

GOLD



A FANTASTIC TALES
SHORT STORY & LESSON PLAN

Gold — Full Lesson Plan

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

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Introductory Questions

1. What if you found a lump of gold in your garden or house?
2. What would you do with it?
3. Would it change your life? How?
4. Is it possible to just find a big piece of gold buried in your house or garden?

Gold

The heat was punishing and my temper made the work none too easier.

After weeks and weeks of trying to avoid digging up the back of the garden, I finally relented.

Louise watched on from the kitchen window to ensure that I was doing a good job of it.

I paused and took a drink from the bottle. The water was warm in the midday sun. The only refreshment while I dug up all the rocks and dead plants.

"I'll make you a nice cup of tea when you finish it all," she said.

I drank and surveyed my work. I had barely made a dent.

I was both dismayed and pleased with this.

Dismayed that after two hours of back-breaking work, I had achieved so little.

And pleased because I had proven myself right with Louise.

Not that it would have any effect on her. She wanted it finished by dinnertime.

"Tomorrow we will go to the garden centre and buy new plants," she said. "I want to make it all beautiful before you go back to work on Monday."

Great. Two solid days of hard labour followed by another week at the grind.

It made the digging all the more hateful.

To follow it with another seven days working in that grim office and the loathsome Mr Bartlett and his passive-aggressive mood swings.

I had come close to walking out at least ten times last week.

I put the bottle of water back on the pathway to make sure it didn't tip over and resumed my digging stance.

My back creaked in protest and I winced at the small shard of pain that knifed into my lower back muscles.

Shoving the spade into the dry, almost solid clay, I jarred against it as I hit yet another rock.

How many of these things were buried at the back here?

Like an abandoned rock garden long forgotten in the 1950s and left for me to dig up because the wife wanted an English rose garden.

"It's my first proper garden," she had said to me earlier.

"Can't we make it nice?"

I bent down and pulled away pieces of dried-up soil and bits of dead root.

Beneath the soil was a yellowish piece of garbage.

I had already found a doll, along with parts of a bike and a rusted old pipe.

I grabbed the side of it and pulled it away.

As it came free, I saw that it was a heavy piece of metal, but a dirty brownish-yellow.

I picked it up and brushed the dirt off it. It weighed heavy in my hand.

The sun caught it and it glinted like... like gold.

I raised it to the light of the sun and gazed at it. It couldn't be.

Not just buried in the back of our garden.

Louise had noticed me staring into space again and was scrutinising me from the kitchen sink.

I waved at her and she waved back; she nodded at the back of the garden and the shovel.

I waved more frantically for her to come out and talk to me.

I saw her muttering to herself as she went to the side entrance door of the house and then appeared at the top of the path leading down to the garden.

"What?" she said, frowning at me.

"Look at this," I said, holding out the fragment of glittering metal in my hand.

"What is it?" she said, squinting at it in the sun.

I leaned towards her to lower my voice.

"I think it's gold," I said.

Louise pulled her head back and looked at me in disbelief.

"Gold?" she said, her lips pulled away in a tight grimace.

I nodded. "I think so. Feel the weight of it."

She took it from me, and she nearly dropped it.

She caught it in both hands and raised the weight of it up and down, bouncing the large lump between her fingers.

"It's heavy," she said.

I nodded again. "Like gold. Gold is heavy."

"How do you know it's gold?" she asked me.

"I don't. But gold is heavy, and that rock is heavy. Plus, it's the colour of gold. It looks like it could be gold."

Her eyes went from me to the rock and back to me again.

"Gold?" she asked, her voice lowered in a serious tone.

I took it from her and examined it.

Small crevices ran around it and inside the grooves, the colour remained consistent. A solid gold tone, discoloured by years of being underground.

"That must be worth a lot of money," she said.

"Yeah," I said.

In front of me at the top of the path lay the two-bedroom terrace house we had bought.

We still owed a fortune on it, a mortgage that would take us years to pay off.

Me working for Mr Bartlett, Louise and her part-time job at the small clothing manufacturer three days a week.

Things were tight much of the time, but we got through okay.

But if this were a solid piece of gold, we could pay off the entire house loan.

We would have enough left over to put a big pile of cash in the bank.

We could invest some of it, buy a brand-new car.

Get new clothes. Go on holiday.

We hadn't had a holiday for years. Just the occasional day trip to the seaside.

Hardly two weeks in the sun.

