

Charlie

a short story lesson plan
for English reading,
speaking & vocabulary



Charlie — Full Lesson Plan

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

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Introductory Questions

1. Do you have a pet?
2. How much do you love this pet?
3. Some people love their pets more than their own family — what do you think about this?
4. Are pets part of our family? Or just pets?

Charlie

“He’s been dead for ten years,” said the little old lady, looking at me with concern.

I stared back into her silvery-blue eyes and nodded my head slowly.

I didn’t know what else to do.

She had this passive look on her face and I felt expected to say something. So I cleared my throat, desperately trying to think of something to say.

“Your husband?”

A look of mild disgust crossed the woman’s face.

“My husband?” she said. “No. He’s been dead for over fifteen years. No, not him. Charlie. My dear Charlie.”

Who was Charlie?

“Charlie?” I said.

She looked at me like I was an idiot.

“Yes, Charlie. He was the love of my life. He was my one and only true love.”

So. This old lady. Who I didn't know. She just sat next to me at the bus stop and starts telling me about her secret lover Charlie.

"Oh, I see." There was a very awkward pause. "Well, I'm sorry for your loss."

She smiled, but I could see a look in her eye that said she was not convinced.

I turned my head to see if the bus was coming. But just an empty road.

"I always keep him near me," she said. "He's always with me."

"Charlie?" I said.

"Yes, Charlie. He's always close to my heart."

"Well, that's good," I said. "It's good to have some spiritual connection to our loved ones."

I surprised myself at how well I could keep the conversation going. But as soon as the bus arrived, I would go upstairs. No more chatting to old ladies about their long-lost lovers.

"No, I don't mean that," she snapped. "I don't believe in any of that spiritual mumbo-jumbo."

She tapped her chest. She wore a thick coat and a scarf. It looked like it was made of fur. She clutched at the scarf and held it against her throat.

I wrapped my arms around myself as an icy breeze blew around us.

“Charlie is always with me. And I mean really with me.”

“That’s great,” I said.

I couldn’t talk to this old lady anymore. I just wanted the bus to arrive and then I could get home and have a hot bath. I didn’t want to engage in conversations with this mad old woman and her Charlie, whoever he was.

“You don’t believe me, do you?”

I turned to face her.

“Yes. I believe you.”

“Have you ever had someone that you have loved so dearly and who loves you back so dearly that you would do anything to make them stay with you?”

I stumbled for something to say.

The old lady shook her head. “You haven’t, have you? Too caught up in your own life and all the things you think about.

You haven't had time to think of anyone else. That's the trouble with young people today. Too inconsiderate."

She was right about that. She had hit the nail right on the head there.

I had been single for... well, forever. I had a girlfriend at college but as soon as we graduated we parted company. Since then. Nothing.

I lived alone in a tiny flat. I had one friend who I referred to as my best friend when in fact he was my only friend. And my visits back home to see my mum and dad were becoming more and more infrequent.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I didn't mean to upset you."

"I loved Charlie. And he loved me. We told each other this every single day."

Then she started to cry. And not just a little weepy, but full-on sobbing.

She reached into her handbag and pulled out a handkerchief. I hadn't seen one in years.

"Please," I said. "Don't upset yourself. Tell me about Charlie."

She wiped the tears away from her eyes and then blew her nose.

“I don’t know where to begin.”

“Well, you said Charlie is always with you. Tell me about that.”

“He is always with me,” she said, and her hand went to her heart again. “He’s right here. Right here with me.”

“Charlie must have been a very special man,” I said.

The old woman leaned back and gave me a glare.

“Man? I never said he was a man.”

I cursed myself for upsetting her again.

“But... I’m sorry... I thought...”

“Yes, you thought,” she said. “And where does thinking get you?”

She patted the furry scarf against her neck.

“No, Charlie was not a man. He was not a human being.”

She smiled back at me. Her teeth all brilliant white.

“So, what was he then?” I asked.

“He was a cat.”

