Workshop 16: Stories from the Past

past simple: was / were · regular verbs · irregular verbs · word formation · past time expressions

Name		Date	
Level	Elementary	Teacher	Alejandro

In this workshop you will learn to talk about the past. You will read about three famous Colombians, about a holiday that went wrong, and about three very different New Year's Eves. You will learn **was** and **were**, the past of regular verbs, and the past of fifteen irregular verbs. You will also learn how to build the word for a job from a verb, and how to say when something happened. At the end you will make a short video for our Facebook page, and write me a real email about a New Year's Eve you remember.

Your plan for today

Part 1 — Three lives and three New Year's Eves *reading*

Part 2 — Wrong name, wrong place *reading and listening*

Part 3 — The past simple *grammar*

Part 4 — Jobs, and when it happened *vocabulary*

Part 5 — Listening *three audios*

Part 6 — Sentence stress *pronunciation*

Part 7 — Your video for our Facebook page *speaking*

Part 8 — An email to your teacher *writing*

What you need

- **Nine audio tracks:** 7.1, 7.4, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.12, 7.14, 7.17 and 7.18.
- I will send you all nine files before you start. Keep them in one folder on your phone or computer.
- Your phone, to record the video for Part 7 and to take or find a photo for Part 8.
- Your email, for Part 8. My address is **luissalejandrogarcia777@gmail.com**.

How to work through this workshop

- Work at your own pace. You can do the workshop in one sitting, or over two or three days.
- Play each audio as many times as you need. Nobody is listening to you, so there is no rush.
- Write your answers directly in this document, or print it and write by hand.
- If you are not sure of an answer, write your best guess. A guess tells me more than an empty line.
- Say the reading texts out loud at least once. Your mouth learns a language faster than your eyes.

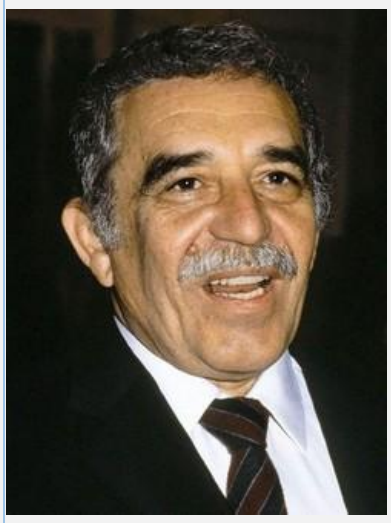
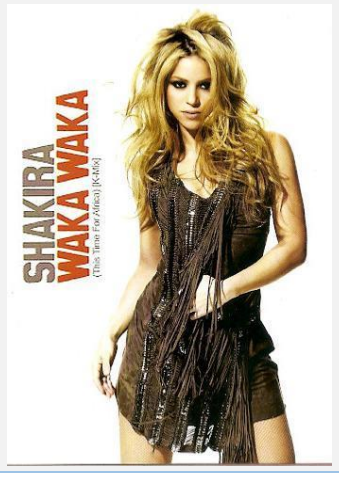
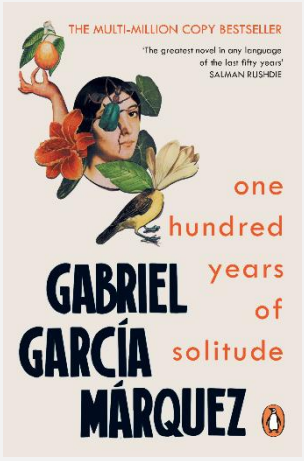
⚠ **Two parts need more than a pen.** Part 7 is a video and Part 8 is an email. Leave enough time for them, and send both to me when you finish.

Part 1 — Reading: Three Lives and Three New Year's Eves

This part has two readings. First you will read about three famous Colombians. Then you will read about three New Year's Eves. Both readings talk about the past, so look carefully at the verbs. You will need them again in Part 3.

Reading 1 — Three famous Colombians

1a. Look at the pictures below. Do you know these three people? What do you think each person did? Talk about them, or write your ideas on the lines.

Fernando Botero	Shakira	Gabriel García Márquez
		
		

1 I think Fernando Botero was a _____

2 I think Shakira was a _____

3 I think Gabriel García Márquez was a _____

1b. Read the three biographies. Then number the events under each one in the correct order, 1–3.

Fernando Botero

Fernando Botero was a Colombian painter and sculptor. He was born in Medellín in 1932. His father was a travelling salesman, and he died when Fernando was only four years old. When the boy was 12, his uncle sent him to a school for bullfighters, because he wanted him to be a matador. But Botero wasn't interested in bullfighting. He was interested in drawing, so he drew the bulls instead of fighting them. In 1952 he won a prize at the national art show in Bogotá, and he travelled to Europe with the money. Later, his paintings and sculptures of big, round people were famous all over the world, and this style is now called *Boterismo*. He gave 180 paintings to Colombia, and today they are in the Botero Museum in Bogotá. He died in 2023, when he was 91.