This rock in my hand could be the end of all our troubles. It could be the beginning of a whole new life.

I laughed and threw the rock a few inches in the air.

It landed in my hand awkwardly and fell to the ground with a solid thud.

A piece fell off and revealed the familiar brownish colour of the rocks I had been digging up for the last few hours.

It was just another rock painted yellow.

Maybe to decorate the rock garden from bygone days.

"Gold," said Louise, and hissed air at me through her teeth.

She marched off back to the house.

"I want it all dug up by dinnertime."

Reading Comprehension Questions

Try to answer all the reading comprehension questions below.

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

1. What is the narrator doing in the story?
2. How long had it been before the narrator decided to dig the garden?
3. Who is watching him?
4. What does Louise offer him when the job is done?
5. What is the weather like?
6. How much progress has he made?
7. How long has he been at work in the garden?
8. Why is he both dismayed and pleased?
9. When does Louise want all the digging finished?
10. What are Louise's plans for the garden?
11. Where does she plan to buy new plants?

12. Why is the narrator angry about spending his weekend this way?
13. What does he think of his job?
14. Who does he particularly dislike at work?
15. What kind of physical pain does he experience?
16. What does the shovel hit?
17. Why does the narrator compare the garden to one from the 1950s?
18. What did Louise say to convince him to dig?
19. What does he find in the soil?
20. What items had the narrator already found in the garden?
21. What does he find that is different?
22. What does he think it might be?
23. How does Louise respond when she sees the narrator acting strangely?
24. What does the narrator show her?
25. How does she initially react?
26. How does the narrator try to convince Louise it's gold?
27. What does Louise notice about the object?

28. What do both characters think about the object's weight?
29. What reasons does the narrator give for thinking it's gold?
30. How does Louise's tone change?
31. What physical details make the narrator believe it might be real gold?
32. Are the couple financially stable?
33. What does the narrator imagine doing with the money?
34. What kind of lifestyle do they currently live?
35. What fantasies does the narrator have about their future?
36. How does he feel holding the object?
37. What happens when he throws the rock in the air?
38. What is revealed about the object?
39. How does Louise react to this discovery?
40. What instruction does she give before leaving?

Gold — Story in Sections with Comprehension Questions

This version of the story is divided into shorter sections, with reading comprehension questions provided after each one.

Teachers: Model answers for all questions are provided at the end of the lesson plan for your reference.

Section 1

The heat was punishing and my temper made the work none too easier.

After weeks and weeks of trying to avoid digging up the back of the garden, I finally relented.

Louise watched on from the kitchen window to ensure that I was doing a good job of it.

I paused and took a drink from the bottle. The water was warm in the midday sun. The only refreshment while I dug up all the rocks and dead plants.

"I'll make you a nice cup of tea when you finish it all," she said.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What is the narrator doing in the story?
2. How long had it been before the narrator decided to dig the garden?
3. Who is watching him?
4. What does Louise offer him when the job is done?
5. What is the weather like?

Section 2

I drank and surveyed my work. I had barely made a dent.

I was both dismayed and pleased with this.

Dismayed that after two hours of back-breaking work, I had achieved so little.

And pleased because I had proven myself right with Louise.

Not that it would have any effect on her. She wanted it finished by dinnertime.

"Tomorrow we will go to the garden centre and buy new plants," she said. "I want to make it all beautiful before you go back to work on Monday."

Reading Comprehension Questions

6. How much progress has he made?
7. How long has he been at work in the garden?
8. Why is he both dismayed and pleased?
9. When does Louise want all the digging finished?
10. What are Louise's plans for the garden?
11. Where does she plan to buy new plants?

Section 3

Great. Two solid days of hard labour followed by another week at the grind.

It made the digging all the more hateful.

To follow it with another seven days working in that grim office and the loathsome Mr Bartlett and his passive-aggressive mood swings.

I had come close to walking out at least ten times last week.

I put the bottle of water back on the pathway to make sure it didn't tip over and resumed my digging stance.

My back creaked in protest and I winced at the small shard of pain that knifed into my lower back muscles.

Reading Comprehension Questions

12. Why is the narrator angry about spending his weekend this way?

13. What does he think of his job?

14. Who does he particularly dislike at work?

15. What kind of physical pain does he experience?

Section 4

Shoving the spade into the dry, almost solid clay, I jarred against it as I hit yet another rock.

How many of these things were buried at the back here?

