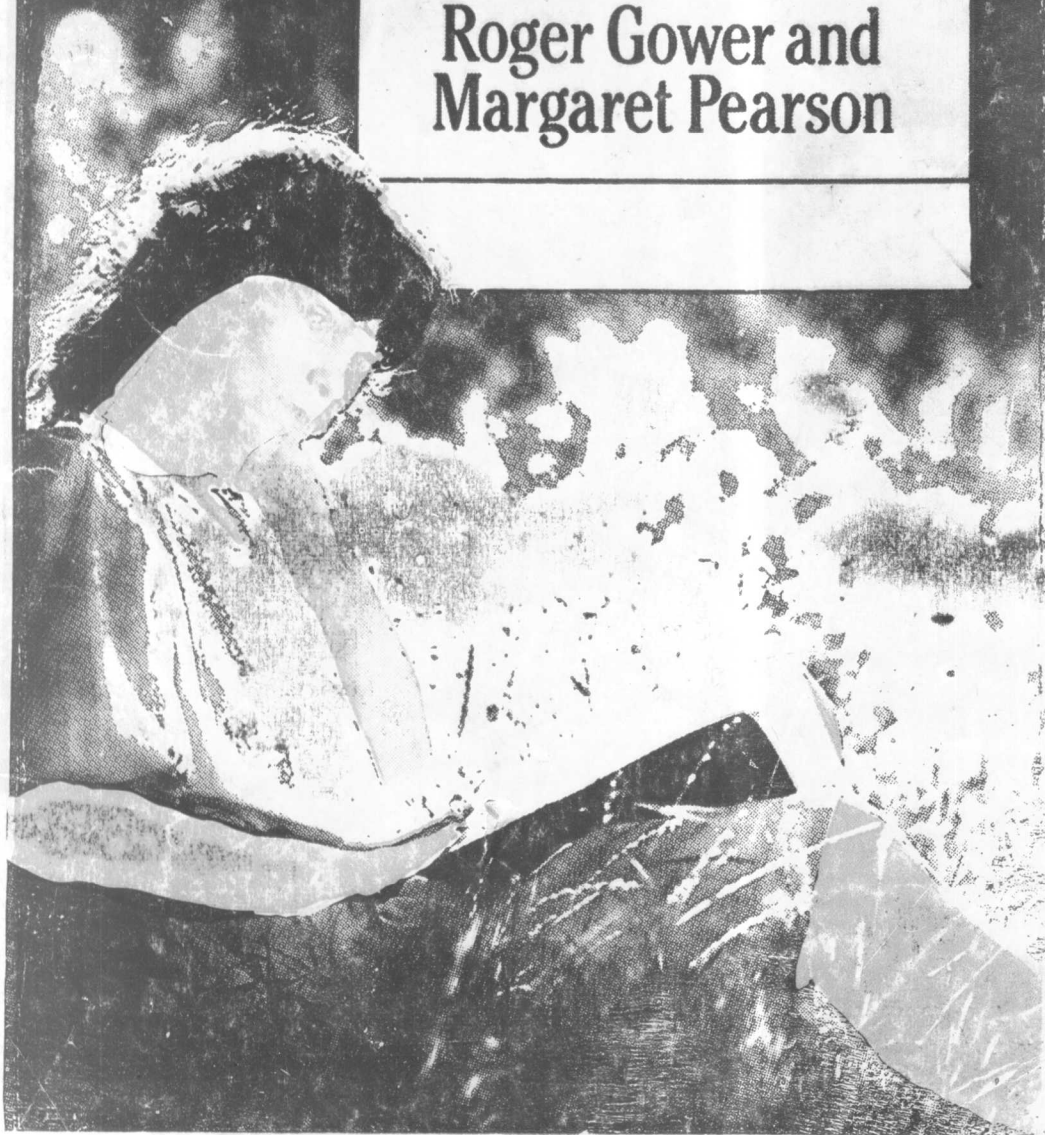


Reading Literature

Roger Gower and
Margaret Pearson



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Longman 

General introduction to the teacher

Reading Literature provides students with an introduction to the reading of British and American literature. It concentrates on helping them actually read what are sometimes difficult texts, while at the same time giving them some help with literary history, biography, differences in genre, technical literary terminology and literary criticism.

