

Advanced English Short Story—The Landlord, Raw and Unforgettable, With Phrasal Verbs for Talking About Power, Housing and Conflict

Level B1-B2

Short Story 1 : By the end of this short story, you will be able to understand the use of PHRASAL VERBS related to POWER, HOUSING AND CONFLICT.

"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."

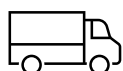
~Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and Philosopher

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

~Desmond Tutu, South African Anglican Bishop



Phrasal Verbs



The Landlord

They say bad news comes in threes, but three is just a number, isn't it? For one thing, Nambewe was not a woman given to superstition. Yet the day she saw her landlord arrive with two men, their faces stern and their hands ready to wrestle with anyone who put up a fight, she knew trouble was brewing.

The landlord was bossing the two men around, barking orders that they were quick to carry out.

"Take that pail. And the other pail too. Remove the clothes from the clothes line."

Soon their hands were full. They headed back to the van and returned for more orders, for more of her things.

Nambewe stood still and watched the scene play out in front of her. Her eyes darted between the two men and the van. She felt her throat drying up.

"Gama! Gama!" She called her oldest son.

"He went to play football," her youngest son replied from inside the house.

"Vincent, stay inside the house! Stay inside the house, do you hear me? Don't come out!"

"Why mummy? I want to go outside to play."

"Just do as I say."

The two men were now carrying two big, empty bags. It looked as though they had come to clear out the house. The landlord was giving them more orders and the men were working with clockwork precision.

Nambewe's chest tightened and she opened her mouth wide so some air could go into her lungs. She tied and retied her *chitenje* with trembling hands. The result was messy but she did not care.

"What are you doing?" She finally said.

"What do we look like we are doing?" The landlord snapped and turned back to his men. Everything was disappearing before her eyes: her clothes, her pots, her plates, her spoons, everything she owned! They were packing each and every item they could lay their hands on, and still they wanted more.

"What's happening aNambewe?"

"I don't know," she replied. "I simply don't know. Please help me, God."

"Isn't that your landlord? Eeh, but people. What is he doing now? Where is Vincent's dad?"

"I don't know."



Nambewe rushed to the van and started pulling the items back into the yard. One of the men shoved her to the ground: "Be careful or I'll hurt you."

"aNambewe, just leave them. They will hurt you."

"What's happening aNaphiri? Why is aNambewe lying on the ground?"

"I don't know."

"Mind your business!" The landlord blurted out and advanced towards the entrance of the house.

"Don't worry aNambewe! If he decides to throw you out, I'll take you in. We can put you up for a few nights. What a foolish man!" Naphiri shouted.

Nambewe stood up and followed the landlord. She was not prepared to back down without a fight! The two men ran after her. Naphiri followed suit and tried to block the two men. They pushed her aside and continued their way.

'Vincent, run to the bedroom!'

"Why mum..."

She heard the door open with a bang. Her son screamed and rushed out of the house. "Mummy, there are thieves in the house!"

A small crowd had now gathered in the yard. They watched as the landlord and his men cleared out the house, carting off item after item. They were throwing their weight around and nobody seemed willing to stand up to them.

"Shame on you! Three grown men ganging up on one woman ...do you call that bravery? Where are the mothers who raised you?" Naphiri fired back from a distance. The landlord kept ordering his men about and clearly looked down on the onlookers.

"Please, don't do this! Please," Nambewe sobbed, her hands crossed above her head. "Please."

Her pleas fell on deaf ears. The trio started with the living room: the TV set, the stereo and the carpet. Then they took the fridge and the curtains. For some reason, they left the sofa set. Nambewe begged them not to touch her son's PlayStation.

"Where is it?" The landlord asked. "Where is the PlayStation?"

"Yes, take the PlayStation. We can sell it at a good price," one of the men chimed in.

Vincent went back into the house to retrieve his PlayStation. When he didn't find it, he went after the man who had plans for his PlayStation and started yelling at him: "Where is it? Give me back my PlayStation! Give it back! Give it back!"



The man just pushed him aside like a piece of paper and carried on his destructive spree.

After many interminable minutes, the landlord finally said: “This is what happens when you always fall behind on your rent. Next time, I will kick you out.”