____ His paintings were famous all over the world.

____ He was a student at a school for bullfighters.

____ He won a prize at the national art show in Bogotá.

Shakira

Shakira is a Colombian singer and songwriter. Her full name is Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll, and she was born in Barranquilla in 1977. When she was a child she loved music, but her music teacher didn't want her in the school choir. He said her voice was too strong for the other children. Her first two albums, *Magia* (1991) and *Peligro* (1993), weren't a success. So in 1994 she tried something completely different: she was an actor in a Colombian television series called *El Oasis*, and she played a young woman called Luisa María. Then, in 1995, her album *Pies Descalzos* was an enormous success, and today she is one of the most famous singers in the world. Shakira wasn't happy about her television series. In 2002 she bought the rights to it, so it isn't on television any more.

____ *Pies Descalzos* was an enormous success.

____ She was an actor in a television series.

____ Her music teacher said no to her.

Gabriel García Márquez

Gabriel García Márquez was a Colombian writer. He was born in 1927 in Aracataca, a small town in the north of Colombia, between the mountains and the Caribbean Sea. His parents weren't there when he was small, so he lived with his grandparents. His grandfather was an old colonel with hundreds of stories about the war, and his grandmother told him stories about ghosts. Later he was a student of law in Bogotá, but he didn't finish his studies, because he was a journalist and he wanted to write for newspapers. In 1967 his novel *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) was an enormous success, and it was a bestseller in more than thirty languages. In 1982 he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He died in Mexico in 2014.

____ He won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

____ He was a student of law in Bogotá.

____ *Cien años de soledad* was a bestseller.

1c. Read the biographies again. Then cover them with your hand. What can you remember about each person? Write two things about each one.

Fernando Botero:

Shakira:

Gabriel García Márquez:

1d. Which of the three people would you most like to meet? Why? Write two or three sentences.

Reading 2 — New Year's Eve: one to remember, or one to forget?

1e. When is New Year's Eve? Is it an important celebration in your country?

1f. Read the three stories. Who had…?

a great evening _____	an OK evening _____	a terrible evening _____

MINA

This was last year, and I went to a hotel with some friends. It had a bar on the top floor, and that's where the party was. We got there at about 11.00. About half an hour before midnight I realized I didn't have my phone. It was in my car. So I took the lift down to the car park. I found my phone, and then I got back into the lift. I was the only person in it. But then, between the third and fourth floors, the lift stopped completely and I couldn't get out. I pressed the button and asked for help, but a guy said there was an electrical fault and I needed to wait. Then a few minutes later, I could hear people outside celebrating. It was awful. I didn't get out until almost 1.00 in the morning. And on top of it all, my friends didn't realize that I wasn't there!





JENNY

I had a fantastic New Year's Eve in Iceland in 2013. First, we went to a really expensive restaurant for dinner. It was early, about 6.00, because that's when people have dinner in Iceland. I wore a lovely dress, but after dinner we got a taxi back to the hotel and I put on boots and a warm jacket. Then we went out and watched the amazing fireworks. Suddenly, at about 10.00, everyone went home to watch TV. There's this famous programme they always watch on New Year's Eve! It was really strange. The streets were empty for a bit. But then just before midnight people came out again and danced and drank till about 5.00 in the morning. It was incredible.



ANDY

I'm a DJ, and this happened to me a few years ago. It was my first time at a New Year's Eve party, and I planned all the music really carefully. I knew exactly which tracks I was going to play. The first part of the night was fine, but just when I thought it was time to start the countdown to midnight, I saw that people were all at the bar, not on the dance floor, and the TVs were on. On the screens I could see fireworks, and Big Ben! I looked at my watch and I realized it was about two minutes slow! I felt really stupid. I bought a new watch the next day!

Adapted from blogs.

1g. Read the stories again. Complete the sentences with **A** (Andy), **J** (Jenny), or **M** (Mina).

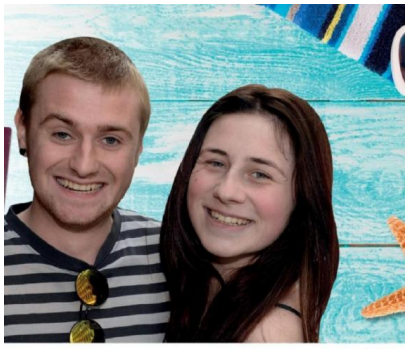
1 _____ was outside at midnight.
2 _____ didn't know exactly when midnight was.
3 _____ was alone at midnight.
4 _____ was at work at midnight.
5 _____ heard the celebrations, but didn't see them.
6 _____ was surprised by something people did.