Like an abandoned rock garden long forgotten in the 1950s and left for me to dig up because the wife wanted an English rose garden.

"It's my first proper garden," she had said to me earlier.

"Can't we make it nice?"

I bent down and pulled away pieces of dried-up soil and bits of dead root.

Beneath the soil was a yellowish piece of garbage.

Reading Comprehension Questions

16. What does the shovel hit?

17. Why does the narrator compare the garden to one from the 1950s?

18. What did Louise say to convince him to dig?

19. What does he find in the soil?

Section 5

I had already found a doll, along with parts of a bike and a rusted old pipe.

I grabbed the side of it and pulled it away.

As it came free, I saw that it was a heavy piece of metal, but a dirty brownish-yellow.

I picked it up and brushed the dirt off it. It weighed heavy in my hand.

The sun caught it and it glinted like... like gold.

I raised it to the light of the sun and gazed at it. It couldn't be.

Not just buried in the back of our garden.

Reading Comprehension Questions

20. What items had the narrator already found in the garden?

21. What does he find that is different?

22. What does he think it might be?

Section 6

Louise had noticed me staring into space again and was scrutinising me from the kitchen sink.

I waved at her and she waved back; she nodded at the back of the garden and the shovel.

I waved more frantically for her to come out and talk to me.

I saw her muttering to herself as she went to the side entrance door of the house and then appeared at the top of the path leading down to the garden.

"What?" she said, frowning at me.

"Look at this," I said, holding out the fragment of glittering metal in my hand.

Reading Comprehension Questions

23. How does Louise respond when she sees the narrator acting strangely?

24. What does the narrator show her?

Section 7

"What is it?" she said, squinting at it in the sun.

I leaned towards her to lower my voice.

"I think it's gold," I said.

Louise pulled her head back and looked at me in disbelief.

"Gold?" she said, her lips pulled away in a tight grimace.

I nodded. "I think so. Feel the weight of it."

She took it from me, and she nearly dropped it.

She caught it in both hands and raised the weight of it up and down, bouncing the large lump between her fingers.

"It's heavy," she said.

Reading Comprehension Questions

25. How does she initially react?

26. How does the narrator try to convince Louise it's gold?

27. What does Louise notice about the object?

28. What do both characters think about the object's weight?

Section 8

I nodded again. "Like gold. Gold is heavy."

"How do you know it's gold?" she asked me.

"I don't. But gold is heavy, and that rock is heavy. Plus, it's the colour of gold. It looks like it could be gold."

Her eyes went from me to the rock and back to me again.

"Gold?" she asked, her voice lowered in a serious tone.

I took it from her and examined it.

Small crevices ran around it and inside the grooves, the colour remained consistent. A solid gold tone, discoloured by years of being underground.

Reading Comprehension Questions

29. What reasons does the narrator give for thinking it's gold?

30. How does Louise's tone change?

31. What physical details make the narrator believe it might be real gold?

Section 9

"That must be worth a lot of money," she said.

"Yeah," I said.

In front of me at the top of the path lay the two-bedroom terrace house we had bought.

We still owed a fortune on it, a mortgage that would take us years to pay off.

Me working for Mr Bartlett, Louise and her part-time job at the small clothing manufacturer three days a week.

Things were tight much of the time, but we got through okay.

But if this were a solid piece of gold, we could pay off the entire house loan.

Reading Comprehension Questions

32. Are the couple financially stable?

33. What does the narrator imagine doing with the money?

34. What kind of lifestyle do they currently live?

Section 10

We would have enough left over to put a big pile of cash in the bank.

We could invest some of it, buy a brand-new car.

Get new clothes. Go on holiday.

We hadn't had a holiday for years. Just the occasional day trip to the seaside.

Hardly two weeks in the sun.

This rock in my hand could be the end of all our troubles. It could be the beginning of a whole new life.

I laughed and threw the rock a few inches in the air.

It landed in my hand awkwardly and fell to the ground with a solid thud.

Reading Comprehension Questions

35. What fantasies does the narrator have about their future?

36. How does he feel holding the object?

37. What happens when he throws the rock in the air?

Section 11

A piece fell off and revealed the familiar brownish colour of the rocks I had been digging up for the last few hours.

It was just another rock painted yellow.

Maybe to decorate the rock garden from bygone days.

"Gold," said Louise, and hissed air at me through her teeth.

She marched off back to the house.

"I want it all dug up by dinnertime."

