

Preterite and imperfect in stories

In English The **simple past** is used to describe actions or states that *began, ended, or were going on* in the past, for *sequences of events, or for reactions*.

I **saw** that movie and I **liked** it. (end of action, reaction)

I **got up, ate** breakfast, and **made** the 7 A.M. flight. (sequence of events)

Back then things **cost** a lot less, so we **were** happier. (ongoing states)

For describing actions that were *ongoing* at a certain time, you can also use the **past progressive**. The simple past can then be used to interrupt the ongoing action. To say what you did *habitually* in the past, you can also use the **used to + infinitive** formula.

At 7 P.M. I **was studying**. (ongoing action)

When I **called** Henry, he **was playing** soccer. (action interrupting another ongoing action)

I **used to watch** cartoons every Saturday morning. (habitual action)

A Circle the verb(s) in each sentence. Then write what each verb is expressing.

1. I read that book, and it made me cry. 1. end of action, 2. reaction
2. Lulu was dancing when we opened the door. _____
3. Travis used to climb trees as a kid. _____
4. We played soccer, talked, and then went home. _____
5. Samantha had a big dog when she was a kid. _____
6. Ian used to climb a different hill every month. _____
7. You were sleeping when the fire alarm rang. _____
8. We ignored little Frankie, so he got angry. _____

In Spanish The **preterite** and the **imperfect** tenses are both used to talk about the past. When telling a story, you should use the **imperfect**:

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| 1. to say what something was like | De pequeño, yo era tímido. |
| 2. to set the scene | Era lunes y hacía calor. |
| 3. to say what was going on | Nos llamó mientras dormíamos . |
| 4. for habitual actions in the past | De pequeño, bebía mucha leche. |

Use the **preterite**:

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| 1. to talk about what happened | Yo subí al autobús. |
| 2. to show a sequence of events | Me levanté y desayuné . |
| 3. to show a change of state or reaction | Me gustó esa película. |
| 4. to talk about an event that interrupted | Mientras paseaba, vi un camión. |

PRETERITE AND IMPERFECT IN STORIES

B Circle the verb in each sentence. Then write whether each verb is in the preterite (P) or in the imperfect (I).

1. Leí ese libro y me hizo llorar. P, P
2. En esta foto Luisa tenía nueve años. _____
3. De pequeña, Ana trepaba a los árboles. _____
4. Jugamos al fútbol, nos duchamos y nos fuimos a casa. _____
5. Simón tenía un perro grande cuando era niño. _____
6. El gato entró en tu cuarto mientras leías el periódico. _____
7. Le trajimos un regalo a Carlos y se puso muy contento. _____
8. Eran las siete y llovía. Salí de casa con un paraguas. _____

C Fill in the paragraph with the preterite or imperfect of the verbs in parentheses.

Era _____ (1. ser) una noche de primavera cuando Mila _____ (2. llegar) a Zaragoza. La ciudad _____ (3. tener) muchas luces que _____ (4. brillar *to shine*) con mucha intensidad. A Mila le _____ (5. parecer) una ciudad fantástica. Algunos edificios _____ (6. ser) antiguos y otros modernos, pero todos bonitos. Mila _____ (7. llamar) a su amiga Ana, que _____ (8. vivir) en Zaragoza. Ana _____ (9. estudiar) para un examen cuando _____ (10. sonar *to ring*) el teléfono. Las dos _____ (11. ir) a cenar, y luego _____ (12. salir) a pasear por las calles de la ciudad. Las dos amigas se _____ (13. conocer) desde pequeñas, cuando _____ (14. jugar) juntas en el parque. Después del paseo, Ana _____ (15. regresar) a casa, y Mila _____ (16. acostarse) y _____ (17. dormirse) enseguida.

D 1. Translate the following sentences into Spanish.

a. *Gloria was studying while we were playing chess.*

b. *Gloria was studying when we decided to play chess.*

2. In which sentence did one action interrupt the other? In which were both going on at once? How did this affect your choice of preterite or imperfect?

