
Just
Leave

Table of Contents

Introductory Questions.....3
Just Leave.....4
Reading Comprehension Questions.....12
Essential Vocabulary.....14
Discussion Questions.....16
Role Play.....17
How To Leave Where You Are.....18
Writing.....20
Reading Comprehension Answer Key.....21
Credits.....23

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Introductory Questions

1. Have you ever felt tempted to just pack your bags and leave?

2. Are you happy where you are right now? Or would you like to just walk out and leave?

3. What would be the consequences if you left right now?

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Just Leave

Kevin got to his feet.

He looked around the office at all of his colleagues working inside their cubicles and cleared his throat.

“I’m going,” he said.

A couple of his co-workers looked up at him.

Kevin shoved his chair away from the desk, pulled on his jacket, and walked out of his cubicle.

Frank – Kevin’s closest colleague and now a good friend – stood by his own cubicle.

“Where are you going?” he said.

“I just have to get out of here,” said Kevin, shaking his head.

He didn’t make eye contact with Frank. He just wanted to leave.

“You can’t just go,” said Frank, a smile spreading across his face.

“Watch me,” said Kevin. “I’m leaving.”

Frank gestured to the other people in the office.

Kevin made his way to the exit, and Frank hurried after him, snapping his fingers at the others to follow.

Frank called out after Kevin.

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“Kevin. We can talk about this. No need to be like this.”

His tone was patronising and demeaning. Kevin ignored it. At the lift, he stabbed at the button with his finger.

But there was no light to show that the lift was in service.

Kevin pulled the fire door open and went down the stairs.

Just as he reached the bottom of the first flight of stairs, the door opened again and Frank followed with the other office staff.

“Kevin! Stop! You can’t just walk out of here!”

Kevin rushed down the stairs. He reached the lobby of the building and marched towards the front exit.

Two security guards blocked his way.

“Excuse me, sir. I can’t let you leave.”

They raised their hands to block his path, but Kevin dodged past them and out of the door.

It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining, and the sky was blue.

A perfect day for leaving.

His co-workers bundled out onto the street, led by Frank.

“Kevin, where are you going? You can’t just leave!”

Kevin ignored them. The sun felt good on his face. The air felt fresh and clean.

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A sign pointed towards the harbour, with a small logo of a ship beside it.

Kevin marched down the street.

A passer-by pointed at Kevin and looked towards Frank.

“Where is he going?” he called out.

“He’s trying to leave,” said Frank. “We have to stop him.”

As Kevin walked down the street, other people began to notice him.

They called out after him.

“Kevin! Where are you going?”

Kevin didn’t look back. He kept marching forward.

“I’m leaving,” he said quietly to himself.

The growing crowd howled as one. The mob grew bigger.

Shopkeepers, street sweepers, an elderly man out walking his dog – they all joined Frank and the other office workers.

Soon there were thirty people or more.

“Stop!” they cried. “You can’t leave!”

A woman ran up to Frank in the crowd.

“You have to stop him! He’s going to the ferry terminal... He wants to get on the ferry!”

Frank nodded at her and rushed forward to grab Kevin’s arm.

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He pulled at Kevin's elbow, spinning him around to face him.

"Stop this stupid game right now, Kevin. Enough of this. Let's go back to the office."

Kevin spun around but didn't fall. He yanked his arm free and glared at Frank.

"I'm leaving," he said. "I've had enough of this place. I have to get out of here."

Kevin continued down the hill. More signs for the ferry terminal appeared beside the road.

"I have been here for too long," said Kevin. "I should have done this a long time ago."

The crowd grew bigger and bigger. People poured out of shops and houses.

They stopped what they were doing and ran after the crowd.

The crowd streamed past a cafe. A man enjoying a quiet cup of coffee saw the commotion and rose to his feet. He joined the mob in the street.

Soon there were so many of them that they filled the street.

A man ran ahead of Kevin.

"We have to stop him," the man called out. "I'm going to run down to those police. They will help us."

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Ahead, two police officers stood by the side of the road.

Frank sidled up to Kevin, his voice low and threatening.

“You won’t be able to leave now,” he said. “The police will stop you.”

The crowd let out a cheer as the man ran up to talk to the police.

