

Books in Easy English  
Stage 4



Longman

# **World of Today and Tomorrow**

Richard Musman



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## Foreword

The books of this series are intended for those who have left the age of fairy tales behind them, but require some reading material in easy English.

In Stage 4 the vocabulary is limited to about 1,500 of the commonest words in English, and their derivatives are freely used. All normal structures are admitted, including the subjunctive and simple inversions. But involved sentences, and the omission of *if* by inversion, are avoided.

## Acknowledgements

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# Flying Doctors of Australia

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Can you imagine how you would feel if you fell dangerously ill and could not reach or call a doctor? Millions of people all over the world are in this unfortunate position, living in distant places where there are no railways, no proper roads and no telephones. Thousands of lives are lost every year which could have been saved if medical attention had been provided in time.

But today help could be brought quickly and easily to many of these people if only full advantage was taken of the aeroplane. No country has proved this better than Australia. The Australians make greater use of the aeroplane than any other people in the world. In no other country is the total number of miles flown by the average person so high. In fact it has been said that Australians jump into planes as people in other countries jump into trains and buses! It is not surprising, therefore, that Australia should have been the first country to develop a Flying Doctor Service.

The Flying Doctor Service of Australia is now forty years old, and it has been so successful that today no Australian, even if he lives hundreds of miles from a town or city, need be anxious about falling ill. He is no further (in time) from a doctor or a hospital than many English farmers.

If you look at the map you will see that Australia is a very large country indeed. Yet although hundreds of thousands of Europeans have settled there since the



last war, it remains one of the emptiest countries on earth. There are still only about 12 million Australians, and most of these live in the big cities and along the narrow belt of rich farmland of the eastern, south-eastern and south-western coasts.

The rest of Australia is desert, or near-desert, where so little rain falls that the rivers remain dry for most of the year. The Australians call this immense empty space the Outback – because it is *outside* and a long way *back* from the comfortable cities in which most of them live. They regard the Outback rather in the same way as they regard the ocean, as a wild, exciting and dangerous place, and most of them never set foot in it during their entire lives.

The Outback has a strange beauty. In some places it extends for hundreds of miles as a sandy desert, completely treeless and almost completely flat. In other places thick, low bushes and strong-smelling eucalyptus<sup>1</sup> trees grow out of the dry, waterless soil; the Australians call this near-desert the Bush. There are also great rocky mountains, mountains of every shade of red and yellow and brown rising into the clear blue sky.

But although the Outback is beautiful it is also very cruel. During most of the year the heat is burning. There is hardly any water and no shade except for the shadows of the mountains and the few eucalyptus trees. You would think that no animals, and certainly no humans, could live in such a thirsty land.

Yet people do live there. In fact in the very centre of the Outback – once called the ‘dead heart of Australia’ – there is now a fine modern town. Alice

<sup>1</sup>eucalyptus: much the most common tree of Australia. It was not found anywhere else in the world before Australia was discovered.



Springs, with its pleasant, tree-lined streets, its shops and its comfortable houses, lies on the only road which crosses the Outback – half-way between the great city of Adelaide in the south and the little Outback port of Darwin in the north.

But the most important people of the Outback are the farmers, for even in the middle of the desert there are places where just enough grass will grow to support sheep<sup>1</sup> and cattle<sup>2</sup>. Australia is a great wool-producing and meat-producing country, and the farms of the Outback, or stations, as they are usually called, are among the largest in the world. There is one cattle station which covers 30,000 square miles.

There are miners in the Outback, too, mining gold, tin and precious stones, and they lead an even harder life than the farmers. In the distant rocky hills the miners have to live – often with their wives and children – in holes in the ground to escape from the terrible heat.

You can imagine what the Flying Doctor Service means to these lonely farming and mining families, particularly to the women and children. It is impossible to describe the comfort which the doctors and nurses of this wonderful service give to anxious parents, or to count the number of lives which they have saved.

When a Flying Doctor is appointed he is sent to a base in, or on the edge of, the Outback. This base, usually a small town, must have, of course, a hospital, an airport – and a wireless station. The importance of wireless, or radio, is immense. In fact its value and its influence on the lives of the people of the Outback is greater even than that of the aeroplane.

<sup>1</sup> sheep: animals which give wool.

<sup>2</sup> cattle: members of the cow family.