Since the primary focus is on reading, the book may be used either by students of literature or by students wishing to improve their English language skills. For either type of class it may be selected as a main course book. The literature teacher, however, may choose it to accompany an anthology or an encyclopaedic survey of some kind whereas the language teacher may choose it to accompany an English language course book.

How the book is organised

The book consists of ten Units. Each Unit centres around a particular focus of attention that a class of students might give a text (e.g. *Comprehension*, *Style*, etc). No Unit has any one exclusive focus. The Units are sequenced according to how the focuses of attention might be related

e.g. *Unit 1* The focus is on building up the students' interest (the first main activity a teacher might carry out with a group *before* they read a text).

Unit 2 The focus is on helping the students understand the content of what they read (the first activity a teacher might carry out with a group *after* they have read the text).

Unit 3 The focus is on getting the students to talk about how they react to what they have read.

However, this is a possible sequence only, and should not be interpreted too rigidly.

Students' language level

If all the work is to be done in English then the assumption is that the students' language level is intermediate to upper-intermediate, although parts of the book can very profitably be used with lower-intermediate students and other parts of it work very well with advanced classes. If, however, your students' speaking and writing skills are weak, much of the discussion and essay work may be done – if you prefer – in the students' own language. This would enable the book to be used consistently with students whose English is lower-intermediate.

The level of the book is not determined by how difficult the texts are but by such criteria as

- how long they are (the texts are usually shorter if they are difficult, longer if they are easy)
- the amount of language assistance given to students (quite a lot with difficult texts)
- the limited expectations of the exercises (i.e. if the text is difficult students won't be expected to understand everything the first time they read it).

The book aims to ease the student in gently.

Original texts

Texts have sometimes been 'abridged' but they have never been re-written to make them simpler. Care has been taken with 'abridged' versions (indicated by dots between sections where abridgement has taken place) not to change the meaning of the whole. Many texts are 'difficult' both in terms of the language used and the ideas expressed, but even in classes where language skills are weak, work on the texts can be very rewarding provided that it is done gently and with care, giving as much assistance as possible. Notice that on occasions several extracts have been taken from a single work to give a greater sense of the whole.

General guidance

First, if possible try to encourage students to read in their own time some of the whole works from which extracts are taken as well as other works by the same writers, even if they are translations in their own language. Try to get them to enjoy their reading instead of seeing it as a chore. You might even be able to find 'parallel' works by different writers – perhaps writers they are familiar with from their own country.

Secondly, students are generally better able to read difficult texts if they work in a co-operative atmosphere and if you help build up their motivation and confidence. What's more, extra student involvement in the classes will increase both interest and willingness to work outside the classroom. It should also increase memory and enjoyment of the texts. Try to promote such an atmosphere. Many of the exercises are designed to help you.

Please note that there are frequent instructions to 'Discuss in pairs'. This is because 'pair work' can also help build up a good atmosphere of co-operation in the classroom as well as stimulate discussion and awareness. If you prefer that the work is done in groups instead of pairs, then group work will usually have the same positive effect but it might take longer.

However, if 'pair work' or 'group work' are unsuitable for your class, then all the work can be done by the students working on their own – even at home – or, alternatively, if you prefer, by the teacher working with the whole class together.

You will notice that the activities in the book are designed to encourage students to discover things for themselves as they read. However, explicit guidance is given from time to time and a teacher may elicit and guide answers where necessary.

How to use the book

You may start at the beginning and work through. There is progress from one Unit to another. Some themes are linked and some of the later exercises are more successful if students have done the earlier ones. There is also occasional reference back to previous Units. However, it is possible, with careful planning, to dip into the book and move out of sequence.

