

READING COMPREHENSION PASSAGES

ROLAND JOHN



1

COLLINS

Reading Comprehension Passages

BOOK 1

Roland John

COLLINS: LONDON AND GLASGOW

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To the Teacher

The passages

These passages, specially written at Stage 2 of Collins English Library, observe the structure rules of the series and also, very largely, the vocabulary restrictions.

The important objective is to provide practice in listening to and reading English with understanding. A learner's pleasure and pride in understanding and enjoying what he reads is a great aid. If the material touches an interest the reader has, or can help to awaken one, so much the better. However, the greater part by far of a student's effort goes into the job of understanding; other responses are limited.

The vocabulary

During the first two years of English study six or seven hundred words may be learned. With the addition of common affixes, some related words and some combinations, the total may be near one thousand. The basic 600 items have been used freely and also, when necessary, the related words.

In language learning a very useful skill is the ability to deduce the meaning of a word. Meaning can, of course, be *found* in a dictionary, a translation or an illustration. It can also be deduced from the context in which the word occurs. This book attempts to train students to deduce meaning from context.

There are some sixty vocabulary items that are outside the Stage 2 list. They are brought in because they are the right words for the occasion; and the context is such that reasoned deduction of meaning is not difficult. These words are listed on page 62 with the passage numbers, etc. where they first occur.

Users of the book are expected to know the commonly employed exercise instruction words, e.g. *Choose*, *Complete*, etc. Proper nouns used in the book are listed on page 63, and the phonetic transcription is a modified IPA, as followed in Collins English Learner's Dictionary.

How to use the book

The methods below have been followed with success among widely differing groups of learners. The author wishes to stress that they are put forward here as suggestions only.

Each passage and its exercises are planned to occupy a complete lesson of about 45 minutes. Where English is being learnt as part of a general curriculum, a lesson should include some written work whenever possible.

Listening and reading

1. Write the two or three unfamiliar words or phrases on the board. Do not explain the meaning. The students shut their books and listen. Read the whole passage to them at your normal reading speed in class. When doing this maintain close contact ('eye contact') with the class, i.e. look down at the text only just sufficiently to keep an even flow. When you reach an item written on the board, pause momentarily and point to it.

2. For the second reading divide the passage into short, manageable sections of two or three sentences each. Try to present each section in a different way. Suggestions are:

a The teacher reads aloud while the students follow the text silently in their copies.

b Chorus reading of short pieces, especially of parts having well defined tone groups, stressed words, weak forms, etc., as in dialogue.

c Chaining words (in chorus), e.g.

Teacher: The doctor—

Class: The doctor—

Teacher: got into his car—

Class: **The doctor** got into his car—

Teacher: and drove away.

Class: **The doctor got into his car and**
drove away.

d Silent reading by the students.

e Students *in pairs* reading aloud to each other.

There is no need for individual students to read aloud to the class.

Exercises

As a general rule first deal with Sections A and B orally, marking in your copy any question, etc. to which a correct answer is not forthcoming. At first assist the process of deduction. Then go straight on to Sections C and D, again orally. Finally, return to the unfinished parts (if any) of Sections A and B.

In certain lesson units 'new' vocabulary has been treated first, and the order of work (A, B, C, D) still applies.

Written work

An exercise may be started in class and finished later. Part of an exercise may be done in writing. Multiple choice exercises are not often suitable because too much may have to be copied. Completion exercises and content answers are all right, and of course all kinds of vocabulary work. Vary the kind of written work from one lesson to the next.

Class questions

Few comprehension lessons pass without the students themselves wanting to ask questions. Concerned, thoughtful questions are a good indication of success. Deal with them after the work has been done.

1 Cats in the Family

My cat's name is Lucy. She is a female, of course; and she is a very pretty ~~cat~~. Her hair is black and yellow.

Last week Lucy was the only cat in my house. But now I have five cats! Lucy has had four kittens. She is very happy with her young family.

The four kittens are not ~~all~~ like Lucy. The biggest kitten is quite black. Another is black with white feet and one white ear. Two kittens are like their mother—yellow and black.

My daughter said: 'Aren't they pretty? Can I have the black and white one? He's a male, isn't he? A tomcat?'

I answered: 'I don't know. Perhaps he is. Perhaps the black one is a male too. We don't know yet. But the yellow and black kittens are females, of course.'

'Are they? How do you know?' she asked.

'Because they're yellow and black. Tomcats never have that colour. Listen and I'll tell you . . .'

A

Choose the right answer.

- 1 That black kitten is pretty.
Is it a male?
a I don't know. Perhaps it is.
b Yes, all black cats are males.
c No, there are no black tomcats.
- 2 When did Lucy have her kittens?
a A long time ago.
b She had them two or three weeks ago.
c A few days ago.
- 3 How many kittens did Lucy have?
a She had two female kittens.
b Last week I had one, but now I have five.
c She had four.
- 4 What are tomcats?
a Black or black and white cats.
b They are male cats.
c They are Lucy's kittens.
- 5 Which kitten did my daughter ask for?
a She wanted the black and white one.
b She asked for one of the kittens.
c She wanted the prettiest one.
- 6 Which kittens were like their mother?
a They were all like her.
b The females were.
c The black and yellow females.

B

Choose the right word.

- 1 There were (five/four/two) kittens in the family.
- 2 The black kitten was the (prettiest/happiest/biggest).
- 3 Is the black kitten a tomcat? (Of course/Perhaps/Yes).
- 4 Black and yellow cats are (often/always/never) males.
- 5 One ear is white but (the other/the next/another) is black.

C

Example: My cat's name is.... (Put in one word.)