1h. How do people celebrate New Year's Eve in your country? Do you think most people enjoy it? Why (not)?

Part 2 — Reading and Listening: Wrong Name, Wrong Place

2a. Read the beginning of a true story about a problem with a flight. Answer the questions.

Last March, Adam and his girlfriend India, who live in Manchester, decided to go to Ibiza on holiday. India's stepfather booked the tickets for them with Ryanair. He needed Adam's surname. He wasn't sure what it was, so he looked on Facebook. The name on Adam's page was Adam West, and he booked the tickets in that name, to fly on 11th June.



1 Where did Adam and India want to fly to? Where from? _____
2 Who booked the tickets? _____
3 What problem do you think there was with the booking? _____

2b. Read the rest of the story. Put the parts in the correct order, 1–6. The first one is done for you.

A	_____	…to pay £220, so he decided to change his surname to West. It was free to change his name, but then he needed a new passport with his new name. The new passport…
B	**1**	Unfortunately it wasn't the right name. 'Adam West' is the name of an actor who played Batman in the 1960s. Adam…

C	____	…that it was possible, but he needed to pay £220, double the cost of the flight. He didn't want…
D	____	…used the name on his Facebook page as a joke. His real name is Adam Armstrong. When Adam…
E	____	…realized the mistake, he phoned Ryanair. He asked them to change the surname on his booking. Ryanair replied…
F	____	…was £103, so Adam saved £117. And he and India travelled to Ibiza on 11th June.

Adapted from the British press.

2c. Do you think Adam's solution was a good one? Why (not)?

2d. You are going to listen to another true story. Before you listen, read sentences A–G and put them in a logical order, 1–7. The first one is done for you.

A	____	They tried to check in.
B	____	Kevin booked the flights.
C	**1**	Kevin and Jeanette wanted to go on holiday to the Caribbean.
D	____	They parked their car.
E	____	They arrived at Birmingham Airport.
F	____	They looked for flights online.
G	____	They walked into the terminal.

2e. **AUDIO 7.6** Now listen to the first part of the story. Was your order in **2d** correct?

2f. **AUDIO 7.7** Listen to the end of the story. What was the problem?



2g. Whose fault was the problem in each story?

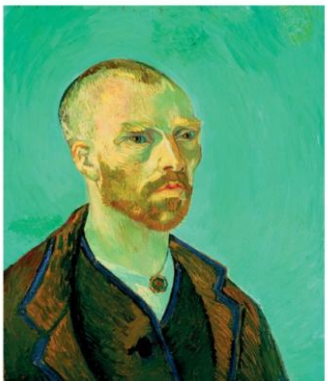
Adam's story	**Kevin's story**
_____	_____

Part 3 — Grammar: The Past Simple

In this part you will meet the past simple three times: first **was** and **were**, then regular verbs, then irregular verbs. The verbs come from the texts you have already read, so look back at Part 1 and Part 2 whenever you need them.

A was and were

3a. Look at this self-portrait by a famous painter. Answer the questions.



1 Do you know who he is? _____

2 How old do you think he is in this painting? _____

3 Do you know any of his paintings? Do you like them? _____

3b. AUDIO 7.1 Listen to an audio guide. Check your answers to **1** and **2** in **3a**.

3c. AUDIO 7.1 Listen again. Choose **a**, **b**, or **c**.

1 He was born in ____ in 1853.
a Belgium **b** the Netherlands **c** Germany

2 His parents weren't ____.
a artists **b** married **c** poor

3 Before he was a painter, he was a ____.
a teacher **b** doctor **c** lawyer

4 There are ____ photos of him when he was young.
a no **b** a lot of **c** not many

5 This self-portrait was a present for the painter ____.
a Monet **b** Picasso **c** Gauguin

6 The relationship between the two painters wasn't ____.
a bad **b** easy **c** complicated

7 He was only ____ when he died.

a 27 b 37 c 47

8 During his life, his paintings were ____.
a unpopular b valuable c famous

WAS AND WERE — the past of *be*

	+	–	?
Present	I am, he is we are	isn't, aren't	Is he…? Are they…?
Past	**I was, he was** **we were**	**wasn't, weren't**	**Was he…? Were they…?**

✓ I **was** at home. / He **was** a painter. / They **were** good friends.

✓ She **wasn't** married. / We **weren't** very happy.