The three men drove away, carrying her prized belongings *en toute impunité*.

A few minutes later, Vincent’s dad stumbled into the yard, drunk and tittering: “Vincent, let’s go and play with your PlayStation!”



1. GRAMMAR (PART 1): Complete the Phrasal Verbs

BOSS

CARRY

CLEAR

THROW

TAKE

PUT

BACK

CART

GO

CARRY

FALL

KICK

2. GRAMMAR (PART 2): Match the Phrasal Verbs to their definitions.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| a. Carry out | a. Execute or perform a task |
| b. Clear out | b. Provide temporary accommodation |
| c. Take in | c. Regard someone as inferior |
| d. Put up | d. Stop resisting in a conflict |
| e. Back down | e. Resist or confront a powerful person |
| f. Stand up to | f. Fail to keep up with payments |
| g. Look down on | g. Force someone to leave a place |
| h. Fall behind on | h. Remove everything from a place |
| i. Kick out | i. Provide someone with a place to live |



3. **GRAMMAR (PART 3):** Match these expressions to their definitions.

Trouble was brewing

Resist strongly

Put up a fight

Be ignored

Throw one's weight around

A problem was beginning to develop.

Fall on deaf ears

Avoid punishment or consequences

Get away with it

Use power in an unpleasant way

4. **GRAMMAR (PART 4):** Find the opposites of the following Phrasal Verbs.

WORD BANK: CARRY OUT – CLEAR OUT – TAKE IN – PUT UP – BACK DOWN – STAND UP TO – LOOK DOWN ON – FALL BEHIND ON – KICK OUT – COME OUT – GO AFTER – CARRY ON

a. Stay inside

a.

b. Stop

b.

c. Fight on

c.

d. Turn away

d.

e. Refuse to obey

e.

f. Leave alone

f.

g. Look up to

g.

h. Take in

h.

i. Keep up with

i.

j. Move into

j.

k. Take out

k.

