

A LETTER by Daniil Kharms

Daniil Kharms was born in 1905 in Russia. He was interested in politics and meaningless of human existence. His main theme of interest is the absurd. Not one of his stories was published during his lifetime, except for those, he disguised in literature for children. One night he was taken into the yard and put into the black car. He died of hunger in prison.

absurd – not having any meaning that would give the purpose to life

BEFORE READING: find the words in the text that mean

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|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. opened | 7. think of something |
| 2. maybe | 8. immediately |
| 3. strictly basic meaning | 9. also |
| 4. the moment when | 10. the others |
| 5. accidentally | 11. as a minimum |
| 6. earlier | 12. precisely |



Dear Nikandr Andreyevich,

I have received your letter and **straight away** I realised that it was from you. At first I thought that it might **by chance** not be from you, but **as soon as** I unsealed it I immediately realised it was from you, though I had been on the point of thinking that it was not from you. I am glad that you, long ago now, got married, because when a person gets married to the one he wanted to marry, then this means he has got what he wanted.

I am very glad you got married, because when a person marries the one he wanted to marry, that means he has got what he wanted. Yesterday I received your letter and immediately thought that this letter was from you, but then I thought that it seemed not to be from you, but **unsealed** it and saw: it really is from you. You did **exactly** the right thing, writing to me. First you didn't write, and then you suddenly wrote, although before that, before that period when you didn't write, you also used to write. Immediately as I received your letter, I straight away decided that it was from you and, then, I was very glad that you had already got married. For, if a person should feel like getting married, then he really has to get married, come what may. Therefore I am very glad that you finally got married to the very one you wanted to marry. And you did exactly the right thing, writing to me. I was greatly cheered up on seeing your letter and I even immediately thought it was from you. It's true, while I was unsealing it, the thought did **flash across my mind** that it was not from you, but then, all the same, I decided it was from you. Thank you for writing. I am grateful to you for this and very glad for you. **Perhaps** you can't guess why I am so glad for you, but I will tell you at once that I am glad for you because you got married, and to the very one you wanted to marry. And, you know, it is very good to marry the very one you want to marry, because then you have got the very thing you wanted. It's for that very reason that I am so glad for you. But also I am glad because you wrote me a letter. I had even from some distance decided that the letter was from you, but as I took it in my hands I then thought: but what if it's not from you? But then I start to think: no, of course it's from you. I unseal the letter myself and at the same time I think: from you or not from you? From you or not from you?

Well, as I unsealed it, then I could see: it's from you. I was greatly cheered and decided to write you a letter **as well**. There's a lot which has to be said, but **literally** there's no time. I have written what I had time to write in this letter and **the rest** I shall write another time, as now there really isn't time at all. It's a good thing, **at least**, that you wrote me a letter. Now I know that you got married a long time ago. I, from your **previous** letters too, knew that you had got married and now I see again: it's absolutely true, you have got married. And I'm very glad that you got married and wrote me a letter. I straight away, as soon as I saw your letter, decided that you had got married again. Well, I think it's a good thing that you have again got married and written me a letter about it. Now write to me and tell me who your new wife is and how it all came about. Say hello from me to your new wife.

Answer the questions:

1. Why do you think Daniil Kharms was arrested and put to prison?
2. Why wasn't any of his work published during his lifetime?
3. If you have only one word to describe the story what would it be?
4. Why does the sentence: "I shall write another time, as now there really isn't time at all.", sound ridiculous?
5. What does this story tell us about human relationships?
6. What factual information does this letter give us?
7. How many sentences would be enough for such a letter?

Past perfect:

1. When the firemen arrived the house(already, burn down)
2. When I got home everyone (be asleep)
3. I didn't know what(happen) to him.

Think: How are the following sentences different from the ones in the previous exercise?

1. When the firemen arrived the house was burning?
 2. When I got home everyone went to bed.
 3. I don't know what has happened to him.
- In which sentence is it still possible to put out the fire?
 - Which verb shows us that it is impossible to do anything about the house any more?
 - In which sentence do we see the person opening the door and seeing everyone asleep?
 - In which sentence does a person open the door, talks with someone for a short while and then everyone goes to sleep?
 - In which sentence are we talking about something we don't know from the present moment?
 - In which sentence are we retelling the story of what we didn't know at one specific point in the past?

Why do we use the past perfect? YES / NO

1. To show that two actions in the past are happening at the same time.
2. To show that the action in the past is not connected to our present moment.
3. To show two actions in the past, where one happened before the other, so that nothing could be changed.
4. To show two actions in the past, where one happened a short time before the other.
5. We often use words like: already and after with the past perfect tense.
6. In conditionals –third type (If you had come I would have kissed you.) to show that the condition cannot be fulfilled, simply because it didn't happen in the past.
7. In indirect speech when we are talking about the past.

Fill in the blanks with: WHEN, AFTER, ALREADY, AS SOON AS, IF, SINCE, UNLESS

1. He has changed a lotI last saw him.
2. Call me,you arrive to New Jersey.
3.negotiating for several months, the agreement was finally reached.
4.he does what he's told, the manager will fire him.
5.he realised the truth he immediately called the police.
6. He couldn't understand that there was no point in lying any more, because I hadknown the whole truth.
7.he had listened to my advice he wouldn't have been in such a trouble.
8.you had called the police what did you do next?

POINT – Do you understand how the words in bold are used in the following sentences?

1. There's no **point in** talking to him – he never listens to others.
2. I was **on the point of** leaving the room when I heard a loud noise.
3. He stood up and **pointed** his gun **at** the prisoner.
4. The **point** is, at least we are all safe.
5. Driving is not one of his strong **points**.
6. I could see him **pointing at** me and telling the other guests what I had said.
7. Could you **point me in** the direction of the bathroom, please?
8. When the necklace disappeared I knew that they would **point the finger at** me.
9. Some economists have **pointed out** that low inflation is not necessarily a good thing.
10. **At that point**, I was still living at home and had no job.
11. The accident happened **at the point** where the A15 joins the M1.
12. He is three **points** behind the leader.

moment	show, direct	blame.....	aim.....	purpose, use.....
do sth. soon.....	characteristic, quality.....	place.....	in sport -mark.....	
show with your finger.....	stress.....	most important fact.....		