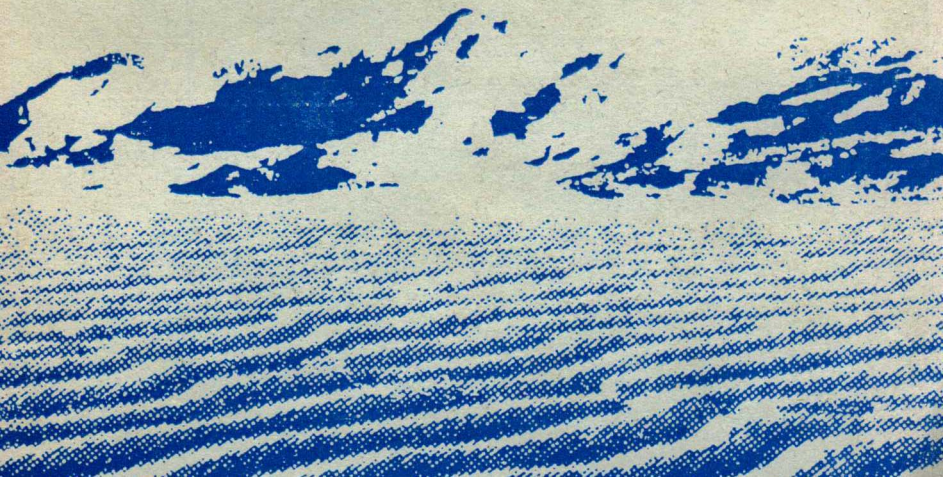
 Graded
Readers
In
English

THE EMPTY SKY
1000 Word Level
Eugene J. Hall

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**1000 Word Level
Eugene J. Hall**



**SCIENCE RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, INC.
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Illustrations by Oscar Fernandez

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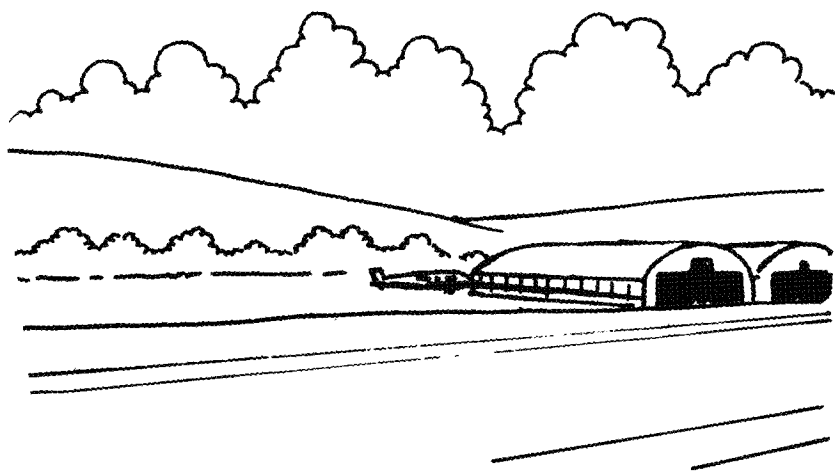
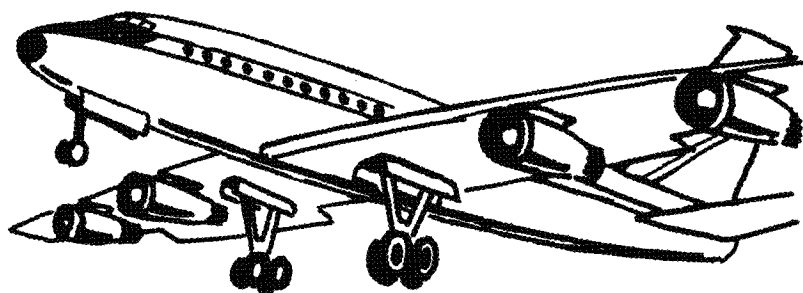
Foreword

The Empty Sky is one of a series of readers intended for students who are learning English as a second or foreign language. Language learners are usually presented with a number of different structures and patterns which they master one by one. In actual use, however, all these structures occur mixed together rather than neatly separated. Reading is one of the best methods to familiarize students with the normal mixture of structures as they are used by native speakers. Reading also helps the students to build vocabulary both by acquiring additional words and expressions and by using old and new items within a context that makes their meaning clearer.

