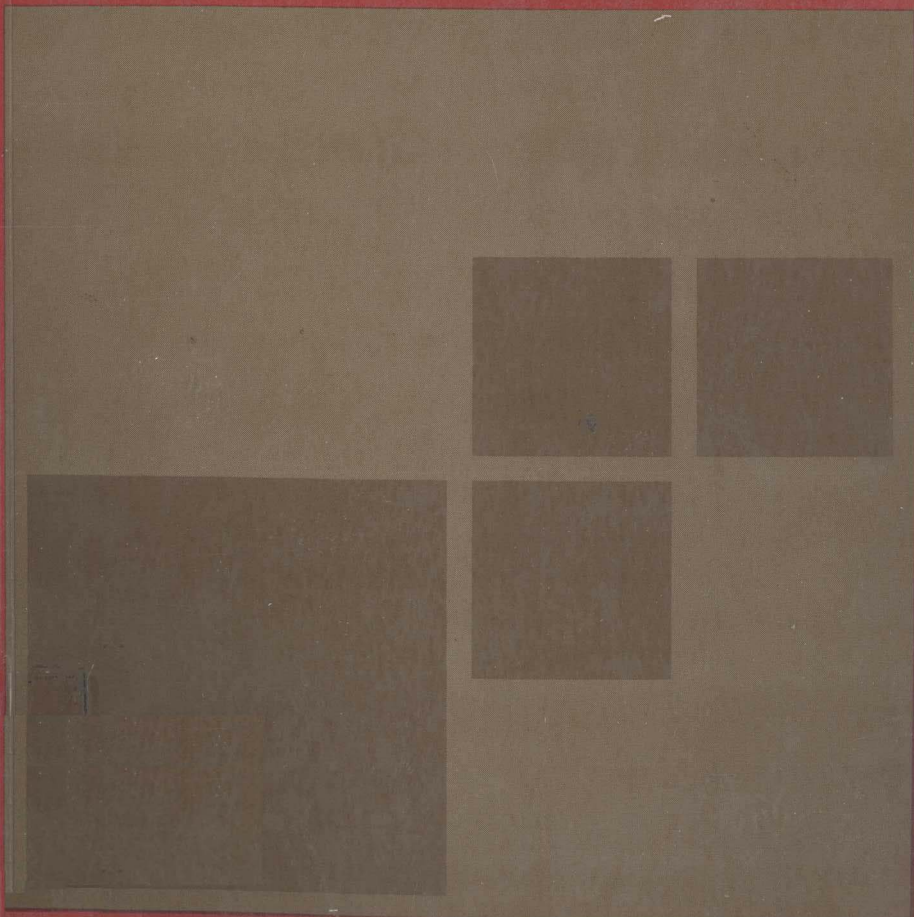


# A New Certificate Comprehension Course

A R B Etherton



**A NEW  
CERTIFICATE  
COMPREHENSION  
COURSE**

**A R B ETHERTON** MA, PhD

*Illustrated by Graham*



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## **A NEW CERTIFICATE COMPREHENSION COURSE**

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# Foreword

1. In 1964 there appeared in the U.K. a very important report: *The Examining of English Language*, the Eighth Report of the Secondary School Examinations Council. This report recommended that changes should be made in the examining of English at S.C./G.C.E. 'O' level, and it has had a considerable and liberalising effect on examining boards and on methods of teaching English at this level.

The report recommended, for example, that 'questions on grammatical and other minutiae' should be 'excluded from the papers' and added that 'they serve no useful educational purpose and indeed have a bad effect upon teaching'. At the same time recommendations were made concerning comprehension and summary questions, and the report suggested that questions should be confined to those which test 'the candidates' power to express themselves in the English language and to read English with understanding'. Broad suggestions were made as to the way in which these aims might be carried out.

2. The principles mentioned in this report have received wide support in the U.K. and overseas. In his 'Report of an Inquiry into English Language Examining' for The West African Examinations Council, D. W. Grieve showed the influence of the 1964 U.K. report. The Universities of Cambridge and London have produced new types of papers based on the report, and it is clear that other examining bodies are making similar changes to their English Language papers at this level.

## 3. THE AIMS OF THIS BOOK

It is in this context that this book has been written, and it has two main aims:

(a) It seeks to prepare candidates for the new type of material and question which are to be found in Paper II of the S.C./G.C.E. 'O' level English Language examination. Accordingly, the reading material includes descriptive, narrative and expository matter. It is all modern in style and outlook and is drawn from a wide variety of sources. The questions include those to test comprehension, on the lines recommended in the report, as well as others of value in the teaching of English. Some are of the free response type while some are objective with multiple choice or true/false questions. Discussion, summary and vocabulary work have also been included.

(b) In the process of achieving (a) the book is meant to be a stimulating and sometimes provocative aid in the task of helping pupils to read, understand and use English. All of the passages are self-contained and most have been chosen for their interest to pupils at this level. Some of the passages carry a message or present a challenge of their own, e.g. attitudes to new ideas (No. 9), advertising techniques and their dangers (Nos. 27, 38 and 45), problems of the future (Nos. 3, 6, 46-48 etc.), the handling of statistics (Nos. 30 and 31). While the new type of examination question is provided in order to cater for (a) above, there is considerable stress on tasks which, while not always directly examinable, are nevertheless of fundamental importance to pupils. Some comprehension questions are deliberately designed to lead pupils to probe into the meaning and value of the written word and into the mind of the writer. Pupils are encouraged to question the writer, to evaluate both what he says and the methods he employs, and to develop a critical attitude of their own.

