

Carapace

Word Work

Language in Use

‘...could....would...’

I could hear the ocean in the telephone. I could see him with a big grin on his face, pulling open his white shirt and rubbing his bare bony chest with his long fingers. He would have the lamps lit under the trees.

In the above extract from the text there are three examples of modal auxiliary verbs. They are easy to spot, as each comprises –*ould* as a major component. One is used to talk about a past event that is real, one for a past event that is imagined and one about an habitual event.

<i>could hear</i>	– past event; at that time
<i>could see</i>	– past event; at that time (<i>imagined</i>)
<i>would have</i>	– supposed event because this is a habit

Decide if the following are descriptions of past events (real or imagined) or habits.

1. She could feel the wind in her hair as she stood on the cliff.
2. He would walk along the cliff shortly after dawn.
3. I would see her every time I listened to that piece of music.
4. She could see the problems ahead even as she spoke.
5. When we were kids, my dad used to take us out so we could ride our bikes every weekend.
6. They could feel the hostility of the crowd as they stood up to speak.
7. We couldn't get to the station before the train left.
8. You wouldn't wait for her to show up?
9. I wouldn't leave before nine in case the postman came.
10. Most evenings he would sit in front of the TV while she knitted.

“He would have the lamps lit”

As this is a narrative, and referring to a time in the past, of course the tense used is the past – *would have*

If the narrator in the story was talking in the present, she would have said *“He will have the lamps lit”*. ‘*Will*’ is used here to imply a habit that is going on now, in the present. It does not have a future intention.

Think about people you know – friends, family. What are they doing now that you can predict, because it is usual (habitual) behaviour? For example: ‘My brother will be at college. My father will be having lunch with his colleagues.’

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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Glossary

The definitions given in this little glossary are correct for the context of the story 'Carapace', but may be different in other contexts.

chilli	hot, spicy pepper;
clicked	made a noise with tongue against top of mouth
crackly	sound of paper
crease up	poetic use – move in pleasure
gadgets	devices; equipment
ghastly	awful; horrible
gulping	trying to breathe when short of air
let things slip	allowed something to happen through inaction
mop of hair	wild, uncombed hair
musk	flowering plant (<i>Mimulus repens</i>)
peeling	removing the skin/shells
plucked	pulling (<i>usually for pulling feathers from e.g. a chicken</i>)
prawns	edible marine crustacean / large shrimp
prick	idiot (<i>disrespectful term</i>)
saree	type of woman's dress common in South Asia
screwed up	closed eyes, as if against a bright light
split	become cracked or broken
squid	Ten-armed celaphod
whiskers	hairs on face