



# **MAKE YOUR POINT**

**L G Alexander  
M C Vincent**

# Make your point

30 Discussion Topics for  
Students at Secondary Level

## LG Alexander *and* MC Vincent

I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew)  
Their names are What  
and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who  
*Rudyard Kipling*



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## To the teacher

### Basic Aims

The widespread interest in *For and Against* (an oral practice book for use with advanced students of English as a foreign/second language) has led to repeated requests for a similar book at an easier level.

*Make your point* has been written to meet this demand. Like its companion, *For and Against*, this book has two broad aims: the first is purely linguistic; the second is educational.

At a linguistic level this book sets out to meet the problems posed by the unstructured 'conversation lesson' by providing a flexible programme which the teacher can manipulate according to the needs of his class. *Make your point* can be used in a fairly mechanical way for guiding conversation in an unresponsive class, or conversely, it can be used creatively as a source-book for ideas in a highly responsive class.

Over and above this basic linguistic objective, *Make your point* is concerned with moral education and social values. Most of the topics deal with serious issues, though some are in a lighter vein (e.g. Nos. 6 and 12). They have been selected for their relevance to modern living and they deal with issues which are of particular concern to teenagers. The exercises are designed to encourage and train the pupils to think for themselves. In the course of discussion it is unlikely that pupils (or anyone else for that matter) will find the right answers to some of the problems posed, but at least they might be tempted to ask some of the right questions.

### Whom the book is for

This book should be found suitable for:

1 Secondary school pupils at the intermediate level who are preparing for the Cambridge First Certificate in English examination. It may be used in addition to an intermediate course like *New Concept English*, *Developing Skills* or *Mainline Skills A and B*.

2 Secondary school pupils at the intermediate level who are not preparing for an examination of any kind and who are attending classes mainly to improve their command of spoken English.

*Make your point* has been designed specifically to meet the needs of secondary school pupils and will therefore NOT be found suitable for adult students.

### A description of the material

#### Layout

*Make your point* consists of thirty lessons each of which is laid out on facing pages. A 'text' (the term is used in the broadest possible sense) always appears on the left-hand page while exercises to guide discussion always appear on the right-hand page.

Left-hand Pages: The 'texts'

Each topic for discussion is first presented through a 'text'. Each text

has been kept deliberately short and simple to enable the pupils to concentrate on conversation rather than comprehension. Every effort has been made to project each topic as vividly as possible so the style of presentation varies greatly from text to text. For instance, there are seven dialogues, three purely visual pages, and a variety of texts which includes picture stories, fables, letters, notes, maps, diagrams, etc. Where a particular style recurs, general cover titles are used. So some texts are labelled 'Focus' (i.e. on a problem), 'Forum' (i.e. general discussion) or 'Viewpoint' (i.e. expressing a personal opinion). Most of the 'texts' deal with vital issues. It is hoped that pupils will feel sufficiently motivated by each topic and the way it is presented to attempt to participate in a discussion.

#### Right-hand Pages: Guided Discussion

The right-hand pages generally fall into five parts labelled A, B, C, D and E. The five exercises are designed to guide the student from highly controlled discussion (closely based on the text) to the open-ended discussion of topics suggested by the text. Each exercise takes the following form:

- A *Comprehension*: This section consists of questions which are designed to ensure that the *meaning* of the text has been fully established in the pupils' minds. In the early lessons the questions demand straightforward answers: e.g. negative/affirmative tags and responses to Wh-/How questions some of which can have more than one answer and can be spread round several pupils. The first five right-hand pages provide teachers with examples of most of the different kinds of questions that can be asked, as a guide for extending the oral work in the later lessons if necessary. The questions in the later lessons are more interpretative or open-ended. They are concerned with *implied* meaning.
- B *Oral Composition*: The purpose of this exercise is to enable pupils to reproduce an argument they are familiar with and/or to construct an argument of their own with the aid of notes. This section, therefore, usually contains notes from which the pupils will:
  - 1 reconstruct two sides of an argument;
  - 2 reconstruct one side and make up the other;
  - 3 construct both sides of an argument (as for example in the visual pages). Occasionally, the pupil is asked to take a stand and state his own case using his own words.
- C *What's Your Opinion?* The rationale behind this section is to involve the pupil personally either by direct questions about what he/she likes/does or by direct invitation to comment on the topic.
- D *Talking Points*: This section is designed to provide opportunity for more extended oral work (e.g. describe/talk about topics related to the text). At this point in the lesson pupils will participate in free conversation.
- E *Conclusion*: This very brief section rounds off each lesson and gives the pupils something to think about or to do in their own time. The section may contain a quiz or a proverb or an assignment

or recommended reading, etc.

