

and head
experiences

turns
to the
their
learning
learn

2.1 James Georgalakis: The Tourist



James Georgalakis is director of communications and impact at the Institute of Development Studies. In this short story we meet a young backpacker at the end of his three-month trip.

2.1.1 PRE-READING: VOCABULARY

1. Prepare to tell a story, real or imagined, about a trip that disappointed you. Include at least five of the words/phrases from the list below. Look up words you are not familiar with.
 - fall short of expectations
 - thwart
 - high hopes
 - despondency
 - anticipation
 - disillusioned
 - dismay
 - discourage
 - let down
 - chagrin
 - dash the hopes of
 - disenchantment

2. Walk about in the classroom and listen to each other's stories.
3. Sum up in class. What seemed to have disappointed you the most? Why is that?
4. In class, discuss if you learned anything from the disappointing trips.

2.1.2 PRE-READING: REASONS FOR BACKPACKING

1. In pairs, come up with reasons why one would go backpacking. Divide the reasons into push factors and pull factors, i.e. things at home that you try to get away from (push) and things abroad that you are attracted to (pull).

Push

Pull

2. Meet up with another pair and compare your reasons. Discuss which factors you think matter the most to young backpackers.

2.1.3 PRE-READING: FORMAL AND INFORMAL LANGUAGE

The following two quotes are from the short story *The Tourist*.

1. Discuss whether they are formal, neutral or informal, respectively.
2. Rewrite each line into a different levels of formality. For example: Rewrite a formal sentence into an informal sentence.

“Sad, eh?” said Kris. “I mean, surely when you have a load of rich folk or whatever marching about spending a fortune in all these shops, driving nice cars, you shouldn't still have poverty like this.”

James Georgalakis: The Tourist (2016), from the IDS Short Story Competition, Institute of Development Studies (p. 11) (2)

“You need to come here right now and check this out.”

James Georgalakis: The Tourist (2016), from the IDS Short Story Competition, Institute of Development Studies (p. 11) (2)

James Georgalakis: The Tourist (2016)

He'd been travelling for just over three months but this was his final destination before returning home. The thought made him nauseous*. There was not much waiting for him there except the high expectations of parents which he had no idea how to meet. Join the family business, put that degree* to good use, make some money and marry a nice girl. No thanks – he thought. Not me, there must be something better. But backpacking his way across a region, supposedly rich with history and opportunity, had done little to shed new light on how to escape his depressingly predictable destiny. As he pondered his predicament* he became aware of someone calling him – ‘Ron, Ron’, repeatedly until he finally snapped out of his daydream and turned to see his latest travelling companion, Kris, waving at him a few yards* further up the busy street.

“What is it?” he grumbled* his reply.

“You need to come here right now and check this out”, said Kris loudly, waving him over theatrically. People were glancing in his direction now, it was embarrassing.

“Go on then what is it,” he snapped as he walked over – by now this country held few real surprises for him. Shitty food, people so hard to read, and the dreadfully embarrassing countrymen that seemed to pop up at every tourist attraction and guest house.

“Look”, said Kris pointing, ‘more beggars than we even saw yesterday. Where do they all come from for god's sake.’

Ron could see what he meant. There was a fairly big group of them, a dozen* perhaps. They looked particularly incongruous* in the city's high-end* shopping district. Dirty, and a little threatening, despite the kids they had with them. Babies on laps and filthy toddlers* in badly fitting clothes. One of these children even had a Manchester United shirt on. It made Ron want to laugh at the absurdity of it all. They were hanging around by a bus stop with its garish* corporate advertising*, this one showing a perfect little family grinning* as they ate some processed food* out of bowls.

Some of the beggars just chatted but others sat and gazed* at the passing crowd intently. They had a sign with them – words scrawled* on a battered* piece of cardboard. Ron could not make out what was written and did not want to stare too long. These people always targeted* the foreigners, he was sick of it.

nauseous have kvalme • degree universitetsuddannelse • predicament knibe • yard måleenhed (ca. en meter) • grumble brumme • dozen tolv • incongruous som ikke passer ind • high-end dyr, fornem • toddler mindre barn • garish prangende • corporate advertising store firmaers reklamer • grin smile bredt • processed food konservesmad • gaze blik • scrawl skrevet hurtigt • battered slidt • target gå efter

'Sad eh', said Kris. 'I mean surely when you have a load of rich folk or whatever marching about spending a fortune in all these shops, driving nice cars, you shouldn't still have poverty like this.'