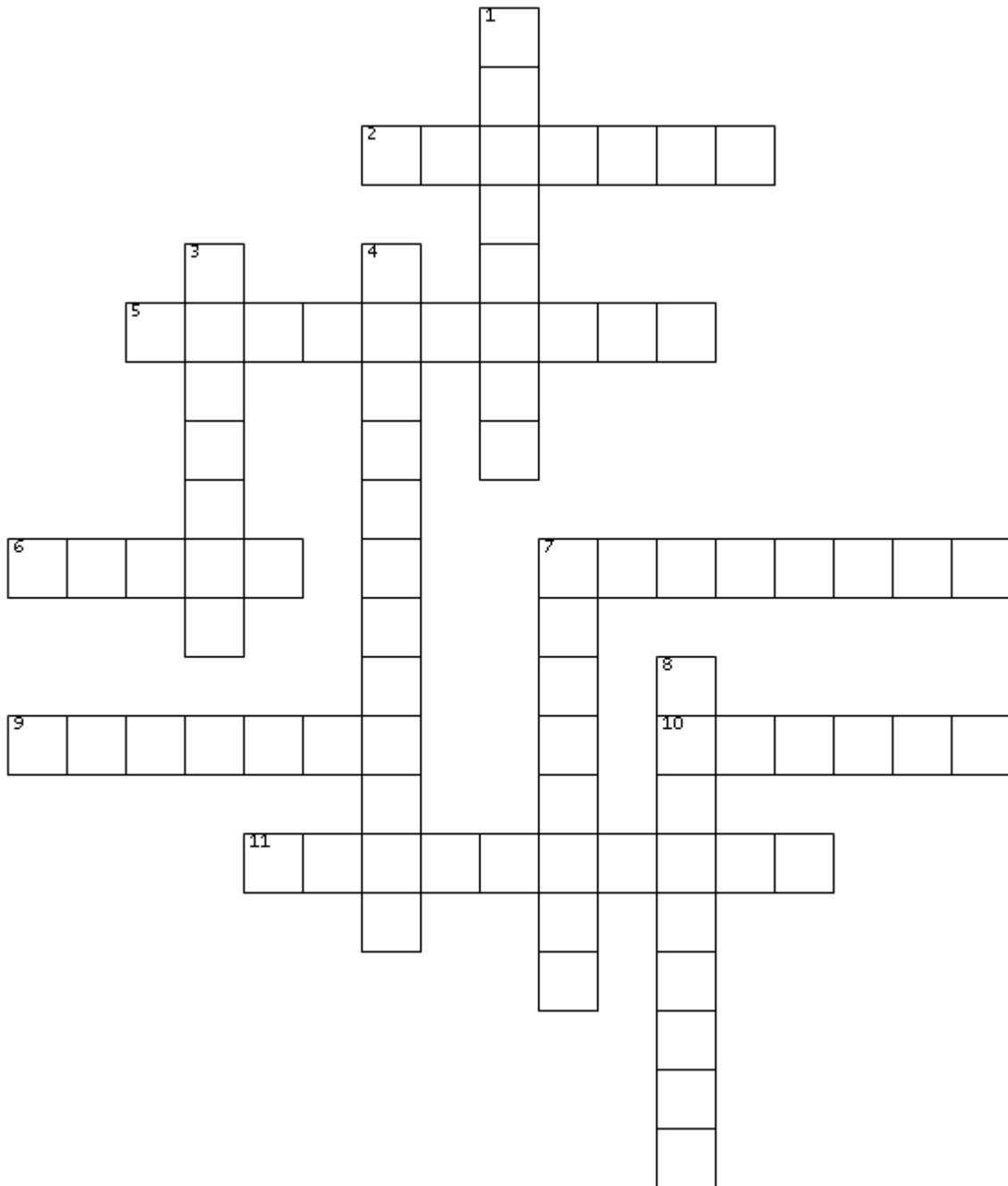
l. Give in to

l.



5. GRAMMAR (PART 5): Solve this Crossword Puzzle about Phrasal Verbs.

WORD BANK: BACK DOWN – BOSS AROUND – CARRY ON – CLEAR OUT – COME OUT – FALL BEHIND
ON – BOSS AROUND – KICK OUT – LOOK DOWN ON – PUT UP – STAND UP TO – TAKE IN



ACROSS

- 2. Force someone to leave a property
- 5. Tell people what to do in an unpleasant way
- 6. Provide temporary accommodation
- 7. Remove everything from a house
- 9. Continue doing something
- 10. Provide someone with a place to live
- 11. Regard someone as inferior

DOWN

- 1. Stop resisting
- 3. Leave a building
- 4. Fail to keep up with the payments
- 7. Execute an order
- 8. Resist a powerful person



6. GRAMMAR (PART 6): Unscramble the following Phrasal Verbs.

WORD BANK: BACK DOWN – BOSS AROUND– CARRY ON– TAKE IN– CLEAR OUT – COME OUT – FALL BEHIND ON – KICK OUT – LOOK DOWN ON – STAND UP TO

KOOL NWOD NO		SSOB DNUORA	
EMOC TUO		LLAF DNIHEB NO	
NWOD KCAB		RAELC TUO	
KCIK TUO		DNATS PU OT	
YRRAC NO		EKAT NI	

7. GRAMMAR (PART 7): Make 5 sentences with Phrasal Verbs.

PHRASAL VERBS (I)

PUT UP (SOMEONE) BACK OFF COME THROUGH LASH OUT MOVE INTO

PICK ON LOOK DOWN ON MOVE IN TAKE UP (A RESIDENCE)

GO AFTER RENT OUT CLEAR OUT CARRY ON

HANG ON TAKE ON (A TENANT) FIGHT BACK STICK UP FOR

BACK DOWN FALL BEHIND ON GANG UP ON THROW OUT CLEAN UP

ORDER ABOUT TALK DOWN TO KICK OUT SETTLE IN

MOVE OUT LORD IT OVER MOVE BACK IN FIX UP TAKE IN

-
-
-
-
-



8. **READING COMPREHENSION (PART 1):** Say if the following sentences are True or False. Justify your answer.

GENERAL COMPREHENSION

- a. The title of the short story is "*The Houseboy*":.....
.....
- b. The narrator can be a man or a woman:.....
.....
- c. The story is about a woman who believes in superstition:.....
.....
- d. The landlord arrives alone.....
.....
- e. Vincent stays in the house all the time:.....
.....
- f. All the neighbours help Nambewe:.....
.....
- g. The story mainly talks about a poor woman:.....
.....

