A Higher Course of English Study

NALD MACKIN DAVID CARVER

2

A HIGHER COURSE OF

ENGLISH STUDY 2

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Preface

Book 2 of *A Higher Course of English Study* is intended for advanced students of the language, whether they have already worked through Book 1 or not. The passages selected for study in this volume are markedly more difficult than those used in the preceding one, though once again we have attempted to arrange them in an order of increasing difficulty while keeping in mind the need for variety. We have nowhere attempted to simplify the language of the originals.

The plan of Book 2 conforms basically to that of Book 1. Each chapter, with one exception, consists of (*a*) two or more passages (*b*) notes on the passages and (*c*) varied exercises, ranging from tests of comprehension to free composition. The exploitation of the texts, however, differs in one important aspect from that of the previous book; and this difference arises both from the greater inherent difficulty of the passages themselves and from our assumption that the user will have a considerable knowledge of the language, and many years of study behind him.

The most obvious difficulty of the texts is that of the extensive vocabulary used. We have therefore not attempted to provide a great many notes on words as such; on the contrary, we now wish to encourage the reader to build up his vocabulary by means of a discriminating use of a dictionary. Nevertheless, in order to prevent this becoming too tedious, we have given the meanings of a few words that will be found in most dictionaries, and of some unusual terms which may present special difficulty. These are exceptional; and in general the student, rather than being given information as in Book 1, is here required to *find out meanings for himself*, whether of single words or of expressions involving idiomatic combinations of words. We particularly recommend *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* by A. S. Hornby, E. V. Gatenby, and H. Wakefield. Even so, our Notes are quite numerous, and this is accounted for by the fact that in this selection a large number of cultural problems

arise incidentally. It is not easy to refer the student to any books that deal specifically with difficulties of this kind, so we have concentrated on filling in the 'background' wherever it has seemed desirable to do so. A glance at the Notes on Frank O'Connor's story *Pity* will show what we mean.

As in Book 1, we have tried to find not only a variety of topics that are interesting in themselves, but also a contrastive treatment of these topics from the stylistic point of view. Thus space-travel is dealt with by the selection of passages from a factual source and from a book of science fiction; children's communities are looked at as they are described in fiction (*Lord of the Flies*) and in an anthropological study (*The Boys' Dormitory*); the extracts from Hemingway's *Big Two-hearted River* and Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* present two startlingly different ways of looking at Angling; and so on. Wherever we deal with questions of style, our concern is to encourage the study of the norms of 'Standard English' for productive purposes, and the *comprehension only* of departures from these norms. This applies to both books of *A Higher Course of English Study.*

In Appendix I, we give a small number of poems for those who feel that such a course is incomplete without this form of literature. They can easily be omitted by those who do not share this point of view.

A *Pronouncing Vocabulary* of proper names and a few difficult words is given in Appendix II.

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APPENDIX 1: Poems

CHAPTER 1

A. The Solar System

The Earth is a planet just under 8,000 miles in diameter, moving round the Sun at a distance of 93,000,000 miles, and completing one circuit in 365¼ days. It is not the only planet; eight others are known, all with their own special points of interest. Mercury and Venus are closer to the Sun than we are; Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto are farther away. Of course, the nearest to us are Mars, which may approach the Earth to within 35,000,000 miles, and Venus, which has a minimum distance from us of only about 24,000,000 miles. Mars and Venus are also the only two planets which do not appear to be overwhelmingly hostile. However, they are much more remote than our one natural satellite, the Moon, which moves round the Earth at a mean distance of less than a quarter of a million miles.

The Sun itself is a star. It is by no means distinguished, and modern astronomers class it as a 'Yellow Dwarf'; it seems splendid to us only because it is relatively so near. We know of stars which are at least a million times more luminous than the Sun, and yet are so far away that telescopes are needed to see them at all. The stars visible at night-time are immensely distant, which is why they appear only as tiny points of light. Many of them may well have planet-systems of their own.

