CAPITOLO

9

Stories

"Marley was dead: to begin with." — Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol (1843)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can talk about the weather, storms and other natural events, and describe how people feel.
2. I can use *-ed* and *-ing* adjectives correctly (*bored / boring, frightened / frightening*).
3. I can use the past continuous to describe the background of a story and actions in progress in the past.
4. I can combine the past continuous and the past simple with *when* and *while*.
5. I can tell a story in order with time linkers, and react when somebody tells me a story.
6. I can write a short narrative with a beginning, a problem and an ending, using direct speech.

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Everybody loves a good story. We tell stories every day: what happened on the way to school, why we were late, what we saw on holiday, a funny thing that our little brother did. People told stories long before they could write, around fires on long winter nights, and today we still read them in books, watch them in films and share them on our phones. In Unit 8 you learnt the past simple, the tense of finished events in the past. But a good story needs more than a list of events: it needs a *scene* — the weather, the place, what people were doing when something happened. For this, English has a second past tense: the **past continuous**.

In this unit there is a wild spring storm in Bristol and a missing rabbit; Callum tells his friends about a very hungry seagull; Aoife gets lost in the Irish fog; and you discover why the British and the Irish tell ghost stories at Christmas.

9.1 Vocabulary: Weather, Feelings and Story Words

9.1.1 Weather and natural events

In Unit 5 you learnt to say what the weather is like (*It's sunny, it's windy, it's raining*). Stories often need stronger words. A **storm** *(ita: tempesta, temporale)* is a period of very bad weather with strong wind and heavy rain or snow. In a *thunderstorm* you also hear **thunder** /ˈθʌndə/, the loud noise in the sky, and you see **lightning** /ˈlaɪtnɪŋ/, the flash of electric light. When a river has too much water and covers the land, there is a **flood** /flʌd/. **Fog** is a thick cloud near the ground: when it is foggy, you can't see very far.

Tabella 9.1 Weather and natural events: nouns, adjectives and verbs

Noun	Adjective	Verb / typical phrase	Italiano
storm	stormy	A storm hit the city.	tempesta
thunder	thundery	It was thundering. / There was a crash of thunder.	tuono
lightning	—	Lightning hit a tree. / a flash of lightning	fulmine, lampo
fog / mist	foggy / misty	The fog came down.	nebbia / foschia
ice	icy	The roads were icy.	ghiaccio
frost	frosty	It was a frosty morning.	brina, gelo
hail	—	It was hailing.	grandine
flood	flooded	The river flooded the fields.	alluvione
gale	—	The wind was howling.	vento di burrasca
heavy rain / a shower	wet	It was pouring. (= raining very hard)	pioggia forte / acquazzone

Notice the spelling of the adjectives: noun + *-y* (*storm* → *stormy*, *fog* → *foggy*, with a double *g* after a short vowel), and *ice* → *icy* (drop the final *e*). We use **heavy**, not *strong*, with rain and snow (*heavy rain*), but *strong* with wind (*a strong wind*). With weather verbs the subject is always *it*: *It was snowing. It was pouring.* When the electricity stops because of a storm, there is a **power cut** *(ita: blackout, interruzione di corrente)* — AmE *power outage* — and you need a *torch* (AmE *flashlight*) or candles.

COLLEGAMENTI

Physics: how far away is the storm? Lightning and thunder happen at the same moment, but light travels at about 300,000 km per second, while sound in air travels at only about 343 metres per second (at 20 °C). So you see the flash almost immediately, and you hear the thunder later. Count the seconds between the flash and the crash: sound travels one kilometre in about 3 seconds (1,000 ÷ 343 ≈ 2.9). If you count 9 seconds, the storm is about 3 km away. If the time gets shorter, the storm is coming closer!

9.1.2 Feelings

The characters in a story are never just “happy” or “sad”. English has many words for feelings; Tabella 9.2 shows some of the most useful ones. You often use them with *be*, *feel*, *look* or *get*: *I felt*

nervous before the exam. She looked upset. We got worried.

Tabella 9.2 Words for feelings

Word	Meaning	Example
scared / frightened	afraid	Lily was scared of the thunder.
nervous	a little afraid before something important	I'm always nervous before a test.
worried	thinking about a problem a lot	Mum was worried because I was late.
upset	sad and a bit angry because something bad happened	He was upset when he lost his phone.
relieved	happy because a problem or a danger is over	We were relieved when we found the dog.
embarrassed	feeling silly in front of other people	I was embarrassed when I fell over in the canteen.
proud	happy about something good you or others did	My parents were proud of my results.
lonely	sad because you are alone	On my first day I felt lonely.
confused	not able to understand	The instructions were strange and I was confused.
furious	very angry	The coach was furious with the team.

Be careful with three of these words. *Nervous* is a false friend for Italian speakers: it means *agitato, in ansia*, not *nervoso* in the sense of "irritable"; if you are angry, say *annoyed* or *irritated*. **Relieved** means *sollevato* (from *relief*, *sollievo*), not *rilevato*. **Embarrassed** really does mean *imbarazzato*, but remember the spelling: double *r* and double *s*. Feeling words often take a preposition: *scared* ***of***, *worried* ***about***, *proud* ***of***, *angry* ***with*** a person.

9.1.3 Adjectives ending in *-ed* and *-ing*

Many adjectives of feeling come in pairs. The **-ed adjective** describes how a person **feels**; the **-ing adjective** describes the thing, the situation or the person that **causes** the feeling (Figura 9.1). *The film was boring, so I was bored. The match was exciting, and all the fans were excited.*

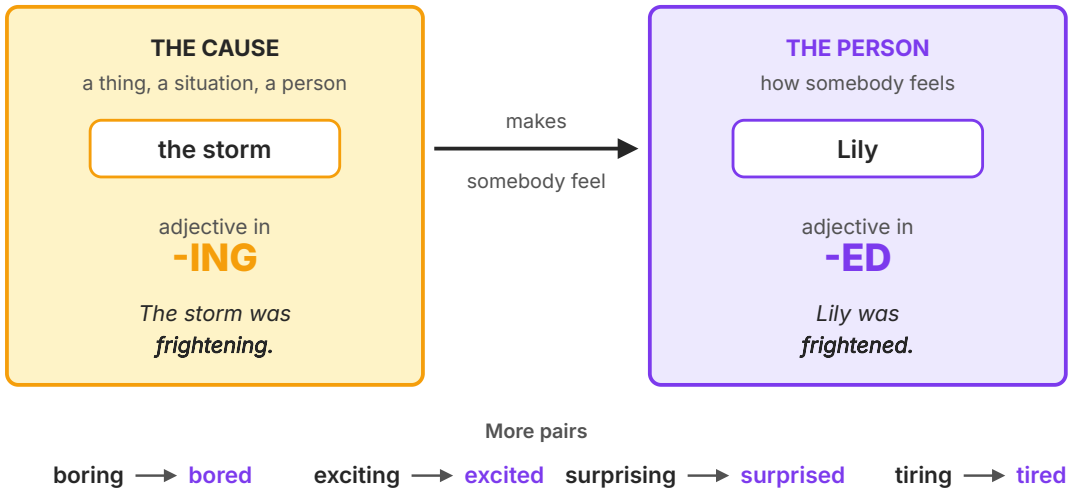

Figura 9.1 *-ing* and *-ed* adjectives. The *-ing* adjective describes the cause (the storm was frightening); the *-ed* adjective describes the feeling of the person (Lily was frightened).

