

Effective Reading

Reading skills for
advanced students

Teacher's Book

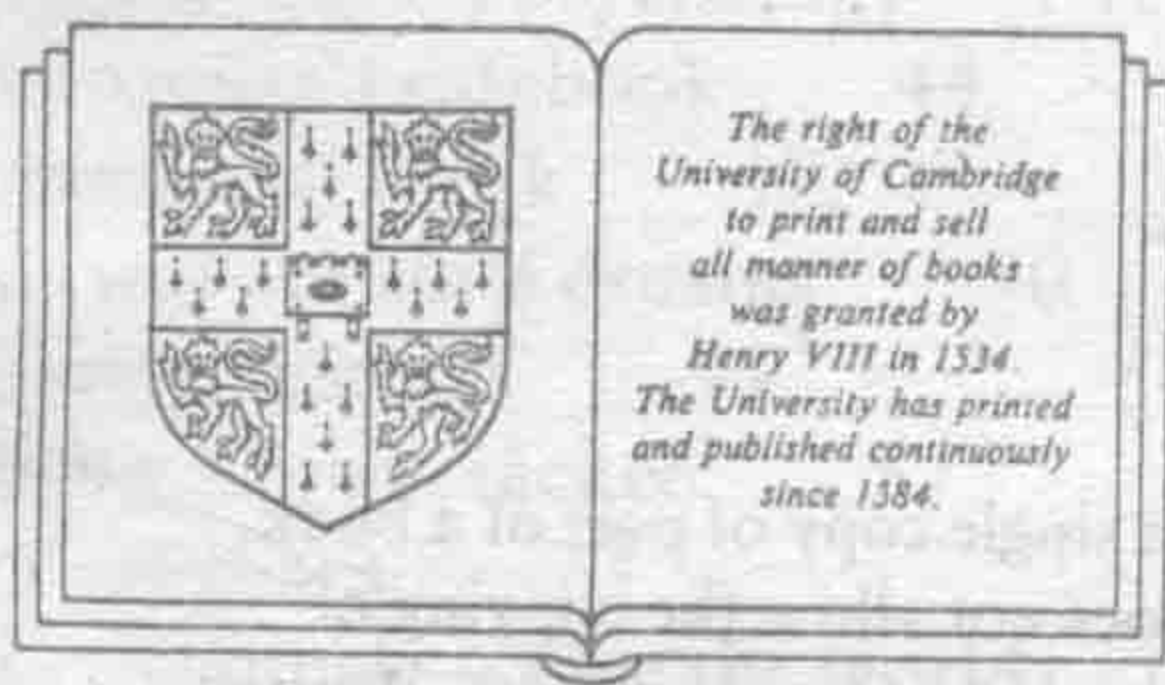
*Simon Greenall and
Michael Swan*

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Introduction

This book is intended for teachers using *Effective Reading* either as supplementary skills material or as the basis of an advanced level English course. It contains:

- a description of the problems involved in reading a foreign language, and an explanation of the techniques and exercise types which are used in this book to help students read more effectively.
- a unit-by-unit guide, including ideas on how to make the most of the material, background notes (where necessary) on the passages, and an answer key.

Reading effectively

Everyone reads with some kind of purpose in mind: for instance, to keep up with the news, to obtain specific information, or simply for pleasure. A reader's purpose may also include the need to reproduce the content of the text in some way or other: in a discussion of the ideas it contains, for example; or in summarising the text for a report or an examination. Effective reading means being able to read accurately and efficiently, understanding as much of a text as one needs in order to achieve one's purpose. Not everybody can do this even in his or her own language. In a foreign language, the problems are of course greater, and comprehension failure is common. This may be a simple matter of not knowing a word, but it is equally likely to be due to a deficiency in one or more of a number of specific reading techniques. The exercises in this book are grouped under headings which refer to these specific techniques.

Extracting main ideas

Sometimes it is difficult for a student to see what the main ideas of a passage are, or to distinguish between important and unimportant information. The exercises in this section encourage students to read for the general sense rather than for the meaning of every word.

Introduction

Reading for specific information

It is not always necessary to read the whole of a text, especially if one is looking for information which is needed for a specific purpose. The activities under this heading set the student a variety of different tasks in order to practise this type of reading.

Understanding text organisation

A student may sometimes have trouble in seeing how a passage is organised. These exercises give practice in recognising how sentences are joined together to make paragraphs, how paragraphs are combined into text, and how this organisation is signalled.

Predicting

Before reading a text we usually subconsciously ask ourselves what we know about the subject matter. This makes it easier to see what information is new to us and what we already know, as we read the passage. If we can help students, where necessary, to transfer this skill to a foreign language, we can ensure that as they read they are not overloaded with too much new information.

