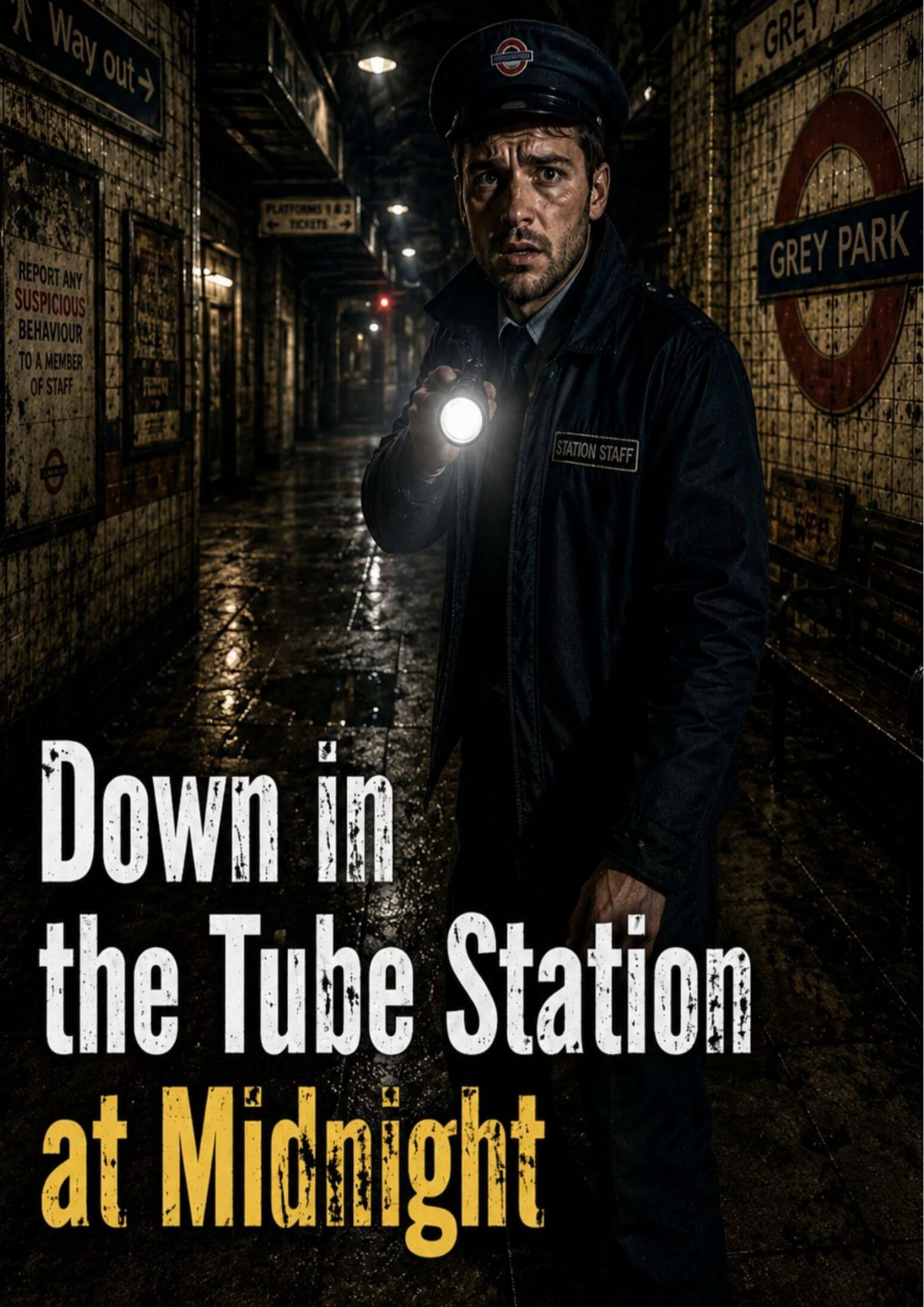




Down in the Tube Station at Midnight

Down in the Tube Station at Midnight — Full Lesson Plan

A Fantastic Tales short story and lesson plan,
courtesy of ManWrites.