Tabella 9.3 Common *-ed* / *-ing* pairs

The person feels...	The thing / situation is...	Italiano
bored	boring	annoiato / noioso
excited	exciting	emozionato, entusiasta / emozionante
interested (in)	interesting	interessato / interessante
frightened	frightening	spaventato / spaventoso
surprised	surprising	sorpreso / sorprendente
tired	tiring	stanco / faticoso
disappointed	disappointing	deluso / deludente
embarrassed	embarrassing	imbarazzato / imbarazzante
relaxed	relaxing	rilassato / rilassante
amazed	amazing	stupito / straordinario

ERRORE FREQUENTE

I'm boring o I'm bored? Gli aggettivi in *-ing* descrivono la **causa**, quelli in *-ed* la **sensazione**. Se dici *I'm boring*, dici che sei tu a far annoiare gli altri!
✗ *The lesson was very bored.* → ✓ *The lesson was very boring.*
✗ *I'm very interesting in history.* → ✓ *I'm very interested in history.*
Attenzione anche alla pronuncia della desinenza *-ed*, che segue le regole del *past simple* (Unit 8): *bored* /bɔːd/, *relaxed* /rɪˈlækst/, *excited* /ɪkˈsaɪtɪd/, *interested* /ˈɪntrəstɪd/.

9.1.4 Story words

To talk about a story, you need a few words of its own. The **characters** are the people (or animals) in the story; the main character is often called the *hero* or the *protagonist*. The **setting** is where and when the story happens. The **plot** *(ita: trama)* is the series of events. The person who tells the story is the *narrator*: a first-person narrator says *I*; a third-person narrator says *he, she, they*. A story usually ends with a happy ending, a sad ending or a *twist* (a surprise at the end).

Stories also need verbs that are more precise than *say*, *go* or *look*. People *whisper* (speak very quietly), *shout* or *scream* (with a loud, high voice, because they are frightened); they *rush* (go very quickly), *grab* something (take it quickly), *stare* (look for a long time) or *shiver* (shake because they are cold or scared). The wind *howls*, a door *bangs*, and the floor *creaks*.

DA RICORDARE

lightning (the flash in the sky, no *e*) ≠ **lightening** (making something lighter). **thunder** starts with the sound /θ/, like *think*. Weather adjectives: *storm* → *stormy, fog* → *foggy, ice* → *icy*. Rain is **heavy**, wind is **strong**.

9.2 Reading: The Night the Lights Went Out

Before you read. Have you ever been at home during a power cut? What did you do? Look at the title and the picture in your mind: what do you think happens in the story?

Giulia enjoys writing, and the Hillside Academy school magazine asked students for true stories. This is her story about a stormy night in May at the Taylors' house in Bristol.

The Night the Lights Went Out

by Giulia Ferraro

It was a Friday evening in early May, and a storm was coming. All afternoon the sky over Bristol was getting darker, and by seven o'clock the wind was blowing hard down Elm Road. Rain was hitting the windows like small stones.

At about half past nine the whole family was at home. Helen was reading on the sofa, Mark was washing the dishes and Josh was playing music in his room, as usual. Sam and I were doing a jigsaw puzzle on the living-room floor. Little Lily was still awake — the noise of the wind was too frightening — and she was sitting next to us in her pyjamas. She wasn't helping much: she was eating the pieces of sky.

Suddenly there was a flash of lightning, and a second later a huge crash of thunder shook the house. Lily screamed and started to cry. Then, while I was looking for a corner piece, the lights went out. The television went silent, the fridge stopped humming *(ita: ronzare)*, and even Josh's music died. For a moment nobody said a word. It was completely dark.

"Power cut," said Mark calmly. "Don't move, everybody. I'll find the torch."

We waited. Outside, the wind was howling, and something was banging against the fence. Lily was holding my arm very tightly. I was frightened too, but I didn't say anything.

At last a small yellow light appeared in the kitchen doorway. Mark was holding a torch in one hand and two candles in the other. As soon as Lily saw him, she started to cry again — but this time for a different reason.

"Biscuit!" she shouted. "Biscuit is in the garden!"

Biscuit is Lily's rabbit. His hutch *(ita: gabbia per conigli)* is at the end of the garden, next to the shed. Sam grabbed his coat, I took the torch, and we ran out into the storm. The rain was so heavy that I couldn't see the shed. The grass was like a lake, and my trainers were soon full of water. When we reached the hutch, the door was open. It was empty.

We searched everywhere: under the bushes, behind the bins, along the fence. We were shouting his name, but the wind was so loud that we couldn't hear our own voices. After ten minutes we were wet, cold and very worried. How could we go back and tell Lily?

Then Sam pointed at the shed. The door was banging in the wind, and inside, on an old bag of garden soil *(ita: terriccio)*, something small and brown was sitting perfectly still. It was Biscuit. He was dry and warm, and he was eating a piece of cardboard. He looked bored.

We carried him into the house, and Lily hugged him for about five minutes. The lights came back at eleven o'clock, but nobody blew out the candles. We sat together in the living room, listening to the rain and telling stories. In the end, it was one of the best evenings of my exchange.

The next morning Mark fixed the door of the hutch. And this time he locked it.

Language in context. Look at how Giulia builds the scene. The verbs in the **past continuous** (*was blowing, was reading, were doing, was howling*) describe the background: what was happening around the main events. The verbs in the **past simple** (*screamed, went out, grabbed, ran*) move the story forward. In *while I was looking for a corner piece, the lights went out*, a short action interrupts a longer one. And notice the time words that guide the reader: *suddenly, then, at last, as soon as, after ten minutes, in the end*. You study all of these in section 9.3.

9.3 Grammar: Past Continuous, *when / while*, Time Linkers

9.3.1 The past continuous

The **past continuous** is formed with the past of *be* (*was / were*) + the *-ing* form of the verb. It is the past "partner" of the present continuous that you studied in Unit 5: *I am reading → I was reading*. The spelling rules of the *-ing* form are the same (*make → making, swim → swimming, lie → lying*).

Tabella 9.4 Past continuous: form (*read*)

Affirmative	Negative	Questions	Short answers
I was reading.	I was not (wasn't) reading.	Was I reading?	Yes, I was. / No, I wasn't.
You were reading.	You were not (weren't) reading.	Were you reading?	Yes, you were. / No, you weren't.
He / She / It was reading.	He / She / It wasn't reading.	Was he / she / it reading?	Yes, he was. / No, she wasn't.
We were reading.	We weren't reading.	Were we reading?	Yes, we were. / No, we weren't.
They were reading.	They weren't reading.	Were they reading?	Yes, they were. / No, they weren't.

Questions with a question word follow the same order: question word + *was / were* + subject + *-ing*: *What were you doing at nine o'clock? Where was Callum going? Why were they laughing?* The short answers repeat only *was / were*: ✓ *Yes, I was*, not ✗ *Yes, I was reading*.

We use the past continuous:

- **for an action in progress at a particular time in the past.** The action started before that time and continued after it: *At 9.00 last night I was doing my homework. This time yesterday we were flying to London.*
- **to describe the background of a story:** the weather, the place, what people were doing when the story starts: *The sun was shining and the birds were singing.*
- **for two long actions in progress at the same time**, often with *while*: *Mark was cooking while Josh was playing music.*

Figura 9.2 shows the first and the third use on a timeline. In both, the action is a *period* (a long, wavy line), not a point.

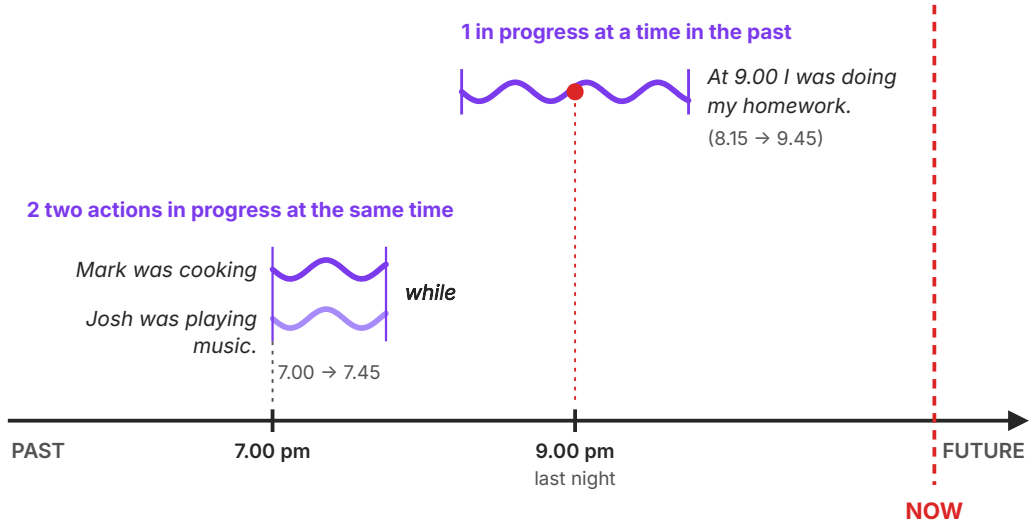

Figura 9.2 The past continuous on a timeline (violet). (1) An action in progress at a time in the past: at 9.00 the homework was in progress — it started before and finished after. (2) Two actions in progress at the same time, 7.00–7.45 yesterday evening.

