

Inside Reading Level 4
Unit 6 Skill Review: Uses of the Present Tense

Name: _____

Date: _____

In Unit 3, we saw special situations where we can use the present tense to describe past events. We can also use the present tense to report what writers wrote in the past. Look at these examples from “Tulipomania” in Unit 6:

Mackey *enlivens* his account with amusing anecdotes.

Thompson and Treussard *place* much of the blame on government policies.

In the examples above, the author is explaining the work of Mackey and of Thompson and Treussard. Because the author is discussing their work, he uses the present tense.

However, when the subject of the sentence is not the writer, the past tense is used:

The business in tulip bulbs *was* so great that by 1623 a single bulb could easily cost as much as a year’s salary.

Apparently, owning such a prize *denoted* wealth and prestige.

Read the following excerpt from “Tulipomania.” Fill in the blank with the correct form of the verb in parentheses, using the present or past tense as appropriate. Remember that the present tense is used to report what writers wrote.

In his book *Tulipomania* (1999), Mike Dash 1. _____ (agree) the Dutch tulip market was a speculative bubble driven by inexperienced investors. But he also 2. _____ (reveal) why rational people might have become caught up in it. The flowers 3. _____ (have) unique color patterns much in demand for their beauty, but each new variety 4. _____ (has) to be propagated from a single bulb which could only produce two bulbs in the next year, four after that, and so on. When the available quantity was small, naturally the underlying value of a single bulb 5. _____ (increase). The more abundant varieties 6. _____ (sell) cheaply by the pound. To complicate matters, the gorgeous markings on the most striking bulbs 7. _____ (are) actually the result of a virus. That made them sickly and difficult to propagate.

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Answer Key

In his book *Tulipomania* (1999), Mike Dash 1. agrees the Dutch tulip market was a speculative bubble driven by inexperienced investors. But he also 2. reveals why rational people might have become caught up in it. The flowers 3. had unique color patterns much in demand for their beauty, but each new variety 4. had to be propagated from a single bulb which could only produce two bulbs in the next year, four after that, and so on. When the available quantity was small, naturally the underlying value of a single bulb 5. increased. The more abundant varieties 6. sold cheaply by the pound. To complicate matters, the gorgeous markings on the most striking bulbs 7. were actually the result of a virus. That made them sickly and difficult to propagate.