

THE TIME-TRAVELING TEACHER

A VOCABULARY-BOOSTING SHORT
STORY



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BIG WORDS MADE SIMPLE.

The Time-Traveling Teacher: A Vocabulary-Boosting Short Story

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I’m going to do the very best I can to help you, but ultimately, the only person who can improve your vocabulary (and SAT/ACT score) is you. Please don’t sue me.

I didn't want to be a teacher. Not really.

But I'm not tall enough to be an actress, and my parents said I'd never make any money as a historian. And, as we all know, those are (basically) the only careers allowed to time travel.

Oh, sure, authors can do it sometimes, too. But according to my aunt Agatha — an author herself — the paperwork's a **bona fide** nightmare, and you have to re-apply for each book.

But teachers — clever things they are — worked out a deal where time travel is part of their professional development. (Well, it is for *history* teachers, at least.) AND, like the actresses in period pieces, teachers don't have to fill out any paperwork. The unions do it for them.

And so I **endured** years of courses with ridiculously **pretentious** titles — things like, “Behavioral **Pedagogy** and the ‘Whole Student’ Lesson Plan,” whatever that means. I took a whole course on it, and I still couldn't tell you.

I started at Brighton Academy in the fall, and to my surprise, the teaching itself was quite **diverting**. I got to talk to kids about Zeus and Julius Caesar all day. What's not to love? As long as you learned to sleep with your eyes open at faculty meetings, the profession itself was surprisingly tolerable.

I did it all for this, though. *This* trip. This surprisingly **prosaic** hotel conference room at the Washington, D.C. Marriott.

It didn't look like much. In fact, a passerby might have mistaken it for an amateur history fair. Tables were set up along the **periphery** of the room with tri-fold posters advertising different places...and time periods. The people behind the tables

Bona Fide - Genuine; real

Endured - Suffered through

Pretentious - Self-righteous; trying to seem more important than is the case

Pedagogy - The method and practice of teaching

Diverting - Entertaining; fun (like “divertido” in Spanish)

Prosaic - Commonplace; ordinary

Periphery - The outer limits

were dressed in **garb contemporaneous** with their poster's location, and though they looked rather amusing now, the amount of money behind these displays could've funded a small army for months.

The time travel industry was highly **regulated**, of course, and **vendors** had to win wildly competitive government contracts. They could only partner with specific professions — the **aforementioned** teachers, actors, and historians, among a few others on an as-needed basis — and it was all for this. The time when we, the selected professions, could sample the **wares** and sign up for free trips. It was like a tasting menu, only we got to see Odysseus sneak out of the Trojan Horse instead of sampling a fine Havarti.

I **meandered** over to the ancient Roman table, where the representative was dressed as a gladiator. He was quite good-looking and muscular, and I should know, since his biceps were on full display.

“Hey, there,” he said as I approached. “So, what are you here for? Character research? Period piece?”

“Sorry?”

“What's the movie?”

I **suppressed** a laugh. “Flattered, though I'm sure you say that to all the girls. But I'm a teacher, not an actress.”

He shrugged. “Could've fooled me, but we at Asynchronous Tours are happy to have you either way. Our **bailiwick** is ancient Rome, from the **Punic Wars** through

Garb - Clothing or dress

Contemporaneous - Existing with the same period of time

Regulated - Controlled or supervised, usually by the government

Vendors - People or companies offering something for sale

Aforementioned - Previously mentioned

Wares - Articles for sale (in her case, the fee has already been paid!)

Meandered - Wandered

Suppressed - Repressed; stifled

Bailiwick - Sphere of operations or influence

Punic Wars - A series of wars between Rome & Carthage (probably not going to be on the SAT!)

the **Pax Romana**.”

“How’d you manage to get this job, if you don’t mind me asking?” I ran a gentle hand above the ancient coins displayed on the table, all of which looked brand new.

“Trade secrets, I’m afraid, but it does help to know someone in government.”

“Thought that might be the case.”

“Most of the people here deserve it, connections **notwithstanding**,” he went on. “Feisal over there studied computer science at MIT. He perfected the hop a few years ago. Increased efficiency by 600%! Melissa — she’s the one dressed as a Greek goddess — wrote the Butterfly **algorithm**. No clue how she did it, but as far as I can tell she fed every history book in the world into a computer, and if anyone threatens the existing order, all the travelers are immediately pulled back, like a failsafe.”

“So it’s not *all nepotism*, is what you’re saying.”

“Not at all. Well, except for Matthew. Yeah, that guy, in the suit of armor. He’s already lost a few people in medieval Europe, but his father’s chairman of the Appropriations Committee or something, so nothing seems to touch him.”

“Won’t be trying out medieval Europe, then!”

“Probably for the best. Shall I put you down for the next tour of Rome? We’ll be doing...” my still-unnamed gladiator flipped through his clipboard, a model of **anachronism**, who probably could’ve also modeled in a more traditional sense. “Ah, *Carthago delenda est*. The run-up to the third Punic War, when the Romans decided to burn Carthage to the ground.”

I eyed his outfit. “I’ll be changing first, obviously,” he added.

Pax Romana - The “Roman Peace” - a phrase describing the period under the emperor Augustus

Notwithstanding - In spite of; nevertheless

Algorithm - A process or set of rules to be followed, especially by a computer

Nepotism - Getting a job through a relative or close friend

Anachronism - Something that doesn’t belong in the time period in which it exists

Carthago delenda est - “Carthage must be destroyed,” a political slogan made popular by Cato

“Why not?” I smiled. “See you there.”

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