One important thing: it is essential that you do not use any exercises which are not suitable for your class. If your students do not need an exercise, or they have too little time to complete it, then don't use it. If an exercise is too easy or too difficult for your group then again, don't use it. It is also essential that you provide any additional material you think the class needs (for example, the literature teacher may feel that he or she needs to give more background information).

If you are a language teacher using the book to help improve the students' English language skills, then you will have to integrate work with your classes' language learning aims. The primary focus for such a class using this book as a main book, however, would probably be something like 'developing reading skills' although the book can very well be used in a vocabulary development class or a grammar exploration class. (The texts offer a marvellous source of language and many of the exercises focus on it explicitly.) Unit 10 is more obviously focused on language and language skills.

Let's look at some of the specific exercises you will find in the book:

Anticipation work

This is vital because

- it helps get the students into the right frame of mind for reading a difficult text
- it helps build up confidence (vital if they are to read texts which, in terms of their language level, are 'too difficult' for them).
- it helps motivate them to read text in the classroom.

Some exercises (e.g. 1.2.2) encourage the students to relate personally to the 'theme' of the text, perhaps through discussion. Others (e.g. 1.2.1) are language-based. Language exercises can provide an interesting and worthwhile warm-up, even for the literature class.

Be careful not to make students feel inferior when confronting a difficult text. (Also in 1.1.1 don't give the questionnaire if you know that some students have not read anything and might be ashamed of the fact.)

Language exercises

Language exercises usually focus on either grammar (e.g. 1.3.5) or vocabulary (e.g. 1.3.1). Sometimes they are intended to come before the students encounter a text (e.g. 1.3.1) in which case they come under the heading *Language Work*, sometimes afterwards (1.3.5), in which case they come under the heading *Language*. However, there is no reason why the 'before' exercises could not, if desired, be done *after* the reading. Literature teachers – as distinct from language teachers – may prefer to keep such work to a minimum.

Note: While the pre-reading language exercises have a link with the text it is usually too time-consuming and demoralising for students if you try to teach in advance all the words which will be new to them. They can better learn the words from the context or after they have read the text.


If you wish to *extend* the language work there are some ideas in Unit 10 and some guidance in 10.3. There is no reason why work in the rest of the book should not be expanded in a similar way.

Listening to/reading the text

It is usually better if the students can first listen to the text without having to read it because

- it helps them get a sense of the whole (the speaker's voice can help with this)
- it discourages them from getting too concerned with the bits they don't understand (it's therefore important not to stop during the reading). However, you will have to assure the students that at this stage they're not expected to understand everything. Either encourage students to relax

and get the general idea of what they are going to hear, or give them in advance a very simple task (e.g. a few simple questions which either focus on the gist of the whole or on some prominent details).

Read the text aloud yourself or play the tape (texts read on tape are indicated by  in the margin). Then either let the students read the text silently at their own speed or read it silently 'he same time as they listen to it. The aim of this second encounter will be to encourage the students towards greater understanding. After that, it is preferable if students help each other to understand the difficult parts but of course they can, at your discretion, get assistance from the glossary, a dictionary, or you.

In general, it is usually better to let students read/listen as often as they like so that they feel comfortable with the text. Naturally it all depends on how much time you've got available. On most occasions, it is advisable not to get the students to read the texts aloud. It can be rather defeating for the student doing the reading and rather time-wasting for the others.

Improving understanding

The aim of all the comprehension exercises is to assist understanding rather than test it. Most of the exercises, then, can more beneficially be given to the students either *before they read the text* (e.g. 1.14.4) to help direct and focus the students' attention, or *after a first encounter with the text* but while they are working on it in detail (e.g. 1.7.2).

If students are not allowed access to the text when doing comprehension exercises you are in effect really checking up on their ability to have understood and remembered what they have read. This is likely to make the whole task of reading difficult texts much more difficult. It is essential that you give as much help as possible with understanding (e.g. help the students to understand your questions by directing their attention to where in the text the answers can be found).

