a wall, another memory slid into place — something about him leaving suddenly in our final year.

'Do you live around here?' he asked.

'Just down the road,' I said.

'I'm across the street,' he told me, smiling weakly.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

5. Where did the narrator recognise the man from?
6. What kinds of activities did they do together in the past?
7. How did the narrator describe the man's smile?
8. What does the man reveal about where he lives now?

### Section 3

The memory sharpened.

A car. A crash. He was the driver.

Too much to drink. Another passenger. Only one survivor.

The police couldn't prove much. And then... he was gone.

He asked what I did now. I told him I was a writer, but the words faded as the rest of it flooded back — the screech of tyres, the shattering glass, the smell of fuel. And the moment I realised I wasn't walking away.

He saw it in my eyes. He knew I remembered.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

9. What accident does the narrator remember?
10. Who was driving the car?
11. What happened to the passengers?
12. What details of the crash does the narrator recall?

### Section 4

‘Well, good seeing you,’ he said quickly, and turned for the door.  
I stood there in the silence of the empty supermarket.  
It was him all right.  
The man who killed me.

### **Reading Comprehension Questions**

13. How does the man end the conversation?
14. What does the narrator realise in the supermarket?
15. Why is the ending surprising?
16. Do you think the man recognised who the narrator really was? Why or why not?

# Reading Comprehension Questions – full list

Read carefully and answer in your own words, using the story as evidence. **You can check the model answers at the back of the lesson plan.**

1. Why did the narrator choose the small supermarket instead of the big one?
2. What two things did the narrator need to buy?
3. How does the narrator describe his own life?
4. What was he supposed to write later that day?
5. Where did the narrator recognise the man from?
6. What kinds of activities did they do together in the past?
7. How did the narrator describe the man's smile?
8. What does the man reveal about where he lives now?
9. What accident does the narrator remember?
10. Who was driving the car?
11. What happened to the passengers?
12. What details of the crash does the narrator recall?

13. How does the man end the conversation?
14. What does the narrator realise in the supermarket?
15. Why is the ending surprising?
16. Do you think the man recognised who the narrator really was? Why or why not?

# Essential Vocabulary

Use these high-impact items from the story throughout the tasks.

**aisle · stocked (with) · convenient · tossed (in) · mind drifted · it clicked · out of reach (in my memory) · smiling weakly · stumbled · screech (of tyres) · shattering (glass) · survivor**

## Vocabulary Practice Exercise (Notebook Routine)

1. Write each new word/phrase in your notebook.
2. Look up the meaning and write a simple definition.
3. Create your own sentence connected to your life.

## Examples

- **Aisle** – a passage between rows of shelves in a shop.  
*Example:* I looked for onions in the vegetable aisle.
- **Screech** – a high, harsh sound.  
*Example:* We heard the screech of tyres outside our building.

# Vocabulary Exercises

In this section, you'll practise key words from the story. **Do all five exercises** in order, then check your work with the **answer key at the end of the lesson plan**.

1. **Match the Synonym** — pair each word with its closest meaning.
2. **Match the Antonym** — pair each word with its opposite.
3. **Gap-Fill Sentences** — complete sentences using words from the box.
4. **Discussion with Vocabulary Prompts** — answer questions using the target words.
5. **Match the Word with Its Meaning** — connect each word to its definition.

***Work carefully, use full sentences where asked, and avoid peeking at the answers until you've finished.***

# Exercise 1 – Match the Synonym

**Match the word with its closest one-word synonym. Write the letter.**

## **Words**

- 1.aisle
- 2.convenient
- 3.tossed
- 4.mind drifted
- 5.it clicked
- 6.out of reach (in my memory)
- 7.smiling weakly
- 8.screech
- 9.shattering
- 10.survivor

## **Synonym options (jumbled)**

- a. corridor
- b. handy
- c. flung
- d. wandered
- e. dawned
- f. elusive



g. wan

h. shriek

i. smashing

j. endurer

## Exercise 2 – Match the Antonym

*Match the word with its opposite. Write the letter.*

### **Words**

- 1.convenient
- 2.tossed
- 3.mind drifted
- 4.it clicked
- 5.out of reach
- 6.smiling weakly
- 7.screech
- 8.shattering
- 9.survivor
- 10.stumbled

### **Antonym options (jumbled)**

- a. beaming / grinning broadly
- b. intact / unbroken
- c. silence / hush
- d. placed carefully
- e. within reach
- f. confused / puzzled
- g. inconvenient / awkward

h. walked confidently / strode

i. victim

j. concentrated / focused

## Exercise 3 – Gap-Fill Sentences

*Use words from the box. Change the form if needed.*

**Word Bank:** aisle, tossed, drifted, clicked, screech, shattering

1. He turned into the vegetable \_\_\_\_\_ to find the onions.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ the bottle into the basket without checking the price.
3. As the manager spoke, my mind \_\_\_\_\_ back to our college days.
4. When she said “final year”, it finally \_\_\_\_\_ for me.
5. The sudden \_\_\_\_\_ of tyres made everyone jump.
6. We heard the \_\_\_\_\_ of glass somewhere outside.