Reading Comprehension Questions

38. What is revealed about the object?

39. How does Louise react to this discovery?

40. What instruction does she give before leaving?

Essential Vocabulary

punishing	temper	relented
midday	surveyed	dismayed
back-breaking work	proven	hard labour
grind	hateful	grim
loathsome	passive-aggressive	mood swings
creaked	wincing	shard
knifed	shoving	jarred
abandoned	dried-up	yellowish
rusted	brownish-yellow	staring into space
scrutinising	frantically	muttering
frowning	glittering	squinting
disbelief	grimace	bouncing
crevices	discoloured	two-bedroom terrace house
fortune	mortgage	tight
brand-new car	awkwardly	bygone

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

Punishing – causing great physical or mental strain; demanding and challenging.

Example sentence: My work schedule recently is punishing, but soon it will be the weekend, and I can relax.

Relented – became less strict or gave in after previously refusing.

Example sentence: After weeks of asking, my parents finally relented and let me get a dog.

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.

Vocabulary Matching Exercise

Match each word (1–15) with its correct definition (a–o).

Word	Write letter here →
1. punishing	
2. relented	
3. dismayed	
4. hateful	
5. grim	
6. loathsome	
7. creaked	
8. winced	
9. jarred	
10. abandoned	
11. scrutinising	
12. frantically	
13. disbelief	
14. grimace	
15. discoloured	

Definitions:

- a. unpleasant, harsh, or depressing
- b. extremely unpleasant or disliked
- c. made a harsh, high-pitched sound, typically from strain
- d. made a slight grimace of pain or distress
- e. struck with a sudden, unpleasant jolt
- f. given up completely; deserted
- g. examining closely and carefully
- h. in a wild, hurried, uncontrolled manner
- i. an inability or refusal to accept something is true
- j. a twisted facial expression showing pain or disgust
- k. having lost its natural colour, often through age or wear
- l. physically or mentally very demanding and harsh
- m. became less strict or gave in after refusing
- n. feeling sudden disappointment or discouragement
- o. arousing or deserving intense dislike

Spot the English Errors

The story Gold is told in the first person. The narrator sometimes uses informal or non-standard English, as people often do when speaking.

Look at the sentences from the story below.

Some contain an error or a non-standard use of English.

Others are completely correct.

For each sentence:

1. Decide whether the sentence is correct or needs changing.
2. If it needs changing, rewrite it in standard English.
3. Explain what you changed and why.

1. The heat was punishing and my temper made the work none too easier.

2. After weeks and weeks of trying to avoid digging up the back of the garden, I finally relented.

3. I had barely made a dent.

4. Dismayed that after two hours of back-breaking work, I had achieved so little.

5. And pleased because I had proven myself right with Louise.
6. My back creaked in protest and I winced at the small shard of pain that knifed into my lower back muscles.
7. I picked it up and brushed the dirt off it. It weighed heavy in my hand.
8. It couldn't be. Not just buried in the back of our garden.
9. Me working for Mr Bartlett, Louise and her part-time job at the small clothing manufacturer three days a week.
10. We hadn't had a holiday for years. Just the occasional day trip to the seaside.
11. We could invest some of it, buy a brand-new car.
12. This rock in my hand could be the end of all our troubles.

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. The narrator is digging in his garden because he enjoys gardening as a hobby.
2. Louise watches the narrator from the kitchen window.
3. The narrator makes excellent progress and finishes most of the garden quickly.
4. The narrator dislikes his boss, Mr Bartlett.
5. The narrator finds the gold-coloured object immediately, within the first few minutes of digging.
6. Louise immediately believes the object is real gold without any doubt.
7. The couple currently live a modest lifestyle, managing their money carefully.

8. The narrator imagines paying off their mortgage if the object turns out to be gold.
9. The object turns out to be a rock painted yellow, not real gold.
10. Louise is delighted and relieved when she learns the object isn't gold.

What is the Correct Synonym?

A synonym is a word of similar meaning. Match each word from the story with its synonym from the box below.

Word Box: *bleak, wealth, gruelling, jolted, deserted, desperately, disheartened, examining, stained, detestable*

1. punishing → _____
2. dismayed → _____
3. hateful → _____
4. grim → _____
5. frantically → _____
6. discoloured → _____
7. scrutinising → _____
8. fortune → _____
9. abandoned → _____
10. jarred → _____

What is the Correct Antonym?