If possible, work out what kind of understanding the exercise aims at (e.g. Does it focus on the gist of a passage? Does it encourage the students to focus on detail? Does it encourage a surface or 'in-depth' understanding?) You will probably need different types of exercises to help with different kinds of understanding.

As a general rule, don't expect a full, profound understanding after the students' first encounter! If necessary, work towards understanding gradually.

Glossaries

Glossaries are provided to help students with the less common (e.g. archaic and 'poetic') words. However, it's better if you can slowly get the students to be less dependent on glossaries by encouraging them to guess unknown words from the context in which they appear. If you are only expecting the students to get the general idea of a text or to simply enjoy it, discourage reference to the glossary altogether.

There are more 'active' glossaries in the *Language Sections* (e.g. 1.2.6). These are particularly of interest to those students who wish to improve their vocabulary. They encourage the students to explore (or try to guess) the meaning of the words in context.

Be careful: too much vocabulary work can hinder efficient reading, so unless your primary aim is vocabulary development, do it with care and restraint. Feel free *not* to use the *vocabulary* exercises in the book.

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R G and M P

UNIT 1

Getting ready

1.1 Finding out about you

1.1.1
What have you read?

i In your own language

NOVELS:	_____
_____	_____
PLAYS:	_____
_____	_____
POEMS:	_____
_____	_____
SHORT STORIES:	_____
_____	_____
BIOGRAPHIES/AUTOBIOGRAPHIES:	_____
_____	_____

ii In English

NOVELS:	_____
_____	_____
PLAYS:	_____
_____	_____
POEMS:	_____
_____	_____
SHORT STORIES:	_____
_____	_____
BIOGRAPHIES/AUTOBIOGRAPHIES:	_____
_____	_____

Write the names of at least two. If none, write none.
Use a separate piece of paper.

1.1.2
What do you like best?

- i Give a mark 0-5 next to the following literary forms (0 = I don't like them. 5 = I like them very much).

Novels

Poems

Short stories

Biographies

Autobiographies

Plays

Essays

- ii Give a mark 0-5 next to the titles you have written in 1.1.1.

1.1.3
What do you think?

- i Tick (✓) those statements you agree with.

Poetry is the highest form of human expression.

I only like to read English literature when the language is simplified.

Poetry is silly.

I like novels because they have a story.

Plays are interesting to watch but not so interesting to read.

Novels are too long when you don't understand the language very well.

I don't like to offer opinions about literature in case I'm wrong.

It's not easy to talk about English literature in English.

I like someone to translate any words I don't understand.

- ii Re-write those statements you don't agree with; make them closer to your views. Add others which express your opinion about literature and reading literature in English.
- iii Discuss your answers in pairs.

1.2 Beginnings

1.2.1
Language work

In pairs, complete the following:

Childhood is the time of life when one is a *child*.

Infancy is the time of life when one is an *infant*.

Adolescence is the time of life when one is an *adolescent*.

What is the approximate difference in ages between the three categories?

What other English words/phrases do you know which describe the different stages of one's life?

1.2.2
Anticipation

- i When and where were you born? (Give date, day or week, exact time, place.)
What is your earliest memory?
What have you been told about your early days?

Tell each other in pairs.

- ii Look at the following pictures. Choose at least one that reminds you of an early experience and, in pairs, tell each other about the experience.



1.2.3 Listen to the following passage:



Out of the darkness of my infancy there comes only one flash of memory. I am seated alone, in my baby-chair, at a dinner-table set for several people. Somebody brings in a leg of mutton, puts it down close to me, and goes out. I am again alone, gazing at two low windows, wide open upon a garden. Suddenly, noiselessly, a large, long animal (obviously a greyhound) appears at one window-sill, slips into the room, seizes the leg of mutton and slips out again. When this happened I could not yet talk. The accomplishment of speech came to me very late, doubtless because I never heard young voices. Many years later, when I mentioned this recollection, there was a shout of laughter and surprise: 'That, then, was what became of the mutton! It was not you, who, as your Uncle A. pretended, ate it up, in the twinkling of an eye, bone and all!'