“Oh,” I said.

All this time and the only thing we were talking about was a silly cat.

“Yes, Charlie was my pride and joy,” she said. She tilted her head down. “Isn’t that right, Charlie?”

I looked up the road again and saw the bus trundling down towards us.

“Well, he must have been a very special cat,” I said, pulling some loose change from my coat pocket.

“He was,” she said. “Would you like to see him?”

The bus got nearer.

“A picture, you mean?”

“No,” she said. “Charlie. See him. In the flesh.”

I just stared back at the old lady, unable to think of anything to say.

“Take a look,” she said, and she unbuttoned her coat.

Around her neck, the scarf. Now clearly visible.

It was all fur. And four thin legs with little paws at the end.

A tail. And the other end a head. The ears moth-eaten and worn away and in place of its eyes two glass beads.

And the mouth. A gaping jaw with blackened teeth.

“This is Charlie,” she said. “He is with me all the time. He never leaves me.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Which characters are introduced at the beginning of the story?
2. What colour are the old lady's eyes?
3. Who is the old lady talking about?
4. Is Charlie alive or dead?
5. How long has the old lady's husband been dead?
6. Where does the story take place?
7. Is there any traffic on the road?
8. What is the narrator's initial reaction to the old lady?
9. How does the old lady describe her relationship with Charlie?
10. What does the narrator of the story plan to do when the bus arrives?
11. Why does he plan to do that?
12. What is the old lady wearing?
13. Is the weather cold in the story?
14. Is the old lady a spiritual person?

15. How does the old lady describe her connection with Charlie's presence?
16. What does the narrator plan to do when he gets home?
17. Does the old lady think the narrator believes what she is saying to him?
18. Does the narrator like talking to the old lady?
19. According to the old lady, what is the trouble with young people today?
20. How does the narrator describe their own personal life and relationships?
21. Does he have a girlfriend?
22. When was his last girlfriend?
23. Who does he live with?
24. How many friends does he have?
25. Does he visit his parents very often?
26. Why does the old lady become emotional and start crying?
27. Is the old lady crying just a little? Or a lot?
28. What does the old lady do to wipe away her tears?

29. What part of her body does the old lady touch when she talks about Charlie?
30. What detail about Charlie is revealed that surprises the narrator?
31. What is she wearing around her neck?
32. What is Charlie?
33. At this part of the story, is there any traffic on the road?
34. What does the narrator take from his pocket?
35. What word does the narrator use to describe Charlie the cat?
36. What offer does the old lady make to the narrator?
37. What does the narrator assume the old lady wants to show him?
38. What does the old lady do with her coat?
39. Describe Charlie's appearance as revealed by the old lady.
40. How does the old lady claim that Charlie is always with her?
41. What is Charlie?
42. Where is Charlie right now?

43. How does the story conclude, and what is the narrator's reaction to Charlie's true identity?

Charlie — Story and Reading Comprehension Questions

This version of the story is divided into shorter sections, with reading comprehension questions provided after each one. It may be more suitable for certain class types or learner levels, depending on their reading ability and pace.

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

Section 1

“He’s been dead for ten years,” said the little old lady, looking at me with concern.

I stared back into her silvery-blue eyes and nodded my head slowly.

I didn’t know what else to do.

She had this passive look on her face and I felt expected to say something. So I cleared my throat, desperately trying to think of something to say.

“Your husband?”

A look of mild disgust crossed the woman's face.

"My husband?" she said. "No. He's been dead for over fifteen years. No, not him. Charlie. My dear Charlie."

Who was Charlie?

"Charlie?" I said.

She looked at me like I was an idiot.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Which characters are introduced at the beginning of the story?
2. What colour are the old lady's eyes?
3. Who is the old lady talking about?
4. Is Charlie alive or dead?
5. How long has the old lady's husband been dead?

Section 2

"Yes, Charlie. He was the love of my life. He was my one and only true love."

