

Beyond Words

Certificate reading and listening skills

Alan Maley and Alan Duff

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Preface

Beyond Words has two aims: to help you understand written and spoken English and to show you how to approach *any* text you come across, so that you will not be worried simply because you do not know a word or phrase.

In order to achieve these aims, the units have been arranged in pairs – Reading and Listening – each of which is on a similar topic. For example ‘Battery buses’ and ‘Atomic cars’ share a common theme – alternatives to petrol-driven vehicles. By *reading* about a topic first you will be better prepared to *listen* to something similar afterwards.

In the exercise material there are comprehension questions like those found in examinations such as the Cambridge First Certificate in English. But there are other, equally important exercises which will help you to see how a passage is put together. It is this ability which will be of great use to you in interpreting other texts. If you think of the text as a forest, we want you to be able to find your way through, and not necessarily to know the names of all the trees. If you are too worried by detail, you go round in circles; if you have a map, you can see where all the paths are.

A.M.
A.D.

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Tall tales from the backwoods

I knew a man who collected English words. He lived in an upturned water tank in the middle of the Australian desert. Unbelievably hot. He was the official town librarian of one of these ghost towns in the outback of Australia. It was founded in the 1890s. People turned up and hammered wooden pegs into the sand and laid out boulevards and avenues. They built a jail and a huge corrugated-iron hotel. That's about all, except 5 that someone down south had it on his books that this was an official town, and he sent a library to it, 3000 volumes and a sum of money as a salary for the librarian. This friend of mine, whose name was Roger, had been a *no-hoper*, as they say, wandering about the outback of Australia. He somehow discovered that there was money to be had there and, what is more, boxes of unopened books sitting in this deserted hotel. 10

He turned up there, got the job, and settled down in the hotel, to begin with. The hotel did, actually, just function: that is, it had half a dozen guests a year who would ride up on horseback, sleep on the floor for an evening, and then push off the next day. This was too much for Roger. It got in the way of his reading. So he took the immense water-storage tank, rolled it a mile into the desert, carried his books out there and 15 lived inside it – so, as he said, 'I could get a bit of peace and quiet'.

Words were a fascination for Roger, and he used to sit in his tank, just thinking about words. If there was a pause in the conversation he would look at you and ask some such question as: 'D'you happen to know what "transubstantiation" is?' If you said you knew, he was very cast down, because he wanted to tell you. 20

One of his regular visitors was the government officer who went by every six months. Roger would ask him if he knew what a word meant, and then he would have to admit that he didn't, and Roger would be very pleased with himself. Taz, as his name was, got very fed up with this. So, on one occasion, before he went, he spent an evening with the Oxford English Dictionary. He rode in, tied up his horse and went 25 in to see Roger, and Roger said: 'D'you happen to know what an "embolism" is?' and Taz said: 'No, I bloody don't.' Then Taz asked him: 'D'you happen to know what a "leotard" is?' Roger was upset to be asked a question. He said: 'A leotard? I think I saw the skin of one once.' And Taz said: 'You bloody didn't.' So Roger said: 'Well, what is a leotard?' Taz said: 'I'm not going to bloody tell you!' He got on his 30 horse and rode off and went to sleep in the desert five miles away.

Some time later he was suddenly woken up by a steely grasp on his coat. Hands picked him up bodily from the ground and held him in the air and shook him. He opened his eyes and it was Roger with his eyes glinting in the moon light, staring at him, and saying: 'What's a bloody leotard?' 35

(From an article by David Attenborough in *The Listener*)

Multiple choice

Read the passage carefully, then answer the following questions.
Choose the response which best reflects the meaning of the text.

- 1 The outback town was given a library because
 - a) it was expanding rapidly.
 - b) Roger was a collector of English words.
 - c) a government official thought it necessary.
 - d) the people of the town had requested one from the government.

- 2 Roger did not stay long at the hotel because
 - a) it was forced to close down.
 - b) there were too many guests.
 - c) he wanted more time for reading.
 - d) he was used to living in the desert.

- 3 Taz, the government officer,
 - a) was fascinated by Roger's encyclopaedic knowledge.
 - b) felt sorry for Roger.
 - c) got tired of being asked the meaning of words.
 - d) was ashamed at knowing less than Roger.

- 4 When Taz asked his question, Roger
 - a) thought he knew the right answer,
 - b) pretended not to know the right answer.
 - c) admitted at once that he did not know the right answer.
 - d) deliberately gave a stupid answer.

- 5 The reason Roger went into the desert after Taz was that
 - a) he wanted to murder Taz.
 - b) he was desperate to know what the word meant.
 - c) he thought Taz had been trying to fool him.
 - d) he had suddenly remembered the answer to the question.

True or false?

Without looking back at the text, decide whether the following statements are true or false.

