

ENCOUNTER WITH A NEW WORLD



A Reading
and Writing Text
for Speakers of English
as a Second Language

Doris Fassler
Nancy Duke S. Lay

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**A Reading and Writing Text
for Speakers of English as a
Second Language**

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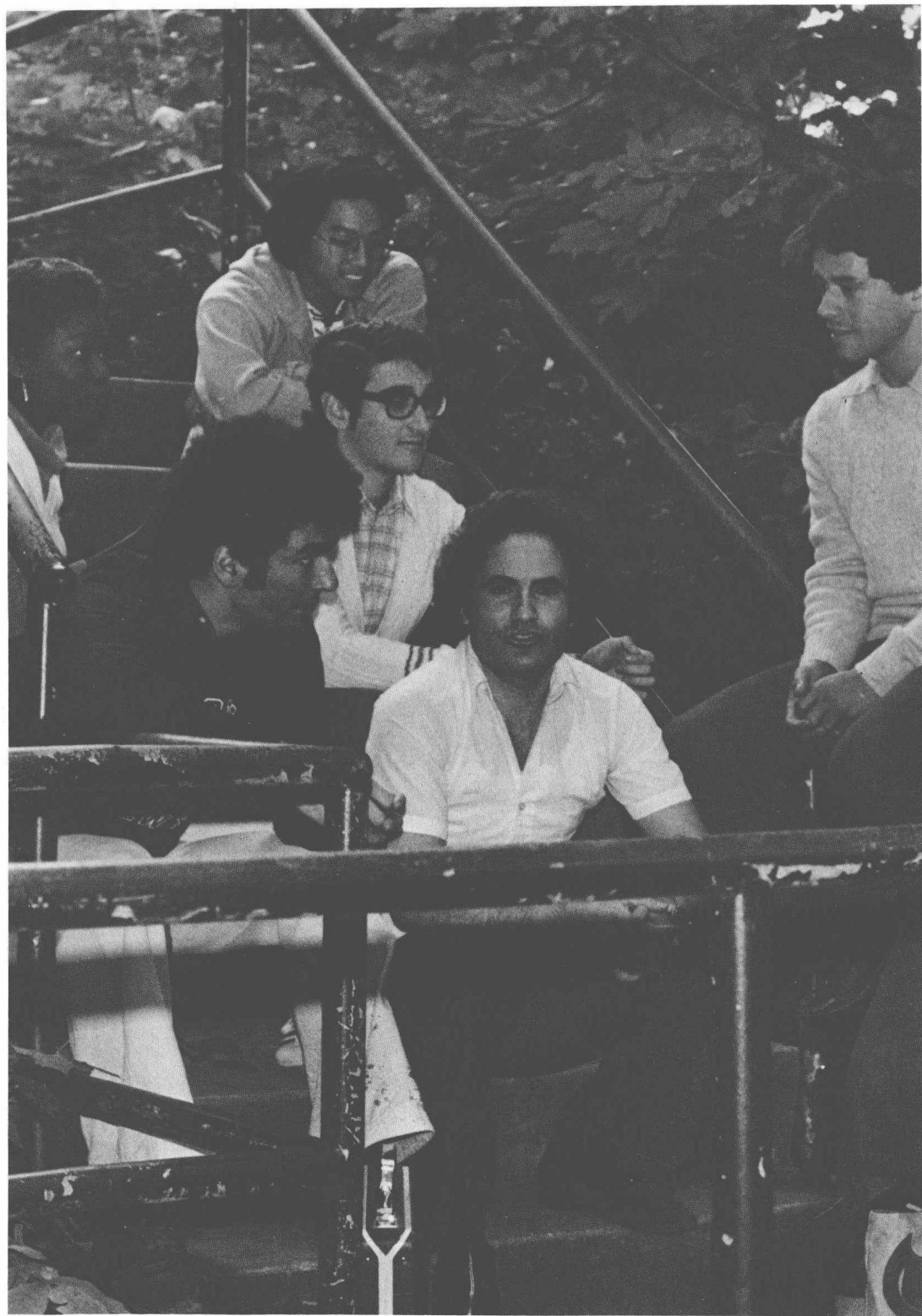
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Encounter with a New World



To my mother, Cheong Choy Ping,
and to my sister, Rosie L. Gonzales,
for teaching me and giving me the
opportunity to experience the new
world.

N. D. L.

To my mother, Elizabeth Bond,
who has always encouraged me; to
Rhoda Haas, whose assistance was
invaluable; and especially to my
husband, Paul Fassler, who made this
book possible.

D. F.

To the Student

At one time or another, you have probably asked yourself, “Will I ever be able to speak and write English like a native?” This book says loudly and clearly, “Yes, like many others before you, you can gain a mastery of English that is equal to the skill of a native writer.”