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Introductory Questions

1. Have you ever been in a subway station late at night? How did it feel?
2. Can strange things happen in a subway station at night? Give some examples.
3. Is it possible for subway stations to be haunted?

Down in the Tube Station at Midnight

“I’ll be glad when this shift is over.”

It was close to midnight and John was just finishing work at the Grey Park tube station.

He hated the late shifts. It was too quiet for one.

Then, when he finished work, he had to get home. It wasn’t too far — sometimes he took a taxi — but other times he walked and the streets were empty with strange shadows creeping across between the houses.

His workmate for the evening, Colin, stretched and kept his feet up on the desk.

Just behind his feet, the bank of security camera monitors.

Each screen showed a different view of the station’s interior.

“Soon done,” said Colin. “See this last train in, then we can all get out of here.”

John waited a second to see if Colin would volunteer to do the rounds of the station. One of them had to walk around the whole place, just to make sure there were no people left inside.

Sometimes a drunk.

One time they found a dog, whimpering and lost.

But Colin stayed glued in his seat. Clearly, he had no intention of moving.

“Guess I’ll go down and have a look,” said John.

Colin peered over his shoulder towards him. “You don’t mind, mate?”

John shrugged. “One of us has got to do it.”

He put on his uniform cap and went to the door.

One of these days, Colin might move out of his chair.

Although John couldn’t recall ever seeing Colin doing anything but sitting down every shift.

John grabbed his walkie-talkie and turned it on. He turned the dial and spoke into it.

“Keep an eye out for me,” he said into the walkie-talkie.

His voice carried loudly to the walkie-talkie on the desk and made Colin jump.

Colin shifted his weight and tried to sit up straight.

“Yeah, yeah, sure. I’m right here.”

John smirked and walked out the door.

A short corridor led to another door and a public walkway. Both sides of the walkway were filled with advertising. An overflowing rubbish bin with discarded fast-food wrappers and fizzy-pop cans at the bottom of it.

John marched down the corridor. He could hear the last train arriving.

It pulled into the station and then he heard Colin's tired monotone voice.

"This is Grey Park, the final stop. Please alight here and leave the station. Thank you."

Colin never had any enthusiasm in his voice.

Some of the other guys that worked in the station would put some energy into their voices or put on a funny voice.

It made them laugh and helped them get through the long and quiet hours.

But never Colin.

As John made his way to the platform, he met the passengers leaving the station. The usual late-night crowds.

A couple of young guys, drunk and full of swagger.

"All right, mate?" they said to John. "Nice hat."

John gave them a curt nod and walked on. The two lads laughed loudly and broke into a rendition of a popular song. A man in his forties, looking weary and deadbeat. Another poor guy doing a late shift somewhere in the city.

An elderly woman, clutching her bag and looking nervous. A young woman, her eyes on the ground and walking straight ahead.

The last strays of the night, all heading home or to anywhere else in the night that might welcome them.

On the platform, the train was still in place, all of its doors open.

John nodded at the train guard — he recognised him from the dozens of times he had seen him before but could not remember his name.

All the train had to be checked, to make sure no people were left sleeping on seats, no forgotten items. God forbid any bags or boxes left on the train — then they had to call the police.

John walked along the platform, checking every carriage. Everything looked in order.

He waved at the guard, who waved back and got back onto the train. He heard the crackle of a radio, then the doors hissed closed and the train pulled out of the station and into the dark tunnel.

In a few seconds, John was all alone on the platform.

He clicked on the walkie-talkie. “Just checking the north end of the platform,” he said. “All clear up there?”

The walkie-talkie crackled and Colin’s voice came through it, tinny and alien. “Just that one bloke by the seats.”

John kept walking.

He hoped the man on the platform wasn’t drunk. They could be difficult to deal with sometimes.

But he could see no one.

“You sure?” he said into his radio. “I can’t see anyone.”

“He’s right there,” said Colin. “Hang on, he’s getting to his feet.”