Remember that **state verbs** (Unit 5: *know, like, love, want, need, believe, understand, belong*) are not normally used in continuous forms, in the past too: ✓ *I knew the answer*, not ✗ *I was knowing the answer*; ✓ *She wanted a drink*, not ✗ *She was wanting a drink*.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Il past continuous. Si forma con il passato di *be* (*was* per *I, he, she, it*; *were* per *you, we, they*) + la forma in *-ing*. Nella forma negativa (*forma negativa*) si aggiunge *not* (*wasn't, weren't*); nella forma interrogativa (*forma interrogativa*) *was / were* va prima del soggetto: *Were you sleeping?* Non si usa mai l'ausiliare *did*: ✗ *Did you sleeping?*

Uso e confronto con l'italiano. Corrisponde a *stavo / stavi... + gerundio* (*stavo leggendo*) e spesso all'**imperfetto** quando descrive un'azione in corso o lo sfondo di un racconto: *Pioveva e tirava vento = It was raining and the wind was blowing.* Ma attenzione: l'imperfetto italiano ha anche altri usi che in inglese **non** diventano past continuous:

• abitudini nel passato: *Da piccolo andavo al mare ogni estate = When I was little, I went to the seaside every summer* (past simple, non ✗ *I was going*);
• verbi di stato: *Ero stanco, avevo fame, sapevo la risposta = I was tired, I was hungry, I knew the answer.*

9.3.2 Past continuous and past simple: *when* and *while*

In stories the two past tenses often work together. When a short action **interrupts** a longer action, use the past continuous for the long action (the background) and the past simple for the short action (the event). This is an **interrupted action** (Figura 9.3):

*I **was reading** in bed **when** the lights **went out**.*
***While** I **was reading** in bed, the lights **went out**.*

While *(ita: mentre)* usually introduces the long action, so it goes with the past continuous. **When** *(ita: quando)* usually introduces the short action, so it goes with the past simple. The clause with *when* or *while* can come first or second; when it comes first, put a comma after it: *When the phone rang, I was having a shower. / I was having a shower when the phone rang.*

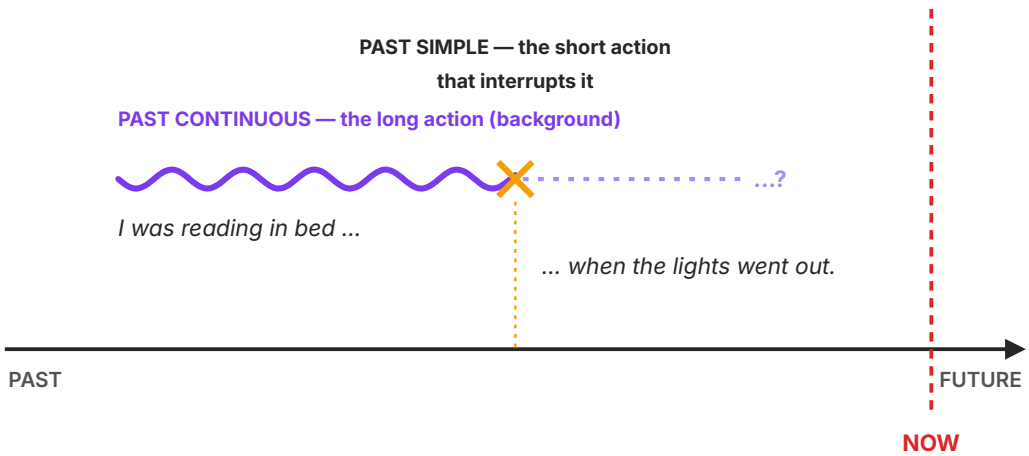

Figura 9.3 An interrupted action. The past continuous (violet, wavy line) is the long action in the background; the past simple (amber cross) is the short event that interrupts it. After the interruption the long action can stop or continue (dotted line).

Compare these two sentences carefully. The tense changes the meaning:

- *When Sam arrived, we **were having** dinner.* — We started dinner before Sam arrived; he found us at the table.
- *When Sam arrived, we **had** dinner.* — First Sam arrived, then we had dinner: two short actions, one after the other, both in the past simple.

Two long actions at the same time are both in the past continuous, usually with *while* (*While I was cooking, Josh was playing music*); a series of short actions that move the story forward are all

in the past simple (*Sam grabbed his coat, I took the torch, and we ran out into the storm*).

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Join the two sentences with *when* and with *while*. *Callum was eating chips on the harbour. A seagull took his fish.*

1. Find the long action (the background): *eating chips* → past continuous, *was eating*.
2. Find the short action (the event): *took his fish* → past simple, *took*.
3. *when* goes with the short action: *Callum was eating chips on the harbour* ***when*** *a seagull took his fish.*
4. *while* goes with the long action: ***While*** *Callum was eating chips on the harbour, a seagull took his fish.* (comma, because the *while* clause comes first)

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Past continuous + past simple con *when / while*. Quando un'azione breve ne interrompe una lunga, l'azione lunga va al *past continuous* e quella breve al *past simple*. È la stessa logica dell'italiano **imperfetto + passato prossimo / remoto**: *Leggevo (stavo leggendo) quando è andata via la luce = I was reading when the lights went out.*

While (= mentre) introduce di solito l'azione lunga; *when* (= quando) quella breve. Se la frase con *when / while* viene per prima, si mette la virgola. Attenzione: due azioni brevi in sequenza vanno entrambe al *past simple*: *Quando è arrivato Sam, abbiamo cenato = When Sam arrived, we had dinner* (prima è arrivato, poi abbiamo cenato).

ERRORE FREQUENTE

Il tempo sbagliato dopo when e while. L'evento breve non va al past continuous:
✗ *When I was arriving at school, the bell rang.* → ✓ *When I arrived at school, the bell was ringing.* (oppure ✓ *When I arrived at school, the bell rang.* — prima sono arrivato, poi è suonata)
✗ *While I walked home, it started to rain.* → ✓ *While I was walking home, it started to rain.*
E non dimenticare *was / were*: ✗ *I reading when you called.* → ✓ *I was reading when you called.*

9.3.3 Time linkers and adverbs for storytelling

A good story tells the reader *when* things happen and in what order. **Time linkers** are words and phrases that connect the events of a story in time. In Unit 7 you used *first, then, next* in a recipe; for stories you need some more (Tabella 9.5).

Tabella 9.5 Time linkers for stories

Linker	Use	Example
first / at first	*first* = the first event in a series; *at first* = at the beginning (but later things changed)	First we looked under the bushes. At first I wasn't scared, but then...
then / next / after that	the next event	Then the lights went out. After that, we searched the garden.
later / ... minutes later	some time after	A few minutes later, Mark appeared.
suddenly	something happens quickly and is a surprise	Suddenly there was a flash of lightning.
as soon as	immediately after (+ subject + verb)	As soon as Lily saw him, she started to cry.
at last	after a long wait (with relief)	At last a small light appeared.
in the end / finally	the final result, often after problems	In the end, it was a great evening.

