

# LESSON PLAN GUIDE

PictureBook English Reading Series — Grammar Fluency

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<b>Category</b>	Fluency in Key Grammar	<b>Title</b>	Grammar Book 23 – The Timeline of a Story: Past Perfect Tense
<b>Ages</b>	6–9	<b>Theme</b>	Past Perfect Tense — had + p.p. + Time Connectors + Fairy Tales

## INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK

In this book, 15 beloved fairy tales become the setting for mastering one of English's most powerful tense structures: the Past Perfect. From Cinderella's life before the ball to Jack's journey before he found the giant, children learn to connect two different moments in the past and show which one happened first — using had + past participle as a bridge back in time.

The fairy tale context is brilliantly chosen: these are stories every child already knows, which means they can focus entirely on the grammar without getting lost in unfamiliar content. The 'Story Bridge' metaphor — had takes us further back in time — gives children an intuitive image that makes the tense feel logical rather than abstract.

## THREE VERB FORMS — BUILDING THE TIMELINE

Base form	Simple past	Present perfect	Past perfect
<b>meet</b>	met	have met	<i>had met (before the ball, she had met the prince)</i>
<b>live</b>	lived	have lived	<i>had lived (she had lived with her stepmother)</i>
<b>arrive</b>	arrived	have arrived	<i>had arrived (he had arrived before midnight)</i>
<b>buy</b>	bought	have bought	<i>had bought (she had bought the magic beans)</i>
<b>find</b>	found	have found	<i>had found (Jack had found the giant's castle)</i>
<b>run</b>	ran	have run	<i>had run (she had run away before the spell broke)</i>

## PAST PERFECT IN CONTEXT — THE STORY TIMELINE

Earlier past — Past Perfect (had + p.p.)	Later past — Simple Past
<i>The clock had struck midnight...</i>	<i>...before she ran away.</i>
<i>She ran away after the clock had struck midnight.</i>	← <i>Time connector switches position</i>
<i>Cinderella had lived with her stepmother...</i>	<i>...before the fairy godmother arrived.</i>
<i>Jack had found the giant's castle...</i>	<i>...when he climbed the beanstalk.</i>

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*Children will be able to:*

- Understand that the Past Perfect describes an action that happened before another past action
- Form the Past Perfect correctly — had + past participle
- Use time connectors — before, after, when, by the time — to join two past events
- Switch sentence order using time connectors while keeping the same meaning
- Use fairy tale contexts to practise Past Perfect storytelling naturally

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### 1. Review three verb forms first

Before introducing the Past Perfect, make sure children are comfortable with all three verb forms: base, simple past, and past participle. Use the table above — go through each verb and ask your child to produce all three forms. This removes confusion between simple past (went) and past perfect (had gone) before they appear together in the story context.

### 2. Build the Story Bridge

Introduce had as a bridge that takes us further back in time. Use two events from a fairy tale: 'She ran away' (simple past — the later event) and 'The clock had struck midnight' (past perfect — the earlier event). Draw a simple timeline: past perfect on the left, simple past on the right, with an arrow showing the order. Ask: 'Which happened first?' The visual timeline makes the sequence immediately clear.

### 3. Master the Time Connectors

Pay close attention to before, after, when, and by the time as the glue that holds the two events together. Practise switching the sentence: 'The clock had struck midnight before she ran away' → 'She ran away after the clock had struck midnight.' Both mean the same thing — but the position of the time connector changes. This advanced sentence combining skill is a hallmark of natural storytelling.

### 4. Hunt for Sparkle Words

While reading the fairy tales, challenge your child to find the descriptive adjectives — the sparkle words like gloomy, wondrous, and selfish. Ask: 'How did the character feel before the magic happened?' Encourage them to use the Past Perfect in their answer: 'Before the fairy godmother arrived, Cinderella had felt lonely and hopeless.' This combines vocabulary enrichment with grammar practice beautifully.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Choose your child's favourite fairy tale and ask them to retell the story focusing on the 'before' — what had happened before the main event? For example: 'Before the prince found Sleeping Beauty, she had slept for a hundred years. Before she fell asleep, a wicked fairy had cursed her at her christening.' Encourage them to use at least five Past Perfect sentences. This retelling activity produces beautifully structured, timeline-aware storytelling — and shows how much richer a story becomes when you can describe what came before.

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## TEACHER'S NOTES AND TIPS

The Past Perfect is one of the most challenging tenses for learners because it requires thinking about two points in the past simultaneously and understanding the sequence between them. The fairy tale context removes one layer of difficulty by using stories children already know — they can focus on the grammar without decoding the plot. The three-verb-form table is an essential prerequisite: children who confuse 'went' and 'had gone' will struggle with the tense. The timeline drawing activity is the most effective visual tool for making sequence explicit. For classroom settings, retelling a familiar fairy tale using at least five Past Perfect sentences is a wonderful speaking or writing assessment task that produces genuinely impressive, sophisticated output.