GLOSSARY

mutton (1.3): meat of a mature sheep
greyhound (1.6): dog used for racing
in the twinkling of an eye (1.12-13): very quickly

1.2.4
Improving understanding

Notice the person speaking is the first person narrator in an autobiography. Read and/or listen to the passage as often as you like. In pairs, help each other to understand what it is about. Try to guess unknown words from the context and answer the following questions:

What event did the child witness?

What did the child say at the time?

Did the family know the truth of what happened at the time?

What was the joke?

1.2.5
Language

Say whether in context each of the words in the left-hand column is a noun, verb, adverb or idiomatic expression. Match the words with the definitions.

✓ flash

✗ gazing

✗ noiselessly

✗ window sill

✗ seizes

✗ accomplishment

✗ doubtless

✗ recollection

✓ became of

✗ probably *adv*

✗ horizontal piece at the base of a window

✗ memory

✗ takes hold of quickly

✗ happened to

✗ looking long and fixedly

✗ successful achievement

✗ sudden rush

✗ silently

Underline all the verbs in the passage and where possible write the names of the tenses next to each (e.g. past simple).

Say what time each tense refers to (past, present or future).

Do you notice anything unusual?

1.2.6 Discussion Tell each other any incidents you can remember in your life which are similar to the one in the passage.

1.2.7 Notes *The previous extract is from Father and Son by Edmund Gosse (1849-1928). It is part of an autobiography written 'as a document, as a record of educational and religious conditions which have passed away and will never return'. It is also 'a study of the development of moral and educational ideas during the progress of infancy'.*

1.3 Building up interest

1.3.1 Language work

Two uses of the verb 'smell' are

to notice a pleasant/unpleasant odour (transitive verb)

to give out a pleasant/unpleasant odour (intransitive verb)

Write two sentences to illustrate the difference. (See 2.5.1.ii for a definition of transitive/intransitive).

1.3.2 Anticipation

i Write down your earliest memory of something you remember having a pleasant or unpleasant smell.
How old were you?

ii Ask someone in the class about his/her memory.

iii Which smells do you like most?

1.3.3 Listen to the following passage. Help each other to understand as much as possible.



GLOSSARY

sainfoin (1.1): herb given as feed to cattle

chaff (1.1): cattle feed after it is cut

plastery (1.7): like plaster (the white powder which, when mixed with water, is put on the surface of walls)

meal (1.10): powdered grain

The very first thing I remember is the smell of sainfoin chaff. You went up the stone passage that led from the kitchen to the shop, and the smell of sainfoin got stronger all the way. Mother had fixed a wooden gate in the doorway to prevent Joe and myself (Joe was my elder brother) from getting into the shop. I can still remember standing there clutching the bars, and the smell of sainfoin mixed up with the damp plastery smell that belonged to the passage. It wasn't till years later that I somehow managed to crash the gate and get into the shop when nobody was there. A mouse that had been having a go at one of the meal-bins suddenly plopped out and ran between my feet. It was quite white with meal. This must have happened when I was about six.

1.3.4 Improving understanding

Notice the speaker is the first person narrator; this time in a novel. Read the passage again and try in pairs to answer the following questions:

Where do you think his parents worked?

Why couldn't the brothers get out of the other end of the passage?

What two smells does the writer remember?

Why was the mouse white?

- 1.3.5** Find a word or phrase in the passage that means:
Language holding firmly trying to break into (with some success)
 a little wet fell out suddenly

In the passage, 'smell' is a noun. Does it mean the 'perception' or the 'giving out' of an odour? Does it have a pleasant or an unpleasant association for the writer?

