

READING AND WRITING ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

T I D B I T S

Reading and Writing Activities for the Student  
of English as a Foreign Language

Intermediate/Advanced



English Teaching Division  
Educational and Cultural Affairs  
International Communication Agency  
Washington, D.C. 20547

1978

## T O T H E T E A C H E R

The readings contained in this book are designed for the intermediate and advanced student of English as a foreign language who has a basic vocabulary of 3,000 words. Each unit is intended to give added information about various cultural aspects of contemporary American society; to provide reading and writing practice through different cloze procedure and grammar related activities; and to increase the student's general vocabulary and syntax usage.

The teacher has the choice of using the readings consecutively or of choosing a reading at random. Each "tidbit" is an independent unit and can be used at random in the classroom as a change-of-pace supplementary activity.

## C O N T E N T S

All-Purpose Peanut	1
Electric Bus	4
Return of the Airship?	7
Mood Music	10
Smell and Sell	13
Home TV	16
Food Money	19
Wind Power	22
Minifarms	25
Experimental City	28
Job Changes	31
24-Hour Shopping	34
Paperback Boom	37
Flexible Work Hours	40
Shop by Mail	44
Zero Population Growth	48
Four-Day Week	52
Man-Made Mountain	56
Fish Food	61
Water	65
Moo Bricks	69
Middle-Age Creativity	73
Canine Detectives	77
Floating Power Plant	81
Measure of Quality	85

ALL-PURPOSE PEANUT

The peanut is a high protein food which is native to tropical America. Peanuts are very popular with Americans and are eaten in salted or unsalted form at parties, picnics, and sports activities. Now there is a new way that peanuts can be eaten. READ THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH AND TRY TO DECIDE WHICH IS THE BEST FINAL SENTENCE TO COMPLETE THE PASSAGE.

The peanut may be in for its biggest boost in the United States since peanut butter was invented in 1890. A scientist at Clemson University in the state of South Carolina has developed a product called peanut flakes which is so highly adaptable that it can be served as a tasty breakfast cereal as well as a high protein, low fat meat substitute. Bland but nutritious, peanut flakes can be made to taste like chocolate candy or a dry breakfast food, or to take on the flavor of beef, chicken and even scrambled eggs when added as a supplementary ingredient to these foods.

Choose the sentence which most correctly completes the above paragraph.

- a. Peanut flakes are now being introduced into the American family diet.
- b. One day you too may be eating peanut flakes as part of your diet!
- c. Since 1890, peanut butter has been part of American eating habits.
- d. President Jimmy Carter is a former peanut farmer.

GLOSSARY

- adaptable adj. changing to fit needs or new conditions
- be in for v. to begin to experience
- bland adj. not having much taste
- boost n. a lift or help
- cereal n. a grain, such as wheat, oats or corn, which can be eaten
- flake n. a very small, thin piece
- ingredient n. one of the parts of a mixture or combination
- nutritious adj. helping the growth and development of a living thing
- protein n. one of the basic parts of living matter
- scrambled eggs fried eggs which are stirred and mixed
- supplementary adj. something added
- take on v. to begin something

EXERCISES

A. Write T (True), F (False), or NG (Not Given) beside each of the following sentences based on the reading.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Peanut flakes are delicious.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Peanut flakes can be adapted to taste like many different foods.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Peanut flakes are limited for possible use.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. A scientist from California developed peanut flakes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Peanut flakes can be made to taste like beer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Peanut flakes are a substitute for protein.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The peanut will definitely become more popular now.

B. Fill in the missing noun or verb forms of the following words.

Noun	Verb
1. _____	invent
2. _____	develop
3. product	_____
4. substitute	_____
5. _____	add

C. Find the words in column 2 that are closest in meaning to the words in column 1.

column 1	column 2
a. boost	a. tasteless
b. develop	b. greatly
c. bland	c. mixed
d. highly	d. rise
e. scrambled	e. make

D. Questions for Discussion

1. When was peanut butter invented and by whom?
2. In what way are peanut flakes adaptable?
3. Where is Clemson University?
4. What are some of the flavors that can be given to peanut flakes?
5. Do you think you would like to eat peanut flakes? Why or why not?

E. Optional Activity

Write a paragraph of 100-150 words describing the popularity and use of nuts in your country.



## ELECTRIC BUS

Automotive pollution in the city is a worldwide problem. Heavy traffic in small areas causes noise and fumes. Now there is a possible large scale solution to automotive pollution. WRITE OUT THE NUMBERS IN THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE IN THE PARENTHESIS PROVIDED.

1 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) alternative to the noise and pollution caused by gasoline engines is an all electric bus, the largest of its kind available in the U.S. today. The electric bus is being developed by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation and is capable of operating 8 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) hours before recharging is needed. Although the bus could be built to carry from 10 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) to 22 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) passengers, the prototype is designed to carry 18 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) persons at 7 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) miles an hour. It is powered by 12 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) 6 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) volt batteries. This new vehicle, which costs 8,000 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) dollars, is one of 15 ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) basic electric vehicle models produced by Westinghouse. Its slow speed limits its usefulness in regular city traffic, but company officials see a good market for the electric bus in high density areas such as industrial complexes, large shopping centers and university campuses.



