

Views from Edinburgh

Language Work

Stative Verbs

Look at the beginning of the poem 'Dusting the Phone'

I am spending my time imagining the worst that could happen.
I know this is not a good idea, and that being in love, I could be
spending my time going over the best that has been happening.

Most of the main verbs are talking about what the poet is doing over a period of time. Underline them. Note that the majority are in the continuous (or progressive) form. Which three letters make this clear?

However, one main verb refers to a state rather than an action or event. Underline this verb.

It would be wrong to say 'I am knowing' in British English. The verb 'to know' does not take the '-ing' form except in certain cases.

These kind of verbs are known as **stative** verbs because they describe a state. Verbs that take the '-ing' form are known as **dynamic** verbs.

A

Here is a list of verbs. Decide if they are stative or dynamic and put them in the appropriate column.

*Like Spend Know Love Happen Prefer Climb Pay Want Wish Buy
Dislike See Hate Talk*

Stative	Dynamic
<i>Know</i>	<i>Happen</i>

B

However, to make things more difficult, some verbs can take both forms, but change meaning when they do! Consider the difference between the meaning of the verbs in these pairs of sentences:

- 1 a *What was she thinking about when did that?*
 b *She thinks he's clever.*
- 2 a *They feel we should leave soon.*
 b *I'm not feeling too well*
- 3 a *He's busy measuring the circumference.*
 b *That small box measures 10 x 20 cms*
- 4 a *I can't see what you mean.*
 b *He has been seeing Jane for a month.*

C

Complete the following sentences by choosing the correct form of the verb. (In each case, only one will fit)

1. I _____ having to get up early. (*dislike*)
2. She _____ to leave now. (*want*)
3. The film festival _____ for two years now (*happen*)
4. He was _____ that you didn't know the answer. (*astonish*)
5. She _____ less round her waist than her sister. (*measure*)
6. They _____ he was lying. (*know*)
7. I _____ the Doctor this afternoon (*see*)
8. While Jim _____
 the bill, Sarah put on her coat.
 (*pay*)
9. He _____ fish to meat.
 (*prefer*)
10. He _____ they had
 underestimated the cost of the
 project. (*feel*)



Paul Millard

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English-English Glossary

Jackie Kay

This section provides a brief mono-lingual glossary of key vocabulary and cultural references from these poems. The meanings are specific to the context, and may mean something else in another context.

I Try My Absolute Best

alar	chemical in pesticide
apparently	seemingly
benzene	liquid that comes from petroleum and coal tar
carcinogenic	causes cancer
cartridge	part of the water purifier
chock-a-block	full
deposit	layer of something left behind
flush	well off, rich
hype up	make excited and agitated
Monster Munch	children's snack of crisps
organic	grown without any harmful pesticides or chemicals
Perrier	mineral water
pipe down	make calm
purifier	device for making water pure
off the breast	no longer drinking the mother's milk
Valium	drug that makes someone feel calm and unstressed

Attention Seeking

detention	punishment where children stay after school to do extra work
gerbil	small rodent kept as a pet
mess up	make untidy
punishment	penalty for doing something wrong
swot	(negative) someone who studies very hard, seriously and enthusiastically



Sassenachs

bru	<i>Irn Bru</i> is a bright orange fizzy drink first made in 1901 in Scotland. It is said to cure hangovers. Advertising slogan: “ <i>Made in Scotland. From girders.</i> ” (<i>girders are heavy iron bars</i>)
clutch	hold tightly
Euston	railway station in north london where trains arrive from Scotland
jig	fidget (a quick, lively dance)
pony	Ponytail. (Long hair tied into a “tail”)
Sassenach	the Scottish people of today call the English “Sassenach”, as a usually friendly term of abuse for the ancient “enemy”.
sophisticated	showing
tammy	(or <i>Tam-o-shanter</i>) is a hat, resembling a beret. It can be worn by men or women.
tartan	a pattern or design of interlocking lines which has made Scotland world-famous

Dusting the Phone

assault	unexpected violent attack
herald	announce the arrival of
hoax	trick played on someone to deceive them
infuriatingly	making someone very, very angry
silver service	high quality service by well trained professionals (usually from waiters in a good restaurant)
siren	loud warning noise, eg from an ambulance
trapped	unable to escape