

# FOCUS ON ENGLISH

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## Introductory Notes

This book is the third in a series of four books designed for students who wish to master and consolidate the essential skills of English and, in particular, for candidates preparing for the Singapore-Cambridge GCE 'O' Level Examination (Subject 121). Besides covering those aspects of the English Language Syllabus for this examination, the book also includes practice in the more basic but nonetheless integral skills of language.

This book consists of eighteen Teaching Units, four end-of-term Tests and a Specimen Paper. Each Teaching Unit in the book consists of six sections organized as follows:

Revision

Comprehension

Language Items

A Grammar

B Structural Patterns

C Re-expression

D The Use of English

Composition

A Writing Techniques

B Essay Topics

C Situational Writing

Oral

Speech Practice

The materials are arranged in a logically graded level of difficulty within each section. The language skills taught in one unit are integrated in subsequent units. Thus, there is at every stage of presentation, control and integration to reinforce learning.

The attitude implicit in the organization of the contents is that the mechanics of a language are best taught by examples. Therefore, teaching notes are kept to the minimum and provided only where it is thought explanations may clarify the more difficult points of usage.

### Revision

Certain aspects of language are more easily caught than taught. These are usually the "minor" irritating points of grammar and usage. This section provides brief teaching notes followed by revision exercises, first in single sentences and then in an extended piece of continuous writing.

## **Comprehension**

The passages for comprehension have been selected on the basis of quality and interest. They show the different uses of language, from the narrative, the subtle art of story-telling, to the plain daily reporting in the newspapers. In the selection of topics, science and arts students as well as the co-educational situation have been kept in mind. In general, the passages reflect matters of local, regional and universal interest.

## **Language**

The more problematic areas of grammar are discussed sufficiently at length to be helpful, but not long enough to be boring. The mechanics of language are presented in structural patterns. These are the basic units of a paragraph and so look forward to the Composition section. Where possible, students are shown alternative constructions for each structure taught. This gives them a feel of the variety and flexibility of language, a skill that will be specifically tested in the examination.

## **Composition**

This section deals systematically with the subject. It begins with the Opening Sentence. Then it builds up gradually to the paragraph, the conclusion, and rounds off with instructions on how to plan the outline of a composition. Examples are given, followed by exercises for analysis.

In the section on Situational Writing a variety of situations is dealt with, instructions given as to what to do, and then followed by examples and exercises. The section begins with the personal kind of writing and then grows in ever-widening concentric circles to the world of business.

## **Oral**

There is a short passage with five follow-up questions at the end of each Unit. They are in part based on past year papers. The aim is not only to acquaint students with the examination requirements but also to widen the variety of reading passages in the book.

## **Speech Practice**

Further practice is given on sounds, phonetic script and link-up in sentences and continuous dialogue.

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## A Articles

In English we use the articles *a*, *an* and *the* before nouns. Sometimes no article (or zero article) is used at all. Some general rules may be given as to when each should be used, but only alert and constant reading will give the learner the intuitive mastery of a native speaker.

## Exercise

*In the following sentences fill in the blanks with the correct article. Where no article is needed, put a circle (O).*

1. .... good character is more important than money.
  2. Swee Ching is .... member of .... Red Cross Society.
  3. He was recently decorated by .... Prime Minister.
  4. She has pen-pals in .... Great Britain, .... United States and .... Philippines.
  5. The school results this year are not as good as in .... previous years.
  6. .... horse is considered .... noble animal.
  7. Some can get accustomed to .... new surroundings without any difficulty.
  8. Some always have difficulty in adapting to .... new way of life.
  9. She missed the fashion show on .... TV Singapore.
  10. He wrote .... new history book this year.
  11. The workers tried to form .... union, but the response was poor.
  12. .... Prime Minister was conferred with .... honorary degree by the University at the recent Convocation.
  13. She lives in .... Katong and works in .... town.
  14. .... Lantern Festival, or .... Mid-Autumn Festival, is celebrated by .... Chinese all over .... world every year. It is on .... fifteenth day of .... eighth moon of .... Chinese calendar. On this day .... families gather for .... reunion dinner at home. Rich, delicious dishes are served. Mooncakes of different kinds are eaten. .... cakes are also given to .... friends and .... relatives as .... gifts of .... friendship.
- In .... evening, .... children have .... enjoyable time. They light up their lanterns and carry them proudly around .... neighbourhood.

## B General

### Exercise 1

*Underline the correct word in the brackets to complete the passage.*

Indirect evidence (on, about) the amount of sleep we need (comes, come) from (the study, studies) of what happens when we do without (it, them). (On, At) first sight these suggest that we do not need as (often, much) as we (do, take). It has been difficult to show any (affect, effect) on performance of as (little, small) as one night's loss of sleep, and even after three days (awakened, awake), we can expect (normal, reduced) efficiency in a man taking responsible decisions in a job which he finds really (absorbing, adsorbing) and exciting. Furthermore, (when, if) at last he is allowed to sleep, he will probably (wake, awake) after (some, around) twelve hours and show little, if any, (ill-effect, ill-effects). These laboratory observations are (born, borne) out by (examples, experiences) in everyday life. It seems clear that the human body is (equipped, made) to over-ride the need for sleep in order to (overcome, meet) emergencies of quite long duration with faculties (undisturbed, unimpaired).