The books in this series are entirely new works. They are adventure, action, and suspense stories that capture and hold the interest of the students. Each chapter is arranged in short sections followed by comprehension questions. With this convenient arrangement, the students do not have to try to recall several pages of text and then answer a long list of questions. The interesting illustrations also help the students to follow the action of the story and to answer many of their questions about meaning.

The Empty Sky is intended for students who have covered the principal structures of English. It uses the structures that are basic to narrative writing in English and also gives the students contextual practice on verb forms and clause structures that are taught at the advanced level. *The Empty Sky* has a vocabulary range of 1,000 words. The majority of these words are basic items of high frequency. In the vocabulary list at the end of the book, separate entries are not given for the noun and verb uses of the same word when they are similar in meaning—to look (the Verb) and look (the noun), for example, receive only one entry. There is also only one entry for each irregular verb with the exception of *to be* and *to go*. Only a few other inflected forms are given separately; they are the subject, object, possessive adjective, and reflexive forms of the personal pronouns, as well as the comparative and superlative forms of *good* and *bad*. Adverbs that are formed regularly with *-ly* are included under the adjective form of the word—the entry for *slow* includes both *slow* and *slowly*. A few semantic distinctions are given separate listings—the verb *to like* and the preposition *like*, for example, and *to close* and *close to*.

It is hoped that the students will not only learn more English from these books but will enjoy reading them as well.



CHAPTER ONE



The lights along the coast of North Africa had just come into view when the flight attendants started to serve dinner in the first class cabin. The big jet was flying from Rome to a city on the West African coast. In the tourist cabin, the passengers were still waiting to be served. Both the flight and the dinner service were more than an hour behind schedule. A few of the passengers looked at the lights far below, but most of them kept their attention on the flight attendants. They were hungry and thirsty and angry at the long delay.

- 1 What had just come into view?
- 2 What did the flight attendants start to do?
- 3 Where was the big jet flying?
- 4 What were the passengers in the tourist cabin doing?
- 5 How much behind schedule was the flight and the dinner service?
- 6 What did a few of the passengers do? What did most of them do?
- 7 How did most of the passengers feel?

The flight had originated in London, with stops in Paris and Rome to board more passengers. The delay had occurred in Rome, where a connecting flight from Japan had arrived late. Ordinarily the plane to West Africa would have left without waiting, but several passengers from Japan were going on to West Africa. Since there was no other flight for two days, the company's headquarters had directed the jet to wait.

- 8 Where had the flight originated? Where had it stopped? Why?
- 9 Had the delay occurred in Rome or in Paris? Why?
- 10 What would the plane to West Africa have done ordinarily?
- 11 Who was going on to West Africa?
- 12 Why had the company's headquarters directed the jet to wait?



Yoshi Okamura sat looking out the window as the lights along the coast came into view and then disappeared in the dark empty space of the Sahara Desert. Even when he could no longer see any lights, Yoshi kept his eyes turned toward the window. Across the aisle, an American kept looking over at him with a red face that seemed very angry to Yoshi. He felt that the man was blaming him personally for the long delay in Rome and now, for the long wait for dinner. When an attendant came down the aisle, the American asked, "How much longer do we have to wait for dinner?"

"Only a few more minutes, sir," the attendant replied.

- 13 What did Yoshi Okamura do?
- 14 What did Yoshi do when he could no longer see any lights?
- 15 Who was looking at Yoshi from across the aisle?
- 16 What did Yoshi feel that the man was doing?
- 17 What did the American ask a flight attendant?
- 18 What did the attendant reply?

Yoshi guessed that the American with the red face was in the

oil business. Yoshi was in the oil business himself, and so, he thought, were most of the passengers on the plane. Oil was what brought people to the West African city that was their destination. A big oil field had come into production near the city. Twelve years ago, the city had been only a small port and the capital of an African nation that not many people could name. Then the oil boom had come. It was a different kind of capital now, one of the new world capitals where petroleum and money flowed freely.

- 19 What did Yoshi guess about the American?
- 20 What business was Yoshi in?
- 21 Did Yoshi think that most of the passengers on the plane were in the same business or in a different business? Why?
- 22 Where had an oil field come into production?
- 23 What had the city been twelve years ago?
- 24 What had come then? Was the city different now? How?