✓ **Where were** you born? **Was** it expensive? — No, it **wasn't**.

Easy trick: I, he, she, it → was. you, we, they → were.

B Regular verbs

3d. Find the past tense of these verbs in the story in **Part 2**. Write them in the chart.

	Present	Past
1	ask	
2	decide	
3	reply	
4	don't want	

REGULAR VERBS — add -ed

Most verbs make the past simple with **-ed**, and the form never changes: **I, you, he, she, it, we, they worked**.

✓ work → work**ed** ask → ask**ed** watch → watch**ed**

✓ verbs ending in **-e**: decid**e** → decid**ed** liv**e** → liv**ed**

✓ verbs ending in consonant + **-y**: repl**y** → repl**ied** stud**y** → stud**ied**

✗ For the negative and the question, use **didn't** and **did** with the **present** form: I **didn't want**. **Did** you **call** a taxi?

3e. AUDIO 7.8 Listen to an extract from the second story. What is the missing word?

"Kevin, _____ you check the airport when you booked?"

C Irregular verbs

3f. Find the past tense of these irregular verbs in the New Year's Eve stories in **Part 1**. The sound is there to help you. The first one is done for you.

Present	Past	Sound	Present	Past	Sound
buy	*bought*	/bɔːt/	**have**		/hæd/
can		/kʊd/	**know**		/njuː/
come		/keɪm/	**put on**		/pʊt ɒn/
drink		/dræŋk/	**say**		/sed/
feel		/felt/	**take**		/tʊk/
find		/faʊnd/	**think**		/θɔːt/
get		/gɒt/	**wear**		/wɔː/
go		/went/			

3g. AUDIO 7.14 Listen and check. Then practise saying the verbs out loud.

Remember

Irregular verbs do not follow a rule, so you have to learn them one by one. The good news is that the negative and the question are **easy**, because they use **didn't** and **did** with the present form.

✓ I **went** to a party. I **didn't go** to a party. **Did** you **go** to a party?

Part 4 — Vocabulary: Jobs, and When It Happened

A Word formation: the name of the job

4a. Find words in the three biographies in **Part 1** for people's jobs made from these verbs.

1 write		**3** sing	
2 act		**4** paint	

Word building: professions

We often add **-er** or **-or** to a verb, for example *writer*, *actor*.

We often add **-ian** or **-ist** to a noun, for example *musician*, *pianist*.

4b. Look at the two groups below. Are the words verbs or nouns? Can you make the words for the jobs?

1	compose	dance	direct	invent	verbs or nouns? _____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	
2	art	novel	politics	science	verbs or nouns? _____
	_____	_____	_____	_____	

4c. Write the names of four famous people in each box. Then ask and answer questions about them.

ALIVE	DEAD
1 _____	1 _____
2 _____	2 _____
3 _____	3 _____
4 _____	4 _____

Who's Sia? → *She's an Australian singer.*

Who was Charles Darwin? → *He was a British scientist.*

Working alone? Write the eight names, then record yourself asking and answering the eight questions on your phone. Listen back once. Notice where you used **is** and where you used **was**.

B Past time expressions

4d. Number the past time expressions 1–10, from the most recent to the most distant. Two are done for you.

____	yesterday morning	____	last week
____	last night	____	last summer
____	last month	____	the day before yesterday

____	three days ago	____	a year ago
1	five minutes ago	**10**	in 2017

Past time expressions

We say **last week**, **last month**, **last night**.

✗ NOT ~~the last week~~, ~~the last month~~.

4e. Complete the sentence for each activity with a past time expression. Write a true answer.

When was the last time?

I travelled by bus… _____	I booked some tickets… _____
I posted a photo online… _____	I downloaded a song… _____
I walked more than 5 km… _____	I played sport… _____
I watched a really good film… _____	I danced at a party… _____
I arrived late for something… _____	

Part 5 — Listening

Three audios in this part. The first two are quick speaking drills, so say your answers out loud. The third is a real story from Brazil.

5a. AUDIO 7.4 Listen. Say the sentences in the past simple. Say your answer out loud before the recording gives it to you.

1 ♪ *I'm at home.* → *I was at home.*

5b. AUDIO 7.12 Listen to some verb phrases. Make true **+** or **–** sentences about yesterday. Say them out loud.

1 ♪ *play tennis* → *I didn't play tennis yesterday.*

5c. AUDIO 7.17 Listen to Denisa from Slovakia talk about a memorable New Year's Eve. Where was Denisa at midnight?



5d. Can you remember what she says about these people and things?