It is recommended that dictionaries should be used when studying the passages and when answering the vocabulary questions, and that pupils should be encouraged to discuss in class anything which they find controversial or of interest. Some passages lend themselves more to the discussion of broad ideas and much useful work can be achieved in these discussions. Others are more suited to a close study of the text: to the study of emotive words, shades of meanings, innuendoes, motives, bias, accuracy and inaccuracy, illogicality and dishonesty, style (what it is and how it is achieved in a particular passage), and to the use or misuse of individual words and expressions. If this type of work is undertaken systematically and in a questing spirit, pupils should be able to take the S.C. and G.C.E. examinations in their stride, and a foundation will have been laid for those who proceed to the Sixth Form.

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## Deep sea currents

Read passages 1 and 2, and answer the questions which follow:

### PASSAGE 1.

When the deep ships of the future descend to the bottom of the oceans what will they encounter in the way of currents? Are deep waters dead or are there strong currents to contend with? Only a decade ago, it was generally believed that the deep waters were almost still with only the slightest stirrings as slow 5 frigid water crept from polar regions towards the equator—a flow of only a few feet each day. Calculations showed this was all the current necessary to offset the deficit created by high evaporation in the tropics. It is true that currents are largely a surface phenomenon but recent measurements show that there 10 is much yet to learn about currents in the depths of the oceans.

The recent use of deep mid-water drifting buoys has given evidence of some remarkable deep currents. These buoys are made of long pieces of tubing less compressible than water; they drift horizontally. The buoy transmits a sonic 'ping' 15 every few seconds so that its course can be followed by a surface ship. One such buoy floating beneath the Gulf Stream revealed a counter-current nearly as strong as the Gulf Stream itself. It is too early to say but it is a reasonable guess that high-velocity cores of water stream through the depths here and 20 there.

### PASSAGE 2.

A remarkable undercurrent runs through the Straits of Gibraltar and it was originally described in a paper to the

Philosophical Society of London in 1724. It seems that in 1712 a privateer, the *Phoenix*, attacked a Dutch ship bound for  
5 Holland and sank her straight away with one broadside. A few days later part of this ship, with her cargo of brandy and oil, was washed up four leagues to the westward of the point where she foundered. The drift of the derelict had directly *opposed*  
10 from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. The brandy and oil, sealed in barrels, provided the buoyancy needed to bring the wreck back to the surface.

Masters of sailing ships of that day were acutely aware of the raging currents in the Gate of Hercules, for they were  
15 sometimes forced to drop anchor and delay their passage through the Straits for as long as three months awaiting favourable conditions. The Dutch wreck gave startling proof of a deep counter-current, even though such eminent scientists as Sir Charles Lyell doubted the evidence and cast about for  
20 some other explanation. The reality of this current is now well known and understood; Italian submarines made use of it for passage into the Atlantic Ocean in World War II. Heavy, highly saline water, caused by high Mediterranean evaporation, pours out into the Atlantic at mid-depths as light surface water  
25 streams in.

(Adapted from *Seven Miles Down* by J. Piccard and R. S. Dietz)

## Exercise A

- a. Using information given in passage 1, explain in your own words why men once believed that the water deep in the oceans moved only very slightly.
- b. As far as you can tell from passage 2, what was the attitude of Sir Charles Lyell to the belief mentioned in (a) above?
- c. In not more than 80 words explain why the earlier opinion about the stillness of deep water is no longer acceptable.
- d. For each of the words below (all taken from passage 2) compose a sentence (i.e. four sentences in all) of not fewer than *ten* words, in which the word is used unchanged in form but with an entirely different meaning from its meaning in the passage: i. bound (l. 4); ii. point (l. 7); iii. cast (l. 19); iv. light (l. 24).
- e. Give the meaning of each of the following as used in the passages. (In the case of single words, both one-word answers and *short* phrases will be acceptable.)

From passage 1: i. encounter (l. 2); ii. to contend with (l. 3); iii. to offset (l. 8); iv. a phenomenon (l. 10); v. drift (l. 15).

From passage 2: i. originally (l. 2); ii. foundered (l. 8); iii. derelict (l. 8); iv. persistent (l. 9); v. buoyancy (l. 11).

## Exercise B

The following statements refer to the two passages above. Some of them are true but some are false. Point out the false statements and explain briefly why they are false.

- i. Extensive evaporation of water in the polar regions caused a movement of surface water from the tropics.
- ii. Surface ships are able to keep a record of the movement of buoys used in research into deep currents.
- iii. When the *Phoenix* was sunk it was carrying a cargo of brandy and oil.
- iv. Part of the Dutch ship was found nearer to the Atlantic than the point at which it had been sunk.
- v. The Gate of Hercules seems to be another name for the Straits of Gibraltar.
- vi. When returning to their own country during World War II, Italian submarines were able to use the counter-current flowing through the Straits of Gibraltar.

