NEWS LESSON

The Couple Who Spent the Night Looking for a Stranger



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. How would you try to return a wallet with no phone number in it?
2. Do you think people are more or less honest than they were in 1989?
3. What makes a small act of kindness stay in your memory?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**unaware**	☐	A	old, said in a polite way
2	**island-hop**	☐	B	the sound of hitting a door
3	**ruined**	☐	C	a set of articles or programmes with the same idea
4	**elderly**	☐	D	travel from one island to the next
5	**backpacker**	☐	E	completely spoiled
6	**series**	☐	F	a traveller who carries a bag on their back
7	**knocking**	☐	G	not knowing about something
8	**private**	☐	H	kept to yourself, not shared

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A backpacker lost a wallet holding a month's money in Darwin in 1989. Two strangers visited four hostels to give it back, then disappeared.

1 Some acts of kindness are small enough to forget by the following week. Others stay with a person for nearly forty years. Simon Kelsey's story, told to the Guardian's Katie Cunningham as part of a reader series about the kindness of strangers, is firmly in the second category, and the details are what make it so.

2 In 1989, Kelsey had just finished university in the UK and gone travelling in Australia. He spent most of the year on the east coast, working long hours on building sites in the blistering sun, and by his own account he loved every minute of it. After ten months he had saved enough to begin making his way slowly home.

3 The plan began in Darwin. He and a group of travelling friends had one last night out before a flight to Timor, from where they intended to island-hop all the way to Singapore. Cash was king in those days, as he puts it, and the $1,000 in his wallet represented roughly a month on the road. Somewhere in the course of the evening, with the beers going down easily, the wallet fell out of his pocket. He noticed nothing, and went to bed still unaware.

4 At 1.30am there was loud knocking at his door. He stumbled out of bed and opened it to find the hostel manager standing beside an elderly couple he had never met. They were holding his wallet, and every dollar was still in it.

5 What they had done to get there is the part worth sitting with. The wallet contained no phone number, only a student ID card with his name. So the couple had worked their way around the backpacker places of Darwin, asking at each one, until they found the right hostel. It was the fourth they had tried, and by then it was the middle of the night.

6 Kelsey admits he did not rise to the occasion. Half asleep and the worse for the evening's drinks, he thanked them and went back to bed. Only the next morning did the scale of the effort become clear to him. Without the couple, he says, the trip he had worked ten months for would have been ruined.

7 He never learnt enough about them to thank them properly, and he has never stopped wishing he could. What he did instead was make a private pledge, to himself and in a sense to them, that he would always go the extra mile when he had the chance to help someone. When he does, he asks only that they pay it forward. He likes to think that the couple in Darwin have quietly helped a great many people they will never meet.

Sources: The Guardian, The kindness of strangers: In 1989 I lost a wallet with $1,000 in it. Picture: .

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Kelsey was with friends on his last night out in Darwin. T F NG
2. The couple found the right hostel on their first attempt. T F NG
3. Kelsey reported the missing wallet to the police. T F NG
4. The cash in the wallet would have lasted Kelsey about a month. T F NG
5. Kelsey has been able to repay the couple directly. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

admits	category	decline	emphasis	intended	occasion	represented	scale

1. The missing money _____ two weeks of his wages.
2. Only after the flood did people see the true _____ of the damage.
3. She _____ to stay for a week, but she ended up staying a month.
4. Some films fit neatly into one _____ , but others belong to several.
5. My brother _____ that he should have listened to the advice.
6. The manager asked the team to rise to the _____ during the busy week.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the couple reached his hostel, they _____ three others. (VISIT)
2. His wallet _____ to him by two strangers. (RETURN)
3. If he had known their names, he _____ them. (THANK)
4. The couple _____ the wallet at the police station, but they did not. (LEAVE)
5. While Kelsey _____ , two strangers were going from hostel to hostel. (SLEEP)

7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Many phrasal verbs have a literal and a figurative meaning. Read the whole sentence, then ask what the verb and particle mean together.

along	away	back	down	on	out	up

1. The couple tracked _____ the owner of the wallet by visiting every hostel in town.
2. After the second hostel, many people would have given _____ and gone home.
3. It took him a moment to work _____ who the strangers at the door were.
4. He wanted to pay their kindness _____ one day.
5. Kelsey decided to carry _____ the couple's habit of helping strangers.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Kelsey could not thank the couple. Does paying it forward make up for that?
2. Why might we remember kindness from strangers more than kindness from friends?
3. Would this story have ended differently with modern phones? How?

9 Role-play: a wallet at one in the morning

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the finder

You have found a wallet with cash and a student card. It is nearly midnight. You want to go and look for the owner tonight. Explain why it matters and ask your friend to come with you.

Student B · the friend

You are tired and want to go home. You think the wallet should go to the police in the morning. Give your reasons, ask questions, then agree on a plan.

Useful phrases

I've just found a wallet on the pavement.
I can't leave it until tomorrow.
Wouldn't it be easier to take it to the police?
What if we try the hostels first?
I'm tired, but I'll come for one hour.
Let's do it, and we'll feel better afterwards.

Afterwards, tell the class: what did you decide to do, and was it the right choice?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 D · 3 E · 4 A · 5 F · 6 C · 7 B · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 represented · 2 scale · 3 intended · 4 category · 5 admits · 6 occasion

6 Verb forms

1 had visited · 2 was returned · 3 would have thanked · 4 could have left · 5 was sleeping

7 Language focus

1 down · 2 up · 3 out · 4 back · 5 on

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