### *Structural Grading*

**Left-hand pages:** The texts have been carefully graded in terms of language content to follow four of the six stages given in the *Handbook to the Longman Structural Readers*. The texts become progressively more difficult, the earliest ones being written within the limitations imposed by Stages 3 and 4 of the Handbook, the final ones going beyond the limitations imposed by Stage 6. However, even though the texts become progressively more demanding, they are always brief enough to ensure rapid presentation in the classroom.

**Right-hand pages:** Lessons 1–25 are written throughout within the limitations imposed by Stages 5 and 6 of the Handbook, though the early lessons contain fewer difficult structures and lexical items than the later ones. The introduction of a broader range of structural and lexical items on these right-hand pages has been inevitable as open-ended discussion cannot be productively confined to the simpler levels defined by the Handbook. However, teachers should always remain aware of the fact that some of the structures and/or lexical items on these pages will need to be explained during the course of discussion. (All explanations should be brief, not laboured!)

The grading scheme as a whole may be summarised as follows:

Left-hand Pages	Right-hand Pages
Lessons 1–5: Handbook, Stages 3/4	Lessons 1–25: Handbook, Stages 5/6
Lessons 6–10: Handbook, Stage 4	Lessons 26–30: Open
Lessons 11–15: Handbook, Stages 4/5	
Lessons 16–20: Handbook, Stage 5	
Lessons 21–25: Handbook, Stages 5/6	
Lessons 26–30: Open	

### **Time Allocation**

Assuming a lesson of 50 minutes, the suggested time allocation is as follows:

Phases of the lesson	Approx. time in minutes
Presentation of text	5–15
A Comprehension Questions	5–10
B Oral Composition	5–10
C What's Your Opinion?	5–10
D Talking Points	5–10
E Conclusion	0–5

The first phase, presentation, is very important since the whole lesson depends on it. A reasonable effort should be made to cover all the remaining phases during the course of a lesson. However, if a lively discussion develops in class after the presentation phase then the lesson will have achieved its purpose even if the exercises have only been partially covered or—in some instances—completely ignored. It will be found in practice that unresponsive classes will need to go through the exercises systematically while responsive classes will often be able to take short cuts.

### How to tackle each phase

#### Presentation (5–15 minutes)

This will vary according to the type of text. Two forms of presentation are recommended:

- 1 Listening Comprehension
- 2 Interpretation

1 *Listening Comprehension*: This is recommended for all texts which lend themselves to this form of presentation: i.e. those which can be read through without interruption. These are as follows:

Dialogues:	Nos. 1, 3, 11, 13, 18, 23, 26.
Fables:	Nos. 2, 9.
Viewpoint:	Nos. 6, 16, 19, 30.
Picture Stories:	Nos. 7, 10, 20.
Total:	16 Texts.

The suggested steps in the presentation are as follows:

- a Introductory Commentary (*books shut*)
- b Listening (*books shut*) (*books open* in the case of picture stories)
- c General Comprehension Questions (*books shut*)
- d Intensive Reading (*books open*)
- e Listening (optional) (*books shut*)
- f Reading Aloud (optional) (*books open*)

In practice this would work out as follows:

- a Introductory Commentary (*books shut*): Say a few words about the subject matter of the text by way of introduction. (E.g. I'm going to read you a text/dialogue about . . .)
- b Listening (*books shut*): Read the text to the class straight through without pauses, explanations or gestures. The pupils *listen* only and try to understand as much as they can at first hearing.
- c General Comprehension Questions (*books shut*): Ask a few general questions about the main points in the text to find out how much the pupils have understood at first hearing.
- d Intensive Reading (*books open*): Read the text in small units (e.g. a sentence at a time or less) making sure the pupils really understand it. Rather than give direct explanations, it is best to try to get as much information as possible from the pupils themselves. (Think of it as a 'corkscrew operation'.) Explanations should be given in English, but this shouldn't be carried to absurd lengths.