An antonym is a word of opposite meaning. Match each word from the story with its antonym from the box below.

Word Box: *gracefully, calmly, easy, dull, persisted, cheerful, occupied, belief, pleased, lovable*

1. punishing → _____
2. dismayed → _____
3. hateful → _____
4. grim → _____
5. abandoned → _____
6. awkwardly → _____
7. glittering → _____
8. frantically → _____
9. disbelief → _____
10. relented → _____

Words and Meanings

Match each expression from the story (1–10) with its correct meaning (a–j).

1. back-breaking work
2. passive-aggressive mood swings
3. staring into space
4. a big pile of cash
5. long forgotten
6. lower my voice
7. hard labour
8. rock garden
9. day trip
10. brand-new car

Meanings:

- a. to speak more quietly, often to avoid being overheard

- b. a large amount of money
- c. physically demanding work, especially of a repetitive or punishing kind
- d. not thought about or remembered for a very long time
- e. a car that has never been previously owned or used
- f. a garden feature made up of arranged rocks and small plants
- g. looking blankly ahead without focusing on anything in particular
- h. indirect expressions of anger hidden behind a shifting, unpredictable temper
- i. a short outing or journey completed within a single day
- j. physically exhausting labour

Gap Fill Exercise

Look at the word bank below. Complete each sentence with the correct word. Not all words will be used.

Word Box: *surveyed, dent, grabbed, buried, muttering, frowning, glittering, examined, consistent, revealed, tight, bygone*

1. She _____ the damage to her car after the small accident.
2. There was a small _____ in the side of the fridge from moving it.
3. He _____ his coat and ran out into the rain.
4. The treasure had been _____ deep beneath the old church for centuries.
5. She kept _____ to herself as she searched for her lost keys.
6. The teacher gave a stern _____ when the class started talking.

7. We could see the _____ lake under the bright afternoon sun.
8. The doctor carefully _____ the patient before making a diagnosis.
9. His performance has been _____ throughout the whole season, never dropping in quality.
10. The report finally _____ the truth behind the company's financial troubles.

Discussion Questions

1. What kind of person is the narrator? Describe his life and what he thinks of it.
2. Is he foolish? Or just naïve and wishful?
3. What kind of person is his wife?
4. How does the narrator feel about digging up the garden?
5. What plans does Louise have for the garden?
6. Does the narrator like his job? Why/why not?
7. What do you think he does in his job?
8. What makes him dislike it so much?
9. The narrator finds a strange object, coloured gold, hidden in the ground.
10. What effect does this have on his mood?
11. Why does it have this effect on him, do you think?
12. Does his wife, Louise, share the same feeling?
13. Do you think they could solve all their problems with a piece of gold? Or would they just find new problems?

14. What bearing does the couple's financial situation have on their fantasies about finding gold?
15. Would their lives have changed drastically if the object was made of gold?
16. Why does the narrator have such strong feelings of hope for the object to be gold?
17. Why do people have fantasies of finding gold or winning the lottery? Do you think people sometimes rely on fantasies instead of trying to change their lives? Why or why not?
18. If you found something valuable, like gold or a diamond, what would you do with it?
19. Can sudden wealth make a person happy? Why/why not?
20. Are you happy with all that you have in your life? Could a piece of gold improve your life?
21. How could the man in the story improve his life? Do you think his wife would support him?
22. What three steps could you make to improve your life, starting today? What is stopping you from starting?

Role Play: What Do We Do Now?

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in the role play.

1. The Narrator
2. Louise

The Situation

That evening, after the disappointment of the “gold” turning out to be a painted rock, the couple sit down to talk.

The narrator wants to talk about how close he felt to solving all their problems, and how the disappointment has affected him. Louise wants to refocus on being practical — finishing the garden, managing their money, and not dwelling on a fantasy.

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: Is Money the Key to Happiness?

The Motion

*“This house believes that money is
the key to happiness.”*

Option A — Full Two-Team Debate

Divide the class into two teams.

Team A — For the Motion

You must argue that money is the key to happiness — that financial security removes the daily stress and worry that stops people from truly enjoying their lives, as seen with the narrator and Louise in the story.

Team B — Against the Motion

You must argue that money is not the key to happiness — that relationships, health, and purpose matter far more, and that chasing wealth (like the narrator's fantasy about the

gold) can distract people from what actually makes life fulfilling.

