
THE TAXI

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Introductory Questions

1. Have you ever had a strange experience in a taxi?
2. Has the driver always taken you where you wanted to go?
3. Where do you need to go?

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The Taxi

“Where do you need to go?”

Sam blinked for a second as he flopped into the back seat of the taxi.

Strange thing to say. Usually, any other taxi driver would say, *Where to? Or where do you want to go?*

“Berkeley Street. Just by the garage.”

Sam rested his head back and closed his eyes for a second. He couldn’t wait to get home and go to bed. These long days were killing him.

He opened his eyes again. The taxi sat still and motionless on the dark, deserted street.

Sam leaned forward a little.

“Driver?”

In the front, a dark figure, his two big hands on the steering wheel. A cap pulled down low over his eyes.

“Berkeley Street, just by the…”

“I heard you the first time,” said the driver.

“Okay, it’s been a long day,” said Sam. “I just need to…”

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“And I’ll ask you again: Where do you need to go?”

Sam blinked. What was this?

“I just told you. Twice in fact.”

The driver stared ahead. The car engine rumbled beneath them.

“No. You told me where you want to go. That’s not where you need to go.”

Sam’s eyes fixed on the back of the driver’s head. He could only make out the man’s jacket collar pulled up around his neck. The cap pulled down to his ears. He could not see one feature of the man in front.

“All right, thanks anyway.”

Sam grabbed his bag and pulled at the door handle. But the door didn’t open. He yanked at the handle a couple of times, but the door remained closed.

Childproof locks. To stop a kid from opening the door. Or anyone, for that matter.

“Listen, let me out. I’ll get another cab somewhere else.”

The driver didn’t move.

“Tell me where you need to go.”

“I need to get out of this taxi,” said Sam. “Before I call the

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police.”

No movement from the driver.

Sam pulled out his phone and swiped the screen. Nothing. He swiped again. He tapped the screen. Maybe out of juice. He could have sworn he had a full battery earlier. He swiped again, but nothing.

“Just let me out here, please,” he said to the driver. “I think there’s been a misunderstanding.”

The driver spoke again. “Tell me where you need to go.” Each word emphasised.

Sam looked out the side window. Opposite, a row of shops, all closed. He turned in his seat to look behind him and saw the street disappearing into the darkness.

Not a soul around. No one.

“Look, I’m sorry, but I don’t know what this is about. If you want my money, I’ve got some in my wallet. You can have that and…”

The driver tilted his head.

“Where do you need to go?”

Sam stared ahead. Through the window of the front of the taxi, he could make out the deserted street. The lights on either side,

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illuminating the sidewalk with conical shapes.

He turned, panic flooding through his veins, and yanked at the door handle. Pulled at it several times until it snapped off in his hand.

He banged at the window with his fists.

“Let me out of here. Let me out right now.”

The driver didn’t flinch. His body rigid in the front seat.

Sam fell back into the rear seat, his breath coming out of him in short bursts. He blinked away the tears that filled his eyes, wiped away the salty sting from his eyelids.

“What do you want?” he said, his voice coming out in a hoarse whisper.

“Where do you need to go?”

“I need to go home,” said Sam. “I need to get home and sleep. I’ve been working all day, and I am tired. I need to go home.”

“That’s where you want to go,” said the driver. “But think. Think carefully. Where do you need to go?”

Sam opened his mouth to speak, but the driver raised his right hand to stop him.

"No. Think. Think carefully now. Where do you really need to go tonight? What is the one place that you need to go?"

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Sam sat frozen in the back.

Where did he need to go?

He thought about it and could not think of one possible answer. He needed to be home. That was where he needed to be.

He wasn't tired. He was exhausted. He needed to get inside his own apartment, have a shower, a cup of hot tea and then bed.

He needed sleep. That was what he needed.

But he could not speak.

The car engine hummed beneath him and the driver sat in front, unmoving.

Then it came to him.

Sam's mouth fell open.

His face dropped and his eyes closed.

That was where he needed to be.

The car engine purred. And the driver sat still in the front.

Sam opened his mouth, but no words came. The driver cleared his throat.

"Where do you need to go?"