As soon as *(ita: appena, non appena)* joins two clauses, so it needs a subject and a verb: *As soon as we got home, we had a hot shower.* **In the end** means "finally, after everything that happened"; do not confuse it with *at the end of* + noun, which refers to the last part of something: *at the end of the film, at the end of the road*. In stories we also use adverbs that show the narrator's attitude or the speed of an action: *luckily / fortunately* (good news), *unfortunately* (bad news), *immediately, quickly, slowly, quietly, calmly*. A comment adverb like *luckily* usually comes at the start of the sentence, followed by a comma: *Luckily, the phone was waterproof.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

I connettivi temporali (time linkers). Ordinano gli eventi di un racconto: *first* (prima di tutto), *then / next / after that* (poi, dopo), *later* (più tardi), *suddenly* (all'improvviso), *as soon as* (appena), *at last* (finalmente, dopo una lunga attesa), *in the end / finally* (alla fine).

Tre distinzioni importanti: *at first* = all'inizio (poi le cose sono cambiate) ≠ *first* = per prima cosa; *in the end* = alla fine, in conclusione ≠ *at the end of* + nome = alla fine di (*at the end of the lesson*); *eventually* = alla fine, dopo molto tempo, **non** "eventualmente" (che si dice *possibly, if necessary*). *As soon as* è seguito da soggetto + verbo, come "appena" in italiano: *Appena è arrivata, ha telefonato = As soon as she arrived, she phoned.*

✗ *At the end we found the rabbit.* → ✓ *In the end we found the rabbit.*
✗ *In the end of the film, the hero dies.* → ✓ *At the end of the film, the hero dies.*
✗ *Eventually, call me.* (= eventualmente) → ✓ *If necessary, call me.*

IN SINTESI

Past continuous = *was / were* + *-ing*: action in progress at a past time, background, two long actions at the same time.
Past simple = finished, short actions; a series of events that move the story on.
long action (past continuous) + **when** + **short action** (past simple): *I was sleeping when the phone rang.*
while + long action: *While I was sleeping, the phone rang.* — comma when the time clause comes first.
Linkers: *first → then / after that → suddenly → as soon as → at last → in the end.*

9.4 Listening and Speaking: Telling and Reacting to a Story

When we tell a story to friends, it is not a monologue: the listeners react, show surprise and ask for more. Listen while your classmates act out the dialogue, then read it. It is Monday morning before the first lesson at Hillside Academy, and Callum has a story to tell.

Tabella 9.6 Listening script — You'll never guess what happened!

Callum	You'll never guess what happened to me on Saturday!
Aoife	Go on, tell us!
Callum	Well, it was a lovely sunny afternoon, so I went down to the harbour with my dad. We bought some fish and chips and we sat on a bench by the water.
Sam	Sounds nice.
Callum	It was! Anyway, I was eating my chips and I was reading a message on my phone when suddenly a huge seagull landed right next to me.
Aoife	Oh no! I know what's coming...
Callum	While I was looking at my phone, it grabbed my fish. The whole piece!
Sam	You're joking!
Callum	No, really! And that's not the end of the story. I jumped up to chase it, and my phone fell out of my hand...
Aoife	Oh no! Did it break?
Callum	Wait — it didn't fall on the ground. It fell into my dad's cup of tea!
Sam	No way! What happened next?
Callum	Dad pulled it out immediately and dried it with his scarf. Everybody on the harbour was laughing, and a little boy was filming the whole thing.

Aoife	How embarrassing! And the phone?
Callum	Luckily, it's waterproof, so it was fine. But the fish wasn't! The seagull was sitting on a boat, eating it very slowly, and it was looking at me.
Sam	Poor you! So what did you do in the end?
Callum	In the end Dad bought me another portion. And this time I ate it inside the café!
Aoife	Good thinking! That's so funny.

Callum is a good storyteller. He starts with a phrase that makes his friends curious (*You'll never guess what happened*), sets the scene with the weather and the place, uses the past continuous for the background (*I was eating my chips*) and the past simple for the events (*a huge seagull landed*). His friends help him: they react with surprise (*You're joking! No way!*) and sympathy (*Oh no! Poor you!*), and they keep the story going with questions (*What happened next?*). These short reactions are called **back-channelling**: they show that you are listening and interested.

Tabella 9.7 Useful language — telling and reacting to a story

Function	Expressions
Starting a story	You'll never guess what happened! · Guess what! · Did I tell you about…? · Something funny / strange happened to me last…
Setting the scene	It was a cold, rainy evening… · I was walking home when… · It happened last summer, while we were…
Moving the story on	Anyway, … · So, … · Then… · Suddenly… · And that's not all! · In the end…
Showing surprise	Really? · You're joking! · No way! · Did he? / Was it?
Showing sympathy	Oh no! · Poor you! · How awful! · What a shame!
Showing pleasure / interest	Lucky you! · How exciting! · That's so funny! · Good for you!
Keeping it going	Go on! · And then? · What happened next? · What did you do? · How did you feel?

DA RICORDARE

Short questions for reactions repeat the auxiliary of the speaker's sentence: *It fell into the tea! — **Did it?** · I was so scared. — **Were you?** · The seagull was huge. — **Was it?*** Say them with a rising, interested voice. **How** + adjective is a strong reaction: *How embarrassing! How awful! How exciting!* (with an *-ing* adjective for the situation).

Speaking.

1. **Pair work.** Think of something that happened to you (a funny moment, a small accident, a surprise). Tell your partner in about one minute. Start with *You'll never guess what happened…* and use at least one past continuous for the background. Your partner reacts at least four times, using Tabella 9.7.
2. **Role play.** Student A: you were at home during a power cut last night; tell B what you were doing when the lights went out and what happened next. Student B: you react and ask questions (*What were you doing? Were you scared? What did you do in the end?*). Then swap roles: B tells a story about getting lost in the fog.
3. **Chain story (groups of four).** Student 1 starts: *It was a dark and stormy night, and I was walking home…* Each student adds one or two sentences with a time linker (*suddenly, then, as soon as, a few minutes later…*). The fourth student ends with *In the end…*

9.5 Writing: A Narrative

A **narrative** is a text that tells a story. The school magazine is having a story competition with the title *A Day I'll Never Forget*. This is Aoife's story.

Lost in the Fog

Last summer, my dad and I were walking in the mountains of Connemara, near Galway. It was a warm, sunny morning, and we were following a path along a lake. Some sheep were eating grass and birds were singing. It was a perfect day.

At about two o'clock, the weather changed. While we were having our sandwiches on a rock, a thick fog came down from the hills. Suddenly we couldn't see the path, the lake or even our own feet! “Don't panic,” said Dad, but his voice sounded worried. “Which way is the car?” I asked. We walked slowly for an hour, but we were going round in circles.

Then we heard a dog barking. A few minutes later, an old farmer appeared out of the fog with his sheepdog. “Are you lost?” he asked with a smile. He walked with us all the way back to the road.

In the end we got home safely, tired but relieved. Now I always check the weather before I go walking!

The structure. Like most stories, Aoife's narrative follows a **story mountain** (Figura 9.4): the tension rises from a calm beginning to a problem and a **climax** (the most exciting or dangerous moment), and then it falls to the ending.

- **Paragraph 1 — Beginning:** who (Aoife and her dad), where (Connemara), when (last summer), and the background in the past continuous (*we were walking, sheep were eating, birds were singing*).
- **Paragraph 2 — Problem:** the change (*the weather changed*), an interrupted action (*While we were having our sandwiches, a thick fog came down*), feelings and direct speech.

- **Paragraph 3 — Climax and solution:** something new happens (*Then we heard a dog barking*) and the problem is solved.
- **Paragraph 4 — Ending:** the result, the feelings (*tired but relieved*) and a final comment or lesson.

