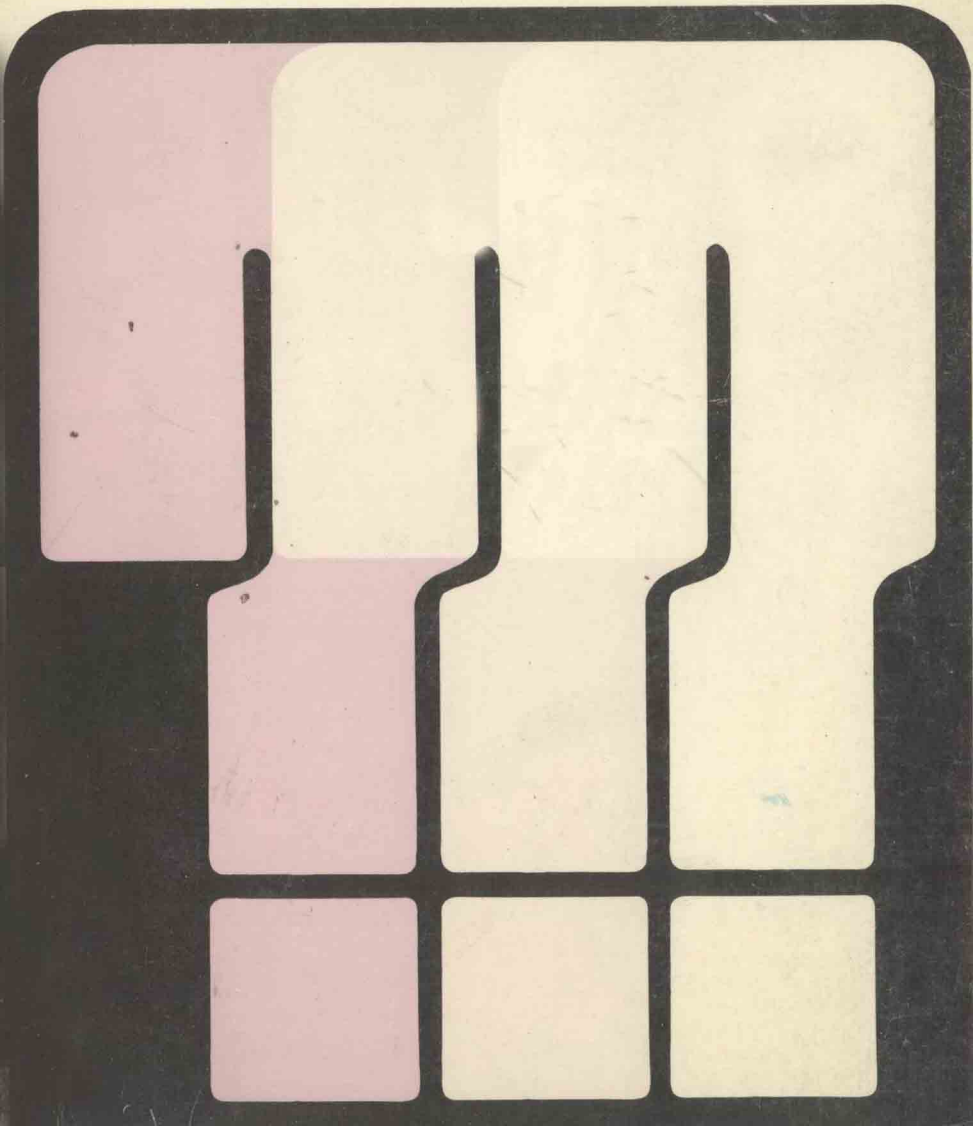
EASY COMPREHENSION PRACTICE IN ENGLISH

TWENTY-FIVE STRUCTURE-BASED PASSAGES WITH MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS OFFERING COMPREHENSION, GRAMMAR & VOCABULARY PRACTICE TO STUDENTS PREPARING FOR THE CAMBRIDGE FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH

JENNY MARCHANT



JENNY MARCHARC

EASY COMPREHENSION PRACTICE IN ENGLISH

Twenty-five structure-based passages with Multiple Choice questions and answers offering comprehension, grammar and vocabulary practice to students preparing for the Cambridge First Certificate in English and other comparable examinations and to all learners of about the same standard of achievement