'I suppose, but it's been the same everywhere, what do you expect,' answered Ron, 'and anyway they're refugees aren't they? Come on, this is the main shopping area – we came here to get geared up – what is it you are looking for?'

'Oh I don't know – not much good at shopping,' Kris shrugged. 'What's this place good for?'

'Clothes I would imagine,' answered Ron, 'I might get some music or something.' Kris laughed loudly and some of the locals stared, 'Music! For goodness sake, who buys music in a shop – even here. Just download it.'

Ron felt humiliated so lashed out*, 'I suppose you'll just want to buy something for that girlfriend of yours?' He knew all too well that Kris was on the re-bound*.

Kris just glowered* and showed him the finger. 'Very mature,' Ron muttered.

In the end the two decided to part company and do their own thing for a while. Ron felt relieved. You travel half-way round the world, feeling a little lonely and homesick, then you meet someone from your own country, who seems to be from a similar background, hang out and then quickly discover being with them 24/7 is unbearable. He'd never been concerned about travelling on his own – you meet more people that way – he'd told his worried looking mother, but he had not reckoned* on most of them being clowns.

As he made his way up the street, the crowds seemed to get thicker and thicker. They jostled* past him but he was used to that. He cut his way through but somehow everyone seemed to walk with a purpose, whereas he ambled* along and now and again changed direction as something caught his eye. This seemed to cause confusion. No one met his gaze*, but he was occasionally pushed and shoved and at one point he had his foot painfully stepped on. He had been told this was the spot in the city for shopping but he was still amazed at how busy it was, despite all that he had heard about the increasingly desperate economic situation. Everyone just seems to shop, he thought to himself. Perhaps it makes them feel better? There were of course many foreign faces like his own; most seemed to stride along with a purpose, like they knew exactly where they were going.

He turned into a small side street to catch his breath. As he made his way down the narrow lane* he found himself outside some sort of textiles shop and decided to step inside to get even further away from the hubbub*. The small boutique was pleasantly calm inside but he was almost immediately approached* by a pushy* salesman.

lash out bide fra sig • be on the rebound trist p.g.a. at et romantisk forhold lige er slut • glower skule • reckon regne med • jostle mase sig forbi • amble slentre • gaze blik • lane smal gade • hubbub larm • approach henvende sig til • pushy påtrængende

'What is it you are looking for sir?' he said, with a forced* looking smile on his face. Why couldn't they just leave him alone? He was sure he was being overcharged* whenever he went because of the colour of his skin and he certainly had bought several items he did not need and did not really have room for in his luggage.

'Well er, mm, you know just looking for something for my mother.' The words came out before he'd really decided how he was going to respond. It was true, he did need a gift for mum but what on earth was this place going to provide? It was hardly a souvenir shop. There were plenty of textiles shops at home. But the salesman was off – pointing things out and encouraging Ron to rub various materials between his fingers and making admiring noises about the colours.

After what felt like an hour but was actually ten minutes, he finally escaped complete with a red pashmina*, gift wrapped. At least it would not take up much room in his bag. Feeling slightly embarrassed by his purchase* and his inability to manage even the nicest and most gently spoken shop people he quickly made his way further down the back streets, following several twists and turns. It was not until he was pulling his phone from his pocket to call Kris to find where they were meeting for lunch, as per an earlier plan, that he realised his surroundings looked entirely unfamiliar. Surely he could not have strayed* that far from the main shopping precinct*? Damn it, he thought, lost again.

Ron's ability to get lost was almost legendary. At school he was subject to much teasing from the other boys for being clueless when it came to navigating the busy city that he has spent his whole childhood in.

'Hey man lost again, ha ha', they'd call out, if he was ever late for class, before the teacher quietened them down and ordered him shame-faced to his seat. Now, at the age of twenty three, friends, girlfriends and family still teased him about his lack of any sense of direction.

His father had humiliated him in front of his aunties and uncles, brothers and sisters and all those that had gathered to see him off back in the spring, by presenting him with a map and a compass. 'To help you find your way son', he laughed and everyone joined in mocking* him. Some even clapped.