But Kevin continued walking towards the harbour. He clenched his teeth and thought about what he would say to the two police officers if they stopped him.

As he neared the two officers, he saw the man talking to them excitedly. One officer nodded and started walking towards Kevin.

“Excuse me, sir,” he said. “Where are you going?”

Kevin stopped. The crowd milled around behind him.

“I’m leaving this place,” he said. “I’m going to the ferry terminal.”

The police officer looked back at the other officer. The second officer stared blankly at Kevin.

The first officer stepped forward and held out his hand to Kevin.

“That is not a good idea, sir. I think you should go back to your office and stay there.”

Kevin stood his ground. He didn’t move.

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“Are you telling me or asking me?” he said.

The officer looked at his colleague a second time. The second officer took one step towards Kevin.

“We are advising you, sir. Please don’t make any trouble.”

The crowd surged behind him. Their voices rose in protest.

“You must stop him!” they called out as one. “Make him stop! He cannot leave!”

Kevin let out a quiet laugh.

“You can’t stop me, can you? If you could stop me, you would.”

He walked down the hill towards the ferry. He stepped between the two officers. Neither one tried to stop him. They just stared as he walked past them.

The crowd let out a gasp of fear.

Kevin walked faster and faster, then broke into a run. He ran the last few metres to the ferry terminal.

Soon he was right in front of the ferry itself. A steel-mesh walkway led from the harbour wall to the boat.

No crew members were visible. Just the boat.

Kevin ran up the walkway and gripped the railing. From here, he could see the town clearly: the road that led uphill through the middle of the town and straight up to the building that

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housed his office.

The crowd stood on the harbour. He could see his work colleagues, shop owners, bank staff, the two police officers, and many local people from the town.

“Come back down here,” called out a woman. “You cannot leave.”

“None of us leaves,” cried another man.

“Why not?” asked Kevin. “Why do you all stay here?”

“We have no choice,” said another. “We must stay here. It’s just the way it is.”

Kevin shook his head.

“You can all leave. We can all leave. Any time we want.”

The ferry let out a blast from its horn, and the engine roared into life.

Then the ferry pulled away from the harbour wall and chugged out towards the sea.

Kevin gazed back at the crowd. They stared back at him, their faces twisted in despair.

“We can all go any time we want,” said Kevin to himself.

Soon the crowd became smaller and smaller. The harbour drifted further and further into the distance.

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Then Kevin could no longer see it at all.

It had all just disappeared.

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Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the main character in this story?
2. Where does he work?
3. Who is Frank?
4. Where did Kevin go?
5. Who follows him out of the office?
6. What suggests that the lift is not in service?
7. How does Kevin leave?
8. Who tries to stop Kevin in the lobby of the building?
9. What is the weather like outside?
10. What sign does Kevin see on the street?
11. What other people follow Kevin outside?
12. How many people are in the crowd following Kevin?
13. Where is Kevin going?
14. What does Frank do to stop Kevin from leaving? What does he say to him?
15. Who does one man in the crowd talk to? Why does he want to talk to them?
16. Do the police officers stop Kevin?
17. How does Kevin respond?

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18. What does Kevin see in the harbour?

19. How does he board the ferry?

20. Are any crew members visible on the ferry?

21. What can he see from the ferry?

22. What does a woman call out to Kevin?

23. What sound does the ferry make?

24. What does Kevin see as the ferry leaves?

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Essential Vocabulary

colleagues	excuse me	advising you
cubicles	beautiful day	trouble
cleared his throat	harbour	gasp of fear
shoved his chair away	logo	run (verb)
walked out	passer-by	railing
closest colleague	terminal	town
patronising and demeaning	nodded at	local people
lift (elevator)	glared at	harbour wall
fire door	commotion	chugged out
stairs	rose to his feet	gazed back
lobby	police officers	twisted in despair
security guards	stared blankly	disappeared

Exercise

There may be a lot of new or unfamiliar vocabulary to you in the story. This is the perfect time to get to know these new and strange words and phrases.

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

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the meaning next to the word or
phrase.

It should look something like this:

Colleagues – *people that you work with in the same job or work location.*

To clear one's throat – *to make a sound in one's throat to gain attention or speak more clearly.*

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

I get on very well with all my colleagues apart from one person.

