



# Last Photographs

The Proficiency level (very advanced) English activity below is by William Christison ([Clases Particulares de Inglés](#)) who is an English teacher in Madrid, Spain.



1) Listen to the MP3 file and answer the questions:

- a) What is Willie's relationship to Marion?
- b) Is William in the photographs?

2) Match the words on the left in each group with their translations on the right.

straightening patches of blue tenement gave in wrapped ratchet one exposure left in ages fox pelt spread	se dió por vencida envuelta (“vestida”) casa de vecinos piel de zorro. extender. un tipo de palanca poniendo derecho en mucho tiempo “manchas” de cielo quedaba una foto	edge damp bench reflected portly settled embraced left half-charred vagrants	corpulenta, gruesa dejado. borde. reflexionó. húmedo-a. sentada cómodamente abrazados-as vagabundos. medio carbonizado banco para sentarse.
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framed viewfinder took care actually beyond. got it right he might even have it done tinted slipped off	se quitó (prenda). en realidad. podría incluso conseguirlo bien hecho visor hacer que se haga. teñido, coloreado. más allá de enmarcado-a. fue cuidadoso.	bent knelt rough pavement bother statues fidgeted spotting blurred cardboard	se inclinó. estatuas se arrodilló. borroso-a. desigual, mal estado. molestia acera notando cartón, cartulina. mover nerviosamente.
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cost be damned retaken wee ones blotted out lifeless subsequent loss of speech stayed behind the couple rose settings drops	borrada de la mente. la pareja se levantó. los pequeñitos ajustes gotas (de lluvia). pérdida del habla, se quedó. al diablo con el precio sin vida. tomada de nuevo posterior.	hill cap drooping moustache hunkered peer out lowered brim squinted splashed forehead shifting gears	salpicaron esforzarse por ver. agachado cambiando de marcha. ala del sombrero bajada. miró con los ojos -entornados. gorra bigote que cuelga. colina frente
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nod spattered rubbing lens hands folded impervious wipe fur beaming viewer side view mirror	secar visor sonriendo manos unidas. insensible salpicado-a. piel de animal muerto retrovisor lateral asentir con la cabeza frotando objetivo (fotografía).	elbow shutter casting pale arc upon receding gazing shirtsleeves latter leans	alejándose se inclina. obturador (fot.). mangas de camisa. pálido codo arco mirando fijamente proyectando sobre (prep.). éste, el último.
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stiffly rugged face wreathed turn-of-the-century whiskers hoe clutched slip from glued leather-bound landscaper not so much as a loose spilled out thrusts	se desparramaron. jardinero. empuja con fuerza. envueltas. rígidamente patillas. facciones duras azada apretada deslizarse de pegadas encuadernado en cuero. comienzo del siglo. ni siquiera un-a sueltas.	gutter moth catches his eye shovelling snapshot trickles predawn drowsy fancies intimate with loss tucks rouse with a start brittle floods	una foto instantánea le atrae la atención frágil. meter cuidadosamente. salir un hilito de agua canalón. se imagina bien familiarizado con la pérdida. polilla. somniaiento-a. despertar sobresaltado antes del amanecer. inunda cogiendo con la pala
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### 3: Listen to the text again and fill in the gaps with the vocabulary:

#### Last Photographs

It had rained hard for most of the night but Marion, seeing patches of blue outside their Mansfield \_\_\_\_\_, finally gave in. "Don't worry, Mum, only as far as the park," Willie said watching her, \_\_\_\_\_ in fox pelt, straightening her hat in the mirror. There was no getting film on a Sunday even in Glasgow, but the young man took his camera, a gift from his sister in Canada, anyway. A click of the \_\_\_\_\_ showed maybe one exposure left and Willie hadn't taken pictures of his old mum in ages. As he \_\_\_\_\_ the day's paper on a damp bench, he \_\_\_\_\_ on how well she looked. "Sit down here, love," he said, "this is a nice \_\_\_\_\_." It wasn't, but Willie wasn't about to make his \_\_\_\_\_ mother walk any further either. There were just two street benches on their side of the park. At the opposite end of the bench where Marion had \_\_\_\_\_, a young couple embraced, to her right stood another left half-charred by vagrants. As he \_\_\_\_\_ the woman in the viewfinder, Willie took care to compensate for the displacement of the image as it would actually appear; he wanted the hill in back and perhaps the trees and sky \_\_\_\_\_ as well. Then, if he got it right, he might \_\_\_\_\_ have it tinted. Marion slipped off her gloves and sat patiently watching her son as he \_\_\_\_\_, then knelt on the rough pavement. Taking pictures was no \_\_\_\_\_ now. She remembered the day she and William had to stand like statues in the studio on Sauchiehall, how Em and Susie had \_\_\_\_\_, and how when William, spotting the blurred figures on cardboard, insisted, cost be \_\_\_\_\_, that they be retaken. "The wee ones are growing so fast," his voice rose, "they're disappearin'!" It had been seventeen springs and there wasn't a day the woman did not miss him. Marion had \_\_\_\_\_ out the morning in Corrie that she had awoken next to her husband's lifeless body and her \_\_\_\_\_ loss of speech; only the good times remained, and dear Willie, the one who'd stayed behind. A passing cloud darkened the sky. The couple rose and left and, as her son turned to change \_\_\_\_\_, heavy drops began to fall. Willie paused, looked upward and then back into the \_\_\_\_\_. Just over his mother's hat a man had suddenly appeared on the bench at the top of the hill. He wore a blue cap and \_\_\_\_\_ moustache and, hunkered forward as he was, seemed to peer out at them from beneath his lowered \_\_\_\_\_. Willie squinted at the figure for several moments as drops splashed onto his \_\_\_\_\_. In a photo taken in the garden behind the Corrie Hotel shortly before his death, Willie's dad had worn a similar cap. He lowered the camera to \_\_\_\_\_ his eyes; when he looked up, the man in the viewer had gone. Only Marion remained now, beaming, hands folded, \_\_\_\_\_ to the rain as it spattered upon her hat and fur. She nodded and Willie, rubbing the lens on his elbow, raised the camera again and quickly pressed the \_\_\_\_\_. As he threw his coat over his mother's shoulders and helped her to her feet, the sun once more emerged \_\_\_\_\_ a pale arc upon the receding clouds.

Three quarters of a century later, a young man sits \_\_\_\_\_ at a gentleman in cap and shirtsleeves. The latter leans forward stiffly, his rugged face \_\_\_\_\_ in turn-of-the-century whiskers, a garden hoe \_\_\_\_\_ in his hands. Could that be him? He gently bends the cardboard image till it \_\_\_\_\_ from the four corners glued to the page of a black, leather-\_\_\_\_\_ album, one his grandmother received from the old country and lay unopened for years under her bed. Not so much as a date. Several loose photos have \_\_\_\_\_ out and when he thrusts them back between the pages, a snapshot catches his eye. It is \_\_\_\_\_, and meticulously hand-coloured. He studies it for a few moments. It must have meant a lot to somebody, he thinks, and then, for safety, \_\_\_\_\_ it behind that of the gardener. Later, in darkness, as water \_\_\_\_\_

down the gutter outside his window, he thinks of the old woman on the bench in the rain. He \_\_\_\_\_ that despite her smile she is intimate with loss, that the picture-taker is someone dear to her, that she once wrote a poem about a moth and a spider and that (he feels \_\_\_\_\_ now) she knows there are no more photographs to be taken.

The young man rouses with a \_\_\_\_\_. Instead of predawn shadows, sunlight floods the room. Late again! He pulls on his clothes, pours tap water into a \_\_\_\_\_ of powdered coffee, and races out the door to his van. It isn't until he is reversing down the drive that he begins to remember his dream. Above the letters "Warning: objects may be larger than they appear" a landscaper in shirtsleeves is \_\_\_\_\_ dirt. The young man pulls out and, shifting gears, is quickly on his way. At the edge of his neighbour's garden, the landscaper, unseen now in the side view mirror, raises a hand to his blue cap and \_\_\_\_\_.

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**4: Choose the correct answer for each question:**

A) Did Marion want to go for a walk?

1. Yes, she did.
2. No, she didn't.

B) Why or why not?

1. She didn't want to go for a walk because she didn't want to fix the fox pelt with the blue patches.
2. She didn't want to go for a walk because it had been raining all night.
3. She wanted to go for a walk because she was worried about the park.
4. She wanted to go for a walk because a man named "tenement" was going to give away some blue patches in a field.

C) Why did she finally decide to go for a walk?

1. She saw a little blue sky outside and she didn't have to walk very far.
2. Some people were finally giving away some patches of blue.
3. She wanted Willie to take a photograph of her hat, which was wrapped in a fox pelt.

D) Who was "wrapped" in a fox pelt?

1. Marion.
2. Willie.

E) How many photos did Willie have film for that day?

1. One.
2. The text doesn't say.

F) What was a characteristic of the area that Willie and Marion lived in?

1. You could always find film on a Sunday.
2. You could never find film on a Sunday.

G) What does "a click of the ratchet showed maybe one exposure left" mean?

1. They took a trip to the park and sat on the left side of the bench.
2. He pressed a lever on the camera and saw that there was only one more photograph of the film.
3. He had never taken a photo of Marion.

H) How long had it been since Willie had last taken a photograph of Marion?