If, despite an explanation, pupils still fail to understand, then translate briefly and move on.

- e Listening (optional) (*books shut*): Read the text straight through again. The pupils should listen only.
- f Reading Aloud (optional) (*books open*): Ask a few pupils to read the text aloud or to take parts in the dialogues and discussions.

2 *Interpretation*: This style of presentation is recommended for all texts which pose problems, require special study, invite personal involvement, etc. These are as follows:

Visual pages: Nos. 4, 14, 25.

'Problem texts': Nos. 5, 8, 12, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28, 29.  
(NB The first parts of Nos. 17, 21, 22, 27 and 28 could be used for listening comprehension purposes.)

Total: 14 texts.

The suggested steps in the presentation are as follows:

- a Introductory Commentary (*books shut*)
- b Intensive Reading and Interpretation (*books open*)

In practice this would work out as follows:

- a Introductory Commentary (*books shut*): Exactly as above.
- b Intensive Reading and Interpretation (*books open*): As above.

However, it is not enough merely to communicate the meaning of each text: plenty of guidance should be given to enable the student to *interpret* the text as well. Ask questions to find out whether the pupils have understood the implied meaning as well as the direct meaning.

Once the presentation phase has been accomplished the lesson may proceed with reference to the exercises on the right-hand page.

- A *Comprehension Questions (5–10 minutes)*: Ask the questions listed in this section (even if similar questions have already been asked during the Intensive Reading). Supply additional questions of your own if you wish to. Try to ensure a rapid *pace*. In the case of unresponsive classes it may be necessary to extend this section considerably by asking all types of questions (e.g. those demanding tag answers.) Examples of the range of questions that can be asked are to be found on the first five right-hand pages.
- B *Oral Composition (5–10 minutes)*: Ask the pupils to refer to the numbered notes and explain particular difficulties (e.g. new words). Now ask two pupils to reconstruct the arguments or let the whole class join in by referring individual pupils to the numbered sections.
- C *What's Your Opinion? (5–10 minutes)*: Ask the questions listed and ask the pupils to refer to this section if necessary. This exercise may be conducted round the class or pupils may be asked to work in pairs: e.g. 'Nos 3, 7.' (It should be noted, however, that work in pairs generally has the effect of slowing down the pace of the lesson.)

D *Talking Points (5–10 minutes)*: When you reach this section, ask the pupils to read the questions to themselves and give them a couple of minutes to think about the problems posed. Then guide the class into a discussion by asking each question. Pupils may need prompting by means of additional questions before a proper discussion can develop. If a pupil makes mistakes while speaking it is best not to interrupt him. When he has finished briefly point out one or two major errors he might have made. Some useful phrases for free discussion can be found on page 62.

E *Conclusion (0–5 minutes)*: Conclude the lesson briefly by referring to this section. Some of the assignments may be set as homework.

*It cannot be stressed too strongly that the 'set lesson' as outlined above can be abandoned altogether if a lively discussion is generated after the presentation of the text, or by any one of the sections.*

### **Other possible uses**

Though this book is primarily intended for guiding conversation, it may be put to a variety of other uses. Some of the texts may be found suitable for speed-reading or scanning: pupils may be asked to look rapidly through a text in a limited time to see if they can 'get the point' quickly and accurately. You may occasionally give dictation exercises or ask pupils to write argumentative compositions as homework following a classroom discussion. Written exercises of this kind may be found useful in consolidating aural/oral work done in the classroom. But it is important not to lose sight of the overall objective of the book as a whole, which is to develop discussion skills by presenting a range of topics which are, for the most part, of universal human interest and concern.

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# 1 Who'll get the job?

## Interview 1

*Miss Draper* Good morning. Do sit down.