Sam raised his eyes to the rear-view mirror. He could just make out the driver's own eyes. Steely grey, no emotion inside them.

Sam leaned forward and whispered the address to the driver.

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The driver nodded, put the car into gear, and slowly drove down the street.

Sam stared outside. The cold, grey windows he had walked past a thousand times on his way to the office. Windows that he may never see again.

Colleagues in his office he may never talk to again.

But he had to go.

It was where he needed to go, and he had put it off for so long.

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Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Who is the main character of the story?
2. Where does the story take place?
3. What time of day is it?
4. Why is Sam taking a taxi?
5. Where does Sam want to go?
6. What has he been doing?
7. What does the taxi driver ask Sam instead of the usual question?
8. What is unusual about the taxi driver's question at the beginning of the story?
9. How does the description of the driver's appearance create suspense?
10. What distinction does the driver make between where Sam wants to go and where he needs to go?
11. How does the taxi driver's behaviour contribute to the tension in the story?
12. Why can’t Sam see the driver’s facial features at first?
13. Why does Sam get frustrated with the driver?

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14. What does Sam try to do in order to escape the taxi?

15. How does Sam's attempt to use his phone add to the feeling of helplessness?

16. What happens when Sam tries to open the taxi door?

17. Does Sam see anyone else on the street?

18. Is the car engine on or off?

19. What is the driver wearing?

20. Why can’t Sam open the door?

21. What happens when Sam tries to use his phone, and what does he think might be wrong?

22. What does Sam do when he realises his phone isn’t working?

23. How does Sam react when the driver asks him where he needs to go?

24. Why does Sam feel a sense of panic when he looks outside and sees the deserted street?

25. Does the driver accept Sam’s home address as the place he needs to go?

26. What is opposite the taxi?

27. What does Sam offer the driver?

28. What does Sam want to do when he gets home?

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29. How can Sam see the driver’s eyes?

30. Why can't Sam answer the driver's question at first?

31. How does Sam finally come up with an answer?

32. What is Sam's realisation towards the end of the story?

33. Does the story reveal Sam’s final destination?

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Essential Vocabulary

Deserted	Childproof locks	Yanked at the handle
Strange	Walked past	Pulled out his phone
Closed his eyes	Emphasised	Wiped away the salty sting
The car engine hummed	Flinch	Banged at the window
Flopped	Exhausted	Put the car into gear
Where to?	Cleared his throat	Usually
Blink	Hoarse whisper	Out of juice
Motionless	Rigid	Rested
Put it off	Disappearing	Panic flooding
Conical	Garage	Rear-view mirror
Steely grey		

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

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Deserted — describes a place where there are no people.

Strange — *refers to something that is unfamiliar, unusual, or different from what is commonly expected or understood.*

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

The streets were deserted when I walked home late at night.

The clouds in the sky created a strange shape that I had not seen before.

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 kind of story is this?
2. Is this a supernatural story? Or a real-life event?
3. How would you feel if you were in Sam's situation?
4. Have you ever had a strange experience in a taxi or another type of transportation?
5. Explain your reasons.
6. Who — or what — is the driver?
7. Is he real? Or a supernatural being?
8. Explain your reasons.
9. What do you think the driver symbolises in the story?
10. Why do you think the driver kept asking Sam where he needed to go?
11. Why do you think Sam couldn't initially answer the driver's question about where he needed to go?
12. What might have been holding Sam back from acknowledging where he truly needed to be?
13. What is the difference between where you want to go and where you need to go?

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14. What do you think the driver meant by "Where do you need to go?" Is it different from where you want to go?
15. Why do you think the driver keeps repeating this question to Sam?
16. What do you think prevented Sam from leaving the taxi?
17. Where do you think Sam needs to go?
18. At the end of the story, Sam whispers the address to the driver. Where do you think they go?
19. How did Sam's perspective change by the end of the story?
20. How does the story build suspense and tension as it progresses?
21. How does the setting of a dark and deserted street contribute to the story's atmosphere?
22. How does the limited description of the driver add to the mystery of the story?
23. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt trapped or unable to leave?
24. Where do you need to go?
25. Think about where you need to go in your life right now. Try to think of three places that you need to go to. Tell the class about these places and why you need to go there.