So. This old lady. Who I didn't know. She just sat next to me at the bus stop and starts telling me about her secret lover Charlie.

“Oh, I see.” There was a very awkward pause. “Well, I’m sorry for your loss.”

She smiled, but I could see a look in her eye that said she was not convinced.

I turned my head to see if the bus was coming. But just an empty road.

“I always keep him near me,” she said. “He’s always with me.”

“Charlie?” I said.

“Yes, Charlie. He’s always close to my heart.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

6. Where does the story take place?

7. Is there any traffic on the road?

8. What is the narrator's initial reaction to the old lady?

9. How does the old lady describe her relationship with Charlie?

Section 3

“Well, that’s good,” I said. “It’s good to have some spiritual connection to our loved ones.”

I surprised myself at how well I could keep the conversation going. But as soon as the bus arrived, I would go upstairs. No more chatting to old ladies about their long-lost lovers.

“No, I don’t mean that,” she snapped. “I don’t believe in any of that spiritual mumbo-jumbo.”

She tapped her chest. She wore a thick coat and a scarf. It looked like it was made of fur. She clutched at the scarf and held it against her throat.

I wrapped my arms around myself as an icy breeze blew around us.

Reading Comprehension Questions

10. What does the narrator of the story plan to do when the bus arrives?

11. Why does he plan to do that?

12. What is the old lady wearing?

13. Is the weather cold in the story?

14. Is the old lady a spiritual person?

Section 4

“Charlie is always with me. And I mean really with me.”

“That’s great,” I said.

I couldn’t talk to this old lady anymore. I just wanted the bus to arrive and then I could get home and have a hot bath. I didn’t want to engage in conversations with this mad old woman and her Charlie, whoever he was.

“You don’t believe me, do you?”

I turned to face her.

“Yes. I believe you.”

“Have you ever had someone that you have loved so dearly and who loves you back so dearly that you would do anything to make them stay with you?”

Reading Comprehension Questions

15. How does the old lady describe her connection with Charlie's presence?

16. What does the narrator plan to do when he gets home?

17. Does the old lady think the narrator believes what she is saying to him?

18. Does the narrator like talking to the old lady?

Section 5

I stumbled for something to say.

The old lady shook her head. “You haven’t, have you? Too caught up in your own life and all the things you think about. You haven’t had time to think of anyone else. That’s the trouble with young people today. Too inconsiderate.”

She was right about that. She had hit the nail right on the head there.

I had been single for... well, forever. I had a girlfriend at college but as soon as we graduated we parted company. Since then. Nothing.

I lived alone in a tiny flat. I had one friend who I referred to as my best friend when in fact he was my only friend. And my visits back home to see my mum and dad were becoming more and more infrequent.

Reading Comprehension Questions

19. According to the old lady, what is the trouble with young people today?

20. How does the narrator describe their own personal life and relationships?

21. Does he have a girlfriend?
22. When was his last girlfriend?
23. Who does he live with?
24. How many friends does he have?
25. Does he visit his parents very often?

Section 6

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“I loved Charlie. And he loved me. We told each other this every single day.”

Then she started to cry. And not just a little weepy, but full-on sobbing.

She reached into her handbag and pulled out a handkerchief. I hadn’t seen one in years.

“Please,” I said. “Don’t upset yourself. Tell me about Charlie.”

She wiped the tears away from her eyes and then blew her nose.

“I don’t know where to begin.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

26. Why does the old lady become emotional and start crying?

27. Is the old lady crying just a little? Or a lot?

28. What does the old lady do to wipe away her tears?

Section 7

“Well, you said Charlie is always with you. Tell me about that.”

“He is always with me,” she said, and her hand went to her heart again. “He’s right here. Right here with me.”

“Charlie must have been a very special man,” I said.

The old woman leaned back and gave me a glare.

“Man? I never said he was a man.”

I cursed myself for upsetting her again.

“But... I’m sorry... I thought...”

“Yes, you thought,” she said. “And where does thinking get you?”