Yoshi and the other Japanese on the plane were members of a trade mission. Their trip to West Africa had two purposes—first to buy oil and second to sell Japanese products. Looking around the cabin, Yoshi tried to guess why the other passengers were bound for West Africa. The angry American was easy; he was a member of one of the crews that explored and drilled for oil. Several of the other passengers had the same tough look of men who did hard physical work outdoors. Two or three of the women were their wives, Yoshi guessed.

- 25 What were Yoshi and the other Japanese on the plane?
- 26 What were the two purposes of their trip to West Africa?
- 27 What did Yoshi try to do when he looked around the cabin?
- 28 What did Yoshi think the angry American was?
- 29 What kind of look did several of the other passengers have?
- 30 What did Yoshi guess about two or three of the women?

There were, of course, several Africans in the cabin. Most of them, Yoshi was sure, were students returning to Africa after finishing their education in Europe or America. He could tell who they were because they looked stiff and uncomfortable in their dark suits, white shirts and neckties. The other Africans looked fatter and more prosperous. Yoshi thought they were government officials who had been on vacation; or, he thought,

they were merchants who had become rich suddenly from the flood of consumer goods that soaked up some of the oil money.

- 31 Were there any Africans in the cabin? What was Yoshi sure about most of them?
- 32 How could Yoshi tell who were the students?
- 33 How did the other Africans look?
- 34 What did Yoshi think they were?

In the front of the cabin were two groups who didn't appear to be too friendly to each other. One group was French, Yoshi decided, and the other English. They were probably on their way to West Africa for the same purpose as the Japanese—to buy and to sell. And here and there in the cabin were passengers whose purpose in going to West Africa Yoshi could not guess. Maybe, he thought, they were the kind of men and women who went there on the chance that they could find a way to get some of the easy oil money to stick to their fingers.

- 35 Who was in the front of the cabin?
- 36 What did Yoshi decide about them?
- 37 Who were here and there in the cabin?
- 38 What kind of men and women did he think they might be?

A flight attendant went into the first class cabin with dinner trays, and Yoshi was able to get a quick glimpse of the passengers there. One was a portly African who left no doubt that he was a very important person. Yoshi guessed that perhaps he was a high government official, a minister or an ambassador. Another was an Arab in flowing robes. He was one of the Arab oil sheikhs whose business took him to every spot in the world where people were dealing in petroleum. There was also a family of four, a father and mother with a boy of about ten and a girl, or rather, a young woman of about sixteen. They all looked very English. Yoshi guessed that the father was a diplomat on the way to take up his post in West Africa.

- 39 How was Yoshi able to get a quick glimpse of the passengers in the first class cabin?
- 40 Who was one of the passengers?
- 41 Who was another?
- 42 Who else did Yoshi see?
- 43 How did they look? What did Yoshi guess about the father?

CHAPTER TWO



"Oh, look!" a woman's voice sounded in Yoshi's ear. He turned for the first time to look at the passenger sitting next to him. It was a young woman in her early twenties. Yoshi couldn't guess what her nationality was or why she was on a flight to West Africa. "See the lights!" she exclaimed. "I thought we wouldn't see any more." She spoke English with a very slight accent, Yoshi noticed.

"It must be an oasis," Yoshi replied. "But I think these will be the last lights we'll see until we've crossed the desert."

"Oh, they're already gone," the woman said, shivering. "It always frightens me a little to fly across the desert."

- 1 Who did Yoshi turn to look at for the first time?
- 2 Who was the passenger? What couldn't Yoshi guess?
- 3 What was she telling Yoshi to look at?
- 4 How did she speak English?
- 5 Where did Yoshi think the lights came from? When did he think they'd see more lights?
- 6 What frightened the woman?

"Have you been to West Africa before?" Yoshi asked.

"Oh, yes, I live there," she answered. She didn't add anything more, so Yoshi was left still wondering about her. She didn't have the look of an adventurer, like some of the other people in the cabin.

After a moment he said, "This will be my first time." He

thought he might be able to find out more about the young woman if he could get her to talk a little.

"It's changed," she said, and her voice sounded sad. "Since they discovered oil, everything has been different, not as pleasant. It was such a quiet place before, such an easy place to live."

Yoshi was even more curious now because she didn't seem old enough to be able to remember very much about the city before the oil rush.

