

Alien Superstar

a song by Alan Smith Robertson

<https://youtu.be/s8pFch5nP4k>

Put the verbs in brackets into either past continuous or past perfect.
Remember to put the adverbs (never, ever, even) between the two parts of the verb.

Then listen to see if you guessed right.

When he came from Mars the alien superstar ¹ was writing (write) a new song
He said it wasn't hard, he always found the right chord on his old guitar
and he played it with his heart

When he came to earth he ² _____ (write) the verse for a new song
And as his ship came down it ³ _____ (make) a supernatural sound
that I ⁴ _____ (never hear) before till now

Pre-chorus

His voice was celestial!
A real-life work of art
I wondered why he ⁵ _____ (come) from so afar
What was his desire?

Chorus

Alien superstar
He ⁶ _____ (perfect) his art
Alien superstar
Take me back to Mars when you depart

He said he ⁷ _____ (be cursed) and that he ⁸ _____ (have) problems with the words
that he couldn't rhyme and that he ⁹ _____ (feel) so unsatisfied,
it ¹⁰ _____ (leave) him traumatised

And he was so sad that I asked if I could lend a helping hand
So he asked if I ¹¹ _____ (ever be) in a rock'n'roll band
I looked at him and said...

Pre-chorus & chorus

And so here I am
on a spaceship and on my way to Mars
And before today
I ¹² _____ (never even leave) the state
Now I'm flying through space

Chorus

Post-listening activities

The lyrics of the song narrate a conversation between an alien superstar and an everyday human being. Look at the conversation below and put the verbs into the correct tense (*present simple & continuous, or present perfect*)

- Greetings human! I come in peace!
- Hello. What are you doing?
- I am writing the verse for a new song
- How interesting! Your ship _____ a supernatural sound that I _____ before.
- I know. It's wonderful, isn't it?
- And your voice is so celestial. Why _____ from so far away?
- I _____ my art
- Oh, OK. Take me back to Mars when you leave, please
- I'll think about it
- ...
- Oh dear!
- What is it?
- I'm writing this song, but I _____ cursed. I _____ problems with the words.
- Oh dear, that *is* a problem
- I can't rhyme, and I _____ so unsatisfied. It _____ me traumatised!
- Wow, I'm so sorry. Can I lend a helping hand?
- _____ in a rock'n'roll band?
- Of course!
- Great! Come with me
- I'm so excited to be on a spaceship! I _____ the state, and now I'm flying through space!

If an alien came down to earth...

- ...what would you ask him?
- ...what would you show him to explain the human race?
- ...would you be willing to go back to his planet with him?
- ...or would you prefer it if he took someone else? Why?

Now write an ending to the story. Try to use narrative tenses if you can.

As soon as the spaceship took off...

Alien Superstar

a song by Alan Smith Robertson designed to practise narrative tenses

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Teacher's answer sheet. Length: approximately 30 minutes

Put the verbs in brackets into either past continuous or past perfect.
Remember to put the adverbs (never, ever, even) between the two parts of the verb.

Then listen to see if you guessed right.

*Note: There are several gaps which allow more than one tense; sometimes with similar meanings, sometimes with different ones. For example: "when he came to earth he wrote..."
"when he came to earth he was writing..."*

If your students put a verb into a different tense to the one in the song, as long as it's correct, compare the phrases and discuss the difference in meaning.

When he came from Mars the alien superstar ¹ was writing (write) a new song
He said it wasn't hard, he always found the right chord on his old guitar
and he played it with his heart

When he came to earth he ² was writing the verse for a new song
And as his ship came down it ³ was making a supernatural sound
that I ⁴ 'd never heard before till now

Pre-chorus

His voice was celestial!
A real-life work of art
I wondered why he ⁵ 'd come from so afar
What was his desire?

Chorus

Alien superstar
He ⁶ was perfecting his art
Alien superstar
Take me back to Mars when you depart

He said he ⁷ had been cursed and that he ⁸ was having problems with the words
that he couldn't rhyme and that he ⁹ was feeling so unsatisfied,
it ¹⁰ had left him traumatised

And he was so sad that I asked if I could lend a helping hand
So he asked if I ¹¹ had ever been in a rock'n'roll band
I looked at him and said...

And so here I am
on a spaceship and on my way to Mars
And before today
I ¹² had never even left the state
Now I'm flying through space

Post-listening activities

The lyrics of the song could be narrating a conversation between an alien superstar and an everyday human being. Look at the conversation below and put the verbs into the correct tense (*present simple & continuous, or present perfect*)

- Greetings human! I come in peace!
- Hello. What are you doing?
- I 'm writing the verse for a new song
- How interesting! Your ship is making a supernatural sound that I have never heard before.
- I know. It's wonderful, isn't it?
- And your voice is so celestial. Why have you come from so far away?
- I 'm perfecting my art
- Oh, OK. Take me back to Mars when you leave, please
- I'll think about it
- ...
- Oh dear!
- What is it?
- I'm writing this song, but I have been cursed. I 'm having problems with the words.
- Oh dear, that *is* a problem
- I can't rhyme, and I 'm feeling so unsatisfied. It has left me traumatised!
- Wow, I'm so sorry. Can I lend a helping hand?
- Have you ever been in a rock'n'roll band?
- Of course!
- Great! Come with me
- I'm so excited to be on a spaceship! I have never even left the state, and now I'm flying through space!

If an alien came down to earth...

- ...what would you ask him?
- ...what would you show him to explain the human race?
- ...would you be willing to go back to his planet with him?
- ...or would you prefer it if he took someone else? Why?

Now write an ending to the story. Try to use narrative tenses if you can.

As soon as the spaceship took off... I felt a bit nervous; I was leaving my home forever and I hadn't had time to pack my bags. I had even forgotten to bring my toothbrush!

As the spaceship flew out of the earth's atmosphere and into space, objects started floating around inside the cabin. I looked out of the window and I saw that the earth was getting smaller and smaller.

- *"It's a long flight back to Mars" said the alien "and I'm hungry. It's time to eat"*
- *"What's for dinner?" I asked.*
- *The alien smiled back at me. He was drooling and sharpening his kitchen knives.*
- *"You are, of course!" he said.*