HAMISH HAMILTON
AND
ST GEORGE'S PRESS

First published in Great Britain 1975
by Hamish Hamilton Ltd
90 Great Russell Street London WC1

SBN 241 89103 5

Printed in Great Britain by
WESTERN PRINTING SERVICES LTD, BRISTOL

To the Teacher

The Scope of this book

EASY COMPREHENSION PRACTICE IN ENGLISH is a practice manual written with two main purposes in mind. It is designed, firstly, to give students a sound, broadly based training to cope with examinations in which the increasingly popular comprehension tests make use of the Multiple Choice (Objective Test) principle. And secondly it aims to help non-examination students to acquire the habit of seizing, comprehending and retaining as much as possible of the essential information contained in a given passage of English, and to train them to do so with the maximum of efficiency and the maximum retention of useful linguistic material for use on later occasions.

The Passages

The twenty-five passages, specially written with the problems of language classes in mind, are structure-based and are *not* graded in order of difficulty. They are pitched at about the same linguistic level as the passages in the companion volume *Multiple Choice Questions in English* by John Eynon, but are intended to enable the student to cope with a somewhat more elaborate and less colloquial style of English, which at the same time is never merely literary. The author has aimed at producing not so much a racy, idiomatic brand of English as an essentially natural English which should be capable of embracing more complex sentence structures and a somewhat choicer and more extensive vocabulary.

The passages themselves are all self-sufficient and centre on various typical aspects and problems of British life, past and present. Style, subject matter and treatment have been varied in an attempt to provide the student with material that will both keep his interest alive and enable him to come to grips with a number of different styles, ranging from the narrative (Nos 2, 11, 14 and 20) and descriptive (Nos 5, 6, 7, 9, 16 and 25) to the belles-lettristic (Nos 1, 9, 17,

23 and 24), the dialogic (Nos 8 and 12), the epistolary (Nos 10 and 14), the journalistic presentation of current affairs (Nos 15, 18 and 19) and the factual presentation of historical or geographical material (Nos 6, 13, 20, 22 and 25). Some passages incorporate further elements (e.g. the macabre in No. 14 or caricature in No. 7), or even combine two or more elements at the same time; but all of them have in common that unusual blend of lucidity and nostalgia which is the prime source of their charm. As for their content, since so many of them provide a balanced, contemporary description or personal account of aspects of life in Britain, they will provide, should the teacher require it, an abundance of interesting material for reading practice, dictation and class discussion.

It will probably be found that Passages 1, 4, 8, 11, 12, 20 and 22 are linguistically among the less onerous, but the teacher should, in the last analysis, allow his choice of passage to be dictated by the need of his class to practise one particular structure rather than another.

The Structures

Being structure-based, the passages provide useful starting-points for grammar work. The structures presented in each passage have purposely not been named under the title of each passage, as it was felt that teachers' and students' attention should not be drawn to this one feature of the passages at the expense of their other qualities. The structures concerned are, however, set out in the Table of Contents on p. v; they will thus not prove a distraction during the lesson, but will nevertheless be easy to refer to at need. It should be borne in mind at the same time that the passages are by no means exclusive in their use of the listed structures. Because, say, *Can* is listed as being dealt with in Passage 10, it does not mean that there are no examples of *Can* in the other passages, or that other structures than *Can* are rigorously excluded from Passage 10. The list is merely intended as a rough guide.

The Questions in General

There are two kinds of Questions in this Book. Section 1 contains twenty objective tests which use the Multiple Choice principle, whereby one correct answer has to be selected from four possible answers. Section 2 contains mainly transformational questions. For

the benefit of students working on their own, there is a key at the end of the Book which contains the correct answers to all questions except the three summaries asked for. Teachers who find this key an unnecessary distraction should ask students to remove it.