- 7 Did the young woman say that she lived in West Africa or in East Africa?
- 8 Was Yoshi left still wondering about her? Why?
- 9 What didn't she look like to Yoshi?
- 10 What did Yoshi say to her? What did he think he might be able to do?
- 11 What did the young woman say about the city to which they were going?
- 12 Did that make Yoshi even more curious about her? Why?

Yoshi didn't have a chance to say anything more, however, because the American with the angry red face was standing up. "Where's our dinner?" he shouted toward the back of the plane where the flight attendants were busy getting the dinner trays ready. "What kind of service do you call this?"

Other voices quickly joined in with complaints until the cabin was filled with an angry buzz. A flight attendant hurried down the aisle. "Please!" she said. "Please, we're getting your dinners ready as fast as we can."

"Yes, after the first class passengers already have theirs!" the American shouted, his face getting even redder. The other voices were so loud and angry that the flight attendant couldn't make herself heard. She tried to speak, but, after a moment, she turned and ran to the rear of the cabin.

- 13 Why didn't Yoshi get a chance to say anything more?
- 14 What did the American shout? Who was he shouting at?
- 15 What did some of the other passengers do?
- 16 What did one of the flight attendants do? What did she say?
- 17 Did the American say when he thought they would get their dinners? When?
- 18 Why couldn't the flight attendant make herself heard?
- 19 What did the flight attendant do?

Two of the flight attendants picked up trays, hurried down the aisle and handed them to the passengers in the first row of seats. Soon the passengers in the front of the cabin were eating. Those in back began to quiet down.

The American stood in the aisle for a moment or two longer. As he sat down, he muttered, "You've got to say something, or they'll just walk all over you." When he was in his seat, the flight attendant handed him his tray, and he fell silent as he began to eat. The next passengers to be served were Yoshi and the young woman—his mystery woman, as he was beginning to think of her.

- 20 What did two of the flight attendants do?
- 21 What were the passengers in front doing? Did those in back begin to quiet down or to make noise?
- 22 What did the American do?
- 23 What did he mutter as he sat down?
- 24 What did the flight attendant do when the American was in his seat?
- 25 Which passengers were served next?
- 26 How was Yoshi beginning to think of the young woman?



Yoshi had just taken the first bite of his dinner when the big jet began to shake violently. In the next moment it dropped so suddenly that Yoshi thought they were falling out of the sky. Without thinking, he held on tight to his seat with one hand. He put the other hand on the young woman's shoulder to keep her from flying out of her seat. The cabin around them was filled

with screams as dinner trays, cameras and small pieces of baggage broke loose.

"Fasten your seat belts! Fasten your seat belts!" the flight attendants cried.

"And just when we finally got our dinner!" Yoshi heard the loud voice of the American saying above the rest of the noise in the cabin.

The plane kept falling like a stone. All Yoshi could think was that it was the end, that the plane was going to crash in the next moment.

- 27 Had Yoshi taken the first bite of his dinner yet? What happened after that?
- 28 What happened in the next moment?
- 29 What did Yoshi do without thinking?
- 30 Why was the cabin filled with screams?
- 31 What did Yoshi hear the American say?
- 32 How did the plane keep falling?
- 33 What was all that Yoshi could think?

CHAPTER THREE

The cabin was completely silent as the plane kept falling. It seemed to fall forever before it finally straightened out with a great shudder. The only noise in the cabin came from the engines as they labored to make the big plane level off. Then, as the passengers felt the plane finally coming under control again, the sound of frightened voices filled the cabin.

"Are you all right?" Yoshi asked the young woman.

"Yes, yes, thank you," she answered, but when he looked at her, he saw that her face was white with fear.

- 1 Was it noisy or completely silent in the cabin?
- 2 How long did the plane seem to fall?
- 3 What made the only noise in the cabin?
- 4 What did the passengers feel? What filled the cabin then?
- 5 What did Yoshi see when he looked at the young woman?



He took his hand from her shoulder so that he could look at his watch. He could hardly believe that less than two minutes had passed. He felt that he had lived through his whole life in that brief time.

Looking around the cabin, he saw that several passengers had been hurt. Some of them had been hit by the objects that had come loose, and others had been thrown from their seats. The flight attendants were hurrying to help the passengers and to put away the loose objects. Nobody was even thinking about

eating any more. In the front of the cabin, a woman began to scream. "My leg!" she cried. "My leg is broken!"