John peered ahead and saw no one. He turned and looked behind him. No one there either.

Colin was such an idiot. This was another problem with him. He wasn’t very observant.

“Are you sure you’re looking on the right platform?” asked John. He would talk to the station chief about Colin.

This was not good enough.

“Yes, platform one,” said Colin. “I can see you walking towards the camera.”

John squinted into the far end of the platform.

He couldn’t see anyone.

“There’s no one here,” he said to himself.

He carried on walking to the very end of the platform, past the two benches on the side. He stopped and looked behind him again.

Maybe Colin was looking at the wrong end of the platform. Not a soul around.

John pulled the radio up to his ear. “Colin, are you sure? Please check again, I can’t see anyone here.”

“He’s right there,” said Colin. “By the seats. He’s just standing by the edge of the platform.”

John spun around. Nothing. He was the only person there.

“Colin, is this some sort of a joke? I can’t see anyone.”

The radio spluttered into life again. “John. He’s behind you.
He’s... John!”

John dropped the radio from the side of his face.

He spun around.

Then he saw it.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the main character in this story?
2. Where does the story take place?
3. What time of day is it?
4. What does John think about working the late shift?
5. How does John sometimes get home after work?
6. Who does John work with?
7. What does John think about Colin's attitude towards work?
8. What sometimes happens at the end of the night in the station?
9. Does Colin offer to help John?
10. What does John take with him when he checks the station?
11. How does Colin react when John speaks into the walkie-talkie?
12. What does John see in the walkway?
13. What can John hear as he walks along the corridor?
14. What announcement does Colin make?
15. How is Colin different from the other station workers?

16. How do the workers sometimes make the job more fun?
17. What kinds of people does John see leaving the station?
18. How do the young men interact with John?
19. What kind of mood do the other passengers seem to be in?
20. Describe the people John sees at the station.
21. Who does John see on the train? Does he know this person?
22. Why does John have to check the train?
23. What could happen if someone left a bag or item behind?
24. Where does the train go?
25. Which part of the station does John go to next?
26. What does Colin report seeing on the platform?
27. What does John hope about the man Colin sees?
28. What does John notice as he looks around?
29. What does John think about Colin's observation skills?
30. Where does John look to try to find the man?
31. Does John find anyone?
32. Who does John plan to talk to about Colin?
33. What does John see on the platform?

- 34. What does Colin insist he can see?
- 35. Does John see anyone?
- 36. What warning does Colin give?
- 37. What happens at the end of the story?

Down in the Tube Station at Midnight — Story and Reading Comprehension Questions

This is the story divided into clear sections with reading comprehension questions below each section.

This format might be easier for certain classes.

You can find the model answers for the questions at the end of the lesson plan.

Section 1

“I’ll be glad when this shift is over.”

It was close to midnight and John was just finishing work at the Grey Park tube station.

He hated the late shifts. It was too quiet for one.

Then, when he finished work, he had to get home. It wasn’t too far — sometimes he took a taxi — but other times he walked and the streets were empty with strange shadows creeping across between the houses.

His workmate for the evening, Colin, stretched and kept his feet up on the desk.

Just behind his feet, the bank of security camera monitors. Each screen showed a different view of the station's interior.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the main character in this story?
2. Where does the story take place?
3. What time of day is it?
4. What does John think about working the late shift?
5. How does John sometimes get home after work?

Section 2

“Soon done,” said Colin. “See this last train in, then we can all get out of here.”

John waited a second to see if Colin would volunteer to do the rounds of the station. One of them had to walk around the whole place, just to make sure there were no people left inside.

Sometimes a drunk.

One time they found a dog, whimpering and lost.

But Colin stayed glued in his seat. Clearly, he had no intention of moving.

“Guess I’ll go down and have a look,” said John.

Colin peered over his shoulder towards him. “You don’t mind, mate?”

John shrugged. “One of us has got to do it.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

6. Who does John work with?

7. What does John think about Colin’s attitude towards work?

8. What sometimes happens at the end of the night in the station?

9. Does Colin offer to help John?

Section 3

He put on his uniform cap and went to the door.