The following remarks are directed at teachers anxious to make the best possible use of the large amount of teaching material offered by the 572 correct answers in this Book and—much more important—by the 1,500 wrong answers. It cannot be stated too clearly that the wrong answers in Section 1 are *not* just so much waste material to be ignored in the search for the right answers. They in fact contain what is perhaps the bulk of the teaching material, and have been compiled with much care and forethought in order to offer a wide range of starting-points for linguistic improvement. One further general point should be mentioned at this stage: teaching a student how to cope efficiently with examinations in English is not always quite the same thing as helping him to improve his English. And whilst most examination candidates nowadays are required to answer the Mutliple Choice questions by transcribing or in some way marking only the letter (A, B, C or D) corresponding to the answer he thinks most apt, it is very often helpful to the student using the Multiple Choice comprehension method as a means of improving his knowledge of English, if he is encouraged to transcribe not just a letter but the entire correct answer. The very procedure of transcribing an entire sentence is going to enable the student to retain for future use far more words, phrases and structures than if he is allowed to rely solely on an act of memory or speech unsupported by that of writing.

Section 1

There are at least four distinct types of question which occur in this Section. Whilst it is sometimes possible to find questions incorporating more than one of these types at the same time, the questions will on the whole be found to fall into the following categories:

(a) *Comprehension Questions.* These, the large majority, are generally couched in the form of either a simple question about the passage followed by four possible answers, or an unfinished sentence followed by four possible completions. The answer chosen must always be relevant. It must be a sensible statement; however, it

must be *not only* a sensible statement, but one which follows the terms of the question and answers it in a manner fitting the context it refers to.

In most of the wrong answers the grammar and structures are correct. What is wrong is the logical nexus; indeed all that is wrong in some cases is that the answer answers *not* the question it purports to, but a different one: it is thus an irrelevant answer. In some cases the sentence or half sentence in the answer will be found to make very little sense as it stands, whilst the same words occurring in the body of the passage do have sense. In some cases a wrong answer, though relevant, is not true, or is not so true as the right answer. In other cases a wrong answer contains a word confusingly similar to one of the words in the text, or contains a word used in a different sense from that of the text. All these niceties should be pointed out by the teacher, who should ascertain also that the student really knows all the words in the passage, the question and the answers. Once the student knows the meaning of the words, he should have no great difficulty in deciding upon the correct answer by logical process; if he goes for a wrong answer, the chances are that he has not understood all the words properly. The teacher can also use the wrong answers to make the student himself explain why they are illogical or irrelevant or inapplicable to the passage: such formulation will be found to constitute yet another useful exercise.

(b) *Slot-and-filler Questions* (*Substitutions*). These questions consist of a sentence, or part of a sentence, taken from the text but containing a gap in place of one of its component words or phrases. The student must choose, from the four possible answers, the word or phrase which is closest in context meaning to the word or phrase omitted. The teacher should explain, or make the student explain, why the other answers cannot or should not be used in this context, and should make sure that the student is capable of using the three wrong answers in a more appropriate context.

(c) *Grammar Questions*. There are comparatively few of these, all designed to help the student consolidate his knowledge of some of the trickier points of English usage. They will help the teacher to check whether the student knows, for instance, the differences in meaning between *need*, *must*, *have*, *should* and *ought*, and which of these forms need 'to', or whether he is aware which tenses are possible and which not in a particular sentence, or which preposition

is the correct one to use in a particular case. In this category we might also include those questions testing the student's knowledge of the proper meaning and construction of some phrasal verbs.
(d) *Vocabulary Questions.* There are about two questions per passage which require the definition of one word or phrase by another. The teacher should make sure firstly that the student is fully aware of the sometimes very nice distinctions between the synonyms concerned, and secondly that he is capable of using the 'wrong' answers correctly, for instance by making up a sentence in which the word or phrase is entirely appropriate.

Section 2
This always consists of three questions only. Each of these is in the form of one or more sentences culled from the passage, followed by instructions to transform them into a different kind of sentence. The transformations asked for are multifarious, for instance, that the student simply join two or more sentences, or change a conjunction, or put a sentence or two from direct speech into indirect or vice versa, or transform one type of conditional sentence into another. The instructions vary in complexity, giving the student sometimes almost too much information and guidance, and sometimes very little. In this way it is hoped that the student's linguistic initiative will increase as he acquires fluency and flexibility and becomes ever more capable of expressing the same thought in a number of different ways.

Whilst it has not been felt necessary in this volume, given its scope and complexity, to ask the student to produce the type of guided summary which is so prominent a feature of *Multiple Choice Questions in English*, this type of question has not been entirely ignored. In the course of the book three short summaries are asked for, mainly with a view to reminding the teacher that he can easily concoct for his students many similar summary questions when he thinks they are linguistically ready to profit from this exercise. And it is largely with the possibility of summary or precis work in mind that a word total has been included at the end of each passage.