Checking comprehension

Under certain circumstances (such as in examinations) a student may need to study a passage very closely in order to answer a question correctly, and exact understanding of points of detail may be crucial. The exercises in this section train students in this kind of careful reading.

Inferring

A writer may decide to suggest something indirectly rather than state it directly. The reader is required to infer this information – which may be essential for correct understanding. Some students may need practice in seeing such implications.

Dealing with unfamiliar words

One of the commonest problems facing a student is simply not being able to understand a word or expression. But it is often possible to guess its general sense by looking for clues, either in the context or in the form of the word itself. Exercises in this section develop the techniques needed to make reasoned guesses about the meaning of new vocabulary.

Linking ideas

In any passage an idea may be expressed by a number of different words or expressions. The exercises here give the student practice in seeing how different words are related to the same idea.

Understanding complex sentences

Some writers, consciously or unconsciously, use a complicated style in which it may be difficult, for example, to distinguish main clauses from subordinate clauses. Struggling with complex syntax can make it easy to lose sight of the general sense of the text. In this section, the student is given practice in 'decoding' long and complicated sentences.

Understanding writer's style

An important part of the pleasure in reading is being able to appreciate why a writer chooses a certain word or expression and how he/she uses it. A number of stylistic devices and features are discussed in this section.

Evaluating the text

A full understanding of a passage may depend on appreciating why it was written, or what purpose particular parts of the text serve. It may, for instance, be important to distinguish between a statement of fact and an expression of the writer's opinion. This section helps develop the student's more critical faculties.

Reacting to the text

Sometimes a reader's interpretation of a passage may be coloured by his or her own views on the subject being dealt with. In this section, practice is given in separating what the writer says from what the reader thinks.

Writing summaries

The ability to write an accurate summary requires accurate comprehension of a passage, the ability to distinguish between essential and secondary information, and skill in composing clear, economical text. For students who need this technique (which is required, for instance, for the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency examination) special training is provided.

How to use *Effective Reading* in class

It is important to remember two points. Firstly, not every student has the same reading difficulties, and not everyone will want or need to do every section and exercise in a unit. We hope that the book contains sufficiently varied material to allow the students to choose what techniques they need to practise. It will usually be more practical for you to select the passage to be studied, but if possible, encourage the students to do only the sections which appeal to them most. If you see that a student is regularly doing well in the exercises of a particular section, it may be that he/she has already acquired this specific reading technique, and doesn't need to practise it any more. So suggest that the student tries a different section next time. Secondly, the aim of this book is to *teach* rather than to *test* reading ability. So the process by which students arrive at their answers is often more important than the answers themselves. For this reason, passages which students find easy are just as useful to them as passages which they find more difficult.

The units have been grouped in threes according to their general theme; the themes are shown in the *Summary of units and techniques* and in the *Contents* of the Student's Book. Students may not find it interesting to do every unit in a group, so you may decide to move on to another theme in order to maintain their motivation.

The passages are also *loosely* graded according to their lexical or structural difficulty. For example, students in the year leading up to the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency examination may find the units in the first half of the book a little easy. However, there is also a progression in the difficulty of the exercise types in the different sections. So it would be better for everyone to do at least units 1–6, where there are some important techniques explained. We hope that even if the passage itself presents little difficulty, the exercise types will be useful and motivating.

If you allow your students to do different sections in a unit, there will be a problem in organising your correction of their work in class. To resolve this difficulty at least partially, ask your students to work with people who are likely to need practice in the same techniques. They can compare notes, discuss their answers and thus do some self-correction. Try not to demand the attention of the whole class to correct exercises that have only been done by some of the students; visit the groups as much as possible and correct their work individually.

In the unit-by-unit guide there are some suggestions on how to present and exploit the passages for other skills work, and to integrate the passages into an advanced course. If you were to do every section in a unit, excluding the suggestions for *Further work*, it would take between 60 and 90 minutes. However, a more balanced lesson using material from

Effective Reading would include the following:

- Some kind of warm-up/discussion activity to introduce the topic.
- Work on a selection of the techniques covered by the unit, which will generate vocabulary development, guided and free writing activities, as well as some oral practice, since most of the exercises are performed in pairs or small groups.
- A follow-up activity taken from the *Further work* section, such as a group discussion, a roleplay or project work.