One of these days, Colin might move out of his chair.

Although John couldn’t recall ever seeing Colin doing anything but sitting down every shift.

John grabbed his walkie-talkie and turned it on. He turned the dial and spoke into it.

“Keep an eye out for me,” he said into the walkie-talkie.

His voice carried loudly to the walkie-talkie on the desk and made Colin jump.

Colin shifted his weight and tried to sit up straight.

“Yeah, yeah, sure. I’m right here.”

John smirked and walked out the door.

A short corridor led to another door and a public walkway.

Both sides of the walkway were filled with advertising. An overflowing rubbish bin with discarded fast-food wrappers and fizzy-pop cans at the bottom of it.

John marched down the corridor. He could hear the last train arriving.

Reading Comprehension Questions

10. What does John take with him when he checks the station?
11. How does Colin react when John speaks into the walkie-talkie?
12. What does John see in the walkway?
13. What can John hear as he walks along the corridor?

Section 4

It pulled into the station and then he heard Colin's tired monotone voice.

"This is Grey Park, the final stop. Please alight here and leave the station. Thank you."

Colin never had any enthusiasm in his voice.

Some of the other guys that worked in the station would put some energy into their voices or put on a funny voice.

It made them laugh and helped them get through the long and quiet hours.

But never Colin.

As John made his way to the platform, he met the passengers leaving the station. The usual late-night crowds.

Reading Comprehension Questions

14. What announcement does Colin make?

15. How is Colin different from the other station workers?

16. How do the workers sometimes make the job more fun?

Section 5

A couple of young guys, drunk and full of swagger.

"All right, mate?" they said to John. "Nice hat."

John gave them a curt nod and walked on. The two lads laughed loudly and broke into a rendition of a popular song. A man in his forties, looking weary and deadbeat. Another poor guy doing a late shift somewhere in the city.

An elderly woman, clutching her bag and looking nervous. A young woman, her eyes on the ground and walking straight ahead.

The last strays of the night, all heading home or to anywhere else in the night that might welcome them.

Reading Comprehension Questions

17. What kinds of people does John see leaving the station?
18. How do the young men interact with John?
19. What kind of mood do the other passengers seem to be in?
20. Describe the people John sees at the station.

Section 6

On the platform, the train was still in place, all of its doors open.

John nodded at the train guard — he recognised him from the dozens of times he had seen him before but could not remember his name.

All the train had to be checked, to make sure no people were left sleeping on seats, no forgotten items. God forbid any bags or boxes left on the train — then they had to call the police.

John walked along the platform, checking every carriage. Everything looked in order.

He waved at the guard, who waved back and got back onto the train. He heard the crackle of a radio, then the doors hissed closed and the train pulled out of the station and into the dark tunnel.

In a few seconds, John was all alone on the platform.

Reading Comprehension Questions

21. Who does John see on the train? Does he know this person?

22. Why does John have to check the train?

23. What could happen if someone left a bag or item behind?

24. Where does the train go?

Section 7

He clicked on the walkie-talkie. “Just checking the north end of the platform,” he said. “All clear up there?”

The walkie-talkie crackled and Colin’s voice came through it, tinny and alien. “Just that one bloke by the seats.”

John kept walking.

He hoped the man on the platform wasn’t drunk. They could be difficult to deal with sometimes.

But he could see no one.

“You sure?” he said into his radio. “I can’t see anyone.”

“He’s right there,” said Colin. “Hang on, he’s getting to his feet.”

John peered ahead and saw no one. He turned and looked behind him. No one there either.

Reading Comprehension Questions

25. Which part of the station does John go to next?

26. What does Colin report seeing on the platform?

27. What does John hope about the man Colin sees?

28. What does John notice as he looks around?

Section 8

Colin was such an idiot. This was another problem with him.

He wasn't very observant.

"Are you sure you're looking on the right platform?" asked John. He would talk to the station chief about Colin.

This was not good enough.

"Yes, platform one," said Colin. "I can see you walking towards the camera."

John squinted into the far end of the platform.

