

Pick and Choose

Multiple choice comprehension passages

ROBERT BEST

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LONGMAN

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Introduction

This book consists of twenty-seven passages for the use of foreign students studying English at intermediate level. The general standard of the passages is that of the Cambridge First Certificate Examination, but the author has chosen and arranged them so that, within this level, they become increasingly difficult as the student progresses through the book.

Most of the vocabulary and constructions in the passages are within the range of at least the passive knowledge of students at the level in question. Where words occur which may be outside this range the author has, in order to preserve the difficulties encountered in reading in real life, purposely avoided 'doctoring' the text. Care has been taken, however, to ensure either that the passages are such that they can be understood without knowledge of the difficult words, or that the meaning of the latter can be worked out by reference to the context.

Each passage is followed by multiple choice exercises. The questions in these exercises are of two types, one designed to test comprehension, the other, knowledge of structure, vocabulary and idiom. The questions of the first type correspond to those to be found in the Reading Comprehension paper of the Cambridge First Certificate Examination, while those of the second type will be found useful in preparing for the Use of English paper in the same examination. (In the first type only one choice is correct in each question; in the questions of the second type there may be several correct choices.)

In addition, there is at the end of each set of questions a further question which requires the student to pick out certain facts or incidents in each passage and set them down in his own words in simple continuous prose.

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I A place to live

We gave the Masfields notice that the cottage would be free by the end of June quarter 1921; but did not have any idea where to go, or what to do next. It seemed clear that we must get another cottage somewhere, live quietly, look after the children ourselves, and try to make what money we needed by writing and drawing. 5 Nancy, who had taken charge of everything while I was ill, now set me the task of getting the cottage. It must be found in three weeks' time.

I protested: 'But you know there isn't a single cottage for rent anywhere.'

10

'Yes, but we simply *have* to get one.'

'All right, then, describe it in detail. Since there are no cottages, we might as well get something that we really like.'

'Well, it must have six rooms, water indoors, a beamed attic, a walled-in garden, and it must be near the river. It must be in a village with shops, and yet a little removed from the village. The village must lie five or six miles from Oxford in the opposite direction from Boar's Hill. The church must have a tower and not a spire - I've always hated spires. And we can afford only ten shillings a week unfurnished.'

20

I took down other details about soil, sanitation, windows, stairs, and kitchen sinks; laid a ruler across the Oxford Ordnance map, and found five riverside villages which corresponded in general direction and distance with Nancy's stipulation. Of these five villages, two proved on inquiry to possess shops; and, of these two, one had a towered church and the other a spired church.

25

I went to a firm of house-agents in Oxford and asked: 'Have you any cottages to let unfurnished?'

The clerk laughed politely. 'What I want is a cottage just outside the village of Islip, with a walled garden, six rooms, water in the house, a beamed attic, and at a rent of ten shillings a week.'

30

'Oh, you mean the World's End cottage? But that's for sale, not for rent. However, it's failed to find a buyer for two years, so

- perhaps the owner will let it go now at five hundred pounds,
35 which is only half of what he originally asked.'

The next day Nancy came to Islip with me. She looked around and said: 'Yes, this is the cottage all right, but I shall have to cut down the cypress trees, and change those window-panes. We'll move in on quarter-day.'

- 40 'But the money! We haven't the money.'

Nancy answered: 'If we could find the exact house, surely we can find a mere lump sum of money?'

She was right. My mother very kindly bought the cottage for five hundred pounds and let it to us at ten shillings a week.

from *Goodbye to All That* by ROBERT GRAVES

In questions (i) to (xii) only one choice is correct.

