

Goat

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Word Work



Early in the story, when the narrator introduces us to Byron, he recalls the time he first met him. This was, clearly, further back in the past than the time of the narrative. The tense used to tell us it was another step back in time is the past perfect. Underline the examples of the past perfect in this extract.

I had first met Byron at a Bhundu Boys concert at the Town and County Club back in the mid-eighties. He claimed to have been a freedom fighter in Rhodesia, pre-Zimbabwe, before getting a British Council scholarship to come to England. I never quite believed him; he didn't seem to have the physique of a fighter. But then, maybe that's why he got a scholarship. What did I know about ZAPU and ZANU? Even Mugabe always looked pretty narrow-chested to me. I had lost touch with Byron for years until a few months ago when I bumped into him at the New Beacon. He had turned into a librarian and said he worked for the London borough of Haringey.

Here are some more excerpts from the text, this time from the conversation that the 'aunties' were having at the reception, recalling how Rehana had ruined Kaiser. They are presented in the past tense because Mrs Amarasekera is telling a story that is immediately in the past for her. If the narrator was reporting what Mrs Amarasekera had said, he would have used the past perfect.

'She led him on, you know. She just led him on until she got her hands on the house in Borella and then everything went phut.'

She had led him on. She had led him on until she had got her hands on the house in Borella and then everything had gone phut.

Make the necessary changes to the rest of the quotes to put them into the past perfect.

'Within eighteen months of the marriage she'd sold the front garden, then the back garden, and then the *house* - just because *she* wanted to come and pussyfoot in England. Kaiser went to pieces.'

'She left the poor boy and came here, pretending to study, and got involved with some German professor and stripped him of all his possessions.'

'Took him to the cleaners. The professor lost all his money. House, land, a fortune in Bavaria. Now she's gone to Middlesex.'