Preparation (10 minutes)

Each team should prepare their arguments. Think about:

- Why did finding the “gold” feel so life-changing to the narrator, even for just a few minutes?
- Would paying off their mortgage actually solve the couple's problems, or just remove one source of stress?
- Can you think of examples of wealthy people who are unhappy, or people with little money who are content?
- Is there a difference between having enough money and having a lot of money?

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 the story as told above.

Imagine the narrator of the story does discover gold in his garden.

He dusts off the object and, to his surprise, finds that it is indeed gold. He takes it to a gold dealer and they tell him it is worth just under one million British pounds.

1. What do you think the man will do with this money?
2. Will he buy a brand-new car as he thought before in the story?
3. Will he go on a very expensive holiday with his wife?
4. Will they go shopping and buy new clothes?
5. Will he invest any of it?
6. Save any of it?

7. Or will he spend all of it very quickly?

Think about the questions above, then write your story.

Try to give your story a valuable lesson for the reader to learn.

Write your story.

When you have finished writing your story, read it out loud in front of the class.

Or give it to your teacher for review.

Reading Comprehension Questions — Model Answers

1. The narrator is digging up the back of the garden.
2. It had been weeks before the narrator finally relented and began the work.
3. Louise, his wife, is watching him from the kitchen window.
4. She offers to make him a nice cup of tea when he finishes digging.
5. It is extremely hot — the heat is described as punishing and the sun is out.
6. He has made very little progress; he has barely made a dent in the ground.
7. He has been digging for two hours.
8. He is dismayed because he has achieved so little, but pleased because it proves he was right that the job would be hard.
9. She wants it finished by dinnertime.

10. She wants to make the garden beautiful by planting new flowers.

11. She plans to buy them at the garden centre the next day.

12. Because he has to spend his weekend doing hard labour instead of relaxing before another difficult work week.

13. He doesn't like his job. He describes it as grim.

14. He particularly dislikes his boss, Mr Bartlett, who has passive-aggressive mood swings.

15. He experiences a sharp pain in his lower back while digging.

16. It hits another rock buried in the dry clay soil.

17. He imagines it was once a rock garden that had been abandoned for decades.

18. She said it was her first proper garden and asked, "Can't we make it nice?"

19. He finds what first appears to be a yellowish piece of garbage buried in the soil.

20. He had found a doll, parts of a bike, and a rusted pipe.

21. He finds a heavy, shiny, brownish-yellow piece of metal.

22. He thinks it might be a lump of gold.

23. She frowns at him from the window and then comes outside to see what's going on.

24. He shows her the shiny, gold-coloured object he found in the garden.

25. She is sceptical and reacts with disbelief, pulling her head back in surprise.

26. He tells Louise to feel how heavy the object is.

27. She notices that it is very heavy and nearly drops it when she takes it.

28. They both notice that the object is unusually heavy.

29. He says it is heavy, gold-coloured, and looks consistent in tone, even in its grooves.

30. Her tone becomes serious and quiet as she begins to consider the possibility it might be real.

31. He notices the consistent golden colour inside the small crevices of the object.

32. No, they are struggling with a large mortgage and limited incomes.

33. He imagines paying off the mortgage on their house.

34. They live a modest life and have to manage carefully because they have limited money.

35. He dreams that the gold will end their financial problems and bring them a better life.

36. He feels excited and hopeful that their luck might have changed.

37. It lands awkwardly and falls to the ground.

38. It is just a regular rock painted yellow — not gold at all.

39. She is annoyed and disappointed, expressing her frustration.

40. She tells him to finish digging up the garden by dinnertime.

True or False — Answers

1. False. In fact, he has been avoiding the job for weeks and only does it reluctantly.
2. True.
3. False. In fact, he has barely made a dent after two hours of work.
4. True.
5. False. In fact, he finds a doll, bike parts, and a rusted pipe before finding the object.
6. False. In fact, she reacts with disbelief when he first shows it to her.
7. True.
8. True.
9. True.
10. False. In fact, she is annoyed and disappointed, and marches off back to the house.