All the same, we must not be contemptuous of the Sun. It may not be a celestial searchlight, but neither is it a glowworm: it is normal in every way, and cosmically it is far more important than our own insignificant world. Its diameter is 864,000 miles so that it could contain more than a million globes the size of the Earth; even at its surface, the temperature is around 6,000°C. (11,000°F.), and in the solar 'power-house', deep inside, the temperature must rise to well over ten million degrees. The Sun is gaseous, and is not burning in the ordinary sense of the word, since it produces its energy by means of thermonuclear processes near its core.

The essential difference between a star and a planet is that

a star is a sun in its own right, whereas a planet shines only because it reflects the rays of our own particular Sun. If we could observe from the surface of another world—Mars, for instance—the Earth too would appear in the guise of a starlike object, and a telescope would be needed to show even large features such as the Pacific Ocean and the Eurasian landmass.

(From *Space in the Sixties*, by PATRICK MOORE.)

B. A Rusty Desert

The first thing that you would see on the surface of Mars when looking at it through a telescope would be the general orange-red colour of the surface. The ruddy colour of the planet, in fact, is easily noticed by the naked eye. The areas showing this red tint have been called 'deserts', but it must not be supposed that the deserts on Mars are just like the deserts on Earth. Much work has gone into the study of the spectrum of the Martian deserts. There is definite evidence that there are some silicates present—chemical substances similar to sand. But the main constituent is probably similar to limonite, a terrestrial mineral containing a great deal of red iron oxide. Because of the absence of oxygen in the planet's atmosphere, it is probable that any oxygen that might have been present has been used up in oxidizing the surface. Mars may be a *rusty* planet!

If we were to attempt to summarize the conditions on Mars, we would liken them to conditions in a terrestrial desert if it were transported to the poles, and raised into the stratosphere. While certain very primitive terrestrial forms of life, such as bacteria, might manage to survive on Mars, certainly no highly developed forms of terrestrial life could exist there without artificial aid. Yet, compared with other parts of the universe, conditions on Mars are very similar to those on Earth.

Seen through a telescope, the most prominent features of the Martian surface are the white polar caps. These caps are extensive in the Martian winter, and shrink and disappear in the Martian summer (the summer of one hemisphere occurring at the same time as the winter of the other). They are almost

certainly composed of water, but here the similarity with the polar snowcaps on Earth ends, for the Martian polar caps are little more than thin layers of frost.

A more careful study of Mars through a telescope reveals a number of irregularly shaped dark blue-green markings. They are more or less permanent—maps of Mars have been made, and the features named—but they are not exactly constant in shape or appearance. In particular, they show a variation of colour with the changing seasons on Mars, in time with the melting of the polar caps. There have been many hypotheses put forward to explain these markings: for example, that they are composed of minerals that change colour as the moisture from the polar caps reaches them. Recently, it was suggested that, because the general pattern of the markings seemed to follow the lines that one would expect for the prevailing winds on Mars, the markings might be composed of ash from volcanoes (although no volcano has ever been observed). But in my view, the hypothesis that best explains the great variety of observations that have been made of these markings is that they are vegetation that flourishes during the short Martian summer.

One of the most cogent arguments for this view is the fact that, although we not infrequently observe dust storms in the Martian atmosphere, the dark markings are not permanently obscured by them. The markings seem to have the power of *regeneration*. The Russian astronomer Tikhoff made many interesting comparisons of the spectrum of the dark markings on Mars with the spectra of terrestrial vegetation at various altitudes in the Pamirs. He found that at low level, where the climate was temperate, the plants reflected much of the sunlight in the infra-red. However at high altitudes, where the plants needed more warmth, they began to absorb the infra-red solar rays. In fact, the greater the altitude, the greater the absorption in the infra-red. The spectrum of the Martian markings was very similar to the spectrum of terrestrial vegetation at the highest altitudes.

(From *Life in the Universe*, by MICHAEL W. OVENDEN.)