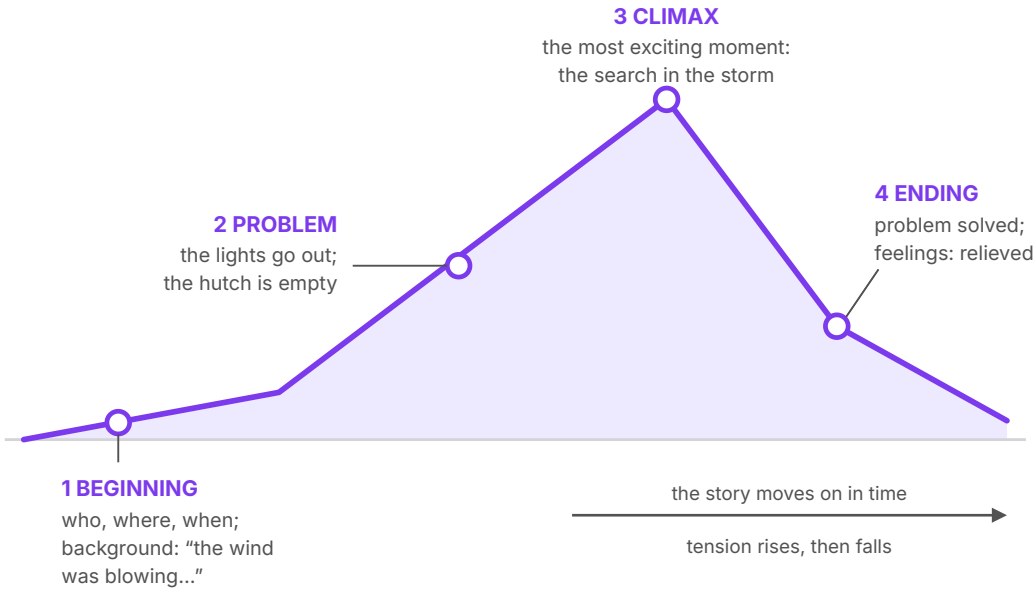

Figura 9.4 A story mountain, with the four parts of Giulia's story *The Night the Lights Went Out* (section 9.2): a calm beginning, a problem, the climax at the top and the ending. Aoife's story has the same shape.

9.5.1 Direct speech

Direct speech means the exact words that a character says. It makes a story more alive. The rules of punctuation are a little different from Italian, where we often use dashes or « » quotation marks:

- Put the spoken words inside quotation marks: *"Are you lost?"* Many British books use single quotation marks ('Are you lost?'); American texts use double ones. Both are correct: just be consistent.
- The punctuation of the spoken words goes **inside** the quotation marks: *"Don't panic," said Dad.* — *"Which way is the car?" I asked.*
- If the sentence continues after the speech, use a comma, not a full stop, at the end of the spoken words: ✓ *"It's late," said Mark.* / ✗ *"It's late." said Mark.* A question mark or an exclamation mark stays: *"Biscuit!" she shouted.*
- Start a new paragraph (a new line) each time a different person speaks.

- Use a **reporting verb** to show how the words are said: *say, ask, reply, shout, scream, whisper, explain*. After the speech, the order can be *said Dad* or *Dad said*; with a pronoun it is always *he said*, *I asked* (✗ *said he*).

> ● ERRORE FREQUENTE
> **Il discorso diretto in inglese.** Non si usano i trattini né le virgolette basse « » dell'italiano, e la punteggiatura va dentro le virgolette:
> ✗ *— Don't panic — said Dad.* → ✓ *"Don't panic," said Dad.*
> ✗ *"I'm cold", she said.* → ✓ *"I'm cold," she said.*
> ✗ *"Where are you?" asked he.* → ✓ *"Where are you?" he asked.*

Checklist. Before you hand in your story, check that:

- it has a title and four paragraphs: beginning, problem, climax / solution, ending;
- the first paragraph answers *who? where? when?* and uses the past continuous for the background;
- the events are in the past simple, with at least one interrupted action with *when* or *while*;
- you use at least four time linkers (*suddenly, then, as soon as, at last, in the end…*) and one adverb such as *luckily*;
- you describe feelings with precise adjectives (*relieved, embarrassed, frightened…*) and use *-ed / -ing* correctly;
- there is some direct speech, with correct punctuation;
- you checked spelling, especially of irregular past forms (Appendix, Tabella A.1).

Writing task. Write a story (100–120 words) with the title *A Day I'll Never Forget* or *The Storm*. It can be true or invented. Follow the four-paragraph plan and the checklist.

9.6 Culture: Storytelling in Britain and Ireland

Long before books, stories travelled from mouth to mouth. In Ireland the traditional storyteller was called a **seanchaí** *(pronuncia approssimativa: "SHAN-a-key")*, an Irish word. A seanchaí knew hundreds of old tales, legends and family histories by heart and told them on winter evenings by the fire, in farmhouses and villages. In Scotland and Wales, too, storytelling was an important part of village life. The tradition never died: today there are storytelling festivals and clubs in many parts of Britain and Ireland.

The most famous British **legend** — a traditional story that may contain a little history but is mostly imagination — is the story of **King Arthur**. In the legend, Arthur pulls a sword from a stone, becomes king, lives at Camelot and meets his knights at the Round Table; his magic sword is called Excalibur. Was Arthur a real person? Historians don't know. That is why King Arthur is a legend, not history.

Another tradition is the **ghost story** at Christmas. In Victorian Britain, families often told frightening stories by the fire on the long, dark nights of December. In 1843 Charles Dickens published *A Christmas Carol*: on Christmas Eve, the mean old businessman Ebenezer Scrooge receives a visit from the ghost of his dead business partner, Jacob Marley, and then from three spirits, who show him his past, his present and his future. The book was an immediate success, and it is still read, performed and filmed every year. Later, the scholar M. R. James wrote ghost stories to read aloud to his friends at Christmas in Cambridge; his first collection, *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, was published in 1904. And the most famous vampire story of all, *Dracula* (1897), was written by Bram Stoker, who was born in Dublin.

Even Halloween has roots in this part of the world. It comes from *Samhain*, an old Gaelic festival at the end of October that marked the beginning of winter. In Ireland and Scotland people carved faces into turnips; Irish and Scottish emigrants took the customs to North America, where the pumpkin took the place of the turnip.

APPROFONDIMENTO

"Marley was dead: to begin with." This is the first sentence of *A Christmas Carol* (Charles Dickens, 1843), and it is a perfect story opening. It is short, it is a surprise, and it makes the reader ask questions: who was Marley? Why "to begin with"? Is he going to come back? Dickens uses the past simple *was* to give us a fact about the past — and then spends the next pages telling us how a dead man came back to visit his old partner. When you write your own story, try to begin with a sentence that makes your reader curious.

APPROFONDIMENTO · HOW THE LEGEND OF ARTHUR WAS WRITTEN DOWN

The earliest texts that mention Arthur are very short: a Latin history of the Britons, written in about 830, lists twelve battles of a leader called Arthur. The full story appeared in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, written in Latin in about 1136, and in 1485 William Caxton, the first printer in England, printed Thomas Malory's long English version, *Le Morte d'Arthur* ("The Death of Arthur"). Figura 9.5 puts these books on a timeline, together with the famous ghost stories of this section.