### Exercise 2

*Underline the correct words in the brackets to complete the sentences.*

1. The fourth year (to, for) me has (be, been, being) the best year I have (spends, spend, spent) at school.
2. I have hardly missed (a, the, 0) day's schooling as I would have missed all the fun and laughter of our form.
3. The homework has not been (to, two, too) heavy and (much, most, any) teachers (has, have, had) been very easy with us, especially the new teacher.
4. His lessons (have, had, has) been riotous, what with Gopal always getting told (of, off) for gazing at the girls or for failing to do his (homework, homeworks).
5. I think most of the (boy, boys) (take, takes) work quite seriously, but there (is, are, was) a few who cannot be bothered with anything.
6. (Beside, Besides) working hard, we take an active part in school (activity, activities).



## COMPREHENSION



### Have a 'Cuppa'

You do not see this happening in Singapore or Malaysia, but it is a common feature in Britain — almost a ritual. At the bottom of a big hole in the road, the water main was under repair. Four workmen sat on a plank by the hole drinking tea and talking among themselves. A woman remarked, "It's a disgrace! Look at them! What we pay taxes for, I don't know. They've been at it for hours, I bet, just sitting there drinking tea. Suppose we all lounged around like that, what would the world come to, I wonder? Things are getting out of hand."

Many people would agree with the sentiments of the forceful woman. In their opinion council workmen fritter away hours drinking tea brewed over an open fire. Is it not a waste of public funds to pay good wages to able-bodied men, just to have them sit around sipping hot drinks? Forking out the taxes is bad enough; then seeing the taxes wasted is too much.

But something can be said for these workmen. In Britain the tea-break is a national custom. Time spent in this traditional way inside offices and other buildings rarely attracts comment. It is because the workmen's tea-break is so public that people take notice of it and show their dis-

approval. Who can tell how long office staff linger over their cup of tea, except those who linger? And they are not likely  
25 to complain. If labourers do take a long time over their tea, perhaps this stems from the nature of their work. A typist in her comfortable office may consider ten minutes adequate for a cup of tea and gossip; the man who is out in all weather doing exacting physical work needs longer or  
30 more frequent breaks. Consider the very people criticized by the woman; they had probably been toiling for hours on end and needed a rest. They were in the hot sun, bare to the waist, and their hard muscles were evidence of heavy physical labour. They did not get those muscles by sitting around  
35 drinking tea.

A councillor once walked into his office and saw the typists and clerks drinking tea. This annoyed him and he reported the matter to the head of the department, stressing that the office was wasting taxpayers' money. The head of  
40 the department later sent for the supervisor, told him of the complaint and asked for his views. The supervisor was forthright: "When Mr X saw those girls, they had just finished their monthly work-load ahead of schedule. When they do that, I purposely let them rest for twenty minutes  
45 before they start the next lot of work. I dare say I could restrict them to the normal ten minutes, but I'm not going to breathe down their necks or stand over them with a stop-watch counting the seconds of their tea-break. Mr X should look in when they are working. He'd see how quick  
50 and efficient they are. It's the best team the council has." Then he walked back to his office, angry at the insult to his staff. The head of the department, who knew and trusted his man, wisely let it go at that.

### Exercise 1

*Answer these questions.*

1. What is almost a ritual in Britain?
2. Why do labourers take more time over their tea?
3. Do you agree with the argument put forward to defend the labourers? Why?
4. Did the office supervisor do the right thing in allowing his workers extra time for the tea-break? Support your answer.
5. What do you think of the sentiments expressed by the woman?

## Exercise 2

*Choose the best answer.*

1. Many people would
  - A give their support to the woman's views.
  - B talk among themselves about the workmen.
  - C go against the workmen.
  - D let the workmen alone.
2. The workmen had probably toiled for hours
  - A before finishing their work.
  - B without a tea-break.
  - C without stopping for a rest.
  - D standing up.
3. The tea-break is
  - A needed by everybody.
  - B a compulsory benefit for employees.
  - C only for working people.
  - D a way of life.
4. The councillor reported the matter to the head of the department
  - A causing stress to the taxpayers.
  - B pointing out that money was wasted.
  - C in order to stop the practice.
  - D causing distress in the office.
5. The head of the department said that he would
  - A investigate the matter.
  - B look inside the office.
  - C not waste taxpayers' money.
  - D send for the supervisor.
6. 'I dare say .....' (l. 45) means
  - A I can make a guess
  - B I suppose
  - C Of course
  - D It is certain
7. I dare say I could ..... (l. 45)
  - A obstruct them for ten minutes.
  - B prevent them for ten minutes.
  - C be strict about their tea-break for ten minutes.
  - D confine their tea-break to ten minutes.
8. The head of the department wisely
  - A let go of it.
  - B let them continue drinking tea.
  - C let the matter end there.
  - D let the situation change.