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AMERICAN

English

READER

Grant Taylor

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SAXON SERIES IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

GRANT TAYLOR Consulting Editor

AMERICAN ENGLISH READER

**STORIES FOR READING AND VOCABULARY
DEVELOPMENT**

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hensive Desk Dictionary*.

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AMERICAN English READER

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IN TODAY'S WORLD, the teaching of learning principles in higher institutions of languages has become more and more important. It is not only in the English-speaking world, but in the non-English-speaking world, English is becoming the common language of communication. The American English Reader is a collection of materials of the American English language, which is the most important of the American English language. It is the seventh in the series of American English.

AMERICAN ENGLISH READER

THIS ILLUSTRATION

shows a typical American city street scene. The illustration is a black and white photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, there is a large, multi-story building with many windows. In the background, there are other buildings and a street with cars. The illustration is a black and white photograph of a city street scene.



IN TODAY'S WORLD, the teaching and learning of foreign languages has taken on greater importance and dimension than ever before. Among the countless languages of the world, English has assumed a leading role in diplomatic, commercial, and all other types of international communication. To provide the many thousands of teachers of English in the United States and abroad with materials of unquestioned excellence, the editors of Saxon Press created almost a decade ago the English as a Second Language Series. The American English Reader is the seventh in this distinguished series of textbooks for teaching American English.

READER

THE ILLUSTRATION on the left page by Leonard Everett Fisher* depicts Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where the signing of the Declaration of Independence was announced by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

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*Illustration from *America Is Born*
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SAXON SERIES IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

GRANT TAYLOR, Consulting Editor

ADVANCED ENGLISH EXERCISES

AMERICAN ENGLISH READER

AMERICAN READINGS

ENGLISH CONVERSATION PRACTICE

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MODERN ENGLISH ESSAYS

MODERN ENGLISH WORKBOOK

MODERN SPOKEN ENGLISH

PRACTICING AMERICAN ENGLISH

READING AMERICAN HISTORY

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The *American English Reader* is designed then for "intensive" rather than "extensive" reading practice in American English. Intensive reading calls for close attention to vocabulary and the structure within which this vocabulary occurs; it also calls for thorough study and careful home preparation. Of course, it is essential to keep language practice stimulating for students, and arousing their curiosity about the information in a story is an excellent procedure. In intensive reading, however, knowledge of the plot or the ideas set forth in any story becomes secondary in importance. Extensive reading, on the other hand, is generally done outside of the class and there is little concentration on reproducing with any degree of exactness the vocabulary or structures from the text. The emphasis in this case is on increasing reading speed, gathering information, and the collection of ideas. Gaining active control of English vocabulary and structure first requires intensive study, to be followed later by extensive, uninterrupted reading to develop further familiarity with the lexicon and to develop speed and ease in silent reading for communication.

Teachers will find in using the *American English Reader* that each of the stories has been presented in the same format. This was

done purposely to aid students in becoming familiar with the plan of the text in as brief a time as possible. More specifically, the arrangement of materials is the following: (a) *the story with footnoted word study lists*, (b) *questions for oral and written practice*, (c) *summary sentences for laboratory practice*, and (d) *exercise and study materials* comprising at least one each of the following types: (d1) the synonym exercise, (d2) the missing word exercise, (d3) the preposition exercise, (d4) the matching sentence parts exercise, (d5) the word form chart, (d6) the word form example list, (d7) the word form selection exercise, (d8) the correct sentence completion exercise.

From the plan in the foregoing paragraph, it will be apparent at once that the *American English Reader* was developed with the thought in mind that the student should not only see and hear but should also repeat and write new words or the alternate forms of known words in the course of going through each story. Further, the text was developed with consideration of the need for frequent repetition of vocabulary and making the student "word-and-structure conscious." The reading assignment is, of course, highly effective for vocabulary expansion. It was the author's aim to make his *American English Reader* particularly well suited for this task by developing special ways of clearly illustrating derivative forms and providing for practice with these forms. The teacher will also note that, throughout the text, great emphasis has been placed on oral and written questioning, one of the most valuable exercises which can be used in connection with the reading assignment. Finally, the audio-oral approach to language learning has been even further stressed in the *American English Reader* through the presentation of summary sentences for listening and repetition practice in the laboratory or the classroom.