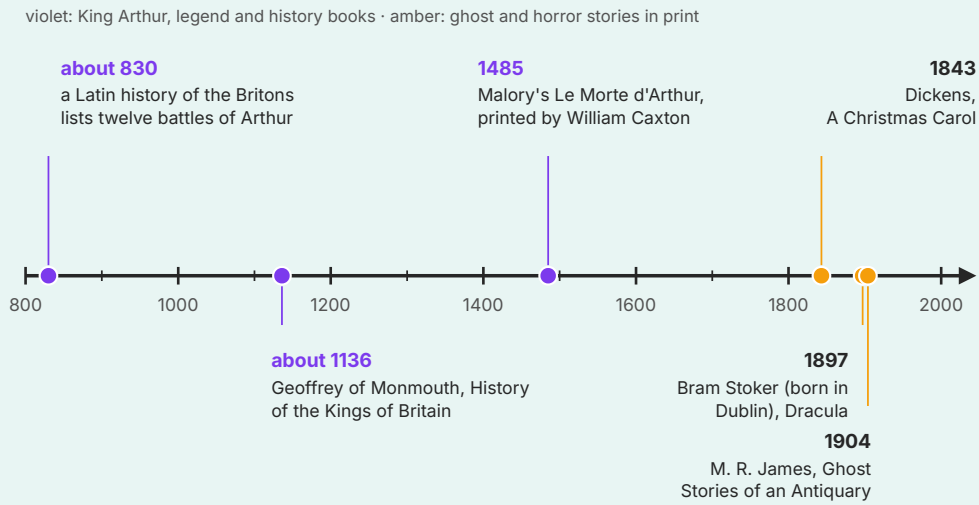

Figura 9.5 Some milestones of storytelling in Britain and Ireland, 800–2000 (proportional time axis). Violet: the legend of King Arthur and the early "histories" that told it; amber: famous ghost and horror stories in print in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Compare with Italy. Which traditional stories, legends or ghost stories do people tell in your region? Is there a festival or a time of year (for example the night of the Befana) when people tell stories? Write five sentences in English and compare them with a partner.

9.6.1 Easy reader: *A Christmas Carol*

Here is the story of *A Christmas Carol*, retold in simple English. The first sentence is Dickens's own; the rest is our retelling. *(clerk: impiegato; chain: catena; lonely: solo, solitario; grave: tomba)*

Marley was dead: to begin with. Jacob Marley died seven years before this story begins. His old business partner, Ebenezer Scrooge, was a cold, mean man who loved only money. He paid his clerk, Bob Cratchit, very little, and when people wished him a merry Christmas, he answered: "Humbug!" *(sciocchezze!)*

On Christmas Eve, while Scrooge was sitting alone by a small fire, Marley's ghost appeared. He was wearing a long, heavy chain. He told Scrooge to change his life, and he said that three spirits were coming to visit him.

The first spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Past, took Scrooge back to his childhood. He saw himself as a lonely boy at school, and later as a young man who chose money instead of love. The second spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Present, showed him the Cratchits' small, happy Christmas dinner, and their youngest son, Tiny Tim, who was very ill. The third spirit never spoke. It showed Scrooge a Christmas in the future: Tiny Tim was dead, and nobody was sad about the death of a lonely old man. On his grave Scrooge read a name — his own.

When Scrooge woke up, it was Christmas morning. He was so happy to be alive that he laughed and danced round his room. He sent an enormous turkey to the Cratchits, he went to his nephew's Christmas dinner, and he paid Bob more money. Tiny Tim did not die, and Scrooge became like a second father to him.

SINTESI

- Weather and natural events: *storm, thunder, lightning, flood, fog, hail, ice, frost*; adjectives *stormy, foggy, icy*; *heavy* rain, *strong* wind; a *power cut*.
- Feelings: *scared / frightened, nervous, worried, upset, relieved, embarrassed, proud, lonely, confused*; *nervous* = agitato (a false friend); *relieved* = sollevato; *embarrassed* = imbarazzato (double *r*, double *s*).
- *-ed* adjectives describe the person's feeling (*bored*); *-ing* adjectives describe the cause (*boring*).
- Past continuous: *was / were* + *-ing*; questions *Were you sleeping?*; short answers *Yes, I was / No, they weren't*.
- Uses: an action in progress at a time in the past, the background of a story, two long actions at the same time.
- State verbs (*know, want, like...*) are not used in the past continuous: *I knew*, not ✗ *I was knowing*.
- Interrupted action: long action in the past continuous + *when* + short action in the past simple; *while* + long action; comma when the time clause comes first.
- Two short actions in sequence are both in the past simple: *When Sam arrived, we had dinner.*
- Time linkers: *first, at first, then, after that, later, suddenly, as soon as, at last, in the end / finally*; *in the end* ≠ *at the end of*; *eventually* = alla fine.
- Reacting to a story: *Really? You're joking! Oh no! Poor you! What happened next? Did it?*
- A narrative: beginning – problem – climax – ending; direct speech with punctuation inside the quotation marks (*"Don't panic," said Dad.*).
- King Arthur is a legend, not history; *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens, 1843) made the Christmas ghost story famous; in Ireland the traditional storyteller was the *seanchaí*.

ESERCIZI

Vocabulary

1. ● Match the words (1–6) with the definitions (a–f). 1 thunder · 2 lightning · 3 flood · 4 fog · 5 hail · 6 power cut — a small balls of ice that fall from the sky · b a time when there is no electricity · c a thick cloud near the ground · d the loud noise in the sky during a storm · e a lot of water that covers land that is usually dry · f a flash of electric light in the sky

2. ● Find the odd one out. a storm · gale · lightning · lonely — b relieved · proud · tiring · upset — c whisper · shout · scream · stare — d suddenly · then · after that · stormy

3. ● The film was so _____ that I fell asleep.
   A. bored
   B. boring
   C. bore
   D. boredom

4. ● Lily is _____ of thunder, so she hides under the table.
   A. frightening
   B. fright
   C. frightened
   D. frighten

5. ●● Choose the correct adjective. a Our trip to the museum was really (*interested / interesting*). b I was (*disappointed / disappointing*) with my mark. c The last ten minutes of the match were very (*excited / exciting*). d After the long walk we were (*tired / tiring*). e It was (*embarrassed / embarrassing*) when my phone rang in class. f Are you (*interested / interesting*) in ghost stories?

6. ●● Complete the sentences with the words in the box: *embarrassed · lonely · nervous · proud · relieved · upset*. a I was very _____ before my piano exam. b She was _____ when her best friend moved to another city. c We were _____ when the doctor said it was nothing serious. d In his first week in London he didn't know anybody and he felt _____ . e My parents were _____ of me when I won the race. f I was so _____ when I called my teacher “Mum”!

7. ●● Word formation. Write the adjective. a fog → _____ · b storm → _____ · c ice → _____ · d mist → _____ · e frost → _____ · f thunder → _____

Grammar

8. ● Complete with the past continuous of the verbs in brackets. a At eight o'clock this morning I _____ (have) breakfast. b Josh and Sam _____ (play) video games all evening. c It _____ (snow) when we left the house. d What _____ you _____ (do) at 10 pm yesterday? e Lily _____ (not sleep): she was scared of the thunder. f We _____ (not listen), so we didn't hear the question.

9. ● Make the sentences negative, then make questions and short answers. a Helen was reading. (yes) b The children were swimming. (no) c It was raining. (yes) d You were waiting for the bus. (no) e Callum was running. (yes)

10. ● While I _____ my homework, the phone rang.
    A. did
    B. were doing
    C. am doing
    D. was doing

11. ● What _____ at ten o'clock last night? — I was sleeping.
    A. were you doing
    B. did you doing
    C. you were doing
    D. was you doing

12. ●● Past simple or past continuous? Complete the story with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.
    Last Sunday I (1) ___ (walk) in the park with my cousin. The sun (2) ___ (shine) and some children (3) ___ (fly) kites. Suddenly a big black dog (4) ___ (run) towards us. It (5) ___ (not wear) a collar. My cousin (6) ___ (scream), but the dog only (7) ___ (want) to play. A few minutes later its owner (8) ___ (arrive) and (9) ___ (say) sorry.

13. ●● Join the sentences with the word in brackets. Use the past continuous and the past simple. a I was walking home. I met Aoife. (when) b Callum was cycling to school. His bike broke. (while) c We were watching a film. The lights went out. (when) d Giulia was waiting for the bus. She lost her umbrella. (while) e Mark was cooking. Lily was drawing. (while)

14. ●● Find and correct the mistake in each sentence. a ✗ They was playing football in the rain. b ✗ I was knowing the answer, but I didn't say it. c ✗ When I was arriving home, the film started. d ✗ Were you sleep when I called? e ✗ At the end we found the rabbit in the shed. f ✗ She was swiming in the lake when the storm started.