The man went to the front of the room and cleared his throat. Everyone looked up at him.

If you do this correctly, it will help you learn many new words and phrases. This will build your
English vocabulary and writing down all the words and phrases, making sentences of your own,
will all help you to remember all of this new vocabulary.

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening.

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Discussion Questions

1. What is this story about? Say in your own words what the story is about.

2. Why does Kevin want to leave the place he is in? What do you think made Kevin want to do this?

3. Where is Kevin? What kind of place is it? Why are the other people there?

4. Do all the people in this place like living there? Why/why not?

5. Why do they want Kevin to stay in this place?

6. Have you ever had thoughts like Kevin?

7. Have you ever wanted to just get up and leave a place you are in? Why? What happened?

8. Do you want to leave where you are right now? Why/why not?

9. If you could leave where you are right now, how would you do it?

10. And where would you go?

11. Why would you go to this place?

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Role Play

This is a role play activity with two characters.

Kevin

Frank

Imagine one of you is Kevin, and you have arrived in a new place. You are happy and glad you left the place you were in with Frank before.

Then one day, Frank calls you. He asks you to come back. You say no, and you give him all the reasons why.

You can say why the new place is better and how it is better.

And you give all the reasons why the old place is not good for your life.

But Frank tries to convince you to come back. He is very persistent.

Take some time to prepare your role play.

Then when you are ready, you can show the class.

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How To Leave Where You Are

This is a presentation activity.

You want to leave where you are now. It doesn't matter why you want to leave, but you have decided to leave.

Think about the steps you need to take to leave.
How will you leave the place you are in? And what do you need to do to leave?

For example, maybe you want to leave where you are now and climb a mountain in Nepal.
How would you do it?
And what steps would you take?

1. I would read some books about mountain climbing and Nepal.
2. I would go to the hospital and ask a doctor if I am physically fit enough to climb a mountain.
3. I would buy the right clothing and equipment I need to climb a mountain.
4. I would tell all my family and friends where I am going and when.
5. I would book a flight to Nepal.
6. I would pack my bags.
7. I would go to the airport and leave.

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You are going to make a brief presentation about leaving where you are and going somewhere else.

Tell the class what you would do and the steps you would need to follow.

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Writing

You have left and gone to a new place. You have gone on a great adventure that has changed your life.

Now write a letter to an old friend that still lives in the old place.

Tell them why you left and where you are now.
Tell them how you got there. Maybe it took a long time. Maybe it was very easy. Or very difficult.

Write your letter as homework.

Now read it out in front of your class.

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Reading Comprehension Answer Key

1. Kevin is the main character.

2. He works in an office, in a cubicle.

3. Frank is Kevin's closest colleague and a good friend.

4. Kevin leaves his cubicle and heads for the office exit.

5. Frank and the other office staff follow him.

6. There is no light to show that the lift is in service.

7. He opens the fire door and goes down the stairs.

8. Two security guards try to stop him.

9. It is a beautiful day. The sun is shining and the sky is blue.

10. He sees a sign pointing towards the harbour, with a small ship logo beside it.

11. Shopkeepers, street sweepers and an elderly man walking his dog join the office workers. More townspeople join later.

12. At first there are thirty people or more. The crowd keeps growing until it fills the street.

13. He is going to the ferry terminal to leave the town by ferry.

14. Frank grabs Kevin's arm and pulls at his elbow, spinning him around. He tells him to stop the "stupid game" and go back to the office.

15. He talks to two police officers because he wants them to stop Kevin from leaving.

16. No. They advise him to return to his office, but neither officer prevents him from walking past.

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17. Kevin stands his ground and asks whether the officer is telling him or asking him. He then laughs quietly, says they cannot stop him and walks between the officers.

18. He sees a ferry, with a steel-mesh walkway leading from the harbour wall to the boat.

19. He runs up the steel-mesh walkway.

20. No. No crew members are visible.

21. He can see the town, the road leading uphill to his office building and the crowd at the harbour.

22. She calls, “Come back down here” and “You cannot leave.”

23. The ferry lets out a blast from its horn. Its engine then roars into life.

24. He sees the crowd staring back, their faces twisted in despair. The crowd and harbour grow more distant until he can no longer see them.

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