Thanks to the wireless lonely people can now talk to their friends and neighbours. Thanks to the wireless children, prevented by the great distances from going to school, can now be educated. There is a special School of the Air. But more than anything else the wireless gives to the people of the Outback a feeling of safety. For whenever they are in trouble they can call at once for help.

Today every lonely village, farm or mine has a special wireless set which can both send out and receive messages. It is as simple to work as a telephone, and it has become the life-line between the doctor and the people of the Outback.

Just as ordinary doctors have visiting hours, times when their patients<sup>1</sup> come and visit them, in the same way Flying Doctors have fixed times each day when they are in their offices at the base ready to receive messages from *their* patients. In fact, although Flying Doctors fly between them more than a million miles every year, their most important work is done at the base – in front of their radio sets.

The doctor 'examines' his patients by asking them questions. 'Have you a fever?' he asks. 'Is it a high fever? Have you any aches or pains? How severe is the pain? Describe it to me very carefully. Is it a sharp or a dull pain? Are there any swellings? Do you think you have lost any weight?' And so on and so on.

The patient answers all these questions very carefully, or if he is too ill or too young to talk, his parents or the chief man at the station answer for him. The doctor then has to decide what illness the patient is suffering from. You may think that this would be a very difficult problem at so great a distance. But the doctor

<sup>1</sup>patient: a sick person whom a doctor is trying to cure.



asks his questions so cleverly and has had so much practice that he seldom makes a mistake.

The next problem is how to treat the illness. Of course it is both impossible and unnecessary for the doctor to get into his plane and visit all his patients every day. Some patients only need advice and comfort. They need to be told how to make themselves comfortable, what medicines to take to bring down the fever or make the pain less severe.

But you are probably wondering, 'How can these people of the Outback get medicines when the nearest shop where they could be bought lies hundreds of miles away across a land without roads or railways?' The answer is that they do not have to leave the house in order to get the medicine the doctor has ordered. For every cattle station, every mine, every village, every lonely house in the Outback is provided with a special medicine chest. Each bottle in the chest is carefully numbered, and to avoid any chance of a mistake each medicine is also marked with its own special colour. Everything that the patient needs to know about the medicine and its use is printed in very simple language on each bottle.

But suppose the doctor is worried? Suppose there has been a serious accident in which the patient has lost a lot of blood? Suppose the doctor decides after his radio conversation that the patient is dangerously ill?

Then the doctor does not wait a moment. He picks up his bag of instruments and, usually in the company of a trained nurse, he rushes to the airport where a special plane and an experienced pilot<sup>1</sup> are always in readiness.

<sup>1</sup> pilot: man who flies a plane.



Let us imagine one such sudden call for help. Dr Brown, with Nurse Smith standing beside him, was listening to a farmer who had fallen from his horse and hurt his leg. The wound was not very serious. Dr Brown was explaining to him how to clean and dress it, when suddenly their conversation was interrupted by a woman's voice. Dr Brown knew that something serious had happened, for patients only have permission to interrupt when they need immediate help.

'This is S for Sugar calling!' (Each station is known by letters so that it can be quickly and easily recognised.) 'My son was out with his father this morning helping to put out a bush fire. He has just been brought in terribly burned. Please come quickly.'

Dr Brown tried to comfort her and explained to her what she should do to lessen the boy's pain. Then he told her that he was flying out to the station at once.

Before he left he gave orders at the hospital that everything should be made ready to receive the boy. He knew that the boy would need very special attention if his life was to be saved.

The little two-engined plane into which he and the nurse climbed was specially built to carry sick people. In other words it was an ambulance plane, and like motor ambulances it was marked on either side with a red cross. Behind the pilot's seat there were three other seats, room for the doctor's bag, a medical chest, a wireless set and a stretcher<sup>1</sup>.

'The Sinclair station,' Dr Brown said to the pilot.

He did not have to tell the pilot where the station was. The pilot knew his immense district better than a taxi driver knows his town. He knew that the Sinclairs had one of the largest cattle stations in the country,

<sup>1</sup>stretcher: light bed on which sick people are carried.



and that their farmhouse, or homestead as the Australians call it, lay 350 miles to the north – on the edge of some of the driest, emptiest, cruellest desert in Australia.