15. ●● Choose the correct linker. Giulia's first day in Bristol: (a) *First / At first* I felt nervous, but then everybody was really friendly. (b) *When / While* I arrived at the station, I saw Sam with a sign with my name. (c) *Then / At last* we took the bus to Elm Road. (d) We waited at the bus stop for forty minutes, but *eventually / possibly* the bus came. (e) *As soon as / Suddenly* we got off the bus, it started to rain very hard. (f) *At the end / In the end*, we arrived home wet but happy.

16. ●● Put the words in order to make sentences or questions. a was / when / raining / it / I / up / woke b were / what / doing / you / when / phoned / I / ? c while / were / we / the / walking / fog / came / down d soon / as / as / home / got / I / I / went / bed / to e Mark / dishes / was / the / washing / while / Helen / was / reading

17. ●●● Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. Use the past continuous. a I started to watch TV at 7.00 and stopped at 8.30. At 8.00 I _____ . b Lily drew a picture from 4.00 to 5.00. At 4.30 Lily _____ . c During my shower, somebody knocked at the door. While I _____ , somebody knocked at the door. d During the lesson Callum fell asleep. Callum fell asleep while the teacher _____ . e We had our picnic, and in the middle of it the storm started. The storm started while we _____ .

18. ●●● Translate into English. a Mentre tornavo a casa, ha cominciato a grandinare. b Che cosa stavate facendo quando è andata via la luce? c Appena abbiamo visto il coniglio, ci siamo sentiti sollevati.

Reading and Listening

19. ● Read *The Night the Lights Went Out* again. True (T), false (F) or doesn't say (DS)? a The storm happened on a Friday evening in May. b Josh was doing a jigsaw puzzle with Sam and Giulia. c The lights went out after a crash of thunder. d Mark found the torch in the kitchen. e Biscuit's hutch is in front of the house. f Biscuit was in the shed. g The lights came back after midnight.

20. ●● Answer the questions about the story. a What was Helen doing at half past nine? b Why wasn't Lily in bed, and why wasn't she very helpful with the jigsaw puzzle? c Why did Lily start to cry again when she saw Mark? d Why couldn't Sam and Giulia hear their own voices in the garden? e What did Mark do the next morning?

21. ●● Find words in the story that mean: a took something quickly; b a small light that you hold in your hand; c a little house for a rabbit; d making a long, loud sound, like a wolf (about the wind); e did not move at all (two words).

22. ● Read the listening script *You'll never guess what happened!* (Tabella 9.6). Answer the questions. a Where did Callum go on Saturday, and who with? b What was Callum doing when the seagull landed? c Where did his phone fall? d Why was the phone OK? e What did Callum's dad do in the end?

23. ●● Find in the script (Tabella 9.6): a two expressions that show surprise; b two expressions that show sympathy; c two questions that keep the story going; d one sentence with *while* + past continuous; e one adverb that introduces good news.

24. ●● Read the easy reader *A Christmas Carol* in Section 9.6. a What kind of man was Scrooge at the start? Find two adjectives. b Who visited Scrooge on Christmas Eve? Put the four visitors in order. c What did the Ghost of Christmas Present show him? d How did Scrooge change at the end? Give two examples. e Find two sentences in the past continuous.

Writing and Speaking

25. ● Rewrite the sentences with the correct punctuation for direct speech. a Help shouted Lily b Where is the torch asked Sam c I'm cold Giulia said d Don't worry he whispered everything is fine

26. ●● Do the writing task in section 9.5: a story of 100–120 words, *A Day I'll Never Forget* or *The Storm*. Use the four-paragraph plan, the past continuous and the past simple, at least four time linkers and some direct speech.

27. ●● Speaking. Your partner tells you about a bad day. React to each sentence with an expression from Tabella 9.7 or a short question (*Did you? Was it?*): a "I missed the bus this morning." b "And it was pouring with rain!" c "Then I found a twenty-pound note on the pavement." d "But when I got to school, I fell over in front of the whole class." e "In the end, the teacher gave me the best mark in the test."

28. ●●● Speaking. The alibi game. Somebody took the cake from the school canteen yesterday between 4.00 and 5.00 pm. In pairs, prepare your alibi: what were you doing, where, with whom? Then the class asks each pair questions (*What were you doing at 4.15? What was your friend wearing? Was it raining?*). If your answers are different, you are the cake thieves!

Towards B1

29. ●● Read the text and choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for each gap.
Last winter my brother and I (1) ___ skiing in the Alps when the weather suddenly changed. It started to snow very (2) ___ and we couldn't see anything. We were very (3) ___. (4) ___ we were looking for the path, we heard a voice. It was a ski instructor! (5) ___ we saw him, we felt much better.
(1) A was · B were · C did · D are
(2) A strong · B heavy · C heavily · D strongly
(3) A frightening · B frighten · C fright · D frightened
(4) A Until · B During · C While · D Then
(5) A As soon as · B At last · C In the end · D Suddenly

30. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap.
It was a cold, foggy evening. Giulia and Aoife (1) ___ waiting for the bus outside the school. They (2) ___ talking about the test, so they didn't notice the time. Suddenly Aoife looked at her watch. "Oh no! The last bus left ten minutes ago!" she said. In (3) ___ end, they decided to walk. While they (4) ___ crossing the park, they heard a strange noise. They were very scared, (5) ___ it was only a cat! They laughed and got home safely, tired (6) ___ happy.

31. ●●● Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. Use the word in brackets and two to five words. a I was having a shower. My phone rang at that moment. (WHEN) I _____ my phone rang. b The end of the film was boring for us. (BORED) We _____ at the end of the film. c Immediately after we got home, it started to rain. (SOON) It started to rain _____ got home. d We waited a long time, but finally the bus came. (LAST) We waited a long time, but _____ came. e During our walk the fog came down. (WHILE) The fog came down _____ walking.

32. ●● Short message. Your English friend writes: *"Why didn't you answer my call at eight last night?"* Write a reply (35–45 words). Say what you were doing at eight, what happened, and say sorry.

33. ●●● Write a story (about 100 words) that begins with this sentence: *As soon as I opened the door, I knew that something was wrong.*

PER APPROFONDIRE

- MUR — R. Murphy, *Essential Grammar in Use*: the units on the past continuous and on past continuous vs past simple, with extra practice.
- EGU — R. Murphy, *English Grammar in Use*: the past continuous and *when / while*, for students who want to go further.
- SWA — M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: entries on the past progressive, on *-ed / -ing* adjectives ("participle adjectives"), on *at the end / in the end*, and on direct speech punctuation.
- CGE — R. Carter, M. McCarthy, *Cambridge Grammar of English*: narrative in spoken English and listener responses (back-channelling).
- CED — D. Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*: the history of English literature and of story genres.

Glossario del capitolo

As soon as
appena, non appena — immediately after; + subject + verb: *As soon as she saw him, she cried*

Direct speech
discorso diretto — the exact words someone says, in quotation marks: *"Help!" she shouted*

-ed / -ing adjectives
aggettivi in -ed / -ing — *-ed* = how a person feels (*bored*); *-ing* = what causes the feeling (*boring*)

Embarrassed
imbarazzato — feeling silly in front of other people (spelling: double *r*, double *s*)

Eventually
alla fine, infine (false friend: not *eventualmente*) — after a long time or after problems

Flood
alluvione, inondazione — a lot of water that covers land that is usually dry

Fog / foggy
nebbia / nebbioso — a thick cloud near the ground: *It was a foggy morning*

In the end
alla fine — finally, after everything that happened (≠ *at the end of* + noun)

Legend
leggenda — a traditional story that may contain a little history but is mostly imagination: *the legend of King Arthur*

Lightning
fulmine, lampo — the flash of electric light in the sky (not *lightening*): *a flash of lightning*

Past continuous
past continuous (passato progressivo) — *was / were* + *-ing*: *At nine I was reading*

Plot
trama — the series of events in a story

Power cut
blackout, interruzione di corrente — a time when there is no electricity (AmE *power outage*)

Relieved
sollevato — happy because a problem or a danger is over: *We were relieved when we found the dog*

Setting
ambientazione — where and when a story happens

Storm
tempesta, temporale — very bad weather with strong wind and heavy rain or snow; a *thunderstorm* also has thunder and lightning

Thunder
tuono — the loud noise in the sky during a storm: *a crash of thunder*

Torch
torcia elettrica — a small electric light you hold in your hand (AmE *flashlight*)

Upset
turbato, dispiaciuto — sad and a bit angry because something bad happened

While
mentre — introduces a long action, usually in the past continuous: *While I was walking, it started to rain*

Soluzioni

1. 1 d (thunder) · 2 f (lightning) · 3 e (flood) · 4 c (fog) · 5 a (hail) · 6 b (power cut).