C. Time to Rest

The view was not much. To eyes which had seen the landscapes of Earth it was not a view at all so much as just another section of the regular Martian back-drop. In front and to the left, smooth water spread like a silk sheet to the horizon. A mile or more to the right lay a low embankment with yellow-red sand showing through rush-like tufts of skimpy bushes. Far in the background rose the white crowns of purple mountains.

In the mild warmth of noon Bert let his boat carry him along. Behind him, a fan of ripples spread gently and then lapsed back into placidity. Still further back the immense silence closed in again, and nothing remained to show that he had passed that way. The scene had scarcely changed for several days and several hundred miles of his quietly chugging progress.

Exactly what had taken place on Earth, none of them knew, nor ever would know. His ship had been four days out of the Lunar Station, bound for Mars, when it happened. One of his mates, a man a little older than himself, had roused him from his bunk and dragged him to the port-hole. Together they had gazed at a sight which was printed for ever on his memory: the Earth split open, with white-hot fire pouring from the widening cracks.

Some had said that one of the atomic piles must have gone over the critical mass and touched off a chain reaction: others objected that if that were so the Earth would not have split, but have flared something like a nebula followed by non-existence. Much ill-informed argument regarding the possibility of a chain reaction limited to certain elements had followed, and occasionally recurred. The truth was that nobody knew. All that was certain was that it had broken up, disintegrating into a belt of innumerable asteroids which continued to scurry round the sun like a shower of cosmic pebbles.

Some of the men had taken a long time to believe what they had actually seen; they were the worst affected when they did understand. Some found that their minds would not grasp and hold it as a fact; for them the Earth went on, ever unattainable, yet somewhere existent. Demoralization had spread through

the ship, a few were for turning back, unreasonably convinced that they should be there, and in some way giving help: afterwards it had continually been their grudge that they had not been allowed to, even if it were useless. The skipper had decided that there was nothing to be done but hold on their course for Mars.

The navigators had looked more and more worried as their tables became increasingly inaccurate with orbits changing about them; they had watched with wonder the freed moon leave her path and sail through space guided by incalculable forces until she came eventually within the clutch of the giant Jupiter; but long before that happened the ship had, by a combination of calculation and guess-work, made her successful last drop to Mars.

Other ships, too, had come in; research vessels from the Asteroid Belt and beyond, traders from the Jovian moons diverted from the homeward course. Some that were expected never arrived, but in the end there were a couple of dozen lying idle on Mars with no home port to seek. Several hundreds of men idled with them. As well as crews, there were miners, drillers, refiners, prospectors, explorers, station maintenance men, settlement staff, and the rest, all thrown together on an alien world to make the best of it.

There had also been two women, hostesses or stewardesses. Good enough girls, and amiable at first, though no great beauties. But circumstances were against them, and the pressure was great. They had gone quickly to the astonishing depths of badness good women can reach once they start. It was reckoned they had caused a score of murders each before they were found to be susceptible to the same method of disposal. Things were quieter after that; with drinking as the main amusement.

It might, Bert told himself, have been worse. It *was* worse for those who had wives and families. He had less personal loss: his mother had died some years before, his father had been an old man, there had been a girl, a sweetly pretty girl with hair like red gold and who grew prettier in his memory as time went by: Elsa her name was, but there had not really been a lot to it; and though it was pleasant to recall that she might have married him, he had never in point of fact seriously tried to find out whether she would or would not. Then, too, there was a

slender consolation that he was on Mars and at least better off than those who must have been trapped in the steamy heat of Venus, or on the cold Jovian moons. Life offered something beyond perpetual battle to survive, and though it might not be very much, it had been better to go out and see what there was rather than soak away youth and strength with the rest. So he had started to build his boat.

(From *Time to Rest*, by JOHN WYNDHAM.)

Notes

A. THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Line

11 *hostile:* Here, with conditions too bad to support any form of life

12 *our one natural satellite:* The earth has, of course, a large number of artificial satellites sent into orbit by space scientists in recent years.