The reading passages in this book are concrete proof of this statement. They were all written by nonnative speakers of English. They were written by people who came to a new country with little or no knowledge of English—people who had to earn a living, perhaps by fixing shoes, by selling rugs door to door, or by waiting on tables. Like you, these writers had to struggle with the English language while making new lives for themselves. Yet they eventually became published and professional writers of English.

Of course, you have already come a long way toward your goal of proficiency in English, and this book, with its varied language activities, will bring you even closer.

Reading Guidelines

As you read each selection, look for answers to the following questions:

1. What is the main idea of the passage?
This may be stated at the beginning or it may be understood only after you have read the entire passage.
2. What is the main idea of each paragraph?
This is usually stated in a topic sentence. However, it may also be implied, that is, not stated directly.
3. What arguments, examples, illustrations, incidents, or other details does the author use to explain and support the main idea?
You must decide which are major details—those that are essential

to support the author's ideas—and which are minor details—those that help the reader to understand the ideas but are less important.

4. What are the implications of the author's statements?

The author may want you to understand certain ideas, but not state them directly. You should be able to figure out these implied ideas.

5. Finally, what are the author's conclusions or opinions?

What meaning or importance has the writer given to the material presented? Are the opinions or conclusions logical? Do you agree with them? If not, what are your conclusions or opinions?

To summarize, look for the following when reading:

1. The main theme of the article.
2. The main idea of each paragraph.
3. Major and minor supporting details.
4. Implications.
5. Conclusions or opinions.

To the Teacher

This text for high-intermediate and advanced students of English as a second language strikes a balance between readers which concentrate on reading skills and grammar-composition texts which are devoted exclusively to the development of writing skills. This is a text that will enable the student to improve all these skills in the course of a semester's work.

The readings are concerned with the experiences of foreigners who have made a new life for themselves in a new country. What makes it unique is that all the selections were written by published and professional writers whose native language was not English. The passages eloquently demonstrate their ability to write proficiently, accurately, often poetically, in their second language.

Thus, our readings will be meaningful to students in two new and important ways. First, they will provide encouragement to those who are now struggling to improve their English, for they are concrete proof that it is indeed possible to gain a mastery of English, even as a second language, that is equal to the skill of a native writer. Second, the selections portray a variety of experiences that mirror and parallel, reinterpret, or contrast with the students' own experiences. This connection between experiences underlies the epigraphs to each chapter which we have chosen from the writing of our own students.

In addition to the reading passage with its glossary, emphasizing context clues, each chapter presents integrative language activities, such as: (1) comprehension and discussion questions for both oral and written practice, (2) a cloze exercise, (3) word form and synonym exercises for vocabulary development, (4) grammar exercises and sentence combining, (5) writing topics with guidelines for different types of essays, and (6) proofreading. This text provides enough material for a complete, one-semester course.

Teaching Guidelines

VOCABULARY

1. *Glossary.* We have glossed only words and phrases whose meaning might not be easily grasped even from a dictionary. Those words whose meaning is clearly indicated in dictionaries have been left to the students to look up. When the dictionary offers a multiplicity of meanings that could be confusing, we have included the word in the glossary. We have also included words whose meaning can be derived from the context.

2. *Context clues.* We would like to provide training and practice in finding the approximate meanings of words directly from the context so that the students can gradually learn to read a passage without looking up every word they do not know. Context clues to meaning may be found in the semantic content of the passage, in the grammatical function of the word in the sentence, or in the morphology of the word itself.

For example, in chapter 1, we have indicated that *regional* has the *-al* adjective suffix, and its base word is *region*. This can lead to a discussion of prefixes, suffixes, and base words or roots. Furthermore, the teacher might discuss how one can determine that *regional* is an adjective from its position preceding the noun *friendship*.

Sometimes, we point out phrases that either convey the opposite meaning of the glossary word or have a similar meaning, such as “a comforting answer” for *consolation*.

3. *Word forms.* Many of our students misuse words that have closely related forms which are nevertheless distinct parts of speech. We have therefore included exercises to distinguish between the different forms. One can teach the following concepts in this exercise:

- a. Parts of speech. Give specific clues to students, such as the fact that nouns follow articles and adjectives precede nouns.
- b. Suffixes and prefixes.
- c. Forms of the verb.

4. *Synonyms.* To help retention of new vocabulary, we have prepared exercises requiring the students to utilize the meanings they have learned from the glossary, from the context clues, or from a dictionary.

COMPREHENSION

1. *Reading guidelines.* The text includes a note to the student on reading guidelines. In addition, at the beginning of each reading passage, we have included a set of questions (entitled *To Think About*) which will guide the student while reading. This thinking while reading will make it much easier for the student to answer the comprehension questions. The teacher

can also use the reading guidelines for class discussions of main ideas, supporting details, implications, and conclusions.

2. *Comprehension questions.* The questions follow the order of presentation of the ideas in the reading passage. They automatically lead the student to read for main ideas, for supporting details, and for implications and conclusions. They are also valuable as a partially controlled writing exercise which allows the student to use many of the phrases and vocabulary in the passage, while permitting latitude in response, particularly to those questions calling for inferences.