2. a lonely (a feeling, not weather) · b tiring (an *-ing* adjective that describes a situation; the others describe how a person feels) · c stare (a way of looking, not of speaking) · d stormy (an adjective, not a time linker).

3. B (boring). *Il film è la causa: aggettivo in -ing.*

4. C (frightened). *Lily prova la sensazione: aggettivo in -ed; si dice frightened of.*

5. a interesting · b disappointed · c exciting · d tired · e embarrassing · f interested.

6. a nervous · b upset · c relieved · d lonely · e proud · f embarrassed.

7. a foggy · b stormy · c icy · d misty · e frosty · f thundery.

8. a was having · b were playing · c was snowing · d were … doing · e wasn't (was not) sleeping · f weren't (were not) listening.

9. a Helen wasn't reading. — Was Helen reading? Yes, she was. · b The children weren't swimming. — Were the children swimming? No, they weren't. · c It wasn't raining. — Was it raining? Yes, it was. · d You weren't waiting for the bus. — Were you waiting for the bus? No, I wasn't (No, we weren't). · e Callum wasn't running. — Was Callum running? Yes, he was.

10. D (was doing). *Azione lunga dopo while, soggetto I: was + -ing.*

11. A (were you doing). *Ordine della domanda: parola interrogativa + were + soggetto + -ing.*

12. 1 was walking · 2 was shining · 3 were flying · 4 ran · 5 wasn't wearing · 6 screamed · 7 wanted (state verb, not continuous) · 8 arrived · 9 said.

13. a I was walking home when I met Aoife. / When I met Aoife, I was walking home. · b While Callum was cycling to school, his bike broke. / Callum's bike broke while he was cycling to school. · c We were watching a film when the lights went out. / When the lights went out, we were watching a film. · d While Giulia was waiting for the bus, she lost her umbrella. / Giulia lost her umbrella while she was waiting for the bus. · e Mark was cooking while Lily was drawing. / While Mark was cooking, Lily was drawing. (two long actions: both past continuous)

14. a They were playing football in the rain. · b I knew the answer, but I didn't say it. (state verb) · c When I arrived home, the film started. (or: When I arrived home, the film was starting.) · d Were you sleeping when I called? · e In the end we found the rabbit in the shed. · f She was swimming in the lake when the storm started. (double m)

15. a At first · b When · c Then · d eventually · e As soon as · f In the end.

16. a It was raining when I woke up. / When I woke up, it was raining. · b What were you doing when I phoned? · c The fog came down while we were walking. / While we were walking, the fog came down. · d As soon as I got home, I went to bed. · e Mark was washing the dishes while Helen was reading. / Helen was reading while Mark was washing the dishes.

17. a At 8.00 I was watching TV. · b At 4.30 Lily was drawing a picture. · c While I was having a shower (was showering), somebody knocked at the door. · d Callum fell asleep while the teacher was talking / was speaking / was teaching / was explaining something. · e The storm started while we were having our picnic (were having a picnic).

18. a While I was going (walking / coming) home, it started to hail. · b What were you doing when the lights went out? (… when the power went off?) · c As soon as we saw the rabbit, we felt relieved. (… we were relieved.)

19. a T ("a Friday evening in early May") · b F (Josh was playing music in his room) · c T · d DS (the text doesn't say where he found it) · e F (it is at the end of the garden, next to the shed) · f T · g F (at eleven o'clock).

20. a She was reading on the sofa. · b She was still awake because the noise of the wind was too frightening; she wasn't helpful because she was eating the pieces of sky. · c Because she remembered that Biscuit, her rabbit, was in the garden in the storm. · d Because the wind was so loud. · e He fixed the door of the hutch and locked it.

21. a grabbed · b torch · c hutch · d howling · e perfectly still (sitting still).

22. a To the harbour, with his dad. · b He was eating his chips and reading a message on his phone. · c Into his dad's cup of tea. · d Because it's waterproof. · e He bought Callum another portion of fish and chips.

23. a You're joking! · No way! · b Oh no! · Poor you! (also: How embarrassing!) · c What happened next? · So what did you do in the end? (also: Did it break? / Go on, tell us!) · d While I was looking at my phone, it grabbed my fish. · e Luckily.

24. a Cold and mean (he loved only money). · b Marley's ghost; the Ghost of Christmas Past; the Ghost of Christmas Present; the third spirit (the future). · c The Cratchits' small, happy Christmas dinner, and Tiny Tim, who was very ill. · d Any two: he sent an enormous turkey to the Cratchits; he went to his nephew's Christmas dinner; he paid Bob more; he became like a second father to Tiny Tim. · e *While Scrooge was sitting alone by a small fire, Marley's ghost appeared.* · *He was wearing a long, heavy chain.*

25. a "Help!" shouted Lily. (Lily shouted.) · b "Where is the torch?" asked Sam. (Sam asked.) · c "I'm cold," Giulia said. · d "Don't worry," he whispered. "Everything is fine." (Single quotation marks '...' are also correct.)

26. Model answer (*The Storm*, about 120 words): Last August, my family and I were camping near a lake. It was a hot evening, and we were sitting outside our tent while Dad was cooking sausages. Suddenly, the sky went black and the wind started to blow. A few minutes later it was pouring with rain. "Into the car, quick!" shouted Mum. While we were running to the car, a flash of lightning hit a tree near the lake. I was really frightened. We waited in the car for an hour, listening to the thunder. At last the storm stopped. Unfortunately, our tent was full of water, so we slept in the car. In the end it was an exciting adventure, and the sausages were delicious!

27. Model reactions: a Oh no! / Did you? · b Poor you! / Was it? How awful! · c Really? Lucky you! · d Oh no! How embarrassing! · e No way! Good for you! / That's great!

28. Open speaking. *Traccia:* each pair agrees on a timetable (e.g. *At 4.00 we were having a snack in the café; at 4.30 we were walking to the library; it was raining, so we were wearing raincoats*). The class asks past continuous questions (*What were you doing at...? Where were you sitting? What was the weather like?*) and compares the two students' answers.

29. 1 B (were) · 2 C (heavily: adverb after the verb) · 3 D (frightened) · 4 C (While: + the long action in the past continuous) · 5 A (As soon as).

30. 1 were · 2 were · 3 the · 4 were · 5 but · 6 but (also accepted: and).

31. a I **was having a shower when** my phone rang. · b We **were bored** at the end of the film. · c It started to rain **as soon as we** got home. · d We waited a long time, but **at last the bus** came. · e The fog came down **while we were** walking.

32. Model answer (41 words): Hi Tom, sorry! At eight I was having dinner with my family and my phone was in my bedroom. After dinner I was very tired, so I went to bed early. I saw your call this morning. Sorry! Talk soon, Giulia

33. Model answer (about 100 words): As soon as I opened the door, I knew that something was wrong. The living room was dark and the window was open. The curtains were moving in the wind, and there were papers all over the floor. "Hello? Is anybody here?" I whispered. Nobody answered. Sud-

denly I heard a noise in the kitchen. I was really scared, but I walked slowly towards it. Then I saw it: our neighbour's cat was sitting on the table, eating my sandwich! It came in through the open window while I was at school. In the end we both had a snack, and I closed the window.