'Just follow all the other people who look like you,' shouted his older brother laughing. He blushed at the memory. A first class* computer science graduate and they just sodding* laughed. He fumed* when he thought of it.

The street he found himself in looked quite depressing on this grey overcast day and the sidewalk was littered* with filth*, uncollected rubbish, broken glass and dog mess.

forced påtaget • overcharge kræve for højen pris • pashmina cashmere • purchase køb • stray komme bort • precinct område • mock drille • first class rangerende i den høje ende i en universitetsksamen • sodding fandeme • fume blive rasende • litter flyde med • filth skidt

He looked properly, perhaps for the first time in some minutes, at his surroundings. Boarded-up* shop fronts, dwellings* with grimy* windows and scruffy* front entrances, overgrown with weeds. Where the hell was he? This did not look like the city centre! He stared at his cell. Oh great he thought, no signal – again. Why was he not surprised? Either his phone was out of charge or the signal had gone. No google maps then, he grimaced. He was reminded yet again of the joke map his father had presented to him. It was not even of the right bloody country never mind the right city.

He was so busy thinking about whether he could retrace* his steps whilst still brooding* over his humiliation back home, he did not see the two men approaching him from behind. The first he knew about their presence was when one grabbed him by the shoulder and spun him around, the other shouted 'Ok we'll have that.' The phone was snatched from his hand. 'You rich foreigners don't need it anyway. You can just buy another.' Both were young looking – perhaps in their late teens – and one, to Ron's horror, carried an ugly looking little blade*. Ron felt his guts* lurch* and bile* rising in his throat.

'Money!' barked* the taller of the two while his knife carrying colleague looked nervously about. Ron did not speak but just handed over his money and cards. His hand shook as he held them out and they were snatched from him. And then they were gone. They had fled around the corner so fast he hardly saw them go. Afterwards, he struggled to remember what they had been wearing or their faces. They all looked the same to him anyway. He remembered the glint of the knife though and the thick accent of the taller one who spoke. Those memories visited him in his dreams for a long time after.

It was not until after the meeting with the bored looking police officer, a woman, the successful attempt to reach his distraught* parents and on the following day, the wiring* of money and the purchase* of a cheap phone, that Ron was able to get his stuff together for the trip home. As for Kris – well he lost his number along with his iPhone and he never saw him back at the accommodation*. He was a loser anyway and it was not as if he ever tried to contact Ron again.

It was later that evening, while he packed, that he found the pashmina* under his bed. It was still in its carefully folded paper gift wrapping, in the bottom of a crumpled plastic shopping bag with little white handles and the store's logo printed on the side. He'd clutched* that bag right through the robbery. He had not even noticed he was carrying it and his assailants* seemed to have ignored it also. Funny really he thought. Then he burst into tears sitting down heavily on the side of his hotel bed,

boarded-up brædder for vinduerne • dwelling bolig • grimy snavset • scruffy forfalden • retrace følge tilbage • brood tænke over • blade kniv • guts mave • lurch vende sig • bile galde • bark råbe (i en skrap tone) • distraught oprevet • wiring sende penge elektronisk • purchase køb • accommodation her: hotel • pashmina cashmere • clutch knuge • assailant overfaldsmand

putting his head in his hands. The shock of what had happened to him the day before finally hitting him.

God he missed home so much. This country had overwhelmed him, with its crass* commercialism, bizarre cultures and behaviours and its misplaced arrogance – particularly towards foreigners. He just wanted to get away. He did not care if it was steeped* in shared history and was great for your Christmas shopping. Surely all the hype around it was misplaced. Why did so many come here – even stay? It was beyond him.

Twelve hours later he was heaving* his rucksack through the airport, casting his gaze* from left to right toward the other side of the arrivals gate to see if he could spot his father's driver. There he was. Good. Right on time. The heat, noise and smells of home hit him as they left the terminal together.

As he sat in the back seat staring out at all the familiar sights he felt depressed once again. What the hell was he going to do? His trip really had changed nothing. Three countries visited, many new experiences notched up* and for what? Maybe his parents were right. All this backpacking, pretending you are poor, when really you could go and dine in the finest restaurant, check into a five star hotel, or just fly home whenever you wanted, really was a waste of time. Worst, it was a lie.