J. M. HATWELL
General Editor

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Passage 1 *The Importance of Sheep*

Most of us are accustomed to think that sheep are foolish, brainless creatures. We say that somebody looks sheepish when he is shy and embarrassed, and we laugh at people who 'follow each other like sheep'. My uncle Bertram, who is very tactless, is always calling my brother the black sheep of the family because he's unemployed, and has got long hair, unlike him.

Yet sheep and their products are serious matters. In the Middle Ages wool was England's most famous and important export, and since that time the Lord Chancellor has always sat, in the House of Lords, on a symbolic cushion called the Woolsack. Shetland wool, Welsh and Scottish tweeds and tartans, and Yorkshire worsteds are now world-famous, while local spring lamb and the traditional English 'leg o' mutton' are considered great delicacies within the United Kingdom.

I suppose the animals themselves are unaware of their own economic importance. All over the mountains and hills of Wales, England and Scotland, different breeds of sheep lead simple but arduous lives. For although mountain sheep are specially bred to withstand severe weather conditions, there are often great losses during the winter. In a sudden snowfall many will be stranded and will die of starvation and exposure. Later in the year, as spring approaches, the farmers' greatest fear is that another cold spell may interrupt the lambing season. As spring develops it is always exciting to see the first lambs of the season. One can watch these small scraps of newly-born white wool trying out their legs, then learning to run, to skip and to jump . . . But already the butchers are sharpening their knives at the prospect of juicy young spring lamb to sell. Finally, when towards summer we shed our layers of woollen clothing, the sheep, too, shed theirs. We can imagine that they must feel the same pleasure as we do in jumping free from the great weight of dirty wool which they have carried about with them all winter.

Some time ago, I went to visit a friend who had gone to live by himself in a small cottage on a remote Welsh mountain. When I arrived, I found him standing absolutely still in the front garden, in the company of a large, equally motionless sheep. They both looked as if they had been there for some time. My friend indicated that he did not wish to be disturbed, so I went indoors. Later he told me that he believed that sheep were not stupid, as people generally supposed, but deeply philosophical. He explained that he had been trying for a long time to make contact with them. He had noticed that they would sometimes approach human beings quite unconcernedly, but he said that it had taken him a long time to gain their confidence. The secret he said he had discovered was to remain very, very still, to try to think of sheeply matters, and above all to avoid meeting the eyes of any sheep which did come near.

Carefully avoiding *his* eyes, as usual, I smiled politely. But as often happens when I am with him, I was suddenly unable to think of anything to say. (530 words)

SECTION 1

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER

i My Uncle Bertram . . .

A is being tactless.
B is thoughtless about other people's feelings.
C is unemployed.
D is always calling up my brother.

ii My brother . . .

A is a disgrace to the family.
B is a dark horse.
C does not like my uncle.
D has more hair than my uncle, and is unemployed.

iii When was wool England's most important export?

A Since medieval times.
B In medieval times.
C In the middle of the Ages.
D Traditionally.

iv The Woolsack is . . .

A an important sack of wool.
B a red velvet cushion with symbols on it.
C a sign of the traditional importance of wool to the British economy.
D the Lord Chancellor's favourite cushion.

v Lamb and mutton are . . .

A very popular meats in Britain.
B traditionally well-cooked.
C delightful in spring.
D extremely delicate foods.

vi Mountain sheep . . .

A are bred to withstand losses in winter.
B are a resistant breed.
C eat special bread in bad weather.
D stand up in bad weather.

vii In a snowfall sheep may be . . .

A left high and dry.
B starved and exposed.
C surprised.
D unable to find shelter and food.

viii During the winter . . .

A there are often many losers.
B many sheep die often.

C many sheep perish when it snows.
D many sheep often lose their way.

ix What do the lambs do in the spring time?

A They are afraid that the weather may turn cold.
B They try out scraps of wool on their legs.
C They go to the butchers' to be sold.
D They run about and play in the fields.

x The butchers sharpen their knives because . . .