13 *mean:* average

22 *may well have:* that is, it is possible, but we have no means of knowing

23 *all the same:* however
it may not be: Here, although it is not

25 *cosmically:* within the universe

29 *'power-house':* this expression is put in inverted commas to indicate that it is not meant literally

30 *must rise:* Here, very probably rises

33 *thermonuclear processes:* the processes involved in the explosion of an atomic bomb

35 *in its own right:* in itself, because of its own nature

40 *Eurasian:* adjective meaning Europe and Asia taken together. It is also used as a noun meaning a person born of a marriage between a European and an Asian.

B. A RUSTY DESERT

Line

4 *by the naked eye:* that is, without the aid of a telescope

7 *spectrum:* By studying planets or stars through an instrument which measures the spectrum, scientists are able to say what the heavenly bodies are made of.

33 *more or less permanent:* that is, they may in fact change slightly

55 *the Pamirs:* high mountains in Central Asia

57 *the infra-red:* the area of the spectrum composed of rays which are invisible

C. TIME TO REST

Line

1 *not much:* (slang) not at all remarkable
3 *backdrop:* background, scenery (a technical term from the theatre)
13 *and several hundred miles:* that is, 'and *for* several hundred miles'
22 *atomic pile:* an installation in which atomic energy is used to generate electricity
23 *the critical mass:* If more than a certain amount of the material which produces atomic energy is assembled in one place, an explosion occurs. This is very broadly the principle on which the atomic bomb works. The maximum amount of material which can be safely assembled together is known as the *critical mass.*
touched off: started
chain reaction: a process in which one incident, here an explosion, causes a second, which in turn causes a third, and so on
25 *but have flared:* but would have flared
30 *asteroids:* heavenly bodies varying in size from very small planets to mere pieces of rock
38 *were for:* were in favour of
unreasonably: because the earth no longer existed, and so it was impossible to return there
42 *hold on:* continue
45 *tables:* mathematical tables
47 *incalculable:* that cannot be calculated
50 *her:* Ships are often referred to as feminine.
51 *drop:* landing
60 *make the best of it:* live as well as they could, even though conditions might not be pleasant
62 *no great beauties:* not at all beautiful
75 *there had not really been a lot to it:* he and Elsa had not been seriously interested in each other
84 *soak away:* waste, perhaps through drink and idleness

Exercises

I

(A) *The Solar System.* Say whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE, and write out the sentence in the passage which tells you the answer:

1 Venus is usually nearer to us than Mars.
2 The Sun gives out much more light than the stars.
3 We know that many of the stars have planets of their own.
4 The Sun is bigger than the Earth.
5 The Sun is not solid like the Earth.

(B) Now turn to *A Rusty Desert* and do the same for these statements:

1 We need a telescope to see the red markings on Mars.
2 Mars has no oxygen.
3 Mars is very cold.
4 The markings on Mars never change.
5 The markings on Mars are undoubtedly caused by volcanoes.

(C) Now answer these questions on *Time to Rest*, as far as possible using your own words:

1 What was the reason suggested for the destruction of the Earth? Why did some people not accept this suggestion?
2 In what way did the job of the navigators become more difficult?
3 What happened to the Moon?
4 What happened in the end to the two women?
5 In what ways was Bert better off than others?

II

1 In *The Solar System* there are a number of expressions written out in *numbers*. Find these expressions, write them out in *words*, and practise saying them aloud.
2 Both *A Rusty Desert* and *Time to Rest* contain a number of expressions introducing *suggestions*, *arguments*, and *hypotheses*. For example: *A Rusty Desert, line* 8 'there is definite evidence'. *Time to Rest, line* 23 'others objected that'. Find as many similar expressions as you can, and write them out.
3 Paragraph 1 of *Time to Rest* contains a number of expressions which suggest the quiet and monotony of the Martian landscape. Find these expressions and write them out.

III Answer the following questions:

(A) *The Solar System*

1 *Line* 7: What does the writer mean by *of course* here?
2 *Line* 17: Who might be meant by *we* here?
3 *Line* 23: What does *all the same* mean here?
What contrast is the writer making?
4 *Line* 24: Note the structure used here: something *may not be x but neither is it y* (or *but it is y*).