You're Anne Porter, aren't you?

*Anne Porter* Uh-huh.

*Miss Draper* Which school do you go to?

*Anne Porter* Mm...mm High.

*Miss Draper* I'm sorry. I couldn't hear you.

Did you say Merton High?

*Anne Porter* No, Burton.

*Miss Draper* What's it like?... Well, what's your favourite subject?

*Anne Porter* I don't like any subject much, but I'm good at maths.

*Miss Draper* I see. Have you any hobbies?

*Anne Porter* Not really.

*Miss Draper* What do you do in the evenings then?

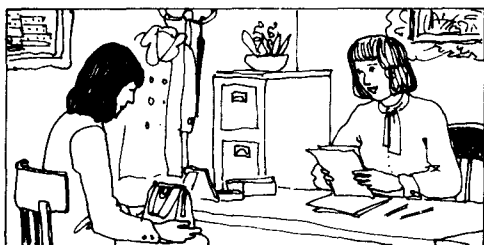
*Anne Porter* Watch T.V.

*Miss Draper* Why do you want to work in a shop?

*Anne Porter* er...I don't want to work in an office.

*Miss Draper* Have you any questions for me?

*Anne Porter* (Shakes her head)



## Interview 2

*Bill Baker* Sorry I'm late. Good afternoon.

*Miss Draper* Good afternoon. Please sit down. Your name's Bill Baker, isn't it?

*Bill Baker* Yes, that's right. I'm from Brent Boys' School.

*Miss Draper* Have you a favourite subject?

*Bill Baker* Yes, I have--history, but I'm better at art. I'm no good at maths!

*Miss Draper* What are your hobbies?

*Bill Baker* I like all sports. In the summer I swim a lot.

*Miss Draper* What do you do in the winter then?

*Bill Baker* (laughs) I stay indoors. I'm making my own Hi-fi set.

*Miss Draper* Why do you want a job in a shop?

*Bill Baker* I think I'd like it. My uncle has a radio shop...(etc.)

# Who'll get the job?

Presentation 1

1

## A Comprehension

- 1 What is Anne wearing?
- 2 She isn't smiling, is she?
- 3 Has she met Miss Draper before?
- 4 Does Anne speak clearly?
- 5 Are her answers long or short?
- 6 What's her best subject?
- 7 Is she a dull or a lively girl?
- 8 Do you think she is rude, or shy?
- 9 Was Bill punctual for his interview?
- 10 He looks untidy, doesn't he?
- 11 Does he look cheerful?
- 12 How does he answer the questions?
- 13 What's his worst subject?
- 14 When does he stay indoors? Why?
- 15 Why does he want to work in a shop?
- 16 What questions could he ask?

## B Who'll get the job?

Here are Miss Draper's notes on the interviews:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>a Say what she thought of Anne.</i><br/><b>FOR</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Was punctual, smart, tidy.<br/>Would look nice in a shop.</li><li>2 Good at Maths—would add up bills correctly.<br/><b>AGAINST</b></li><li>3 Was very shy—spoke too quietly, didn't look at me.<br/>Seemed rude—didn't answer.<br/>Might be rude to customers.</li><li>4 Seemed dull—no hobbies; no questions about the job. Might not work well.</li></ol> | <p><i>b Say what she thought of Bill.</i><br/><b>AGAINST</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1 Arrived late, looked untidy.<br/>Shop assistants must be smart.</li><li>2 Bad at Maths—might make mistakes in the bills.<br/><b>FOR</b></li><li>3 Was very cheerful, friendly—smiled, answered questions fully. Spoke clearly.<br/>Customers would like him.</li><li>4 Showed interest—uncle has a shop; asked questions. Would work hard.</li></ol> |
|--|---|

## C What would an interviewer think of you?

Answer the following questions. Choose the letter that fits you best:

*a* always *b* usually *c* often *d* sometimes *e* never

- 1 Are you smart and tidy?
- 2 Are you punctual?
- 3 Are you cheerful and friendly?
- 4 Do you speak clearly?
- 5 Do you like meeting people?