- 1 The people of the outback town were extremely grateful for the gift of 3000 books.
- 2 Roger was a trained librarian.
- 3 The hotel had very few guests.
- 4 Roger had the water tank carried out into the desert.
- 5 Roger was dismissed from his job as librarian.
- 6 When Roger asked people the meaning of words he was sad if they knew the answer.
- 7 Taz deliberately asked Roger a word he would be unlikely to know.
- 8 Roger was delighted at being asked a question by Taz.
- 9 A leotard is an animal.
- 10 Roger woke Taz up because he wanted to tell him what he thought 'leotard' meant.

Vocabulary in context

Choose the definition which best fits these words or phrases as they are used in the text.

1 *ghost town* (line 3)

- a) a town haunted by evil spirits
- b) a trading station
- c) a town that has lost its life
- d) a new settlement in the desert

2 *outback* (lines 3, 9)

- a) unpopulated parts
- b) northern regions
- c) mining area
- d) suburban belt

3 *had it on his books* (line 6)

- a) had read about it
- b) had an official record of it
- c) had the intention of writing about it
- d) had a book about the town

4 *no-hoper* (line 8)

- a) a man who has little chance of succeeding
- b) a man who has had a lot of bad luck
- c) a man who has just lost his job
- d) a man who is seriously ill

5 *cast down* (line 20)

- a) delighted
- b) relieved
- c) surprised
- d) disappointed

6 *upset* (line 28)

- a) displeased
- b) amused
- c) puzzled
- d) grateful

Summary

Make a short summary of this story. Try to limit yourself to *two* sentences for each paragraph of the text.

Unit 2

The underworld

Let us take a brief look at the planet on which we live. As Earth hurtles through space at a speed of 70,000 miles an hour, it spins, as we all know, on its axis, which causes it to be flattened at the Poles. Thus if you were to stand at sea level at the North or South Pole you would be 13 miles nearer the centre of the earth than if you stood on the Equator. 5

The earth is made up of three major layers – a central core, probably metallic, some 4000 miles across, a surrounding layer of compressed rock, and to top it all a very thin skin of softer rock, only about 20 to 40 miles thick – that's about as thin as the skin of an apple, talking in relative terms.

The pressure on the central core is unimaginable. It has been calculated that at the centre it is 60 million pounds to the square inch, and this at a temperature of perhaps 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The earth's interior, therefore, would seem to be of liquid metal – and evidence for this is given by the behaviour of earthquakes. 10

When an earthquake occurs, shock waves radiate from the centre just as waves radiate outwards from the point where a stone drops into a pond. And these waves pulsate through the earth's various layers. Some waves descend vertically and pass right through the earth, providing evidence for the existence of the core and an indication that it is fluid rather than solid. Thus, with their sensitive instruments, the scientists who study earthquakes, the seismologists, can in effect X-ray the earth. 15 20

Northern India, and more especially that part of Northern Pakistan known as Baluchistan, is a particularly active seismic area. In Baluchistan one of the greatest earthquake disasters of modern times occurred, in 1935, when the town of Quetta was destroyed and 30,000 people lost their lives. Today, Quetta is the home of a geophysical observatory where scientists make a special study of earthquakes. One of the practical tasks of these seismologists in Quetta has been to calculate ways of making buildings safe against earthquake tremors, and nowadays all houses in the town are built according to seven approved designs. As a result, in a great earthquake near Quetta only a few years ago, practically all the buildings stood up and no lives were lost. 25 30

Iceland is one of the most active volcanic regions of the world. And it was to Iceland that Jules Verne sent the hero of his book *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. This intrepid explorer clambered down the opening of an extinct volcano and followed its windings until he reached the earth's core. There he found great oceans, and continents with vegetation. This conception of a hollow earth we now know to be false. In the 100 years since Jules Verne published his book, the science of vulcanology, as it is called, has made great strides. But even so the deepest man has yet penetrated is about 10,000 feet. This hole, the Robinson Deep mine in South Africa, barely scratches the surface; so great is the heat at 10,000 feet that were it not for an elaborate 35

air-conditioning system, the miners working there would be roasted. Oil borings down to 20,000 feet have shown that the deeper they go, the hotter it becomes. 40

The temperature of the earth at the centre is estimated to be anything between 3,000 and 11,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Some scientists believe that this tremendous heat is caused by the breaking-down of radio-active elements, which release large amounts of energy and compensate for the loss of heat from the earth's surface. If this theory is correct, then we are all living on top of a natural atomic powerhouse. 45
(By Radio UNESCO)

Multiple choice

Read the passage carefully, then answer the following questions.
Choose the response which best reflects the meaning of the text.

1 The outer layer of the Earth is compared to the skin of an apple because

- a) it is only 20 to 40 miles thick.
- b) it is thin in proportion to the Earth's mass.
- c) it is relatively thin compared with the central core.
- d) it is softer than the other layers.