3. *Discussion questions.* Since these deal with more far-ranging implications than the comprehension questions, the students will be able to bring their own experiences and insights to bear.

4. *Cloze exercises.* A cloze exercise taken from the reading passage is included in each chapter. This provides still another method of determining the students' comprehension. The importance of the cloze technique is clearly stated by John W. Oller in "Cloze tests of second language proficiency and what they measure" (*Language Learning*, 23 (1), June, 1973):

The information provided in the cloze test allows the student by analysis to synthesize a greater whole. At the same time, the synthesis or projection may become part of the next analysis required to produce a subsequent synthesis. It is interesting to note that the process of taking a cloze test involves more than "passive" reading. By sampling the information that is present, the subject formulates hypotheses, or expectations, about information that is to follow.

In other words, the cloze technique forces the student to think about and concentrate more on the language in order to select the appropriate form to fill a particular blank. This requires more awareness and analysis of the language by the students.

The teacher can use this cloze exercise in several ways. One can go over *all* possible answers for each blank, since there is often more than one grammatically and semantically correct answer for some of the blanks, even if they do not match those in the original passage. Even students' incorrect answers can be valuable for discussion. Write all the answers on the board and go over them one by one, discussing reasons for using one as opposed to another.

Another suggestion is to use this passage to guide students in looking for clues in grammar. For example, only a form of the verb *to be* can occur between *I* and *beginning*. Since the subject is *I*, the list of forms narrows down to *was* and *am* (multiple-word forms are not a possibility because the blanks require only one word each). If the time of the event is in the past, the answer has to be *was*. Cloze passages lend themselves to similar discussion of articles, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, and in fact, all grammatical functions depending on the passage.

GRAMMAR

1. *Special problems.* Each chapter will focus on a particular grammatical problem that both arises in the reading passage and persists in the writing of advanced students, as we know from our own experience.

2. *Scrambled sentences exercises.* Since word order of complex structures still remains a problem for high-intermediate to advanced students, we include some scrambled sentences. Each exercise will be related to a particular grammar problem. We have included not only single words in the scramble but also phrases, because we feel that students need to see groups of words put together. This will help them not only in their writing, but also in their reading. In subsequent exercises, the complexity of the sentence is increased.

3. *Sentence combining.* Such exercises are particularly useful for students who are just at the stage of developing more complex and interesting sentences. Our exercises at first guide the students to certain combinations but gradually leave them free to develop the skill so that eventually they can work out several different possibilities on their own.

WRITING

1. *Comprehension questions.* As already mentioned, they provide an opportunity for partially controlled writing.

2. *Essay assignments.* Each chapter offers not only a choice of topics, but also a choice of rhetorical modes. Thus, chapter 1 suggests an essay of comparison-contrast, a report of an interview, and a biography. Furthermore, for each writing assignment, we give some instruction about developing compositions, so that by the end of the book, the student will have received a succinct, though comprehensive, course on composition.

3. *Proofreading.* We include proofreading under writing skills because students must be encouraged to regard proofreading and revising as integral steps in the process of writing. Because students' perception of error, especially their own, is extremely poor, regular practice in detecting and correcting mistakes is a necessary part of any writing program. The proofreading passages, taken from essays written by our own students on the same topics, deal with typical errors overlooked in writing by advanced students. Corrected versions of the proofreading passages start on page 255.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP ACTIVITIES

We believe that the use of collaborative groups of students working together is a valuable break from the usual classroom routine. Therefore, we will indicate here those activities in each chapter that are suit-

able for group work. (Our indications are, of course, only suggestions. The activities can always be conducted in the full class structure.)

1. *Discussion of questions related to the reading.* In a small group in which the instructor is not present as the focus of attention, students learn that they themselves and their fellow students have something worth saying. The small groups also provide better opportunities for speaking English, which is particularly important for ESL students. More students can be talking at any given time than during a classroom discussion. Teachers can control the work done by requiring written reports or essays relating to the discussion or by having the groups report orally to the entire class.

For example, each small group of three to five students can be given a different discussion question or set of related discussion questions, and allowed fifteen to twenty minutes for discussion. Then the class can be reassembled and each group asked to report on their conclusions, with other members of the class being allowed to add their comments.

2. *Grammar exercises.* When students in a small group of no more than five go over grammar exercises, the group inevitably becomes involved in the clarification of grammatical concepts. In cases of disagreement, students will articulate the basis for their choices and will be less intimidated about arguing a point than with a teacher's comment. However, the teacher is always available as a resource to settle questions.

3. *Proofreading.* The proofreading exercises are particularly suited to take advantage of the natural, friendly competitive spirit between the students. Since the number of errors is always indicated, the groups can compete to see which one discovers and corrects them all first.

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