Discuss the difference between the words 'elder' and 'older'. What does 'elder' tell you about Joe and his brother?

- 1.3.6** The previous extract is from *Coming up for Air* (1934) by George Orwell (1903–1950), the author of *Nineteen Eighty Four* and *Animal Farm*. As well as being a novelist Orwell was a journalist and satirist. *Coming up for Air* is a novel about a man who gets very nostalgic about his past and eventually makes a journey back to the most important place of his childhood. He is totally disillusioned.

1.4 Into a harder passage

- 1.4.1** i Find out how many people in the class were born on a Friday.
Anticipation ii Find out how many were born near midnight.
 iii Find out if any were born at midnight on a Friday.
- 1.4.2** The following passage refers to the birth of the narrator.
 Listen.
 In pairs help each other to understand as much as possible.



Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously.

In consideration of the day and hour of my birth, it was declared by the nurse, and by some sage women in the neighbourhood who had taken a lively interest in me several months before there was any possibility of our becoming personally acquainted, first, that I was destined to be unlucky in life; and secondly, that I was privileged to see ghosts and spirits; both these gifts inevitably attaching, as they believed, to all unlucky infants of either gender, born towards the small hours on a Friday night.

I need say nothing here, on the first head, because nothing can show better than my history whether that prediction was verified or falsified by the result. On the second branch of the question, I will only remark, that unless I ran through that part of my inheritance while I was still a baby, I have not come into it yet. But I do not at all complain of having been kept out of this property; and if anybody else should be in the present enjoyment of it, he is heartily welcome to keep it.

GLOSSARY

station (1.2): position
 gender (1.13): sex (male or female)
 heartily (1.21): in all sincerity; thoroughly

1.4.3
Improving
understanding/tone

- i Re-read as often as you like. Try to answer the following questions:
What were the nurse's two predictions about someone born in the middle of a Friday night?
Do we know if the nurse was correct?
- ii How do you know from the passage that it is from a novel and not a conventional autobiography? (Look at the first sentence.)
- iii Can you describe the narrator's attitude to himself?
- iv Do you find any of the passage funny? If so, which parts? (Give reasons.)

1.4.4
Language

Find a word or phrase in the passage that means:

- at the same time
- wise
- prophecy
- turned out to be correct

What do the words 'inheritance' and 'property' suggest?
Here 'property' could mean 'characteristic'. In what way could it be a pun (i.e. a play on words)?

The passive voice consists of the verb 'be' + past participle (e.g. he was given ...). Circle all examples of the passive voice in the passage.
Underline those examples of the verb 'be' + adjective (e.g. I was happy).
For each example of the passive voice say whether it is possible to change it to the active voice (not 'he was given', but 'gave it to him') and, if so, say what difference it would make to the meaning.

1.4.5
Notes

*The last extract is the opening of the novel David Copperfield (1849-50) by Charles Dickens (1812-1870). Dickens worked as a clerk in a solicitor's office, a reporter in the *Lancet*, Courts and a parliamentary reporter. In all he wrote fifteen novels, primarily set in an urban, industrial world. As a man he was reputed to be full of charm, enthusiasm and exuberance. David Copperfield has some autobiographical elements but is essentially a novel about the growth of a young man from childhood to maturity.*

1.5 Introduction to literary forms

- 1.5.1
 - i The main literary forms are listed in 1.1.2. In pairs, agree on at least three characteristics of each literary form (e.g. POETRY: 1. A poem often has a rhythmic pattern).
 - ii Each frequently overlaps with the others. So a play may be poetic and a novel semi-autobiographical.
Make a list of the forms and draw lines between them to show which overlap with which, e.g. DRAMA

POETRY

Discuss.

1.6 Follow-up work

i Look at the following pictures:



ii *Either:* Write the story of the first few days of your life. Use your imagination. Begin something like:

I was born

It was

My mother

Or: Write the story of one or two early memories. Begin something like:

I remember

I was

(Maximum 300 words)