What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers

1. punishing = gruelling
2. dismayed = disheartened
3. hateful = detestable
4. grim = bleak
5. frantically = desperately
6. discoloured = stained
7. scrutinising = examining
8. fortune = wealth
9. abandoned = deserted
10. jarred = jolted

What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers

1. punishing ↔ easy
2. dismayed ↔ pleased
3. hateful ↔ lovable
4. grim ↔ cheerful
5. abandoned ↔ occupied
6. awkwardly ↔ gracefully
7. glittering ↔ dull
8. frantically ↔ calmly
9. disbelief ↔ belief
10. relented ↔ persisted

Words and Meanings — Answers

1. back-breaking work = physically exhausting labour
2. passive-aggressive mood swings = indirect expressions of anger hidden behind a shifting, unpredictable temper
3. staring into space = looking blankly ahead without focusing on anything in particular
4. a big pile of cash = a large amount of money
5. long forgotten = not thought about or remembered for a very long time
6. lower my voice = to speak more quietly, often to avoid being overheard
7. hard labour = physically demanding work, especially of a repetitive or punishing kind
8. rock garden = a garden feature made up of arranged rocks and small plants
9. day trip = a short outing or journey completed within a single day

10. brand-new car = a car that has never been previously owned or used

Gap Fill Exercise — Answers

1. surveyed
2. dent
3. grabbed
4. buried
5. muttering
6. frowning
7. glittering
8. examined
9. consistent
10. revealed

Vocabulary Matching Exercise — Answers

1. l (physically or mentally very demanding and harsh)
2. m (became less strict or gave in after refusing)
3. n (feeling sudden disappointment or discouragement)
4. o (arousing or deserving intense dislike)
5. a (unpleasant, harsh, or depressing)
6. b (extremely unpleasant or disliked)
7. c (made a harsh, high-pitched sound, typically from strain)
8. d (made a slight grimace of pain or distress)
9. e (struck with a sudden, unpleasant jolt)
10. f (given up completely; deserted)
11. g (examining closely and carefully)
12. h (in a wild, hurried, uncontrolled manner)
13. i (an inability or refusal to accept something is true)
14. j (a twisted facial expression showing pain or disgust)
15. k (having lost its natural colour, often through age or wear)

Spot the English Errors — Model Answers

1. Needs changing

The heat was punishing and my temper made the work none too easy.

Easier is a comparative adjective. After none too, we use the base adjective easy.

2. Correct

After weeks and weeks of trying to avoid digging up the back of the garden, I finally relented.

No change is necessary.

3. Correct

I had barely made a dent.

Barely means only just or hardly at all. The expression make a dent is also used figuratively to mean making a small amount of progress.

4. Sentence fragment

Dismayed that after two hours of back-breaking work, I had achieved so little.

This is not a complete sentence in formal written English. In fiction, however, writers often deliberately use sentence fragments to represent a character's thoughts or to create emphasis.

A standard version could be:

I was dismayed that after two hours of back-breaking work, I had achieved so little.

5. Sentence fragment

And pleased because I had proven myself right with Louise.

Again, this is deliberately fragmentary narrative writing.

A standard version could be:

I was also pleased because I had proven myself right with Louise.

6. Correct

My back creaked in protest and I winced at the small shard of pain that knifed into my lower back muscles.

No grammatical change is necessary. Knifed is being used figuratively to describe a sudden, sharp pain.

7. Informal/non-standard usage

Original: It weighed heavy in my hand.

Standard English: It weighed heavily in my hand.

Heavy is an adjective, while heavily is the corresponding adverb. Heavy can sometimes be heard in informal or stylistic English, but heavily is the safer choice in standard written English.

8. Sentence fragment used for effect

It couldn't be. Not just buried in the back of our garden.

The second part is not a complete sentence. In fiction, this kind of fragment can represent a character's thoughts and create dramatic emphasis.

A more conventional version would be:

It couldn't be, not just buried in the back of our garden.

9. Sentence fragment

Original: Me working for Mr Bartlett, Louise and her part-time job at the small clothing manufacturer three days a week.

This is written as a fragment representing the narrator's thoughts.

A more conventional version could be:

I worked for Mr Bartlett, while Louise worked part-time at the small clothing manufacturer three days a week.

10. Sentence fragment used for effect

We hadn't had a holiday for years. Just the occasional day trip to the seaside.

The first sentence is correct. The second is a fragment deliberately used for emphasis.

A standard version could be:

We hadn't had a holiday for years, just the occasional day trip to the seaside.

11. Acceptable in narrative writing

We could invest some of it, buy a brand-new car.

This works as a compressed list of possibilities in the narrator's thoughts.

A more conventional version would be:

We could invest some of it and buy a brand-new car.

12. Correct

This rock in my hand could be the end of all our troubles.

No change is necessary.

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