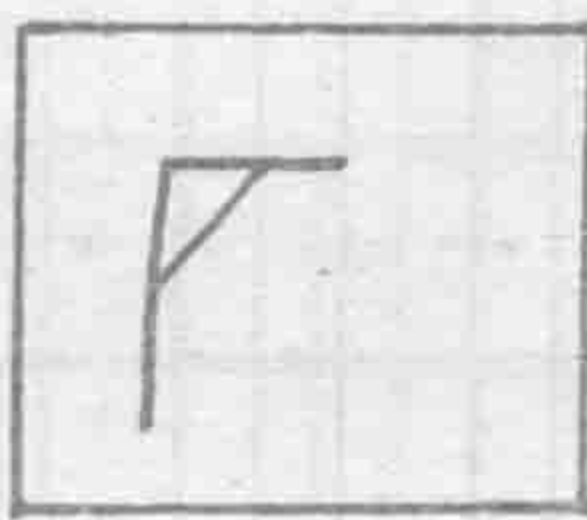
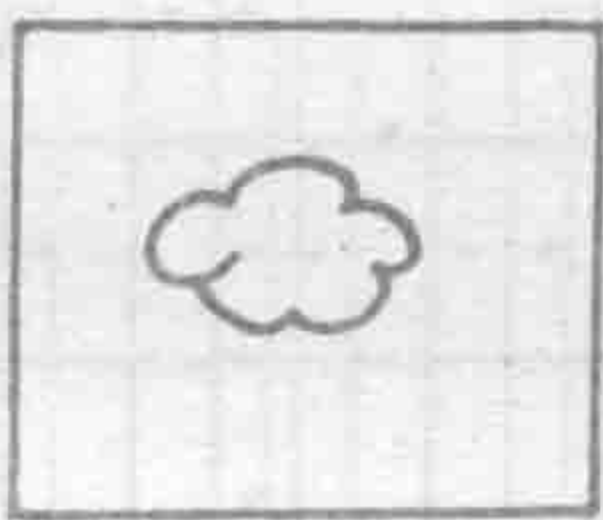
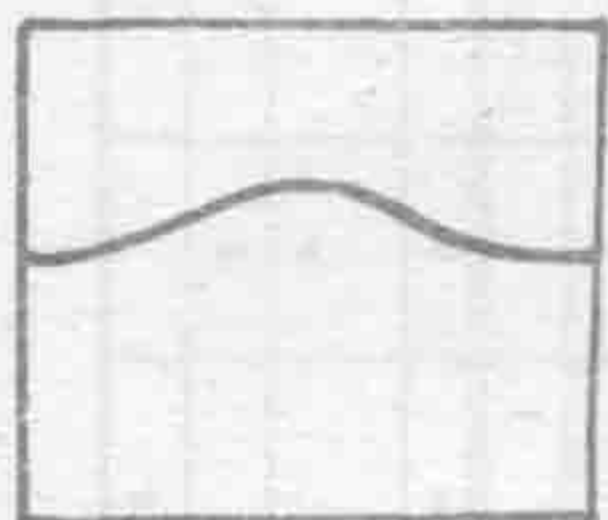
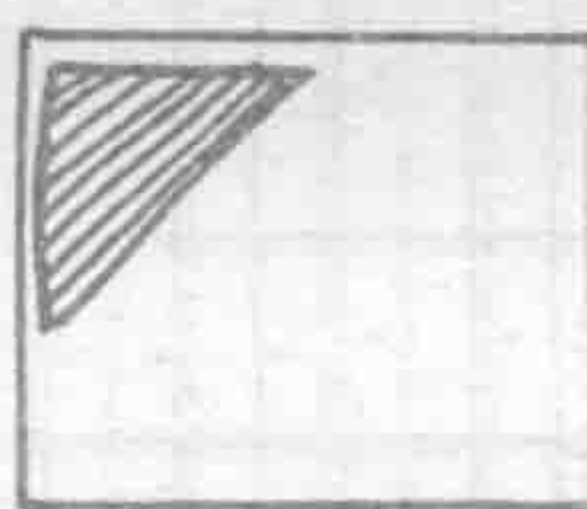
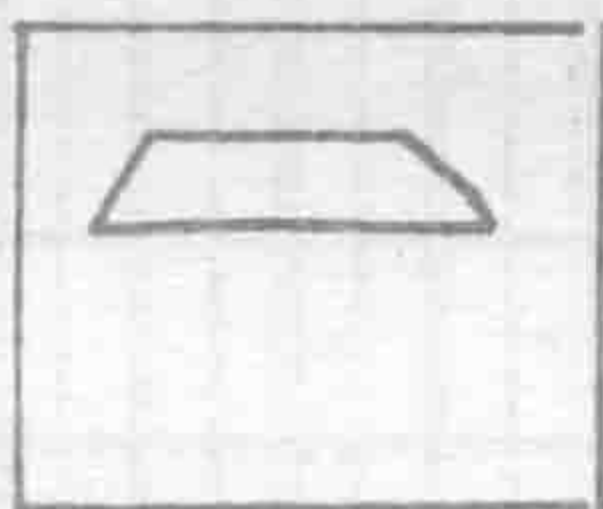
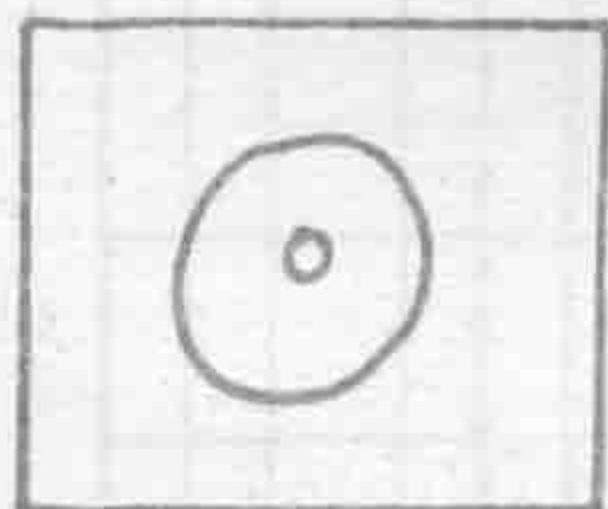
In addition to this, some extra listening practice or grammar revision may be necessary.