- (i) The writer protested to Nancy about the task she had set him, because
 - A. he had been ill
 - B. there were no cottages to let anywhere
 - C. they had to have a cottage
 - D. there was no cottage he really liked
- (ii) He asked Nancy to describe it in detail, because
 - A. he needed to draw it
 - B. they simply had to get one in three weeks' time
 - C. he wanted to know what kind of cottage would suit Nancy
 - D. there was no cottage really like it
- (iii) He laid a ruler across the Oxford Ordnance map, in order to
 - A. find the general direction of Oxford
 - B. find any villages five or six miles from Oxford
 - C. measure the Ordnance map
 - D. measure the distance between the five villages
- (iv) The clerk thought the owner would
 - A. allow it to be sold at five hundred pounds
 - B. allow it to be rented at half the original cost
 - C. leave it for two years
 - D. find a buyer in two years
- (v) They simply *had* to get a cottage because
 - A. the writer had been ill

- B. they were due to leave the one they were living in
 - C. they needed money
 - D. they had so many children
- (vi) 'two villages proved on inquiry to possess shops' (l. 25) means
- A. he went into shops in two of the villages to ask some questions
 - B. two villages had asked about shops
 - C. he approved of two villages for asking about shops
 - D. he discovered by asking people that two of the villages had shops
- (vii) 'free' (l. 1) means
- A. rent-free
 - B. without an owner
 - C. ready to let
 - D. for sale
- (viii) 'in three weeks' time' (ll. 7-8) means
- A. after three weeks
 - B. not before three weeks had passed
 - C. within three weeks
 - D. three weeks later
- (ix) 'let it go' (l. 34) means
- A. let it
 - B. leave it
 - C. sell it
 - D. rent it
- (x) 'it's failed to find a buyer for two years' (l. 33) means that for two years
- A. a buyer lost it
 - B. it has not had an owner
 - C. a buyer has been looking for it
 - D. it has been for sale
- (xi) 'corresponded with Nancy's stipulation' (ll. 23-24) means
- A. was what Nancy wanted
 - B. replied to the letter Nancy wrote to them
 - C. Nancy had visited
 - D. Nancy told me to visit
- (xii) 'all right' (l. 37) means
- A. without doubt
 - B. in good condition

- C. well designed
- D. perhaps

To answer the following, write down the number of the question and the letter of every item that could fill the gap. The items you choose must be grammatically correct and must correspond to the meaning in the original passage.

- (xiii) I was ill Nancy had taken charge of everything.
- A. During the time
 - B. Meanwhile
 - C. In the time
 - D. By the time
- (xiv) Nancy now left it to me the cottage.
- A. for getting
 - B. getting
 - C. to get
 - D. in order to get
- (xv) There are no cottages, we might as well get something we really like.
- A. so
 - B. therefore
 - C. in that case
 - D. as
- (xvi) I asked whether any cottages to let.
- A. they have
 - B. they were having
 - C. they had had
 - D. they had
- (xvii) The owner to sell it for two years.
- A. was unable
 - B. has not succeeded
 - C. has been unable
 - D. is unable

Rewrite the following sentences according to the instructions after each. Change the meaning as little as possible. Change only enough to do what you are asked to and to make a correct sentence.

- (xviii) 'Nancy, who had taken charge of everything while I was ill, now set me the task of getting the cottage.'
Begin: 'While I was ill

- (xix) 'However, it's failed to find a buyer for two years, so perhaps the owner will let it go now at five hundred pounds.'

Begin: 'Perhaps the owner

- (xx) Describe, in about 80 words, what Nancy did, without quoting her actual words at any point.

2 *Adventures of a secret agent*

Ashenden, the British Agent in Geneva in World War I, was bitterly disappointed. His attempt to get Chandra Lal, the German Agent, to come to Thonon, in answer to a letter from the woman he loved, had failed. Instead of coming, Chandra sent her a letter
5 which Ashenden had intercepted.

Then Ashenden had an inspiration. He said to Felix, his French colleague: 'Find the man who brought this letter. Tell him to return to the person who gave it to him. He is to say that he took it to the lady and she sent it back. If the person asks him to take
10 another letter he is to say that it is not much good as she is packing her trunk and leaving Thonon.'

He saw the letter handed over and the instructions given and then walked back to his little house in the country.