Now check your score on p. 61

## D Talking Points

- 1 What would you wear for a party/a picnic/an interview/a day's shopping?
- 2 When you go shopping, what do you notice about the shop assistants?
- 3 What can you learn about a person from his clothes?
- 4 Why are some people more shy/rude than others?

## E Find out about jobs in shops. How much are shop assistants paid? Which customers do they like/dislike? What hours do they work?



# The foolish frog

Once upon a time a big, fat frog lived in a tiny shallow pond. He knew every plant and stone in it, and he could swim across it easily. He was the biggest creature in the pond, so he was very important. When he croaked, the water-snails listened politely. And the water-beetles always swam behind him. He was very happy there.

One day, while he was catching flies, a pretty dragon-fly passed by. 'You're a very fine frog,' she sang, 'but why don't you live in a bigger pond? Come to my pond. You'll find a lot of frogs there. You'll meet some fine fish, and you'll see the dangerous ducks. And you must see our lovely water-lilies. Life in a large pond is wonderful!'

'Perhaps it is rather dull here,' thought the foolish frog. So he hopped after the dragon-fly.

But he didn't like the big, deep pond. It was full of strange plants. The water-snails were rude to him, and he was afraid of the ducks. The fish didn't like him, and he was the smallest frog there. He was lonely and unhappy.

He sat on a water-lily leaf and croaked sadly to himself, 'I don't like it here. I think I'll go home tomorrow.'

But a hungry heron flew down and swallowed him up for supper.

The End

## A Comprehension

- 1 Who once lived in a tiny pond?
- 2 Was it deep or shallow?
- 3 Were there any plants in the pond?
- 4 There weren't any fish, were there?
- 5 Which other creatures lived there?
- 6 Why was the frog very important?
- 7 He was happy there, wasn't he?
- 8 Who passed by one day?
- 9 What did she ask the frog?
- 10 Describe the creatures in her pond.
- 11 Was her life dull or wonderful?
- 12 The frog followed her, didn't he?
- 13 How did he get to the other pond?
- 14 Why was he unhappy there?
- 15 Where did he sit?
- 16 When did he decide to go home?
- 17 What happened to him?
- 18 Do *you* think he was a foolish frog?

## B Two points of view

a *State the frog's point of view.*

FOR SMALL POND

- 1 Safe—could swim across it.
- 2 Important—everyone knew him; other creatures polite.
- AGAINST LARGE POND
- 3 Dangerous—big, deep, strange.
- 4 Lonely—no one knew him; other creatures rude, unfriendly.

b *State the dragon-fly's point of view.*

AGAINST

- 1 Dull—nowhere to go; nothing to see.
- 2 Boring creatures—snails, beetles; no fish, ducks. Small plants.
- FOR
- 3 Exciting—dangerous ducks.
- 4 Interesting—meet a lot of creatures; plenty to do, see.

## C Would you rather go to a large school or a small one?

*In a large school:*

- 1 You work in a big building—get some exercise between lessons.
- 2 You have special rooms for different subjects—don't stay at one desk.
- 3 You can learn more subjects—there are more teachers.

*In a small school:*

- 1 You work in a small building—don't waste time between lessons.
- 2 You stay in your own classroom most of the time—don't lose things.
- 3 You can learn better—don't have different teachers every term.

- a Are all these points true? Can you suggest any more? What's *your* opinion?
- b Which type of school is better for young children/for pupils of your age?

## D Talking points

- 1 Describe your first day at a new school. How did you feel?
- 2 Are there any dangers in your everyday life? If so, what?
- 3 Describe a visit to a strange place. Was it exciting?
- 4 Would you like to leave your home and travel abroad? Why/why not?
- 5 Does everyone want to be important? Would you like to be? Why/why not?
- 6 Do you know anything about real pond life? If so, tell us.

## E A proverb

'One man's meat is another man's poison'. Try to collect some more English proverbs.

# FARMS *or* FACTORIES?



*Mr Hunter* Gentlemen! Listen to me, please. I've come here to *help* you.

*Farmer Kent* Oh no you haven't! You want our land.