DETAILED READING COMPREHENSION

1) Answer the following Reading Comprehension questions in detail:

- a. What was Nambewe doing when she first saw the landlord and the two men?.....
.....
- b. Why did Nambewe become worried?.....
.....
- c. What instructions did the landlord give to the two men?.....
.....
- d. Why did Nambewe tell Vincent to stay inside the house?.....
.....
- e. What evidence suggests that the men planned to take many of Nambewe's belongings?.....
.....
- f. How did Nambewe react when she realized what was happening?.....
.....
- g. What happened when Nambewe tried to retrieve her belongings from the van?.....



-
-
- h. How did Naphiri support Nambewe during the incident?.....
-
-
- i. Why did a crowd gather in the yard?.....
-
-
- j. How did the crowd react to the landlord's actions?.....
-
-
- k. Which items did the men remove from the living room?.....
-
- l. Which item was particularly important to Vincent?.....
-
- m. Why did Vincent become angry?.....
-
-
- n. What reason did the landlord give for taking Nambewe's belongings?.....
-
-
- o. What warning did the landlord give before leaving?.....
-
- p. How did the three men leave the scene?.....
-
- q. When did Vincent's father arrive?.....
-
- r. What was ironic about Vincent's father's final comment?.....
-
-
- s. Who do you think suffered the most during the incident? Why?.....
-
-
- t. What lesson can be learned from the story?.....
-



2) Answer the following questions concerning narration, character and plot:

- a. Who tells the story? Is the narrator a character in the story or an outside observer?
- b. Does the narrator know Nambewe's thoughts and feelings? Give an example from the text
- c. Why do you think the author begins the story with the expression "*Bad news comes in threes*"?
- d. What kind of person is Nambewe? Give two examples from the story to support your answer
- e. What impression do you get of the landlord?
- f. How is Naphiri different from the other neighbours?
- g. What does Vincent's reaction to the loss of his PlayStation reveal about him?
- h. What does the ending reveal about Vincent's father?
- i. What is the main conflict in the story?
- j. How does the tension increase throughout the story?
- k. Why is the scene where Nambewe is pushed to the ground important?
- l. Why is the ending ironic?
- m. Do you think the story has a happy ending, a sad ending or an open ending? Explain your answer
- n. What themes does the story explore?



3) Fill in the blanks.

WORD BANK: PLAYSTATION – GROUND – VAN – DRUNK – FOOTBALL – NEIGHBOURS – BELONGINGS – NAPHIRI – LANDLORD – RENT

Text 1

The story begins when Nambewe sees her arrive with two men and a large Her oldest son, Gama, has gone to play , while Vincent is inside the house. Soon, Nambewe realises that the men have come to take her

When Nambewe tries to stop the men, one of them pushes her to the Meanwhile, comes to her defence and even offers to help her if she loses her home. Although many gather in the yard, nobody manages to stop the landlord and his men.

The men remove many items from the house, including Vincent's Before leaving, the landlord explains that Nambewe has fallen behind on her A few minutes later, Vincent's father arrives , unaware of everything that has happened.

Text 2:

WORD BANK: LOOK DOWN ON – TAKE IN – CLEAR OUT – STAND UP TO – COME OUT – KICK OUT – BOSS AROUND – FALL BEHIND ON – CARRY OUT – BACK DOWN

The landlord spent the morning the two men. They quickly his orders and began to the house. Nambewe watched in disbelief as her belongings disappeared into the van.

At first, Vincent's mother told him not to of the house. Meanwhile, Naphiri promised that she would Nambewe if she lost her home. Unlike the landlord, she did not people who were struggling.

Although Nambewe was frightened, she refused to Unfortunately, none of the neighbours were willing to the landlord. Before leaving, he warned Nambewe that if she continued to her rent, he would her of the house.



4) CREATIVITY: Write a short story (150 words or 15 lines): Choose one subject and use Phrasal Verbs

- Imagine what happens to Nambewe and her family after the landlord leaves.
- Write a different ending to the story.
- Imagine that Vincent finds his PlayStation a week later. Explain what happened and where he found it.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.





Learn **English**
With Africa