She patted the furry scarf against her neck.

“No, Charlie was not a man. He was not a human being.”

She smiled back at me. Her teeth all brilliant white.

Reading Comprehension Questions

29. What part of her body does the old lady touch when she talks about Charlie?

30. What detail about Charlie is revealed that surprises the narrator?

31. What is she wearing around her neck?

Section 8

“So, what was he then?” I asked.

“He was a cat.”

“Oh,” I said.

All this time and the only thing we were talking about was a silly cat.

“Yes, Charlie was my pride and joy,” she said. She tilted her head down. “Isn’t that right, Charlie?”

I looked up the road again and saw the bus trundling down towards us.

“Well, he must have been a very special cat,” I said, pulling some loose change from my coat pocket.

“He was,” she said. “Would you like to see him?”

Reading Comprehension Questions

32. What is Charlie?

33. At this part of the story, is there any traffic on the road?

34. What does the narrator take from his pocket?

35. What word does the narrator use to describe Charlie the cat?

36. What offer does the old lady make to the narrator?

Section 9

The bus got nearer.

“A picture, you mean?”

“No,” she said. “Charlie. See him. In the flesh.”

I just stared back at the old lady, unable to think of anything to say.

“Take a look,” she said, and she unbuttoned her coat.

Around her neck, the scarf. Now clearly visible.

It was all fur. And four thin legs with little paws at the end.

A tail. And the other end a head. The ears moth-eaten and worn away and in place of its eyes two glass beads.

And the mouth. A gaping jaw with blackened teeth.

“This is Charlie,” she said. “He is with me all the time. He never leaves me.”

Reading Comprehension Questions

37. What does the narrator assume the old lady wants to show him?

38. What does the old lady do with her coat?

39. Describe Charlie's appearance as revealed by the old lady.

40. How does the old lady claim that Charlie is always with her?

41. What is Charlie?

42. Where is Charlie right now?

43. How does the story conclude, and what is the narrator's reaction to Charlie's true identity?

Essential Vocabulary

concern	silvery-blue	passive
cleared my throat	desperately	mild disgust
idiot	secret lover	awkward pause
spiritual	loved ones	long-lost
snapped	mumbo-jumbo	scarf
fur	clutched	wrapped
icy breeze	dearly	stumbled
inconsiderate	hit the nail on the head	tiny flat
infrequent	weepy	full-on
sobbing	handkerchief	glare
cursed	furry	brilliant white
my pride and joy	tilted	trundling
loose change	in the flesh	unbuttoned
paws	moth-eaten	beads
gaping	jaw	blackened

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

Concern – a feeling of being worried or nervous about something.

Example sentence: Next-door neighbour's dog causes me some concern.

Silvery-blue – a light shade of blue, that has a hint of silver in it.

Example sentence: The bird's wings looked silvery-blue in the sunlight.

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 Practice Exercise

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

Word	Write letter here →
1. concern	
2. passive	
3. desperately	
4. mild disgust	
5. awkward pause	
6. mumbo-jumbo	
7. icy breeze	
8. inconsiderate	
9. weepy	
10. sobbing	
11. glare	
12. furry	
13. trundling	
14. moth-eaten	
15. gaping	

Definitions:

- a. an uncomfortable moment of silence in a conversation
- b. language or ideas that seem meaningless or confusing
- c. a cold, light wind
- d. not thinking about the feelings or needs of others
- e. tending to cry easily or often
- f. crying loudly with deep, uneven breaths
- g. a long, angry, or fierce look
- h. covered with fur
- i. moving slowly and heavily, often with a rolling motion
- j. damaged by moths; old and worn out
- k. wide open
- l. a feeling of worry or anxiety about something
- m. not reacting or responding actively; accepting without resistance
- n. in a way that shows a strong, urgent need or feeling
- o. a slight feeling of dislike or distaste

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.

If the statement is false, correct it and make it true.