Summary of units and techniques

	Extracting main ideas	Reading for specific information	Understanding text organisation	Predicting	Checking comprehension	Inferring	Dealing with unfamiliar words	Linking ideas	Understanding complex sentences	Understanding writer's style	Evaluating the text	Reacting to the text	Writing summaries
<i>People and personalities</i>													
1 Doodles	x	x					x						x
2 Money is the only home	x		x				x			x			
3 Shielding Brooke	x		x			x	x						
<i>Food and drink</i>													
4 The good picnic guide	x					x				x			x
5 Down and Out in Paris and London			x			x	x	x					
6 A family lunch in Beirut	x	x	x				x						
<i>Houses and safety at home</i>													
7 House for sale	x	x	x		x								
8 Burgled seven times			x		x				x				x
9 Sissinghurst Castle	x		x						x				
<i>Jobs and employment</i>													
10 24 hours in the life of the City		x	x			x		x			x		
11 How to write a winning résumé	x						x	x					x
12 All Greek to me	x							x			x		x
<i>Shopping, consumer affairs, advertising</i>													
13 Shopping basket psychology	x		x			x		x					x
14 Mr Hornby's casebook			x			x	x				x		x
15 Commercial break	xxx					xx					x		
<i>Travel</i>													
16 This way for suite dreams	x			x			x			x			
17 Clearing customs		x				x						x	
18 Getting China cracked	x	x					x						x
<i>Wildlife and the environment</i>													
19 The capybara	x					x	x	x		x			x
20 Save the jungle - save the world	x			x			x	x		x			x

Unit 1 Doodles

Before you begin this unit, you may like to introduce the topic. Draw the following shapes on the board:



Then ask the students to copy *one* or *two* of the drawings. Explain that the drawings are 'unfinished' and need to be 'finished' in whatever way the students find most appealing.

This warm-up will give you the basis for a discussion on the students' own doodles. It's important to do this activity *before* you begin the unit in the book, in order to make sure that the students' doodles are as unconscious as possible.

Extracting main ideas

This section will encourage your students to read for the general sense of each paragraph, which is 'summarised' in the form of a picture. The technique of extracting main ideas is the first stage in writing summaries. Try to avoid answering any specific vocabulary questions for the moment.

Answers:

3 1H 2E 3F 4A 5G 6D 7I 8B 9C

Reading for specific information

You may like to explain that we don't always read something from beginning to end; sometimes we read selectively, looking for the answer to a specific question.

Possible answers:

- a) affectionate: paragraph H c) disorganised: paragraph J
b) cruel: paragraph C d) happy: paragraph E

If the students have done the warm-up activity, ask them to work in pairs and decide what the passage says about each other's doodles. They should also discuss whether the character analysis is accurate or not.

Dealing with unfamiliar words

Explain to your students that this section has two purposes:


- i) to help them understand selected words in the passage;
 - ii) to present two useful techniques for dealing with unfamiliar words.
- You may also want to mention that it is better not to rely on using the dictionary all the time; in this section, it should only be used in the last part of exercise 3.