*Mr Hunter* I want to build two factories. I don't need much land for that.

*Farmer Kent* You'll take too much. And we don't want factories on our island.

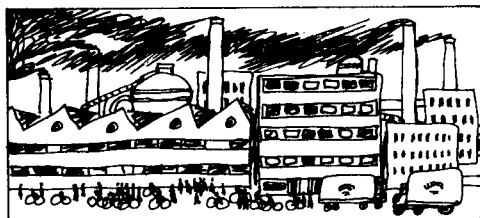
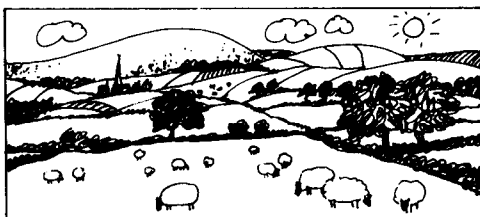
*Farmer Stubbs* No, we don't. Factories are ugly.

*Farmer Binns* They're noisy.

*Farmer Dodds* They're smelly.

*Mr Hunter* My factories will give you work, and money.

*Farmer Binns* We've got work. We're farmers.



*Mr Hunter* How big are your farms? How much do you grow?

*Farmer Dodds* We grow enough to feed ourselves.

*Farmer Stubbs* It's a good life.

*Mr Hunter* A good life? You work every day of the week. You never have holidays.

*Farmer Stubbs* We don't need holidays.

*Farmer Kent* You can't change our lives.

*Mr Hunter* But your lives are changing. Where are the *young men*? Why do they leave the island? Why do they go to the cities?



**A Comprehension**

- 1 Does Mr Hunter live on the island?
- 2 Who is he talking to?
- 3 Are they friendly towards him?
- 4 What does Mr Hunter want to do?
- 5 He doesn't need much land, does he?
- 6 Will the farmers give him any?
- 7 Why don't they want factories?
- 8 How could factories help the island?
- 9 The farmers don't want to change their lives, do they?
- 10 Are they sensible or stupid? Why?
- 11 Where have the young men gone?
- 12 Can you suggest why?
- 13 Would factories bring them back?

**B The arguments**

*a State Mr Hunter's argument.*

FOR

FACTORIES

- 1 Will help the island—work, money; fixed hours, pay, holidays.
- 2 Don't need much land.
- 3 Very small—don't grow much.
- 4 Long hours—no pay, holidays.
- 5 Young men don't like them—leave.

AGAINST

FARMS

*b State the farmers' argument.*

AGAINST

- 1 Will spoil the island—ugly, noisy, smelly.
- 2 Will take too much land.
- 3 Belong to farmers; grow own food.
- 4 A good life—like hard work; don't want to change.

FOR

**C Would you like to work on a farm?**

- 1 Do you like working outdoors?
  - 2 Could you get up early every day?
  - 3 Do you like animals?
  - 4 Are you strong?
  - 5 Would you like to work by yourself most of the time?
- If you answered 'Yes' to 3 or more questions, you'd like farming.

**Would you like to work in a factory?**

- 1 Do you like working indoors?
  - 2 Would you like to work fixed hours?
  - 3 Could you work with noisy machines?
  - 4 Do you like working in a big group?
  - 5 Could you do the same thing all day and every day?
- You'd like working in a factory, if you answered 'Yes' to 3 or more questions.

**D Talking points**

- 1 Do you agree with the farmers or Mr Hunter? Say why.
- 2 Have you ever visited a factory/farm? If so, tell us about it.
- 3 Do you think it's important to have your own land? Why/why not?
- 4 Farms produce food. What do factories produce?
- 5 Are farmers' lives changing? If so, how?
- 6 What do country people want to do when they come to town?
- 7 When people from the town go to the country, what do they want to do?
- 8 Would you rather live in a town or in the country? Why?

**E A problem**

Throughout the world people are moving from the country to the towns. What difficulties does this cause? Name two or more. Is it wrong? How would you persuade people to stay in the country? Suggest ideas.

## 4 Boys' work, girls' work?



*a Learning to cook*



*b Mending a puncture*



*c Learning to use a plane*