## Exercise 4 – Discussion with Vocabulary Prompts

*Answer in full sentences using the bold word.*

1. When is shopping truly **convenient** for you?
2. Describe a time when a memory suddenly **clicked**.
3. What's a detail from a film you watched that remains just **out of reach** in your memory?
4. Have you ever given someone a **weak smile**? Why?
5. What real-life sounds remind you of a **screech**?
6. Do you know a story of a **survivor** that inspired you?

## Exercise 5 – Match the Word with Its Meaning

Match the word with the correct meaning. Write the letter.

### Words

- 1.aisle
- 2.stocked (with)
- 3.convenient
- 4.tossed (in)
- 5.mind drifted
- 6.it clicked
- 7.out of reach (in my memory)
- 8.smiling weakly
- 9.shattering (glass)
- 10.screech (of tyres)

### Meanings (jumbled)

- a. This means a place is supplied or filled with items.

- b. This is the corridor between shelves in a shop or supermarket.
- c. This describes something that is easy and suitable for your needs.
- d. This means you threw something lightly or casually into a container or place.
- e. This means the idea suddenly made sense to you.
- f. This describes a smile that is barely there, showing little confidence or strength.
- g. This means the detail is difficult to recall fully from memory.
- h. This describes glass breaking into many pieces.
- i. This means your attention wandered away from the present task or conversation.
- j. This refers to a high, sharp noise made by tyres when they slide or stop suddenly.

# Discussion Questions

This set invites broader interpretation. There are no single correct answers—justify your ideas with evidence from the story.

1. Have you ever unexpectedly met someone from your past?  
How did it feel?
2. How might the narrator have felt seeing the man again after so many years?
3. Do you think the man felt guilty when he saw the narrator?  
Why or why not?
4. If you were in the narrator's position, would you have confronted the man directly?
5. Do you think people can ever escape from their past mistakes? Why or why not?
6. What does the story suggest about memory — can it ever really fade?
7. How would the story change if it were told from the other man's point of view?



8. Do you believe in ghosts or spirits? Could this story be read as a ghost encounter?
9. What lesson does this story give us about drinking and driving?
10. If you had written this story, would you have ended it the same way? Why or why not?

# Aisle Three — A Short Play

## Cast (flexible)

- **Narrator** (can be the same actor as Shopper)
- **Shopper** (first-person narrator in the story)
- **The Man** (old college acquaintance)
- **Cashier** (optional)
- **Store Manager / Store Intercom Voice** (optional; can be offstage)
- **Shoppers / Chorus** (optional murmurs/SFX)

## Simple staging & props

Two “aisles” made with chairs or tables; 1–2 baskets; a bottle (washing-up liquid); a few onions.

SFX you can make with phones or voices: quiet supermarket hum, a single barcode *beep*, tyres *screech*, glass *shatter*, door *ding*.

## Scene 1 — The Small Supermarket

*(Quiet supermarket. Shopper enters with basket. Narrator steps forward or voices over.)*

**Narrator:** A small supermarket near my flat—more expensive, but convenient. Today I needed two things: washing-up liquid and onions. My glamorous life.

**Shopper** (*light, wry*): Washing-up liquid... onions... done.

*(Barcode beep. Shopper moves down the aisle.)*

**Narrator:** My mind drifted to the dull article I had to write that afternoon. That's when I saw him.

*(The Man appears at the end of the aisle. They hold eye contact.)*

## Scene 2 — Recognition

**The Man** (*careful*): I know you.

**Shopper** (*searching his face*): Yeah... College.

**Narrator:** Nights out, the same bars, the same music. A face just out of reach—until it clicked.

**The Man:** Do you live around here?

**Shopper:** Just down the road.

**The Man** (*weak smile*): I'm across the street.

*(A small, awkward silence.)*

### Scene 3 — The Memory Returns

*(Lights or voices shift. Chorus hum drops. SFX: distant screech of tyres, shattering glass.)*

**Narrator** *(measured, clear)*: A car. A crash. He was the driver. Too much to drink. Another passenger. Only one survivor.