He couldn't see anyone.

"There's no one here," he said to himself.

He carried on walking to the very end of the platform, past the two benches on the side. He stopped and looked behind him again.

Reading Comprehension Questions

29. What does John think about Colin's observation skills?

30. Where does John look to try to find the man?

31. Does John find anyone?

32. Who does John plan to talk to about Colin?

Section 9

Maybe Colin was looking at the wrong end of the platform.

Not a soul around.

John pulled the radio up to his ear. "Colin, are you sure?

Please check again, I can't see anyone here."

"He's right there," said Colin. "By the seats. He's just standing by the edge of the platform."

John spun around. Nothing. He was the only person there.

"Colin, is this some sort of a joke? I can't see anyone."

The radio spluttered into life again. "John. He's behind you.

He's... John!"

Reading Comprehension Questions

33. What does John see on the platform?

34. What does Colin insist he can see?

35. Does John see anyone?

Section 10

John dropped the radio from the side of his face.

He spun around.

Then he saw it.

Reading Comprehension Questions

36. What warning does Colin give?

37. What happens at the end of the story?

Essential Vocabulary

glad	shift	shadows
creeping	workmate	stretched
security camera monitors	volunteer	to do the rounds
drunk	whimpering	glued
no intention	peered	shrugged
uniform cap	grabbed	walkie-talkie
smirked	corridor	walkway
overflowing	rubbish bin	discarded
monotone	alight	enthusiasm
late-night	swagger	curt
broke into	rendition	weary
deadbeat	clutching	nervous
strays	dozens	bloke
crackle	hissed	tinny
alien	observant	spluttered

Vocabulary Practice Exercise

Follow the steps below to help you learn and remember new words and phrases more effectively:

1. Write each new word or phrase in your vocabulary notebook.
2. Look up the meaning of each word in your dictionary. Write a clear and simple definition next to the word.
3. Create your own sentence using the word or phrase correctly. Try to make the sentence meaningful and connected to your own life or experiences.

Examples

Glad – *a feeling of being happy or content.*

Example sentence: *I'm glad it has stopped raining. Now we can go outside again.*

Shift – *a period of working time, can be early in the morning or late at night.*

Example sentence: *I love being a nurse, but the late-night shifts are really tiring.*

Why do this?

Doing this regularly will help you improve all areas of your English — reading, writing, speaking, and listening. By writing definitions and making your own examples, you are actively using the language, which helps it stick in your memory.

True or False

Read the statements below and decide if they are True or False.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

1. John works at Grey Park tube station.
2. John enjoys working the late shifts.
3. Colin volunteers to do the rounds of the station instead of John.
4. John takes a walkie-talkie with him when he checks the station.
5. Colin's voice is monotone and lacks enthusiasm.
6. On his way to the platform, John passes a group of drunk young men who are friendly towards him.
7. John recognises the train guard and remembers his name.
8. Colin tells John that there is a man standing on the platform.

9. John can clearly see the man that Colin describes.

10. At the end of the story, John turns around and the reader is told exactly what he sees.

What is the Correct Synonym?

Look at the table below.

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

A synonym is a word of similar meaning.

Words	Synonyms
glad	abrupt
weary	attentive
nervous	toneless
curt	whining
observant	fixed
monotone	sneered
whimpering	shattered
glued	pleased
smirked	exhausted
deadbeat	anxious

What is the Correct Antonym?

Look at the table below.

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

An antonym is a word of opposite meaning.

Words	Antonyms
glad	courteous
weary	oblivious
nervous	sober
curt	empty
observant	kept
drunk	apathy
overflowing	early-morning
discarded	sad
enthusiasm	energetic
late-night	calm

Words and Meanings

Look at the words below.