The plane flew northwards across the flat empty plain. Now and then they crossed a dried-up river bed or lake. There was no sign of life. At last the pilot pointed downwards to a narrow piece of flat ground from which all rocks and bushes had been removed. It was the Sinclairs' air-field. As soon as the plane had landed the farmer ran to meet the doctor and helped him lift the stretcher from the plane. Then, with Dr Brown and Nurse Smith sitting beside him, he drove as fast as he dared down the rough track leading to the homestead, five miles away. It had been impossible to build the air-field any nearer because there was no ground smooth or flat enough.

Mrs Sinclair was waiting in front of the homestead, a plain, low wooden house with a tin roof, standing alone among its store-rooms and farm buildings in the middle of the great, dry, empty land. Mrs Sinclair was the only woman on the station. She was used to a hard life. But this was different. She knew that her son's life was in danger.

Dr Brown only had to take one look at the boy's burns to know that his life was in danger. The burns were not only deep. They extended over a very large part of his body. He was in terrible pain.

Dr Brown and the nurse did not waste any time. They treated his wounds and laid him on the stretcher. As they got ready to drive back to the plane, Dr Brown tried to comfort the mother.

'Don't worry, Mrs Sinclair,' he said. 'I think we have arrived just in time.'

Dr Brown was right. Thanks to the Flying Doctor



Service, the boy was in a comfortable hospital bed in less than three hours. His life was saved.

No part of Australian society gets more help from the Flying Doctor than the Aborigines, the race of black people who lived in Australia before any Europeans came. There are only a few thousand Aborigines left, but nearly all of them live in the Outback. Some work on the sheep and cattle stations. Others prefer the simple lives that they have always lived. Many of them live protected by the government in wild faraway districts which no white men are permitted to enter. It is the Flying Doctors who bring these Aborigines help and comfort when they are sick.

Even in these modern days life in the Outback can still be dangerous. People still get lost in the Bush and die of thirst. There are Bush fires which spread quickly across hundreds of square miles. There are unpleasant illnesses caused by unclean water. There are snakes whose poison is strong enough to kill. The Flying Doctor has to be ready to deal with all these dangers. And as well as his many other duties, once every five or six weeks he does his rounds, that is to say he flies round to visit every one of his patients, even those he has already cured over the radio.

Poor patients need not worry about money or about paying before they call the Flying Doctor. The Flying Doctor Service is free. Patients are asked to pay what they can, but if they are very poor they need pay nothing at all.



# Plastics – Man's Most Useful Material

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The word 'plastic' comes from the Greek word 'plastikos' and is used to describe something which can be easily shaped. You will see what a suitable name this is for 'plastics' – those man-made materials which have become so common all over the world during the last twenty years.

Have you ever thought how much you depend in your everyday life on plastics? Let us imagine a day in the life of an ordinary English family, the Smiths. Mr and Mrs Smith would find it almost impossible to live without plastics. Early every morning they are awakened by the ringing of the bell in their grey plastic clock. Mrs Smith jumps out of bed, puts on her brown plastic shoes and brings her husband a drink of hot tea in a green plastic cup. Then Mr Smith gets up. He puts on his glasses in their black plastic frames, and cleans his beautiful white plastic false teeth with a red plastic tooth brush.

Downstairs Mrs Smith cooks the breakfast and listens to soft music coming from a radio in a coffee-coloured plastic case. Her kitchen is clean and bright and modern. All the table tops and doors are made of shining blue plastic. At the windows hang orange and white plastic curtains, and the floor is covered with black and white plastic squares. Mrs Smith keeps the food and drink in plastic bags and bottles and in white plastic containers with red plastic lids. She cleans the floor with a plastic brush.



Mr Smith and the children come into the kitchen for their breakfast. They sit down on yellow plastic chairs at a yellow plastic table. Mrs Smith fills their plastic cups with tea. She puts bread and butter on their plastic plates and eggs in their plastic egg cups.

When he has finished his breakfast Mr Smith kisses his wife goodbye, puts on his plastic raincoat and turns the plastic handle of the door leading into the garage. He gets into his shiny new car with its plastic driving wheel, green plastic seats and green plastic instrument board. He does not look inside the engine, but he knows that it contains plenty of plastic parts too.

When Mr Smith reaches his office he is welcomed by brightly coloured plastic flowers standing on his desk. His secretary – who wears plastic ear-rings – types his letters for him on the plastic keys of her typewriter, brings them to him in a flat plastic basket and he signs them all with a large red plastic pen.