GLOSSARY

- alternative n. a choice between two or more things, only one of which can be chosen
- capable of adv. able or ready to
- density adj. crowded; close together
- fume n. strong smelling smoke or smoke-like gas
- pollution n. dangerous or unpleasant waste matter in the air, soil or water
- prototype n. an original type, form or instance that serves as a model on which later stages are based or judged
- recharge v. to cause formation of electricity again
- vehicle n. anything upon or in which a person or thing may travel or be carried, especially anything on wheels

EXERCISES

A. Write T (True), F (False), or NG (Not Given) beside each of the following sentences based on the information given in the reading.

- \_\_\_ 1. The electric bus is large, fast, and noisy.
- \_\_\_ 2. It is powered by a long electric cord.
- \_\_\_ 3. It is used in areas of high population.
- \_\_\_ 4. The bus operates more than 10 hours at one time.
- \_\_\_ 5. The bus costs more than a car.
- \_\_\_ 6. It is fast.
- \_\_\_ 7. The bus is now being used in every major city in the United States.

B. Change the following phrases or sentences in the passive voice into sentences in the active voice.

Example: the car being built by Westinghouse.  
Westinghouse is building the car.

1. Noise and air pollution were caused by gasoline engines.
- 

2. The electric bus is being developed by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation.
- 

3. The bus is powered by twelve, 6-volt batteries.
-

4. One of 15 basic electric vehicle models was produced by Westinghouse.
- 

- C. Find the words or expressions in column 2 that are closest in meaning to the words in column 1.

column 1	column 2
a. capable	a. ready for use
b. designed	b. prevent
c. available	c. run
d. power	d. able
e. limit	e. built

D. Questions for Discussion

1. Why is an electric bus necessary?
2. Who is developing the largest electric bus now available?
3. How many passengers will it have and how fast will it go?
4. How is the bus powered?
5. Where is the best place to use the electric bus?
6. What, in your opinion, are some of the benefits of the electric bus?

E. Optional Activity

Describe, in approximately 150 words, the effect of automotive pollution as you see it or have experienced it.



## RETURN OF THE AIRSHIP?

After you put the following sentences in correct order, you will discover that the dirigible or airship is becoming popular again as a form of transportation. REARRANGE THE SENTENCES TO MAKE A COHESIVE, UNIFIED PARAGRAPH.

Besides, says Dr. Vittek, dirigibles get better when they get bigger because "larger vehicles carry larger cargoes, not only in absolute terms but also in terms of the percentage of space available for payload."

Dirigibles, those airborne giants that have not been used commercially since the 1930's, may return to the skies if one scientist has his way.

While dirigibles are slower than airplanes, their advantages may outweigh any disadvantages, the MIT researcher says.

He predicts that airships nearly a kilometer long may one day become a reality if there is enough commercial interest.

"Airships are five to ten times more efficient than airplanes because their energy is used only for motion, not for support," claims Dr. Joseph F. Vittek, Jr., of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

GLOSSARY

<u>cargo</u>	n.	a load of articles carried on a ship or a plane
<u>cohesive</u>	adj.	sticking or holding together
<u>efficient</u>	adj.	producing the desired result with the least waste
<u>outweigh</u>	v.	to be more important than something else
<u>payload</u>	n.	the money-producing part of a cargo
<u>predict</u>	v.	to tell in advance what will happen
<u>unified</u>	adj.	united

EXERCISES

A. Write T (True), F (False), or NG (Not Given) beside each of the following sentences based on the reading.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Dirigibles used to be a common form of transportation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Dirigibles will return to popularity as a form of transportation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Dirigibles require much energy to support cargo.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Airships carry many passengers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Airships are slower than airplanes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Large airships are a distinct possibility if there is enough commercial interest.

B. Select the lettered word or phrase most similar in meaning to the first word or phrase.

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <u>in absolute terms</u>     | 2. <u>has his way</u>    |
| a. at first sight               | a. carries his load      |
| b. never                        | b. satisfies his desires |
| c. independent of anything else | c. fulfills his duty     |
| d. unfortunately                | d. remembers his work    |
- 
- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3. <u>outweigh</u>        | 4. <u>become a reality</u> |
| a. be more important than | a. last a long time        |
| b. carry                  | b. wonder                  |
| c. substitute             | c. get bigger              |
| d. grow                   | d. come to pass            |
- 
5. more efficient than
- a. more important than
- b. more effective than
- c. more loosely than
- d. more beautiful than

- C. Find the words in column 2 that are closest in meaning to the words in column 1.

column 1

- a. absolute
- b. dirigible
- c. space
- d. predict
- e. efficient

column 2

- a. room
- b. complete
- c. foretell
- d. effective
- e. airship

D. Questions for Discussion

1. Who is Dr. Joseph F. Vittek, Jr.?
2. What is the advantage of bigger dirigibles, according to Dr. Vittek?
3. Do dirigibles have any disadvantages? If so, what are they?
4. Are dirigibles used commercially today?
5. Why are dirigibles more efficient than airplanes?
6. How long might dirigibles be, according to Dr. Vittek?