Since it has been convincingly demonstrated that, in all language learning situations, the more frequently a word is encountered the more likelihood there is that it will be permanently retained, the author has placed great emphasis on the frequent recurrence of vocabulary items. This was done purposely to expedite the permanent addition of these items to the student's total active and passive vocabulary in accordance with the principle previously stated. How the repetition of vocabulary items was handled can be illustrated by several brief examples: In the first story ("He Saw Texas First"), the word *adventurous* occurs on page four, and the word *adventure* occurs in the same paragraph; thereafter, both words are noted in the word study list

at the foot of the page and occur in Exercises 4, 5, 6, and 7. Taking another instance, the word *greedy* also occurs on page four; thereafter it occurs in the footnoted word study list, in sentence 10 of the sentences for laboratory practice, and in Exercises 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, and 8. The student would, therefore, in doing all the work connected with the first story encounter the word *greedy* at least 10 times! In this connection, the words in the footnoted word study lists which accompany each story are those which have been proven to cause non-native speakers difficulty for one or more of the following reasons: the vocabulary range within which they fall, the spelling, or the attached usage problems. The words have been placed at the foot of the page on which they occur to call them to the attention of students, and some teachers may find it convenient to use these words as the basis for dictations or spelling exercises.

The study of alternate or derivative word forms is another highly important aspect of vocabulary expansion. In order to make his vocabulary serviceable for as many situations as possible, the student must not only learn to use words in one form but also to alter the forms of words to fit different contexts. As previously stated, it was the author's aim to make the *American English Reader* particularly well-suited for this type of vocabulary practice. To help achieve this aim, a special word form chart was developed for each story in the reader; further, a section providing extensive examples of all derivatives and important idiomatic usages was made up to accompany each chart. These items provide the student with the opportunity to enlarge his vocabulary considerably by encountering and being asked to use alterations or variations of known vocabulary. To assure that the student would be provided with an actual opportunity to practice with the alternate forms (rather than just to work with "meaning"), the author has also developed for each story a word form exercise based on the word form chart and example section. In using the word form charts, the teacher should be aware that often word forms *do exist* where the chart has X X X X X (indicating no form). In all cases, these forms have been omitted by virtue of rarity, shifts in meaning, or complicated usage problems, and the student should not be expected to deal with these omitted forms until a later stage in his language learning process. The teacher should also note in using the word form charts that present and past participles (the *-ing* and *-ed* forms of verbs) have not been given as distinctive adjectival forms; however, in cases where the use

of either participle form as an adjective is very common, the author has included an example of the usage in the word form example section. It should be pointed out that the word form charts are very useful in demonstrating to students how derivatives are formed through the use of prefixes and suffixes. The charts can also be useful to the teacher who wishes to make up further exercises. By using the charts, for example, many excellent exercises can be developed on forming adjectives from nouns, nouns from verbs, etc. The word form examples associated with each chart were carefully planned to be useful in supplementary audio-oral drill. Wherever possible, the sentences were based directly on the story and the use of unknown words was avoided; further, the sentences were kept short and contractions were purposely used. The sentences in the word form example section can, therefore, be used for effective audio-oral drill in the laboratory or the classroom.

As the teacher will quickly notice upon examining the text, the "question-density" for each story is relatively high, i.e. there are covering questions for a large percentage of the sentences in each story. In line with the principles of intensive reading practice, high question-density gives the teacher the maximum opportunity to stress the observation of structural detail (tenses, plural forms, articles, etc.). Also it should be noted that high question-density simplifies the reading assignment for the student and facilitates the use of controls by the teacher; conversely, the lower the question-density, the more difficult the reading assignment becomes for the student and the less opportunity the teacher has for controls or reinforcement. The questions in the *American English Reader* may be used for either oral or written practice although care was taken to make them especially suitable for the following type of simple but highly effective oral practice: The student keeps his book open in front of him and is permitted to look at it as the teacher asks a question. The student to whom the question is directed (after a suitable pause, of course) is asked to look at the teacher, not the book, and give his reply. In answering, the student is told to look at the teacher during the entire time that he is answering, not just for a moment after which he glances back to the lines of the story. This can be done successfully, of course, only after the student is familiar with the story, the vocabulary, and the structure of the sentences. The questions in the text progress from sentence to sentence and ask about the people, actions, and other details mentioned in the story. Students are, therefore, able to follow along with little diffi-

culty. It is quite essential for this sort of questioning to proceed at a fairly rapid clip without delaying for the student who has to search for his answer. In this procedure, there is a conscious effort on the part of the student to memorize briefly and then recall. In order to get full benefit from this type of practice, the student should be required to answer in a complete sentence. It will be noted, in this connection, that the actual words and constructions from the stories in the *American English Reader* have been closely followed in forming the questions. This allows minimal variation from the text and forces students to note exactly the structure and vocabulary used in the reading. Both the linking of the oral English and the written English and the many brief periods of memorization and recall in this type of practice speed up language learning considerably. The entire questioning process, carried out in this manner, is not only simple and highly effective but it also becomes in a very short time an interesting procedure for students.