Match each word with the correct meaning underneath.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Word Bank

walkie-talkie • uniform cap • rubbish bin • walkway •
corridor • security camera monitors • rendition • strays •
bloke • tinny

Meanings

- a) screens that display the live footage from security cameras
- b) an informal British word for a man
- c) a small portable device used to send and receive radio messages
- d) a particular performance or version of a song or piece of music
- e) a path or passage designed for people to walk along
- f) having a thin, metallic sound, often through a speaker or radio

- g) a hat worn as part of an official or work uniform
- h) people or animals wandering alone, without a clear direction or place to go
- i) a long narrow passage inside a building, connecting different rooms or areas
- j) a container used for holding waste or discarded items

Gap Fill Exercise

Look at the word bank below.

Use each word from the word bank to complete the sentences below.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Word Bank

peered • shrugged • grabbed • smirked • stretched •
discarded • clutching • nervous • hissed • crackle

Sentences

- a) He felt _____ before his first day at the new job.
- b) The snake _____ loudly before slithering away into the grass.
- c) The old radio let out a _____ before the signal disappeared completely.
- d) She _____ nervously into the dark room before switching on the light.
- e) When asked if he was responsible, he just _____ and said nothing.

- f) He _____ his bag quickly and ran to catch the bus.
- g) The boy _____ to himself, knowing he had won the argument.
- h) The cat _____ lazily after waking up from its nap in the sun.
- i) The old newspapers were _____ in a pile behind the shop.
- j) The woman stood at the airport, _____ her passport tightly.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe what John's job is.
2. Does he like this job, do you think?
3. How does John feel about his late-night shifts? Why?
4. How does he get on with his colleague, Colin?
5. Describe John's workmate, Colin. What kind of person is he?
6. Why does John have to do the rounds of the station at the end of his shift?
7. Why do you think Colin never offers to do the rounds of the station at the end of the shift?
8. How does John feel about Colin's attitude?
9. What is the setting of the story? How does the setting contribute to the atmosphere?
10. What do you think the subway station is like late at night?
11. What kind of people do you think John encounters late at night in the subway station?
12. The two young guys are drunk. Why does one of them say 'Nice hat' to John?

13. The old woman appears nervous. Why?
14. Why does John have to check the train before it leaves the station?
15. Someone — or something — is on the platform. What do you think this is?
16. Why does John think Colin is mistaken about seeing someone on the platform?
17. What do you think happens after John sees 'it'? Discuss in class possible events that follow.
18. What do you think Colin does next?
19. Do you have a subway system in your town or city?
20. Are there any strange stories about subway stations in your hometown? Tell the class.
21. Have you ever had a moment when you were scared or surprised? Can you describe it?
22. How would you feel if you were in John's situation? Would you be scared or curious?
23. Do you think there is a logical explanation for the person Colin sees on the platform?

24. Have you ever had a job where you had to do tasks at the end of your shift? What were they?

Role Play: Reporting to the Station Chief

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in the role play.

1. John
2. The Station Chief

The Situation

The next morning, John has to explain to the station chief what happened on the platform the night before — Colin's repeated warnings about a man John could not see, and what John finally turned around to find.

The station chief is sceptical and is looking for a rational explanation. John struggles to describe something he still doesn't fully understand himself, and must decide how much detail to share without sounding like he's lost his mind.

In pairs, create a conversation that you can present to the class.

Take some time to prepare your role play.

When you are ready, show the class.

Debate: Should Night Shifts Always Require Two Staff?

The Motion

“This house believes that jobs requiring staff to work alone at night, like John’s, should always require at least two members of staff on duty.”

Option A — Full Two-Team Debate

Divide the class into two teams.

Team A — For the Motion

You must argue that no one should be sent to work alone in an empty, quiet place late at night — for safety reasons, and because being alone can affect a person’s mental state, judgement, and wellbeing.

Team B — Against the Motion

You must argue that staffing every night shift with two people is not always realistic or necessary, and that

businesses must balance safety with practical costs and staffing levels.

Preparation (10 minutes)

Each team should prepare their arguments. Think about:

- Was Colin actually being helpful to John by staying at the desk, or should he have accompanied him?
- What responsibilities do employers have for staff safety and mental wellbeing on night shifts?
- Are there jobs where working alone is unavoidable? How can risks be reduced?
- Would John's experience have been different if Colin had walked the platform with him?