The next boat on which Chandra could possibly come arrived
15 about five and having at that hour an important engagement with an agent working in Germany, he warned Felix that he might be a few minutes late. But if Chandra came he could easily be detained; there was no great hurry since the train in which he was to be taken to Paris did not start till shortly after eight.
20 When Ashenden had finished his business he strolled leisurely down to the lake. It was light still and from the top of the hill he saw the steamer pulling out. It was an anxious moment and instinctively he quickened his steps. Suddenly he saw someone running towards him and recognized the man who had taken
25 the letter.

'Quick, quick,' he cried. 'He's there.'

Ashenden's heart gave a great thud against his chest.

'At last.'

He began to run too and as they ran the man, panting, told
30 him how he had taken back the unopened letter. When he put it in Chandra's hand the latter turned frightfully pale, and turned it over and over in his hand as though he could not understand what his own letter was doing there. Tears sprang to his eyes

and rolled down his cheeks. He said something in a language the man did not understand and then in French asked him when the boat went to Thonon. When the man got on board he looked about, but did not see Chandra; then he caught sight of him, huddled up in a coat with his hat drawn down over his eyes, standing alone in the bows. During the crossing he kept his eyes fixed on Thonon. 35 40

'Where is he now?' asked Ashenden.

'I got off first and Monsieur Felix told me to come for you.'

'I suppose they're holding him in the waiting-room.'

Ashenden was out of breath when they reached the pier. He burst into the waiting-room. A group of men, talking at the top of their voices and gesticulating wildly, were clustered round a man lying on the ground. 45

'What's happened?' he cried.

'Look,' said Monsieur Felix.

Chandra Lal lay there, his eyes wide open and a thin line of foam on his lips, dead. His body was horribly contorted. 50

'He's killed himself. We've sent for the doctor. He was too quick for us.'

from *Ashenden* by SOMERSET MAUGHAM

In questions (i) to (x) only one choice is correct.

(i) Ashenden was bitterly disappointed because

- A. the woman he loved had failed to answer his letter
- B. his plan to get the German Agent to come to Thonon had failed
- C. the woman he loved had sent him a letter but it had been intercepted
- D. the woman he loved had died

(ii) As Ashenden was walking towards the lake

- A. he saw the steamer leaving
- B. he saw the German Agent running towards him
- C. it began to get light
- D. he finished his business

(iii) When he received the letter, Chandra

- A. opened it
- B. turned it over

SOMERSET MAUGHAM

- C. said he could not understand it because it was in a foreign language
 - D. turned pale
- (iv) When Ashenden reached Chandra, the latter was
- A. gesticulating wildly
 - B. dead
 - C. killing himself
 - D. running quickly away.
- (v) 'he might be a few minutes late' (ll. 16-17) means
- A. Felix might be late
 - B. Chandra might be late
 - C. Ashenden might be late
 - D. the agent working in Germany might be late
- (vi) 'intercepted' (l. 5) means
- A. destroyed
 - B. lost
 - C. written
 - D. got hold of
- (vii) 'had an inspiration' (l. 6) means
- A. took a deep breath
 - B. opened the letter
 - C. had a good idea
 - D. couldn't think what to do
- (viii) 'he quickened his steps' (l. 23) means
- A. he walked faster
 - B. he walked quickly downstairs
 - C. he quickly stopped
 - D. he ran away
 - E. he walked quickly home
- (ix) 'panting' (l. 29) means
- A. laughing loudly
 - B. shouting desperately
 - C. breathing hard
 - D. running faster
- (x) 'he burst into the waiting-room' (l. 45) means
- A. he came into the waiting-room and began to laugh
 - B. he rushed into the waiting-room
 - C. he knocked down the door of the waiting-room
 - D. he came into the waiting-room and began to talk in a loud voice

To answer the following, write down the number of the question and the letter of every item that could fill the gap. The items you choose must be grammatically correct and must correspond to the meaning in the original passage.