## Exercise C (For discussion in class.)

1. What does the author of passage 1 achieve by starting with a question?
2. Why do you think Sir Charles Lyell doubted the evidence of an undersea current flowing through the Straits of Gibraltar? Give your own opinion.
3. In general, what is the attitude of people today to new ideas? Do young and older people show different attitudes to new ideas? If you think they do, suggest reasons for their different attitudes.
4. What do you think is the ideal attitude to new ideas?
5. Are you, yourself, capable of displaying this 'ideal attitude' when people bring forward new ideas concerning these subjects?
  - a. deep sea currents
  - b. life on other planets
  - c. religion
  - d. ways of learning a language
  - e. the position of women in society
  - f. food



## The reluctant tiger

As far as human beings are concerned, the jungle is neutral in more senses than one. It has no urge whatever to be spectacular or to satisfy man's craving for sensation, so that for literary or cinema purposes it must be dramatized. This fact was realized  
 5 by Dick Roe, the animal-trapper and maker of popular films of the tropics. His triumph of showmanship was a drama filmed partly in an enclosure on Singapore Island. The movie script described how the beautiful heroine was rescued from the jaws of a man-eating tiger by a super-Tarzan just as it was leaping on  
 10 to its adorable prey.

A tiger was accordingly purchased from a travelling menagerie, but it was so old and mangy that, although prodded and pinched, it resolutely refused to spring, and all it would do was go to sleep. Then Dick Roe had a brainwave. He rigged up an  
 15 elevated platform of bamboo and sheathed it in copper. On to this the tiger was lured with a large piece of meat, and once it was fairly in position, a switch was turned on and an electric charge passed through the copper sheathing. Startled out of its wits, the tiger shot high in the air and, while cameras whirled,  
 20 the woodland heroine (in effigy, of course) prayed that some jungle hero would appear to deliver her from her grisly fate.

(Adapted from *The Memoirs of a Malayan Official*  
 by Victor Purcell.)

### Exercise A

1. According to the author, why must the jungle be dramatized?
2. What does *super* mean in *super-Tarzan*?

3. How did Dick Roe persuade the elderly tiger to get up on the platform?
4. How did he persuade it to get off the platform?
5. What is meant by 'in effigy'? (line 20)
6. The author was writing his memoirs. What are memoirs?
7. What attitude does the author show to the making of popular films? Give evidence in support of your answer.

## Exercise B

Explain the meaning of the words in italics:

1. The jungle does not wish to satisfy man's *craving* for sensation.
2. The *movie script* demanded that a tiger leap on the heroine.
3. An old and *mangy* tiger was bought from a *menagerie*.
4. It *resolutely* refused to jump off the platform
5. Dick Roe *sheathed* the platform in copper.
6. *Startled out of its wits*, the tiger leapt high in the air.

# 3

## Cities in the clouds



In a recent issue of *Science Journal* a consulting engineer, Mr. W. Frischmann, a partner in the firm of C. J. Pell and Partners, suggested an interesting way of dealing with the shortage of land in Britain. He put forward the view that 'tower cities', two miles high and containing 850 storeys, might be a solution to the growing demand for land. Each structure would house about 500,000 people and have several advantages over conventional types of housing.

Such tower cities, providing accommodation, employment,



education and every other indoor need for their inhabitants,  
10 have been made technically possible by modern developments,  
particularly in Britain, in cement manufacture and concrete  
technology, and by advanced constructional techniques, Mr.  
Frischmann says.

‘Simple arithmetic shows that the vertical city would make  
15 available for other purposes an area of well over 100 square  
miles which, in horizontal cities like Manchester and Bristol,  
are occupied by buildings. Moreover, the city’s transport  
problems would be almost eliminated.’

The lofty structures would be built on the core principle,  
20 similar to that of tall trees—a vertical column supporting a  
series of basically horizontal cantilever projections. The  
foundations of such a building would have to be excavated to  
a depth of 500 feet in London, Mr. Frischmann says, and it  
might be necessary to go even farther outwards and downwards  
25 by drilling large-diameter ‘roots’ from the bottom of the  
caisson.

The tower would have stiff walls capable of carrying the  
main structural loads and at the same time providing con-  
venient housing for lifts, staircases, toilets and service ducts.  
30 ‘I advocate cores wholly of concrete,’ Mr. Frischmann says.  
‘My colleagues and I have carried out extensive designs and  
calculations to prove the structural feasibility of such a tower.’

(Adapted from a report in *The Times*.)

## Exercise A

1. What advantages are claimed for these buildings?
2. What disadvantages (not mentioned in the passage) might they have for people living in them?
3. Would you like to live (and work) in one of these tower cities? Give your opinion with reasons.
4. a. As far as you can, describe ‘conventional housing’ (i) as it was five thousand years ago, (ii) as it was a thousand years ago and (iii) as it is now.  
b. In line 7, what does ‘conventional’ mean?

## Exercise B

1. Summarise Mr. Frischmann’s suggestion in less than 50 words.