And so on. There is no end to the use of plastics. The Smiths' two children have plastic playthings. Countless objects in their new school are made of plastics. Some of their friends go to a school which is almost entirely made of plastics, roof and walls and all. For builders, engineers, electricians, furniture-makers, manufacturers of all kinds, now frequently prefer plastics to the wood, metal, stone, leather, rubber, paper and other natural materials on which they once had to depend. Doctors, too, use plastics. There are many healthy people walking about today with plastic parts inside their bodies. There are even people with plastic parts to their hearts, people who would otherwise have died. Everywhere we look, in aeroplanes, ships and trains as well as in houses, schools and hospitals, we see plastic fittings and furniture. We wear plastics. Nearly everything we buy is



wrapped in plastic wrappings. In fact about the only thing we can't do with plastics today is eat them – and before long perhaps we shall be doing that too.

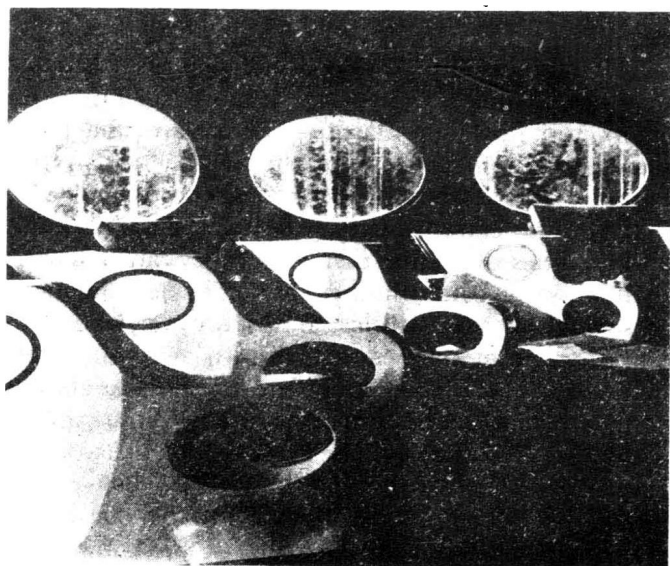
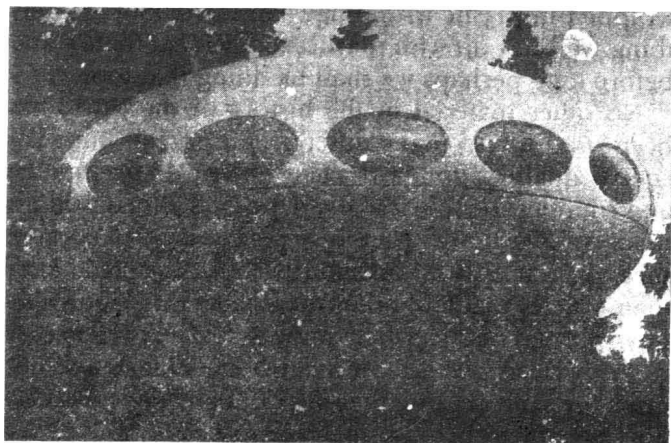
No other material in the history of the world has been used for so many different purposes. But what special qualities do plastics have? Why do the Smiths, and countless people like them, possess so many things made of plastics? They buy plastic articles because they are not only cheaper but also often much better than articles made of other materials. Mrs Smith also buys plastics because their smooth surfaces are so easy to keep clean. She likes them because they will not catch fire, and because they are not damaged by water. She likes them because they are so bright, and above all, because they are light, much lighter than wood or metal.

The lightness of plastics is one of their most valuable qualities. Think how easy it is to lift plastic furniture! Think, too, how light plastic containers are! A delivery man can carry many more plastic containers than containers made of wood or metal or glass.

It is quite extraordinary how many different kinds and qualities of plastics there are. They can be harder than wood or softer than rubber. They can be made so strong that they will last almost for ever, or so thin and cheap that they can be thrown away after only being used once. They can be made as clear as glass or completely black. They can be made any colour you like to choose. They can even be made to look like wood or leather or rubber or stone.

You, like Mrs Smith, probably know that plastics are man-made materials. But what else do you know about them? Mrs Smith certainly knew nothing at all about plastics until her husband told her. Mr Smith knew because he had studied science. Plastics, he explained,





*The outside and inside of a house built completely of plastic*