

LANGUAGE FACT I

PERFECT TENSE VERBS

In the Latin reading passage there are some new forms of verbs already treated in earlier chapters. These are forms of the perfect tense, a tense that refers primarily to past time:

cēpit “s/he/it took” (perfect tense of *capiō*)

dedit “s/he/it gave” (perfect tense of *dō*)

fuit “s/he/it was” (perfect tense of *sum*)

habuit “s/he/it had” (perfect tense of *habēō*)

In the same passage there are also perfect tense forms of verbs that have not appeared in previous chapters.

lēgit “s/he read” (perfect tense of *legō*)

The meaning of the perfect differs in subtle ways from the imperfect—the past tense introduced in Chapter 11. While the imperfect tense refers to a **continuing** action or state in the past, the perfect indicates either a single act in the past or a **completed** action.

For example, *dīcēbat*, means “s/he was saying” (i.e., a continuing action), but *dīxit* (the same verb in the perfect tense) usually means “s/he said” or “s/he did say” (once and for all).

But the perfect has yet another distinctive meaning. It can refer to an action completed just before the present time. In English the auxiliary verb “have” or “has” indicates this distinction. In Latin this nuance is clear from the context (e.g., adverbs may indicate that an action has just been completed). In the following sentences the verb *legere* (“to read”) is used in the imperfect tense and in both meanings of the perfect tense.

Librum legēbat. “S/he was reading the book.”

Librum legēbat. Deinde dīxit: “Librum tandem lēgī.” “S/he was reading the book. Then s/he said: “At last I have read the book.”

Librum lēgit. “S/he read the book.”

When the past action is negative, or is to be emphasized, “did” is used in the translation.

Librum nōn lēgī. “I did not read the book.”

Librum lēgī. “I did read the book.”

► EXERCISE 1

© Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc.

Find and translate nine more perfect tense forms from the Latin reading passage.

©2016 Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc. this sample was created for Texas Proclamation 2017 adoption preview not for distribution. This document will expire May 31, 2017.