1. The old lady tells the narrator that Charlie is her husband.
2. The old lady's husband died more than fifteen years ago.
3. The narrator immediately understands who Charlie is.
4. The old lady says Charlie is always close to her heart.
5. The narrator plans to sit downstairs with the old lady when the bus arrives.
6. The old lady says she believes in spiritual connections with loved ones.
7. The narrator's visits to see his parents have become increasingly infrequent.
8. The old lady begins to cry heavily when talking about Charlie.

9. Charlie turns out to be a human being the old lady once loved romantically.

10. At the end of the story, the old lady reveals a taxidermied cat worn as a scarf.

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: *submissive, tearful, worry, rare, hairy, leaned, thoughtless, wide-open, swore, urgently*

1. concern → _____

2. desperately → _____

3. passive → _____

4. inconsiderate → _____

5. weepy → _____

6. cursed → _____

7. furry → _____

8. gaping → _____

9. tilted → _____

10. infrequent → _____

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: *active, closed, indifferently, considerate, dull grey, frequent, hairless, cheerful, strode, indifference*

1. concern → _____

2. passive → _____

3. inconsiderate → _____

4. weepy → _____

5. furry → _____

6. gaping → _____

7. infrequent → _____

8. dearly → _____

9. stumbled → _____

10. brilliant white → _____

Words and Meanings

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

1. mumbo-jumbo
2. hit the nail on the head
3. in the flesh
4. my pride and joy
5. loose change
6. tiny flat
7. moth-eaten
8. awkward pause
9. secret lover
10. long-lost

Meanings:

- a. an uncomfortable silence during a conversation
- b. a romantic partner kept hidden from others

- c. confusing or meaningless talk, especially about spiritual or supernatural ideas
- d. not seen or heard from for a long time
- e. someone or something a person is extremely proud of
- f. in person, physically present, rather than in an image or description
- g. a very small apartment
- h. damaged by small holes, typically from insects, and old-looking
- i. small coins carried in a pocket or purse
- j. said or done exactly right, capturing the truth of a situation

Gap Fill Exercise

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

Word Box: *cleared my throat, desperately, mild disgust, sobbing, glare, cursed, tilted, trundling, unbuttoned, paws, infrequent, dearly*

1. He _____ before starting his speech, trying to calm his nerves.
2. She searched _____ for her lost keys, checking every pocket twice.
3. A look of _____ crossed his face when he saw the mess in the kitchen.
4. The child was _____ uncontrollably after dropping her ice cream.
5. The teacher gave the noisy students a stern _____ from across the room.

6. He _____ under his breath when he stubbed his toe on the table.

7. She _____ her head to one side, confused by the strange noise.

8. The old cart came _____ slowly down the cobbled street.

9. He _____ his coat before stepping into the warm café.

10. The dog's _____ left muddy prints all across the kitchen floor.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the old lady wear around her neck?
2. Why would she wear such a thing?
3. Do you think she is crazy? Or does she really love Charlie and miss him?
4. What does the little old lady mean when she says, “He's always with me”?
5. Why does the old lady believe that Charlie is with her? Is her Charlie literally with her in body and soul? Or just his body? Or what?
6. In your opinion, what does the young man talking to her think about the old lady?
7. How does the narrator's attitude towards the old lady change throughout the story?
8. Describe the old lady's emotional connection to Charlie.
9. Why does the old lady believe that young people are “too inconsiderate”?
10. Is this true today, do you think?
11. Do you think more of yourself than others?

12. What do you think of the narrator's own life?
13. Do you think he is happy?
14. Does he have enough other people in his life?
15. Why do you think the old lady carries Charlie with her all the time?
16. How does the old lady's attachment to Charlie compare to other forms of companionship?
17. Discuss the theme of love and companionship in the story.
18. How does the story make you reflect on your own relationships and attachments?
19. Do you have enough friends in your life?
20. Do you have a good relationship with your family and friends?
21. Why does the old lady hold on to Charlie all the time?
22. Why can't she just let him go?
23. Do you believe in the possibility of a deep, emotional connection with an object or pet? Why or why not?
24. Can people become so attached to a pet cat or dog?