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26. Have you ever been so focused on what you want that you neglect what you actually need?
27. How does the concept of "want" versus "need" play a role in our decision-making?
28. Can you relate to Sam's exhaustion after a long day of work? How do you unwind after a tiring day?
29. Are people in so much of a hurry in their lives that they only think about their immediate desires in life?
30. Why don’t they think about what they really need in life?
31. Think of three things you want and three things you need.
32. Now tell the class.
33. What is the difference in these things?
34. Can you help someone you know with what they need in life? Can they help you? Why/why not?

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The Story Continues…

This is a group exercise.

Divide into groups of three or four students. Work together and think of possible conclusions to the story.

For example, Sam could end up in the following places:

- **Hell**
- **A cemetery to visit his grandfather's grave**
- **The house of a long-lost friend**
- **To meet an enemy and make amends**

It could be anywhere!

In your groups, think of a place where Sam is taken by the mysterious driver.

Then make a story out of this situation.

When you are ready, tell the story to the class as one group. Each person should tell one part of the story.

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Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

The title of the story is:

Where Sam Needs To Be

Write the ending to this story. You can write any ending you want — use your imagination!

When you have finished your story, read it out loud in class. ***Or you can hand it to your teacher for review.***

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Reading Comprehension Questions Answer Key

Suggested answers. Accept equivalent wording. Interpretations of the driver and the final destination are open to discussion.

1. The name of the main character is Sam.

2. The story takes place inside a taxi on a dark, deserted street. The taxi eventually begins to move.

3. It is night; the street is dark, and the driver refers to “tonight”.

4. He has been working all day and wants to get home because he is exhausted.

5. Sam wants to go to his home on Berkeley Street, just by the garage.

6. He has been working all day.

7. The taxi driver asks Sam, “Where do you need to go?”

8. The driver asks where Sam needs to go rather than where he wants to go or simply “Where to?”

9. His cap and raised jacket collar hide his facial features, making him difficult to identify and his intentions uncertain.

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10. The driver says that Sam's chosen destination is where he wants to go, but insists that there is somewhere else he needs to go.

11. He remains still, repeats his question, refuses to let Sam out and shows no reaction to Sam's panic.

12. The driver's cap is pulled down and his jacket collar is pulled up, hiding his features. Sam is also sitting behind him.

13. He has given his destination twice, but the driver will not drive there and keeps repeating his question.

14. He pulls and yanks at the door handle and bangs on the window with his fists.

15. His phone does not respond, so he cannot use it to call the police or ask for help.

16. The door stays closed. Later, after he pulls the handle repeatedly, it snaps off in his hand.

17. Sam does not see anyone else on the street; it is deserted.

18. It is on. Sam hears it rumbling, humming and purring.

19. The driver is wearing a jacket with its collar pulled up and a cap pulled down low.

20. The story identifies childproof locks as the reason the door will not open.

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21. The screen does not respond when he swipes or taps it. He thinks the battery might be flat, although he believes it was full earlier. The actual cause is not confirmed.

22. He asks the driver to let him out and says there may have been a misunderstanding. He then looks outside and offers the driver money.

23. At first he is confused and frustrated. As the driver persists, he becomes frightened and panics. Eventually he thinks carefully and whispers an address.

24. There is nobody nearby to help him or notice that he is trapped.

25. The driver does not accept Sam's home address as the place he needs to go. He says that home is where Sam wants to go and asks him to think about where he needs to go.

26. A row of closed shops is opposite the taxi.

27. Sam offers the driver the money in his wallet.

28. He wants to have a shower, drink a cup of hot tea and go to bed.

29. He sees them in the rear-view mirror.

30. He is exhausted and can initially think only of going home and sleeping.

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31. After thinking carefully, a destination suddenly comes to him. The story does not explain exactly what triggers this realisation.

32. He realises there is somewhere he needs to go and that he has put off going there for a long time.

33. The story does not reveal Sam’s final destination. Sam whispers an address and the driver sets off, but the destination is not revealed.

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