2 Which of the following is *not* true?

It is thought that the interior of the Earth is not solid because

- a) there is great pressure at the centre.
- b) earthquake waves can move vertically.
- c) the outer layer is made of rock.
- d) the heat at the centre is too great.

3 The Robinson Deep mine in South Africa is

- a) too deep to work in.
- b) too hot to work in.
- c) still in use.
- d) very close to the surface.

4 Since the publication of Jules Verne's book it has been proved that

- a) the centre of the earth is not hollow.
- b) oil borings cannot go deeper than 20,000 feet.
- c) the earth is hot at the centre because heat is lost at the surface.
- d) the earth is in danger of exploding.

True or false?

Without looking back at the text, decide whether the following statements are true or false.

- F 1 If you stand at the Equator you will be closer to the centre of the Earth than if you stand at the Poles.
- F 2 The shock waves from an earthquake cannot pass through the Earth's central core.
- T 3 Earthquakes often occur in Baluchistan.
- F 4 All houses in Quetta are built according to the same design.
- T 5 Jules Verne suggested that the Earth's centre was hollow.
- F 6 The Earth is hottest at the surface.
- T 7 It is not known exactly how hot it is at the centre of the Earth.

Vocabulary in context

Choose the definition which best fits these words or phrases as they are used in the text.

- a) 1 *axis* (line 2)
a) central line
b) side
c) orbit
d) gravitational pull

e. midpoint

- 2 *major* (line 6)
a) large
b) important
c) main
d) distinct

- 3 *fluid* (line 18)
a) soft
b) liquid
c) thin
d) wet

- 4 *in effect* (line 19)
a) probably
b) effectively
c) actually
d) accurately

- 5 *a particularly active seismic area* (line 22) is one where
a) many seismologists work.
b) many people are killed.
c) many earthquakes occur.
d) many research centres have been built.

- 6 *intrepid* (line 33)
a) daring
b) foolish
c) experienced
d) curious

- 7 *extinct* (line 33)
a) unexplored
b) inactive
c) unsafe
d) inextinguishable

- 8 *has made great strides* (line 37)
a) caused a sensation
b) been accepted by scientists
c) developed immensely
d) improved mining techniques

Reading comprehension: Unit 2

9 compensate for (line 45)

- a) prepare for
- b) allow for
- c) make up for
- d) exchange for

Summary

Pick out the main point(s) from each paragraph and write a summary of the passage in not more than ten sentences.

Make use, if you like, of the following phrases:

- the Earth's slightly irregular shape
- immense pressure at the centre
- earthquake waves are not impeded by the central core
- houses in seismic regions must be specially designed
- Jules Verne was mistaken in thinking . . .
- heat increases with depth and this makes it impossible to . . .
- the Earth has its own internal supply of heat and energy.

Unit 3

When you have an accident

Drivers on the Basingstoke by-pass used to have their attention diverted by a sign that read - A MOMENT'S INATTENTION CAUSES ACCIDENTS. This self-defeating warning has now been removed, but its message is still very much to the point.

Almost anything can cause an accident. Apart from momentary inattention, it might be a minor miscalculation, a sudden fit of coughing, a bop on the head with a teddy-bear from a child in the back seat, an argument with the wife, fog, falling asleep at the wheel, bad eyesight, a glaring sun, ice, rain, wind, or snow - all these can make the difference between a tragic hit and a lucky miss. 5

Although human error plays its part, it is by no means the only cause of accidents. There must be some cause other than simple human error. Road construction plays its part: researchers have found that it is not at the obvious danger spots - sharp corners, cross-roads, narrow lanes - that accidents happen. It is on those roads where there are subtle visual traps, unexpected changes in the shape or surface of the road, or even insufficient or badly-placed signs. Wherever there is a 'black spot', it means that something is seriously wrong with the road. Why else did the careless driving of so many come out at that particular spot? 15

What the law requires when you have an accident

There are, firstly, the legal formalities of exchanging names and addresses with others involved in an accident and, in certain cases, informing the police. However, you are required by law to stop after an accident only if:

- 1 Somebody other than yourself in or outside your car has been injured. 20
- 2 A vehicle not your own has been damaged.
- 3 Any horse, cow, donkey, sheep, or dog has been injured.

It has been said that if a driver continues unaware of causing injury he must be acquitted. But the courts are wary of that excuse. Furthermore, the driver himself must wait at the scene; it is not enough for him to leave his chauffeur or a friend to attend to the boring formalities while he goes off on more important business. 25

If you have been involved in an accident and have stopped, you must give your name, address, and registration number to anyone who has a good reason for requesting it; this means anyone affected by the accident. If somebody is injured, the driver must produce his insurance certificate on request. If these formalities are complied with it is not necessary to wait for the arrival of the police. It is, however, often wise to do so. The police are expert at drawing plans, taking measurements and photographs and gathering other evidence. In your absence the police could be given a biased story against you; and you yourself might want to point out certain features of the accident to the police. 35

(From *The Sunday Times Magazine*)