They were now in the city centre, passing the columns* and glass of the railway station, less than a mile from his parents' apartment. The car ground to a halt yet again. The traffic certainly had not improved since he'd left.

'What's the hold up now Gopal?' he asked the driver.

'Very sorry Mr Rahul sir, there is a cow at the top of the street holding everything up.'

Ron stared into Paharganj – now there is a crowded street, he thought. He could see many western tourists flocking up and down hassled* by hawkers* and beggars. God, last times he been down there were when he and his school friends used to go and buy fireworks for Diwali. Bloody dreadful place. What made people leave their own comfortable homes to visit such shit holes? He tried to remember the phrase he heard his father use despairingly* once, when describing these young visitors to his country. What was it? 'Development tourists,' that was it. What a joke.

'Just drive around, Gopal,' he instructed the driver. The car slowly edged* forward, horns blaring* all around. No place like home, he thought. He stared out of the window watching the sun turning orange on the hazy*, polluted New Delhi* skyline.

James Gargalakis: The Tourist (winner from the BPS Short Story Competition, Institute of Design, Great Studies)

crass kold • steeped gennemtræng • heave slæbe • gaze blik • notch up sat kryds ved • column søjle • hassle chikaneret • hawker gadesælger • despairingly fortvivlet • edge bevæge sig gradvist fremad • blare lave højlyd • hazy tåget • New Delhi hovedstaden i Indien

2.1.4 COMPREHENSION: SUMMARY AND THE STORY'S TWIST

1. Write a brief summary of the story (125–150 words).
2. Meet up with a classmate and read each other's summaries. Did you manage to include everything that is important?
3. What is the story's twist in the tail?
4. Discuss where you think Ron has been and give reasons for your answer.

2.1.5 ANALYSIS: REASONS FOR TRAVELLING

1. Discuss why Ron goes travelling and why he chooses to be a backpacker rather than travelling more comfortably.
2. Are Ron's reasons similar to the reasons you came up with in the pre-reading task 2.1.2 (se side 60) about push and pull factors?
3. If yes, are the reasons similar because all young people are alike?
4. If not, are your different reasons due to your different backgrounds?

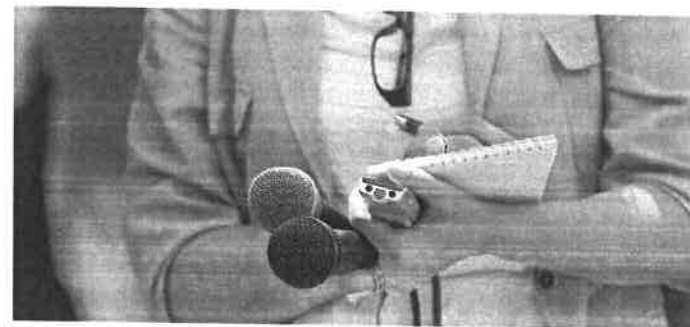
2.1.6 ANALYSIS: EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

1. In five minutes, find as many adjectives as possible that describe the setting. Write them down.
2. Compare your adjectives to your neighbour's.
 - a. Discuss if the adjectives show us Ron's impression of the setting.
 - b. If so, how would you characterise his impression?
3. Make a list of the reasons Ron does not like the place he has travelled to.
4. What is it that Ron seems to have been looking for?
5. Is it possible to find what Ron was looking for? Why/why not?

2.1.7 ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISATION OF RON

1. Characterise Ron by choosing at least four of the aspects below. Draw something or find images online to represent each aspect, e.g. a knife to illustrate the robbery. Under each drawing, write what you think it shows us about Ron.
 - a. The fact that Ron always seems to get lost.
 - b. Ron's relationship to Kris.
 - c. Ron's attitude to the country he is visiting.
 - d. The gift he buys for his mum.
 - e. His reaction to being mugged.
 - f. Whether Ron learns a lesson on his trip.
2. Tape your illustrations to the blackboard and study your classmates' characterisations.

2.1.8 POST-READING: THE TWIST IN THE TAIL



1. In pairs, prepare an interview with the author of *The Tourist* in which one of you will play the part of the journalist, the other James Georgalakis.
2. The interview must revolve around the story's twist in the tail and the author's way of planning it as well as what he hoped to achieve by it. The interviewer must prepare four-five questions.
3. Record your interview and send it to your teacher or another pair of students for feedback.