

What is Passé Simple?

Worksheet

Passé simple is the literary past tense marking a single completed action in formal or narrative contexts. It is rarely heard in conversation but is essential for reading and understanding French literature and formal texts.

Questions

1. Passé simple is primarily used in...
 - A) casual conversation
 - B) formal written narratives
 - C) email messages
 - D) text messages
2. Register of passé simple?
 - A) informal
 - B) formal/literary
 - C) mixed
 - D) slang
3. How would you say 'I arrived' in passé simple?
 - A) J'ai arrivé
 - B) Je suis arrivé
 - C) J'arrivai
 - D) J'arrive
4. Main function of passé simple in narratives?
 - A) to express ongoing actions
 - B) to show completed sequential events
 - C) to indicate habitual actions
 - D) to state opinions
5. Il entra dans la maison et trouva une lettre.
6. Le héros se leva, regarda le ciel, et cria.
7. Elle lut le message, devint pâle, et s'en alla.
8. Define: What is passé simple used for?
9. Define: Is passé simple used in spoken French?
10. Define: Passé simple vs passé composé?

Answer Key

1. B) formal written narratives — Passé simple is the literary past tense for novels, stories, and formal writing.
2. B) formal/literary — Passé simple belongs exclusively to formal and literary contexts.
3. C) J'arrivai — Passé simple first person: j'arrivai (verb + -ai ending for -er verbs).
4. B) to show completed sequential events — Passé simple narrates a sequence of completed past events in literature.
5. He entered the house and found a letter. Both verbs in passé simple (entra, trouva) show sequential literary events.
6. The hero stood up, looked at the sky, and shouted. Classic passé simple sequence in narrative prose.
7. She read the message, became pale, and left. Three rapid sequential actions told in formal narrative style.
8. Formal, literary narratives — the main past tense in novels and historical texts.
9. Almost never — it belongs to written, formal, and literary French only.
10. Passé simple is formal/literary; passé composé is everyday speech.

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