1	Marcelo	_____	**5**	Copacabana	_____
2	white clothes	_____	**6**	a show	_____
3	Marcelo's mother	_____	**7**	nearly midnight	_____
4	dinner	_____	**8**	a swim at Praia do Arpoador	_____

5e. AUDIO 7.17 Listen again and check your answers to **5d**.

5f. Would you like to spend New Year's Eve in Rio? Is there anywhere else in the world you would like to spend it?

Part 6 — Pronunciation: Sentence Stress

These are the questions you will need in **Part 7** and **Part 8**, so do this part carefully.

6a. Look at the questions. What words are missing? Write them on the lines.

A memorable New Year's Eve

1 What year _____ it?
2 Where _____ you?
3 Who _____ _____ with?
4 Where _____ _____ have dinner?
5 What _____ _____ wear?
6 What _____ _____ do before midnight?
7 What _____ _____ do at midnight?

8 What _____ _____ do after midnight?

9 How _____ the weather?

10 What time _____ _____ go to bed?

11 _____ _____ have a good time?

6b. AUDIO 7.18 Listen and repeat the questions. Copy the rhythm. Say the **big** words strongly, and the small words quickly.

How English rhythm works

In an English question, the important words are strong and slow. The small grammar words are weak and fast. Listen for the strong words:

Where **WERE** you? What **DID** you **WEAR**? **DID** you have a **GOOD TIME**?

Part 7 — Speaking: Your Video for Our Facebook Page

Now it is time to use the past simple in a real situation. You are going to make a short video for our class Facebook page about selfies. The video is about one to two minutes long.

a. Choose your selfie

Find one selfie on your phone, or take a new one now. You will show this photo in your video, so choose one you are happy for other people to see.

If you never take selfies, choose any photo of yourself instead, or simply show the camera your face.

b. Do you ever take selfies?

Choose **YES** or **NO**. Then answer the questions in that column only.

YES	NO
Do you have any on your phone?	Why don't you take them?
Where were you?	Why do you think other people take them?
When was it?	Do any of your friends and family take them?
Who were you with?	Do you have any photos of you on your phone that are not selfies? Where were you?

c. How to make your video

1 Read your column of questions and plan short answers. Write notes, not a full script.

2 Practise two or three times before you film. Say the answers out loud.

3 Film a short video, about one to two minutes. Show your selfie at the beginning, and say who is in it.

4 Speak clearly and have fun. Small mistakes are fine.

5 Send me the video, and I will post it on our Facebook page.

d. Useful language for your video

Starting: Hi, I'm ___. / This is a selfie of me. / In this photo I'm with ___.

Saying yes: Yes, I do. / I take a lot of selfies. / I have hundreds on my phone.

Saying no: No, I don't. / I never take selfies. / I don't really like photos of myself.

Talking about the past: I was in ___. / It was in ___ (year). / I was with my ___. / We were on holiday. / The weather was ___.

Finishing: And that's my selfie! / Thank you for watching.

⚠ **Before you send it:** the video goes on our class Facebook page. If you would prefer me not to post it, tell me and I will keep it private. Only send a photo of yourself, and do not show other people without asking them first.

Part 8 — Writing: An Email to Your Teacher

Write me a real email about **one memorable New Year's Eve** in your life. Attach a photo, so I can really see how and why that night was special for you.

Send it to: luissalejandrogarcia777@gmail.com

Subject: A New Year's Eve I remember

Attach: one photo of that night, or of the place, or of the people you were with

a. Plan your email

Think about a New Year's Eve you remember. Use the eleven questions in **6a** and answer them for that night. Add all the extra information you can.

The year	_____
Where you were	_____
Who you were with	_____
What you did	_____
Why you remember it	_____
Your photo	_____

b. Useful language for your email

Opening: Hi Alejandro, / Dear Alejandro,

Starting the story: I want to tell you about a New Year's Eve I remember. / It was in ___ (year). / I was ___ years old.

The night: We went to ___. / We had dinner at ___. / I wore ___. / At midnight we ___. / The weather was ___.

Your feelings: It was fantastic / strange / terrible. / I felt very happy. / I will never forget it.

The photo: I am sending you a photo of ___. / In the photo you can see ___. / This is why that night was special.

Closing: See you in class, / Best wishes, / ___ (your name)

c. Write your email

You can write your draft here first, and then copy it into your email. Write about 80 to 120 words.

Check before you send

- Did you use the past simple? Look for was, were, went, had, wore, felt.
- Did you check the irregular verbs from Part 3?
- Did you add a past time expression, for example last year or in 2019?
- Did you attach the photo?
- Did you say why that night was special for you?

Well done!

You have finished Workshop 16. Send me three things: this document with your answers, your video for Part 7, and your email for Part 8. See you in class.