The word **'were'** is the past tense of the verb **'to be'** for the second person singular and for all plural forms. In standard English, there are several contexts where different words can convey a similar meaning, depending on how you want to use it in a sentence. Here are some alternatives:

- **'existed'** - This word can be used when talking about the existence of something in the past. For example, instead of saying, 'They were here,' you could say, 'They existed here.'
- **'appeared'** - This can be used in contexts where the presence of something was noted. For instance, 'They were at the party' could also mean 'They appeared at the party.'
- **'happened'** - This can replace 'were' when indicating that something took place. For instance, instead of saying, 'They were in a hurry,' you might say, 'They happened to be in a hurry.'
- **'stood'** - If you are referring to a physical location or state, 'stood' may work. For example, instead of 'They were at the station,' you could say, 'They stood at the station.'

Keep in mind that synonym selection highly depends on the context of the sentence. For expressing existence or state in a factual manner, 'were' is very specific, so while alternatives can sometimes be used, they may not capture the exact intent or meaning of the original sentence.