- (xi) He is to say the lady the letter.
 A. returned
 B. came back
 C. sent on
 D. turned back
 E. replied
- (xii) The next boat on which arrived about five.
 A. it was possible for Chandra to come
 B. it was possible Chandra coming
 C. Chandra was possible coming
 D. it was possible that Chandra came
 E. it was possible that Chandra could come
- (xiii) Ashenden told Felix
 A. that to find the man who had brought the letter
 B. to found the man who had brought the letter
 C. to find the man who had brought the letter
 D. that he should find the man who had brought the letter
 E. finding the man who had brought the letter
- (xiv) There was no great hurry, the train did not start till shortly after eight.
 A. until
 B. as
 C. because
 D. therefore
 E. since
- (xv) Chandra said in French to the man
 A. 'when did the boat go to Thonon?'
 B. 'when was the boat going to Thonon?'
 C. 'when would the boat go to Thonon?'
 D. 'when does the boat go to Thonon?'
 E. 'when the boat goes to Thonon?'
- (xvi) When Ashenden reached Chandra he found him on the ground.
 A. laying
 B. lay
 C. to lay
 D. to lie
 E. lying

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- (xvii) Ashenden's attempt to Chandra to come to Thonon had failed.
- A. make
 - B. convince
 - C. persuade
 - D. allow
 - E. prevent
- (xviii) Describe in not more than 80 words what Chandra did from the moment he received his unopened letter.

3 *On buying books*

Time spent in a bookshop can be most enjoyable, whether you are a book-lover or merely there to buy a book as a present. You may even have entered the shop just to find shelter from a sudden shower. Whatever the reason, you can soon become totally unaware of your surroundings. The desire to pick up a book with an attractive dust-jacket is irresistible, although this method of selection ought not to be followed, as you might end up with a rather dull book. You soon become engrossed in some book or other, and usually it is only much later that you realise you have spent far too much time there and must dash off to keep some forgotten appointment – without buying a book, of course. 10

This opportunity to escape the realities of everyday life is, I think, the main attraction of a bookshop. There are not many places where it is possible to do this. A music shop is very much like a bookshop. You can wander round such places to your heart's content. If it is a good shop, no assistant will approach you with the inevitable greeting: 'Can I help you, sir?' You needn't buy anything you don't want. In a bookshop an assistant should remain in the background until you have finished browsing. Then, and only then, are his services necessary. Of course, you may want to find out where a particular section is, but when he has led you there, the assistant should retire discreetly and look as if he is not interested in selling a single book. 20

You have to be careful not to be attracted by the variety of books in a bookshop. It is very easy to enter the shop looking for a book on, say, ancient coins and to come out carrying a copy of the latest best-selling novel and perhaps a book about brass-rubbing – something which had only vaguely interested you up till then. This volume on the subject, however, happened to be so well illustrated and the part of the text you read proved so interesting, that you just had to buy it. This sort of thing can be very dangerous. Apart from running up a huge account, you can 25 30

waste a great deal of time wandering from section to section.

35 Book-sellers must be both long-suffering and indulgent.

There is a story which well illustrates this. A medical student had to read a text-book which was far too expensive for him to buy. He couldn't obtain it from the library and the only copy he could find was in his bookshop. Every afternoon, therefore, he would go along to the shop and read a little of the book at a time. One day, however, he was dismayed to find the book missing from its usual place and was about to leave when he noticed the owner of the shop beckoning to him. Expecting to be told off, he went towards him. To his surprise, the owner pointed to the book, which was tucked away in a corner. 'I put it there in case anyone was tempted to buy it,' he said, and left the delighted student to continue his reading.

by ROBERT BEST

In questions (i) to (xv) only one choice is correct.

- (i) You may spend too much time in a bookshop because
 - A. the dust-jackets are very attractive
 - B. you start reading one of the books
 - C. it is raining outside
 - D. you have to make sure you don't buy a dull book as a present
- (ii) In a good bookshop
 - A. nobody takes any notice of you
 - B. the assistant greets you in a friendly way
 - C. your heart is contented
 - D. you feel that you are in a music shop
- (iii) An assistant should help you
 - A. as soon as you have entered the shop
 - B. just before you finish browsing
 - C. only when you have finished browsing
 - D. when he leads you to a particular section
- (iv) It is very easy to enter a bookshop and buy
 - A. a book on ancient coins
 - B. a best-selling novel on brass-rubbing
 - C. a book that only vaguely interests you
 - D. a book that unexpectedly interests you