A they want to kill the lambs.
B they are blunt.
C they need to cut up the carcasses.
D there are juicy young lambs running about.

xi In summer the sheep . . .

A lose their wool.
B don't wear dirty woollens.
C get undressed.
D put off their woollen clothing.

xii My friend lives . . .

A on his own behalf.
B remote from a Welsh mountain.
C in the distance.
D in a mountain cottage in Wales.

xiii What was he doing when I arrived?

A He was talking to a sheep.
B He was still watching a sheep.
C He was accompanying a sheep.
D He was standing with a sheep.

xiv They both looked . . .

A for a considerable time.
B at one another for a considerable time.
C as though they had been standing there for a considerable time.
D as though they had been disturbed.

xv What did he tell me?

A He said that sheep could think profoundly.
B He told me that the sheep was a philosopher.
C He told me that people supposed sheep were not stupid.
D He said that people were supposed to be philosophical.

xvi He had been trying for some time to . . .

A get in touch with a sheep.
B send a message to a sheep.
C communicate with sheep.
D meet a sheep.

xvii What did my friend mean by 'sheeply matters' (l. 45)?

A The secrets of sheep.
B Things which a sheep might think about.
C A sheep's business.
D What is the matter with sheep?

xviii What was it my friend had discovered?

A He had discovered how to gain the trust of a sheep.
B He had discovered how to remain very still.
C He had discovered that one must not look at a sheep.
D He had discovered that sheep matter.

xix Sometimes in the presence of my friend . . .

A it oftens happens.
B I am struck dumb.

C there is a sheep standing still.
D we don't see eye to eye.

xx What happens when I am with my friend?

A I cannot to think of anything to say.
B I do not be able to think of anything to say.
C I was unable to think of anything to say.
D I am often unable to think of anything to say.

SECTION 2

i Shetland wool, Welsh and Scottish tweeds and tartans, and Yorkshire worsteds are now world-famous, while local spring lamb and English 'leg o' mutton' are considered great delicacies within the United Kingdom.

Rewrite this sentence, beginning 'While . . . '

ii My friend indicated that he did not wish to be disturbed, so I went indoors.

Rewrite, beginning 'I went indoors . . . ', omitting the comma, and replacing 'so' with a suitable conjunction.

iii Carefully avoiding his eyes, as usual, I smiled politely. But as often happens when I am with him, I was suddenly unable to think of anything to say.

Rewrite these sentences beginning 'As usual . . . ', and join them together.

Passage 2 A Difficult Interview

The recent large exhibition of the paintings of Mr James Hummer drew a lot of attention to this artist.

At seventy, he had been painting quietly for over fifty years, and up till then he had only held small exhibitions of his work. These had brought him a small amount of fame, but suddenly everyone was talking about him and everybody knew his name. People said he was an 'Important Contemporary Artist'. Mr Hummer, for his part, shook his head and asked himself why people wouldn't leave him alone. He said he had no time for pestering journalists, but of course all the newspapers and magazines wanted to interview him. He didn't take kindly to being famous.

His friends, however, said that underneath he was charming and only outwardly seemed a little strange. They explained that he was sometimes very shy and reserved, and sometimes quite the opposite. His temper was unpredictable.

In view of this, it is not surprising that when a young female journalist was sent to interview him in his tiny house deep in the Sussex Downs, she felt extremely nervous. But the interview went worse than expected.

When she arrived, Mr Hummer was sitting at a small unsteady table, and could hardly be seen for a forest of paint-brushes in pots of water. In the middle of these was a bottle of whisky. From time to time he poured some into a paint-stained mug and drank it rapidly.

He smiled politely and said that of course he didn't mind answering some questions. He drank some whisky and put his head on one side as if to hear the questions better. He looked very serious and artistic.

Putting on what she hoped was a suitably impressive voice, the girl asked him what purpose in society he thought he fulfilled as a painter. She wanted to know whether he saw his duty as a painter to be teaching people or entertaining them. The only response was a movement of surprise in the eyebrows among the paint-brushes. Then there was a dry laugh, and then a long pause. The girl began to wonder if he hadn't heard her, but at length Mr Hummer coughed, and broke the silence by asking slowly what on earth she expected as an answer to such a question. He went on by saying that he didn't see why he should have to justify himself. He merely painted