

The inventor, or professor, as we liked to call him, was a kindly man with greying hair and a pair of round rimmed spectacles. At work, he wore a white coat that had long since lost its buttons. Sometimes, he appeared a little absentminded but in reality, he was as sharp as a knife and always considered the consequences of what he was about to say before he opened his mouth. That was not to say that he never said anything controversial - far from it. He knew what he thought and he was determined that the only people who should be performing paradigm moving operations were the people who were against him. Outside work, the inventor returned to his normal demeanour - that of a quiet and unassuming character whose presence would go unnoticed in any public place.

One Sunday morning, I was woken by my phone ringing. I reached out and answered it just as the person on the other end of the line hung up. I looked at my clock: seven fifteen. "Seven fifteen! Who rings at seven fifteen on a Sunday morning?" I said to myself, somewhat exasperated. As if in answer the phone started ringing again. This time, I already had it in my hand.

"Hello," I said. "Who is this please?"

"James? Is that you? I am sorry to disturb you at this hour on your day off but I need your help," replied the familiar voice from the other end of the phone.

"Professor... what do you want?" I asked. The inventor had never rung me at home before and so I figured that it must be important.

"Can you meet me at the lab?"

"Half an hour?"

"That would be great. See you then," replied the professor.

I got up and slid into the same clothes that I had been wearing when I had fallen through the front door at quarter to six that morning. I had been

out with some old friends the night before and was feeling a little worse for wear.

When I got to the lab, the professor was waiting for me. He handed me a mug of black tea as I went to hang up my coat. "Ahh. James. How are you? Were you about to go somewhere?" enquired the professor.

I looked at him. "What do you mean?" I asked.

"Your clothing... you look like you are going to a night club."

"No. This is how I normally dress on a weekend. Why? What is wrong with it?"

"Did I say there was anything wrong with it? I just didn't want to disrupt your plans. That is..."

I interrupted him as I could see this innate conversation taking over my morning. "So - what is it that you want? What is important enough to drag us both out of bed on a Sunday morning in the middle of July?"

The professor sat down and invited me to do the same. He then proceeded to explain about some things that I didn't really understand. Sensing the confusion running through my brain, probably by the look on my face, he stopped and just said, "Look. I need you to come with me to Venezuela for a week."

"Isn't that somewhere in South America? Won't we need lots of injections with big needles for that kind of trip?" I asked, somewhat incredulously.

"Yeah," replied the Professor. "We don't really have time for all that. I have booked us on a flight that leaves in four hours. You need to go home and pack. Don't bring the kitchen sink!"

I rubbed my head and said, "Well, I better get off then. I need to pack."

As I drove back to my apartment, I could think of all kinds of reasons why this was a bad idea:

- the drug situation in Venezuela left a lot to be desired;
- the fact that we were having no injections nor getting any malaria tablets, for that matter;
- it was hot and sweaty in Venezuela;
- the plain fact that I had no idea why we were going.

Despite these reservations, I was seated in seat B7 next to the professor when the flight took off from Manchester Airport later that afternoon. He had hurriedly sorted out the visas online and as my ears popped at 27,000 feet, I put my chair back as far as it would go and started to doze off.

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Checklist

Use capital letter and full stop correctly in one sentence.	
Use capital letters, full stops and question marks correctly in most sentences.	
Use capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks correctly in almost all sentences.	
Sentences are correctly demarked with capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks as appropriate.	
Commas used in lists.	
Commas used to separate clauses such as adverbial clauses.	
Speech marks attempted, but may not always be accurately punctuated.	
Speech marks used with comma to separate narrative from dialogue.	
Speech marks used with comma and capital letter at the beginning of dialogue.	
Dialogue correctly demarked with speech marks, capital letter, comma or other punctuation mark, new paragraph for a new person speaking.	
Use of more adventurous punctuation such as dashes, ellipses, colons, semi-colons.	
Use noun phrases to describe a thing.	
Use adverbial clauses to add detail to a sentence.	
Use a range of simple, compound and complex sentences to move the story forward in an interesting way.	
Use connectives such as: and, so, but.	
Use connectives such as: because, when, if.	
Use connectives such as: although, meanwhile, however.	
Have a clear structure to the story with a start, middle and end.	
Build up some tension in the story so that you are wondering what is about to happen.	

Relate the end of the story to the beginning of the story.	
Attempt to use paragraphs.	
Use paragraphs in dialogue when a new person speaks.	
Make correct use of paragraphs where each paragraph is about an individual subject and the next paragraph starts when the subject being discussed changes slightly.	
Give a character's opinion by what (s)he says or does.	
Explicitly give a character's opinion.	
Use an apostrophe correctly.	
Use all apostrophes correctly.	
Not use 's every time there is more than one of something.	
Uses our, are, of and off correctly.	
Good description of a place or a character.	
Uses a technical vocabulary.	
Uses a wide ranging vocabulary.	
Makes a clear difference between dialogue and narrative vocabulary eg slang and technical.	
Make your comment about what you think of the writing.	