The summary sentences for laboratory practice following each story have been taken from the story but have been adapted to spoken English form and are especially suitable for language laboratory work. An effort was made in all cases to reduce sentences to a manageable length for oral reproduction; in addition, words, expressions, or sentence structures which would not normally occur in oral discourse were eliminated. Although excellent high fidelity recordings of the summary sentence sections are available from the publishers of the *American English Reader*, some teachers may prefer to use the summaries for classroom repetition or for pronunciation practice. The sentences in this section can also be used for combined reading comprehension, vocabulary review, and oral drill. In this type of practice, the teacher asks an isolated question about the story while the student has his text open to the summary sentences. The student is asked (a) to find the sentence which answers the question, (b) to give the number of the sentence, and (c) to give the complete sentence orally without looking at the lines in the book. In a variation of this exercise, the teacher gives the student five or six questions on the blackboard or a duplicated page, and the student writes the answers.

The problem of style is always a difficult one for the author of a reading text for non-native speakers, especially so if vocabulary is to be kept within an intermediate range and the types of sentence structures which can be used are to be limited. While the problem in orig-

inal writing is difficult at best, the problem in adapting stories is even more tortuous. For example, however beautifully constructed, very complicated sentences have to be simplified; cultural or social references which students from other countries would not understand, no matter how well these references present a concise picture, have to be avoided; literary, poetic, regional, and technical language have likewise to be avoided. By the same token, frequent repetition of sentence patterns or vocabulary items, ordinarily a violation of good style, must be deemed valuable.

For all the reasons enumerated above, the author feels very obligated to express his special appreciation to those authors and publishers who were kind enough to permit the adaptation (or rewriting in many cases) of articles or stories which they had originally created or made available to the public. It should be kept firmly in mind that the articles and stories as they appear in the *American English Reader* are not representative or typical in any way of the individual professionally excellent writing styles of their creators. In this connection, the author wishes to express his gratitude to all those authors, illustrators, and publishers who have been kind enough to allow the use or adaptation of their materials in the *American English Reader*. In particular, the author extends his thanks to: The Humble Oil & Refining Company, Houston for "He Saw Texas First," by B. T. Fields, illustrations by E. M. Schiwetz from the *Texas Sketchbook*; Simon and Schuster, Publishers, and Bernard Jaffe, author of *Men of Science in America*, Copyright 1944, from which "Man in Flight" was adapted; The Association Press for the articles "Charles A. Lindbergh" by James V. Thompson and "Thomas Alva Edison" by Marshall C. Harrington, both from *Vocations and Professions*, edited by P. H. Lotz, Copyright 1940; the editors of *Pageant Magazine* and the author, Thomas Gallagher, for "The End of the Shenandoah" from *Pageant Magazine*, Copyright 1958; Random House and Jacob Landau for his illustrations from *The Wright Brothers, Pioneers of American Aviation* by Quentin Reynolds, Landmark Books, Random House, Copyright 1955; McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc. and W. N. Wilson for his illustration from *Ships that Made American History* by Mitchell and Wilson, Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., Copyright 1950; Houghton Mifflin Company and William Barss for his illustrations from *Young Tom Edison* by Sterling North, Copyright 1958; William Morrow and Company and Leonard Everett Fisher for his illustrations

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During the time the *American English Reader* was being developed, revised, and tested in the classroom, ideas and advice were freely given by most of the members of the faculty of the English Language Program, New York University as well as by a number of teachers of English from other parts of the world. I wish, therefore, to express my special gratitude to all these colleagues. In this respect, particular credit for the generous contribution of their time and effort is due Mr. Gordon Ericksen, the Assistant Director of the English Language Program, Mr. John B. Henry, Dr. Martha Salmon, and Miss Bibi Abril-Lamarque. I wish also to thank Mrs. Sara Quimby and Miss Roberta Schissel for their help in the typing and preparation of the final manuscript.

G. E. T.

Washington Square
New York City
1960

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