The Debate

1. Team A gives an opening statement (2 minutes).
2. Team B gives an opening statement (2 minutes).
3. Rebuttal round — each team responds to the other's points (2 minutes each).

4. Closing statements — each team sums up their strongest argument (1 minute each).

The Vote

After the debate, the rest of the class votes on which side made the more convincing argument. The teacher can act as moderator and timekeeper throughout.

Option B — Simplified Class Discussion

If a full debate doesn't suit the class, the teacher can instead run this as an open discussion: pose the motion to the whole class, and go around asking individual students whether they agree or disagree and why. The teacher moderates, encourages disagreement, and draws out different opinions rather than assigning fixed sides.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

You are going to continue writing the next part of the story.

- What happens next?
- What does Colin see?
- What does Colin do next?
- What happens to John?
- What does John see?
- What does the thing that John sees do next?

Think about all these questions to help you write the next part of the story.

Now write the story.

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

Or give it to your teacher for review.

Reading Comprehension Questions — Answers

1. John is the main character.
2. It takes place at the Grey Park tube station.
3. It is close to midnight.
4. He hates it because it is too quiet.
5. He sometimes takes a taxi or walks.
6. He works with Colin.
7. He thinks Colin is lazy and doesn't do much.
8. They sometimes find drunks or lost dogs.
9. No, he stays seated and lets John do the work.
10. He takes a walkie-talkie.
11. Colin jumps because John's voice is loud over the radio.
12. He sees advertising posters and an overflowing rubbish bin.
13. He hears the last train arriving.
14. He announces that Grey Park is the final stop and asks passengers to leave the station.
15. He has no enthusiasm in his voice.

16. They sometimes put on funny voices over the announcements.
17. He sees a couple of drunk young men, a weary man, an elderly woman, and a young woman.
18. They greet him in a joking way and comment on his hat.
19. They seem tired, nervous, or withdrawn.
20. Young drunk men, a tired middle-aged man, a nervous elderly woman, and a young woman looking at the ground.
21. He sees the train guard, whom he recognizes but doesn't know by name.
22. To make sure no people, bags, or forgotten items are left behind.
23. They would have to call the police.
24. It leaves the station and goes into the tunnel.
25. He goes to the north end of the platform.
26. Colin reports seeing a man by the seats.
27. He hopes the man isn't drunk.
28. He notices that no one is there.
29. He thinks Colin is not very observant.
30. He looks at the far end of the platform and behind him.

31. No, he finds no one.

32. He plans to talk to the station chief.

33. He sees no one.

34. Colin insists there is a man by the seats.

35. No, he does not.

36. He warns John that the man is behind him.

37. John spins around and sees something, but the story ends without revealing what it is.

True or False — Answers

1. True.
2. False. In fact, John hates the late shifts because the station is too quiet.
3. False. In fact, Colin stays seated and John volunteers to do the rounds instead.
4. True.
5. True.
6. True.
7. False. In fact, John recognises the train guard but cannot remember his name.
8. True.
9. False. In fact, John cannot see anyone on the platform.
10. False. In fact, the story ends without revealing what John sees.

What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers

Words	Synonyms
glad	pleased
weary	exhausted
nervous	anxious
curt	abrupt
observant	attentive
monotone	toneless
whimpering	whining
glued	fixed
smirked	sneered
deadbeat	shattered

What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers

Words	Antonyms
glad	sad
weary	energetic
nervous	calm
curt	courteous
observant	oblivious
drunk	sober
overflowing	empty
discarded	kept
enthusiasm	apathy
late-night	early-morning

Words and Meanings — Answers

Words	Meaning
walkie-talkie	c
uniform cap	g
rubbish bin	j
walkway	e
corridor	i
security camera monitors	a
rendition	d
strays	h
bloke	b
tinny	f

Gap Fill Exercise — Answers

Words	Sentence
peered	d
shrugged	e
grabbed	f
smirked	g
stretched	h
discarded	i
clutching	j
nervous	a
hissed	b
crackle	c

Credits

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