25. Do you know anyone who loves their pet cat or dog very dearly?

26. Who or what do you love unconditionally? Talk about this person or thing. Why do you love this person or thing so much?

27. Do you have a pet? How much love is there between you and your pet?

28. When your pet dies, what will you do? How will you remember this pet?

29. Some people have their pets stuffed and keep them in their house. What do you think about this?

30. Some people have special gravestones made for their pets when they die. What do you think about this?

31. Is it crazy to be so attached to an animal?

32. Do pets have as much love for their owners?

Role Play: A Strange Encounter

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in the role play.

1. The Narrator
2. His Friend

The Situation

The day after the bus stop encounter, the narrator tells his one close friend what happened with the old lady and Charlie.

His friend must decide whether to take the story seriously, laugh it off as a funny anecdote, or gently point out something uncomfortable it revealed about the narrator's own isolated life — the old lady's words about being “too caught up in your own life” and “inconsiderate.”

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 Keeping a Taxidermied Pet a Healthy Way to Grieve?

The Motion

“This house believes that keeping a taxidermied pet is a strange and unhealthy way to grieve, not a loving tribute.”

Option A — Full Two-Team Debate

Divide the class into two teams.

Team A — For the Motion

You must argue that keeping a deceased pet's body, such as through taxidermy, is an unhealthy way to process grief — that it can prevent someone from truly letting go and moving on with their life.

Team B — Against the Motion

You must argue that grief is deeply personal, and that if keeping a physical reminder of a beloved pet brings someone comfort, it is not anyone else's place to judge how they choose to remember and honour that bond.

Preparation (10 minutes)

Each team should prepare their arguments. Think about:

- Is the old lady in the story coping with her loss, or unable to move past it?
- Are there “healthier” and “less healthy” ways to grieve, or is any method acceptable if it helps the person?
- How does society usually react to unconventional forms of grief? Is that reaction fair?
- What might the old lady's life look like if she didn't have Charlie with her?

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.

The Perfect Pet

This is a presentation exercise.

Get into groups of four students. Then choose one of the animals below.

Cat • Dog • Bird • Spider • Fish • Turtle • Elephant • Tiger • Snake • Rat

No group can choose the same animal!

You should now make a presentation about this animal, and why it would make the perfect pet.

Think of all the advantages of having this animal as a pet and try to convince the rest of the class why they should have this animal as a pet.

For example, maybe you have a horse as a pet.

The advantages could be:

- You can ride the horse to school

- The horse is not dangerous and likes people to stroke his nose and feed him
- The horse lives outside so it is a very healthy pet to look after — lots of fresh air and being outside
- The horse eats healthy food so this could encourage you to eat healthy too

When your group has finished making your presentation, the rest of the class should ask you questions about keeping your animal as a pet.

In your groups, take some time to think of all the advantages of keeping your chosen animal as a pet.

Then present to the class.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

Write a poem about an animal.

Your poem can be in any style you like.

It might be a good idea to make the poem rhyme. This will help you with the sound of English words and how they work together.

When you have finished your poem, read it out in front of your class.

Reading Comprehension Questions — Answers

1. The narrator and the little old lady.
2. Silvery-blue.
3. Charlie.
4. Dead.
5. Over fifteen years.
6. At a bus stop.
7. No, just an empty road.
8. Awkward and unsure how to respond.
9. Charlie was the love of her life, her one and only true love.
10. Go upstairs on the bus to avoid talking to the old lady.
11. He wants to avoid more uncomfortable conversation.
12. A thick coat and a scarf that looks like it's made of fur.
13. Yes, there's an icy breeze.
14. No, she says she doesn't believe in “spiritual mumbo-jumbo.”
15. She says he is really with her, not in a spiritual way.
16. Have a hot bath.