1. He hadn't taken a photo of Marion since she was a young girl.
2. He hadn't taken a photo of Marion for a very long time.
3. Willie opened his ratchet and took out a fresh roll of film.

I) What was Marion's relationship to Willie?

1. She was his mother.
2. She was his grandmother.
3. She was his wife.

J) Why did Willie choose the particular bench where Marion sat down?

1. It was a nice spot.
2. Marion was fat and wouldn't want to walk any further.
3. He was in love with her and he could see her reflection from there.

K) Were the couple on the same bench as Marion or on another bench?

1. on the same one.
2. on a different one.

L) Were there any vagrants near them?

1. Yes, there were some drunk vagrants standing on the left of the bench.
2. Yes, there were some drunk vagrants standing on the right of the bench.
3. No, there weren't any vagrants. There was a bench that the vagrants had burned some other time in the past.

M) What was one of the problems with the camera?

1. It tinted some of the photos.
2. The image in the viewfinder didn't correspond with what the photograph would finally look like.
3. It displaced the images to the right.

N) What did Marion do while Willie prepared the

camera for the photograph?

1. She felt bothered by the photo taking.
2. She gave her gloves to Willie.
3. She remembered going to a studio with William a long time ago.

O) How was taking photos better "now" than in the past?

1. You had to go to a studio, stand motionless for a long time and pay a lot of money.
2. The "wee ones" grow faster.
3. Photos were cheaper, faster and easier now.

P) What was William's relationship to Marion?

1. He was her son.
2. He was her husband.
3. He was her father.

Q) Did Marion miss William?

1. No, she didn't.
2. Yes, she did.

R) What happened to William?

1. He disappeared.
2. He died in his sleep.
3. He lost his voice.

S) What was different about Willie, Em and Susie?

1. Willie had stayed with his mother.
2. Susie had fidgeted.
3. Em had blurred figures.

T) When did the man on the bench at the top of the hill sit down?

1. At the same time Marion and Willie sat down on their bench.
2. After the young couple left.
3. After Marion took off her hat.

U) When did the man on the bench at the top of the hill leave?

1. Before Willie took the photograph of Marion.
2. After Willie took the photograph of Marion.

V) What's similar about the three people in: a) the large photograph above, b) the landscaper that the young man sees seventy-five years later and, c) the man sitting on the bench in the second large photograph above?



## Last Photographs correct answers

### 1) Answers to the questions:

- a) What is Willie's relationship to Marion? **She is his mother.**  
 b) Is William in the photographs? **Yes, he is.** (More about this answer later.)

### 2) The words on the left in each group are matched correctly with their translations on the right.

patches of blue tenement gave in wrapped fox pelt straightening ratchet one exposure left in ages spread	“manchas” de cielo casa de vecinos se dió por vencida envuelta (“vestida”) piel de zorro. poniendo derecho un tipo de palanca quedaba una foto en mucho tiempo extender.	edge damp bench reflected portly settled embraced left half-charred vagrants	borde. húmedo-a. banco para sentarse. reflexionó. corpulenta, gruesa sentada cómodamente abrazados-as dejado. medio carbonizado vagabundos.
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cost be damned retaken wee ones blotted out lifeless subsequent loss of speech stayed behind the couple rose settings drips	al diablo con el precio tomada de nuevo los pequeñitos borrada de la mente. sin vida. posterior. pérdida del habla, se quedó. la pareja se levantó. ajustes gotas (de lluvia).	hill cap drooping moustache hunkered peer out lowered brim squinted splashed forehead shifting gears	colina gorra bigote que cuelga. agachado esforzarse por ver. ala del sombrero bajada. miró con los ojos -entornados. salpicaron frente cambiando de marcha.
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wipe viewer beaming	secar visor sonriendo abiertamente	elbow shutter casting	codo obturador (fot.). proyectando
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hands folded impervious spattered fur nod rubbing lens side view mirror	manos unidas. insensible salpicado-a. piel de animal muerto asentir con la cabeza frotando objetivo (fotografía). retrovisor lateral	pale arc upon receding gazing shirtsleeves latter leans	pálido arco sobre (prep.). alejándose mirando fijamente mangas de camisa. éste, el último. se inclina.
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stiffly rugged face wreathed turn-of-the-century whiskers hoe clutched slip from glued leather-bound landscaper not so much as a loose spilled out thrusts	rígidamente facciones duras envueltas. comienzo del siglo. patillas. azada apretada deslizarse de. pegadas encuadernado en cuero. jardinero. ni siquiera un-a sueltas. se desparramaron. empuja con fuerza.	snapshot catches his eye brittle tucks trickles gutter fancies intimate with loss moth drowsy rouse with a start predawn floods shovelling	una foto instantánea le atrae la atención frágil. meter cuidadosamente. salir un hilito de agua canalón. se imagina bien familiarizado con la pérdida. polilla. somniaiento-a. despertar sobresaltado antes del amanecer. inunda cogiendo con la pala
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### 3: The gaps are filled in correctly with the vocabulary:

#### Last Photographs

It had rained hard for most of the night but Marion, seeing patches of blue outside their Mansfield **tenement** finally gave in. "Don't worry, Mum, only as far as the park," Willie said watching her, **wrapped** in fox pelt, straightening her hat in the mirror. There was no getting film on a Sunday even in Glasgow, but the young man took his camera, a gift from his sister in Canada, anyway. A click of the **ratchet** showed maybe one exposure left and Willie hadn't taken pictures of his old mum in ages. As he **spread** the day's paper on a damp bench, he **reflected** on how well she looked. "Sit down here, love," he said, "this is a nice **spot**." It wasn't, but Willie wasn't about to make his **portly** mother walk any further either. There were just two street benches on their side of the park. At the opposite end of the bench where Marion had **settled**, a young couple embraced, to her right stood another left half-charred by vagrants. As he **framed** the woman in the viewfinder, Willie took care to compensate for the displacement of the image as it would actually appear; he wanted the hill in back and perhaps the trees and sky **beyond** as well. Then, if he got it right, he might **even** have it tinted. Marion slipped off her gloves and sat patiently watching her son as he **bent**, then knelt on the rough pavement. Taking pictures was no **bother** now. She remembered the day she and William had to stand like statues in the studio on Sauchiehall, how Em and Susie had **fidged**, and how when William, spotting the blurred figures on cardboard, insisted, cost be **darned**, that they be retaken. "The wee ones are growing so fast," his voice rose, "they're disappearin'!" It had been seventeen springs and there wasn't a day the woman did not miss him. Marion had **blotted** out the morning in Corrie that she had awoken next to her husband's lifeless body and her **subsequent** loss of speech; only the good times remained, and dear Willie, the one who'd stayed behind. A passing cloud darkened the sky. The couple rose and left and, as her son

turned to change **settings**, heavy drops began to fall. Willie paused, looked upward and then back into the **viewfinder**. Just over his mother's hat a man had suddenly appeared on the bench at the top of the hill. He wore a blue cap and **drooping** moustache and, hunkered forward as he was, seemed to peer out at them from beneath his lowered **brim**. Willie squinted at the figure for several moments as drops splashed onto his **forehead**. In a photo taken in the garden behind the Corrie Hotel shortly before his death, Willie's dad had worn a similar cap. He lowered the camera to **wipe** his eyes; when he looked up, the man in the viewer had gone. Only Marion remained now, beaming, hands folded, **impervious** to the rain as it spattered upon her hat and fur. She nodded and Willie, rubbing the lens on his elbow, raised the camera again and quickly pressed the **shutter**. As he threw his coat over his mother's shoulders and helped her to her feet, the sun once more emerged **casting** a pale arc upon the receding clouds.

Three quarters of a century later, a young man sits **gazing** at a gentleman in cap and shirtsleeves. The latter leans forward stiffly, his rugged face **wreathed** in turn-of-the-century whiskers, a garden hoe **clutched** in his hands. Could that be him? He gently bends the cardboard image till it **slips** from the four corners glued to the page of a black, leather-bound album, one his grandmother received from the old country and lay unopened for years under her bed. Not so much as a date. Several loose photos have **spilled** out and when he thrusts them back between the pages, a snapshot catches his eye. It is **brittle**, and meticulously hand-coloured. He studies it for a few moments. It must have meant a lot to somebody, he thinks, and then, for safety, **tucks** it behind that of the gardener. Later, in darkness, as water **trickles** down the gutter outside his window, he thinks of the old woman on the bench in the rain. He **fancies** that despite her smile she is intimate with loss, that the picture-taker is someone dear to her, that she once wrote a poem about a moth and a spider and that (he feels **drowsy** now) she knows there are no more photographs to be taken.

The young man rouses with a **start**. Instead of predawn shadows, sunlight floods the room. Late again! He pulls on his clothes, pours tap water into a **mug** of powdered coffee, and races out the door to his van. It isn't until he is reversing down the drive that he begins to remember his dream. Above the letters "Warning: objects may be larger than they appear" a landscaper in shirtsleeves is **shovelling** dirt. The young man pulls out and, shifting gears, is quickly on his way. At the edge of his neighbour's garden, the landscaper, unseen now in the side view mirror, raises a hand to his blue cap and **nods**.

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#### 4: The correct answer for each question:

Answers to comprehension questions: A2, B2, C1, D1, E1, F2, G2, H2, I1, J2, K1, L3, M2, N3, O3, P2, Q2, R2, S1, T2, U1, V1, W2, X3, Y2.