My cat's name is **Lucy**.

- 1 Lucy and her kittens in my house.
- 2 The yellow and black kittens are
- 3 Are they tomcats? Well, I don't know
- 4 Why is she happy now? she loves her kittens.
- 5 two kittens are like their mother.

D

Are these MALES or FEMALES?

Lucy a boy your sister your English teacher Mum
a cow my daughter Mr Brown Lucy's black kitten.

2 The Village People

The village was a long way from any town. It was twelve or thirteen hundred kilometres.

'You must go to the city,' I said to Atalipa. 'Only a doctor can help you; and I am not a doctor. I'll go with you.'

'Up the river,' he said. 'Then over the high mountains?'

'Yes. That's the only way.'

'My people have never left the river before,' he said.

Atalipa did not enjoy the city very much. But we stayed for two months, and he got well. Then we went across the high mountains again. We went down the river in Atalipa's boat.

I asked him, 'What are you going to tell your people? Will you talk about the city-men? Will you talk about the big buildings and the cars?'

He thought for a minute. Then he said, 'No. I won't tell them. They won't understand; and perhaps they'll cry.'

'What do you mean? Why will they cry?'

'All men love their homes,' he answered. 'My people are happy in their village. It's their home.'

'Yes, of course. But why will they cry?' I asked.

'Because the city is *your* home. You're only staying with us. And so they'll cry for you.'

*because they want to
cry. in order to get sth
in an attempt to get sth*

A

Choose the right sentence.

- 1 **Atalipa** *a* Atalipa wanted to be a doctor.
 b Atalipa liked the city and wanted to stay there.
 c The doctor helped Atalipa, and Atalipa got well.
 d Atalipa did not want to go home.
- 2 **The village** *a* The village was near a river.
 b The village was between the mountains and the city.
 c People could not leave the village.
 d The village was not a very happy place.
- 3 **The river** *a* It ran from the mountains to the city.
 b It ran from the village to the city.
 c It ran over the mountains to the city.
 d It ran from the mountains towards the village.
- 4 **The villagers** *a* They don't understand, and so they cry.
 b They've never seen big buildings or cars.
 c Atalipa didn't understand his people's sadness.
 d He's going to talk to them about the city.

B

Choose the right word.

- 1 Atalipa and I (went/left/stayed) down the river in the boat.
2 The city was a long (time/away/way) from the village.
3 'That's right. I don't (live/home/visit) with you. I'm only (coming/going/staying) for a few months.'
4 'What will you (say/tell/talk) your friends?' I asked him.
5 'I won't talk about the city. They won't (understand/answer/mean) the city.'

C

Put the right word in each space.

All people love their homes. Atalipa's people loved their homes too. They were happy in their But the visitor was a long from his home. They will think: 'He has ^{left} his home in the So he be sad here. We won't talk the city. We won't him any questions. Then perhaps he'll forget his home and with us.

D

Example: He teaches us. He is a teacher.

He writes stories. He is a

They climb mountains. They are

He drives a lorry. He is a

3 Grey Owl

In 1935 a Canadian Indian arrived in England. He wore Indian clothes. His hair was long, like an Indian's, and he had an Indian's strong face. He said: 'I am a Canadian Indian, and my name is Grey Owl. I want to tell you about Indian life in Canada.'

The people listened to his talks. Grey Owl was a very good speaker. He knew everything about Indian life; and everyone enjoyed his talks. They learned a lot about Canada.

'Canada is a great and beautiful country,' Grey Owl said. 'It's a rich land of trees and rivers. The air is clean and cold.'

He talked about the emptiness of northern Canada. He told stories about the animals and the birds. And, of course, he talked about his people, the Indians. All his talks were true.

Then, in 1938, Grey Owl died. People found and read his books and papers. At first they did not understand. Then *they began to read.*

Grey Owl's true name was Archie Belaney. He was not an Indian. He was an Englishman! His mother took him to Canada in 1910. Soon after that he began to live among the Indians.

People will soon forget Archie Belaney. But they will never forget Grey Owl.

A

Example: He said: 'I'm going to talk about (my mother/my books/
Indian life).'

Answer: He said: 'I'm going to talk about **Indian life**.'

- 1 In Canada Archie used a (new name/new job/new country).
- 2 He lived among (Canada/a beautiful country/the Indians).
- 3 'They are my people,' he said. 'And so I know (some/all/any) about them.'
- 4 Why is northern Canada empty? Because not many (people/birds/animals) live there.
- 5 They found Grey Owl's papers. And they did not understand his (people/stories/names).
- 6 The listeners (learned/loved/forgot) Grey Owl's stories.

B

Which sentences are true?

- ✓1 Grey Owl did not know very much about Indians. ⚡
- ✓2 Grey Owl's clothes were Indian clothes. ⚡
- ✓3 The speaker loved the Indian people. ⚡
- 4 'I am a Canadian Indian,' he said.
- ✓5 Grey Owl and Archie Belaney were not the same person. ⚡

C

Answer the questions.

- 1 Where did Grey Owl tell his stories? *city.*
- 2 Everyone thought: 'Of course he's an Indian.' Why did they think that?
- 3 When did the people find out the man's true name? *in the city.*
- 4 Why will people never forget Grey Owl?
- 5 Did Grey Owl enjoy city life?

D

Some words belong together. *Examples:* mother, father; open, close; male, female; cold, hot (warm).

Find words that go with: long,; everything,; ugly,; at first,; find,; forget,; strong,; after,; northern,; learn,; cowboys,

Look at these: go, leave, run away; car, bus, taxi.

Find words that go with: enjoy; papers; rooms; come; young; shirt; trees