- 6 Why did Yoshi take his hand from the young woman's shoulder?
- 7 Had much time passed? How much?
- 8 What did Yoshi feel?
- 9 What did Yoshi see when he looked around the cabin?
- 10 How had some of the passengers been hurt?
- 11 What were the flight attendants doing?
- 12 Were all the passengers beginning to eat again?
- 13 What happened in the front of the cabin?

Yoshi checked to make sure that both the young woman's seat belt and his own were fastened securely. She was sitting without moving, with her eyes shut tight. "I'm afraid," she said in a voice that Yoshi could hardly hear.

"It's all over now," Yoshi said. He wanted to reassure her, but he wasn't certain himself that the plane was out of danger. He could feel the plane straining to stay level.

"This is the captain speaking," a voice on the loudspeaker said. Once again the cabin became quiet as the passengers tried to listen. The loudspeaker crackled with static, which made it difficult to catch every word. "We've been caught in a sandstorm," the captain informed them. "It's a very violent storm, and it came on us very suddenly. We're gaining altitude now so that we can get above the bad weather. Our radar shows that we should be clear of the storm in only a few more minutes."

- 14 What did Yoshi check?
- 15 How was the young woman sitting?
- 16 What did she say?
- 17 What did Yoshi say to reassure her? Was he certain of it himself?
- 18 Could he feel the plane still falling or straining to stay level?
- 19 Why did the cabin become quiet again?
- 20 Why was it difficult to catch every word?
- 21 What did the captain say had happened?
- 22 What were they doing to get away from the storm?
- 23 What did their radar show?



While the captain was speaking, Yoshi turned to look out the window again. A flash of lightning lit up the sky for an instant. The air was so thick with swirling sand that Yoshi thought they must be flying through the desert, not above it. There were more flashes of lightning, and even in the cabin Yoshi could hear the roar of thunder.

"Please stay in your seats and keep your seat belts fastened," the captain was saying. "The flight attendants will give you all the help you need. We regret any inconvenience that you've been caused."

The loudspeaker was switched off. Some of the passengers began talking again, but others sat silently, with terror written on their faces. They held on tightly to their seats as the plane was carried up and down and from side to side by the force of the storm. In the front of the cabin two flight attendants were taking care of the woman with the broken leg.

24 What did Yoshi see when he looked out the window again?

25 Was there much sand in the air? How much?

26 What could Yoshi hear in the cabin?

27 Did the captain tell the passengers to keep their seat belts fastened or unfastened?

28 What did the passengers do when the loudspeaker was switched off?

29 Did they hold on tightly to their seats? Why?

30 What were two of the flight attendants doing?

"My name is Leila," Yoshi heard the young woman say. He turned to her and replied, "Mine is Yoshi."

But he wasn't sure that she had heard him; she seemed to be talking more to herself than to him. "I come from Lebanon, but I've lived in West Africa for a long time, since I was a child. My father has a store there. It is my home now." Her voice was so low that he could barely hear her.

Yoshi didn't know how to reply. She sounded so sad that he could think of nothing to say. They were silent for a long moment before she went on in a more ordinary tone, "I suppose you're going there because of the petroleum. That's why everyone goes there now."

31 What was the young woman's name?

32 Why wasn't Yoshi sure that she had heard him?

33 Where did Leila say she came from? How long had she lived in West Africa?

34 How loud was her voice?

35 Why didn't Yoshi know how to reply to her?

36 When Leila began to speak again, did she still sound sad?

37 Why did she suppose Yoshi was going to West Africa?

"I'm with a Japanese trade mission," he answered, indicating the other Japanese in the cabin.

"Yes, and a French trade mission and an English trade mission as well," Leila said, gesturing toward the two groups in the front of the cabin. "All are on their way to West Africa because of the oil. Oil is more important today than the people in this world who suffer." Her voice had become scornful.

Before Yoshi could answer, a flash of lightning lit up the whole cabin. In the next instant an explosion shook the plane violently.

"What is it? What is it?" Leila cried.

"One of the engines," Yoshi answered. "It's been hit by lightning."

"God help us!"

38 What did Yoshi answer? What did he indicate?

39 Who did Leila gesture toward? Why were they on their way to West Africa?

40 What did she say in a scornful voice?

41 What happened before Yoshi could answer?

42 What happened in the next instant?

43 What had happened to the plane?