17. No, she says, “You don't believe me, do you?”
18. No, he finds it uncomfortable and wants the conversation to end.
19. They're too caught up in their own lives and inconsiderate.
20. Lonely and isolated. He lives alone, rarely sees his parents, and has only one friend.
21. No.
22. Back in college.
23. He lives alone.
24. One.
25. No, his visits are becoming more infrequent.
26. She is overwhelmed with grief and love for Charlie.
27. A lot — she is sobbing.
28. She uses a handkerchief from her handbag.
29. Her heart/chest area.
30. Charlie was not a man or a human being.
31. A furry scarf.
32. A cat.
33. Yes, the bus is coming down the road.

34. Loose change.

35. He calls him “a very special cat.”

36. To show him Charlie.

37. A picture of Charlie.

38. She unbuttons it to reveal Charlie.

39. Charlie is a taxidermied cat worn as a scarf: fur, four legs with paws, a tail, a head with moth-eaten ears, glass bead eyes, and a gaping jaw with blackened teeth.

40. By wearing him around her neck all the time.

41. A dead, taxidermied cat.

42. Around the old lady's neck.

43. The story ends with the old lady revealing the taxidermied cat as Charlie. The narrator is shocked and speechless.

True or False — Answers

1. False. In fact, she reacts with mild disgust and says, “My husband? No.”
2. True.
3. False. In fact, he has no idea who Charlie is at first.
4. True.
5. False. In fact, he plans to go upstairs on the bus to avoid more conversation with her.
6. False. In fact, she says she doesn't believe in “spiritual mumbo-jumbo.”
7. True.
8. True.
9. False. In fact, Charlie turns out to be her taxidermied pet cat.
10. True.

What is the Correct Synonym? — Answers

1. concern = worry
2. desperately = urgently
3. passive = submissive
4. inconsiderate = thoughtless
5. weepy = tearful
6. cursed = swore
7. furry = hairy
8. gaping = wide-open
9. tilted = leaned
10. infrequent = rare

What is the Correct Antonym? — Answers

1. concern ↔ indifference
2. passive ↔ active
3. inconsiderate ↔ considerate
4. weepy ↔ cheerful
5. furry ↔ hairless
6. gaping ↔ closed
7. infrequent ↔ frequent
8. dearly ↔ indifferently
9. stumbled ↔ strode
10. brilliant white ↔ dull grey

Words and Meanings — Answers

1. mumbo-jumbo = confusing or meaningless talk, especially about spiritual or supernatural ideas
2. hit the nail on the head = said or done exactly right, capturing the truth of a situation
3. in the flesh = in person, physically present, rather than in an image or description
4. my pride and joy = someone or something a person is extremely proud of
5. loose change = small coins carried in a pocket or purse
6. tiny flat = a very small apartment
7. moth-eaten = damaged by small holes, typically from insects, and old-looking
8. awkward pause = an uncomfortable silence during a conversation
9. secret lover = a romantic partner kept hidden from others
10. long-lost = not seen or heard from for a long time

Gap Fill Exercise — Answers

1. cleared my throat
2. desperately
3. mild disgust
4. sobbing
5. glare
6. cursed
7. tilted
8. trundling
9. unbuttoned
10. paws

Vocabulary Practice Exercise — Answers

1. l (a feeling of worry or anxiety about something)
2. m (not reacting or responding actively; accepting without resistance)
3. n (in a way that shows a strong, urgent need or feeling)
4. o (a slight feeling of dislike or distaste)
5. a (an uncomfortable moment of silence in a conversation)
6. b (language or ideas that seem meaningless or confusing)
7. c (a cold, light wind)
8. d (not thinking about the feelings or needs of others)
9. e (tending to cry easily or often)
10. f (crying loudly with deep, uneven breaths)
11. g (a long, angry, or fierce look)
12. h (covered with fur)
13. i (moving slowly and heavily, often with a rolling motion)
14. j (damaged by moths; old and worn out)
15. k (wide open)

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