**Shopper** *(softly, to himself)*: The screech of tyres... the smell of fuel... the moment I knew I wasn't walking away.

*(The Man sees the realisation in Shopper's eyes.)*

**The Man** *(quickly)*: So—what do you do now?

**Shopper**: I write. But— *(breaks off, flooded by memory)*

*(Beat. The Man looks away.)*

### Scene 4 — Exit

**The Man** *(forced brightness)*: Well, good seeing you.

*(Door ding. He exits.)*

**Narrator**: I stood in the quiet aisle, basket in my hand. It was him, all right.

**Shopper** *(to audience, calm)*: The man who killed me.

*(Freeze. Optional soft SFX: distant tyres, then silence. Blackout.)*

## Teacher notes (quick)

- **2-actor version:** One actor doubles **Narrator/Shopper**; one as **The Man**. Keep SFX live (students as sound crew).
- **Expanded cast:** Add **Cashier** (“Can I help you?”), **Manager/Store Intercom Voice** (“Price check on aisle three”), and **Chorus** whispering fragments of college memories.
- **Language focus:** Past narrative, sensory details (sound/smell), hedging (“I think... it clicked”), subtext in short lines.

# Writing — Creative Prompts

This is a creative writing exercise.

Try to write a 200–300 word flash fiction short story using atmosphere, sensory detail, and a twist.

Use the prompts below.

1. **Checkout Line** — You spot a friend you lost touch with years ago. They don't recognise you—until you speak.
2. **Receipt** — A receipt prints with the name of someone who died long ago. The items look familiar.
3. **Price Check** — The store intercom voice calls your name, but no staff know who made the announcement.
4. **CCTV** — On the security screen, you see yourself shopping... from yesterday.
5. **Basket** — In your basket lies an item you didn't pick up. A note is tucked beneath it.

# Reading Comprehension Questions with Model Answers

The following are model answers to the comprehension questions. Students' responses may not always be identical to these examples, and that is perfectly acceptable.

As long as the meaning is accurate and close to the intended idea in the story, their answers should be considered correct.

**1. Why did the narrator choose the small supermarket instead of the big one?**

The narrator chose the small supermarket because it was convenient and close to his flat, even though it was more expensive.

**2. What two things did the narrator need to buy?**

Washing-up liquid and onions.

**3. How does the narrator describe his own life?**

He calls it "glamorous" sarcastically, suggesting it's dull and ordinary.

**4. What was he supposed to write later that day?**

An article titled *Ten Simple Things You Can Do To Keep Your Fridge in Tip-Top Condition*.

**5. Where did the narrator recognise the man from?**

From college, years ago.

**6. What kinds of activities did they do together in the past?**

Nights out, walking to town, the same bars, the same music.

**7. How did the narrator describe the man's smile?**

Weak / smiling weakly.

**8. What does the man reveal about where he lives now?**

He lives across the street from the narrator.

**9. What accident does the narrator remember?**

A car crash during their college years.

**10. Who was driving the car?**

The man from the supermarket.

**11. What happened to the passengers?**

Only one passenger survived.

**12. What details of the crash does the narrator recall?**

The screech of tyres, shattering glass, the smell of fuel, and the realisation he wasn't walking away.

**13. How does the man end the conversation?**

He says, "Well, good seeing you," and quickly heads for the door.

**14. What does the narrator realise in the supermarket?**

That the man in front of him caused the crash that killed him.



**15. Why is the ending surprising?**

The narrator reveals he died in the crash—he is the story's ghost.

**16. Do you think the man recognised who the narrator really was? Why or why not?**

It seems he did; he saw the truth in the narrator's eyes and cut the conversation short.

# Vocabulary Exercises — Answer Key

These are the correct answers to all the vocabulary exercises.  
Please check against your own answers.

**Exercise 1 (Synonyms):** *Answer key:* 1-a, 2-b, 3-c, 4-d, 5-e, 6-f, 7-g, 8-h, 9-i, 10-j

**Exercise 2 (Antonyms):** 1-g, 2-d, 3-j, 4-f, 5-e, 6-a, 7-c, 8-b, 9-i, 10-h

**Exercise 3 (Gap-Fill):** 1 aisle, 2 tossed, 3 drifted, 4 clicked, 5 screech, 6 shattering

**Exercise 4 (Discussion):** answers will vary

**Exercise 5 (Word & Meaning):** 1-b, 2-a, 3-c, 4-d, 5-i, 6-e, 7-g, 8-f, 9-h, 10-j

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