E. Optional Activity

In a 100-150 word paragraph describe what you think it would be like flying in a dirigible. Use the words scenic, soundless, tiny, breathtaking and clear in your paragraph.



## MOOD MUSIC

Music has traditionally been a recreational activity. It has recently become part of our everyday lives, including our work. SUPPLY THE CORRECT PUNCTUATION (PERIODS, COLONS, COMMAS, APOSTROPHES, QUOTATION MARKS) IN THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE.

Its not easily noticed but it is everywhere Its influence is very small but measureable Whether in restaurants shopping centers or assembly lines -- even farms -- background or mood music can be heard almost anywhere in the United States from hushed executive offices to screeching wrecking yards One hand tool manufacturing plant found that efficiency increased 4.5% with the introduction of background music while a California farmer discovered that such music calmed nervous cattle and prevented stampedes that used to cause thousands of dollars in damage The type of music seems to have an impact department stores play slower music during the week to encourage shopping but speed up the beat on weekends when the crowds are heavier The music is basically designed not to be listened to says one background music man but to create a favorable mood or build a tempo to work to

GLOSSARY

background adj. the parts of a scene or picture that are or seem to be behind something else

efficiency n. the desired result with the least waste

hushed adj. quiet

impact n. effect or result

recreational adj. any entertainment, game, etc., which refreshes

stampede n. a sudden rush of frightened animals, especially cattle or horses

tempo n. speed at which music is played

EXERCISES

A. Write T (True), F (False), or NG (Not Given) beside each of the following sentences based on the reading.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mood music is everywhere.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Music has a psychological effect on people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Mood music is always fast.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Background music can be heard in Canada.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Business efficiency is increased with the addition of mood music.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Supermarkets play mood music during the week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Mood music is great for dancing.

B. Select the lettered answer most opposite in meaning to the first phrase in each example.

1. very small but measureable  
 a. greater but visible  
 b. tiny but perceptible  
 c. big but scattered  
 d. huge but indistinguishable
2. from hushed. . .to screeching  
 a. from expanding. . .to diminishing  
 b. from noisy. . .to quiet  
 c. from clear. . .to muddied  
 d. from small. . .to grandiose
3. calmed. . .and prevented  
 a. disturbed. . .and allowed  
 b. pacified. . .and blocked  
 c. thrilled. . .and excited  
 d. bought. . .and sold

C. Find the words in column 2 that are closest in meaning to the words in column 1.

column 1

- a. hushed  
 b. screech  
 c. impact  
 d. encourage  
 e. tempo

column 2

- a. help  
 b. quiet  
 c. beat  
 d. effect  
 e. scream

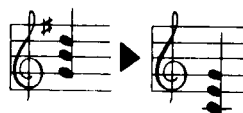
D. Questions for Discussion

1. Where can mood music be heard?
2. What are some of the beneficial effects of mood music?
3. Why do department stores play slower music during the week?
4. Why do they play faster music on weekends?
5. What is the purpose of mood music?
6. Do you think mood music would help you in your work? Why or why not?

E. Optional Activity

Answer the following questions.

1. Have you ever been to a store with background or mood music? Describe.
2. Would mood music be appropriate in your English class? Why or why not?
3. How would slow music encourage shopping?
4. Can you think of places where mood music would be inappropriate?





## SMELL AND SELL

In an effort to sell products which have a pleasant aroma, American companies have tried to bring their samples to people's homes through advertisements. **FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH THE CORRECT INDEFINITE OR DEFINITE ARTICLE (A, AN, THE).**

Aromatic advertising in \_\_\_\_\_ United States is using \_\_\_\_\_ sense of smell to sell products. Manufacturers have known for years that odor is \_\_\_\_\_ effective stimulant to \_\_\_\_\_ purchaser of \_\_\_\_\_ product, but there was no practical way to package "smell." Now, with \_\_\_\_\_ process called "micro-encapsulation," it is possible to sniff \_\_\_\_\_ product's scent from \_\_\_\_\_ printed page. \_\_\_\_\_ concentrated odor is deposited on \_\_\_\_\_ small area of \_\_\_\_\_ page during printing: scratching \_\_\_\_\_ spot with \_\_\_\_\_ coin or fingernail releases \_\_\_\_\_ scent. Some of \_\_\_\_\_ aromas already used in magazine advertisements are those of perfumes, pine trees, roses, shaving cream, pickles, orange juice, and gin.

GLOSSARY

aroma n. a pleasant characteristic odor, such as from a plant, spice or food; adj. aromatic  
concentrated adj. given complete attention to  
deposit v. to put down; place  
encapsulate v. to encase or surround like a capsule; n. en-capsulation  
odor n. smell  
release v. to free  
sample n. a small part of something used to show what the whole is like; an example  
scent n. an odor, especially a pleasant one  
scratch v. to tear or mark a surface with something sharp or pointed  
sniff v. to draw air into the nose noisily  
stimulant n. something that causes to become more active