Answers

	<i>angular</i>	<i>inherent</i>	<i>ailment</i>	<i>gregariousness</i>	<i>embellishments</i>	<i>repressing</i>	<i>muddlehead</i>
1	adj.	adj.	noun	noun	noun	verb	noun
2	i	ii	iii	ii	ii	i	i

Some of the answers are not exact synonyms of the words in the questions. You may need to explain that it isn't always necessary to understand the exact meaning of a word or expression.

Writing summaries

This section practises a similar skill to that found in *Extracting main ideas*; some students may have to develop their techniques of reading a passage for its general sense into an ability to write summaries, particularly for examinations such as the Cambridge Proficiency exam. 

Unit 1 Doodles

Answers to 1 and 2:

<i>webs</i>	feel trapped –, lack confidence –
<i>circular formations</i>	eternal love +, faithfulness +, idealism +, need to reproduce +
<i>knives, daggers, guns</i>	aggressive behaviour –, sadistic –, masochistic –
<i>trees and landscapes</i>	lack of warmth –, spiritual weariness, ill –, disappointed in love –
<i>faces</i>	sociability +, outgoing +, sentimental +, grumpy –, anti-social –, gregariousness +, shyness ±, reserve ±
<i>houses</i>	seeking emotional security –, lacking in love –, houseproud +, untidy –, secure +, happy +
<i>filled in or shaded doodles</i>	aggression –, anger –, sarcasm –, defensive –
<i>hearts, flowers, animals</i>	in love +, daydreaming +, sentimental +, kind +, affectionate +, spontaneous +
<i>heavily lined shapes</i>	barrier between you and the world –, emotions under control +
<i>confused lines and squiggles</i>	muddlehead –, can't cope –, lack of self-control –

After completing 3, and if you have done the warm-up activity, you can ask your students to write a short paragraph describing their partner's doodle.

Further work

It may be better to do this activity for homework. If possible, encourage the students to do the preparation in groups of two or three. Before you leave this topic, find out whether they think this kind of character analysis can be useful or not.

Unit 2 Money is the only home

This passage is taken from a novel by Stephen Vizinczey called *An Innocent Millionaire*, which is the story of a young man's search for some treasure buried under the sea. During his search, he gets to know a very rich young woman called Marianne Hardwick.

Extracting main ideas

Encourage the students to discuss their answers to this question. You may find that they do not agree on the correct answer, but the exercise will nevertheless generate some meaningful discussion.

Suggested answer:

c) The rich still have families because of the influence of their money (but some people may choose (e)).

Dealing with unfamiliar words

In unit 1 we looked at two techniques for dealing with unfamiliar words. The exercises in this section give further practice in these techniques. Remember that it is the techniques which are important here rather than the actual explanation of difficult words or expressions. Encourage your students to work in pairs as much as possible and to help each other work out the meaning of any other difficult vocabulary without using a dictionary.

Answers:

3 a) vi b) viii c) ii d) iii e) vii

Understanding text organisation

It is sometimes difficult to see how longer sentences are organised because subordinate clauses may conceal the main clauses. On other occasions it may be difficult to see how two parts of a passage or a sentence are joined together because the link words are implied rather than stated directly.

Unit 2 Money is the only home

- 1 Read the sentences aloud to the students without pausing at the commas; ask them to note down the main verb in each sentence without looking at their books. You can remind them how commas usually indicate a pause in spoken language, and that the pauses are used to make the sentence easier to understand by indicating sense groups.

Answers:

a) are b) is

- 2 'Though they have . . . ' (lines 15–18)
They may have the boldest manners and most up-to-date ideas, *but* they share their grandmothers' humble dependence.
- 3 *Because* girls were not meant to fend for themselves, he protected them from life.
- 4 'Prevented from acquiring . . . ' (lines 11–15)
Because they are prevented from acquiring the habits of freedom . . . very rich girls . . . are the last representatives of Victorian womanhood.

Encourage them to do the exercise in this section in pairs.

Understanding writer's style

Some students may find it difficult to appreciate the use of irony in this text. What is happening here is that the author is quoting, often without comment, words and expressions used by (or attributed to) rich people like Creighton Montgomery, which reveal their character and attitudes. The words therefore have a double meaning: that given them by the rich, and the very different significance that they have for the writer and the reader.

Answers:

- a) The writer does not feel that girls were not meant to fend for themselves; this is the view of Creighton Montgomery and people like him.
- b) The writer feels that this is a strange kind of 'protection' – he calls it 'crippling'.
- c) The writer is implying that the rich regard themselves as rather like gods (who are not mortal).
- d) The writer does not think that the 'sound views' of the tutors who support Victorian values are sound at all.