

Consultant Editor  
Desmond P. Pereira

# 2

## **UNDERSTAND AND COMMUNICATE**

AN ENGLISH COURSE  
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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# Contents

Comprehension 2–100

Grammar 102–180

Vocabulary and Usage 182–234

Composition 236–272

Speech 274–295

## Introduction

*Understand and Communicate* is a series of four English textbooks specially written to provide a complete course for students in secondary schools. This series attempts not merely to meet the student's need to do well in the GCE 'O' level examination, but also to improve, both generally and in specific areas, his competence in English. Each book in the series contains five sections: Comprehension, Grammar, Vocabulary and Usage, Composition and Speech.

The comprehension passages have been chosen for their interesting content, their rich vocabulary and their varied styles. There is a balance between passages which are almost up-to-the-minute in their modernity and those written in a previous era, while any material containing obsolete vocabulary and expressions, and content which will not interest the contemporary student has been studiously avoided. Most textbooks of a similar nature for Singapore schools have eschewed material from modern American sources (but not the "standard" American authors like Poe, Irving and Melville), but we have faced the fact of the considerable influence of American English in Singapore exercised through the film, television and magazines, and have included several passages from American writing. However, spelling, in order not to confuse the students, has remained British.

In this series we have tried to maintain a balance between what is educationally desirable and the realities of the classroom. For example, in the Composition section, it would have been better to have avoided full-length compositions until Book 2 or even Book 3, giving more time to the students to master the difficulties of syntax, punctuation and unity in paragraphing before attempting to write a whole composition or essay with an eye-catching introduction, an adequate and interesting middle section and a convincing conclusion. But in Secondary One examinations in most schools students are required to write full-length compositions. Therefore practice has to be given to them to meet this need in Book 1.

Those who speak English as their mother-tongue (or "native speakers",

to use the expression now in vogue) may acquire, given the right upbringing, an almost intuitive ability to speak and write grammatically; they can *feel* what is correct or incorrect in an English sentence. This is not so with those whose mother-tongue is not English. Hence the inclusion of a Grammar section. How much of the grammar will be taught or omitted will depend on the teacher's discretion. The teacher may also use the Grammar section in the marking of compositions, referring grammatical errors to the relevant paragraphs so that the student can identify his errors and correct them. This method is better than the futile practice of writing the correct version in the student's exercise book. It is also better than the use of a code which many teachers adopt. A code assumes that the pupil has ready access to a repository of grammatical information—an assumption that is not always true.

The Vocabulary and Usage section is designed not merely to increase numerically the student's vocabulary but to enrich his knowledge of words and expressions, as is also the aim of the exercise following each comprehension passage entitled "Meaning in context".

The Speech section attempts to teach progressively principles of English speech which are by and large neglected in English teaching in Singapore schools. A great deal of un-English pronunciation, rhythms and intonation may be attributed to poor speech habits which have been perpetuated over several generations of English teaching in local schools. It is hoped that the inculcation of good speech habits will oust the bad.

This series, *Understand and Communicate*, has been written by people in the field—by practising teachers themselves, who know exactly what is required of them by school authorities, and what teachers in general would like to find in an English textbook. Teachers will find in each book a wealth of exercises, more than would be really necessary for a class to go through in one year. They will therefore have to select those exercises which are most useful to their particular set or sets of pupils, paying more attention to their weak areas, and skimming over the areas in which they are more competent.

Much has been said about the general disinclination of students in Singapore to read outside their textbooks. While this tendency is by no means endemic to Singapore, we are aware that efforts to remedy the situation here have not met with unmitigated success. Therefore if some were to find our series somewhat voluminous, they should also recognize the need to provide abundant material of a wide range of styles and content for the numerous students who will not, despite the efforts of their teachers, read any other literary matter. For the more adventurous students, it is hoped that the passages will whet their appetite for more reading matter and lead them to vaster stores of wisdom, knowledge and pleasure found in libraries and bookshops.

Facing the reality of the Singapore situation, students will need to study English for the purpose of understanding the media, textbooks of the arts, the sciences and technology, and in later life for carrying out duties such as writing reports, making speeches at meetings and instructing others. These have become the main aims of the study of English in Singapore.

The exercises in this series can be supplemented by activities initiated by the teacher, particularly in the Composition, Grammar and Speech sections, to the added benefit of the student. This series is not meant, comprehensive though it is, to kill the teacher's initiative; yet students working with the book alone will find a sufficiency of textual material for self-study.

To meet another need, long felt by teachers, we have prepared a Teacher's Supplement to the series, in which answers to the questions are provided, and hints given on how to deal with some of the textual material and exercises. In the Speech section, we have not thought it desirable for students to learn pronunciation and intonation through phonetic symbols, only by imitation of the teacher's speech, or through recordings of the lessons we have put on tape. But in the Teacher's Supplement a phonetic script is used to convey to the teacher the pronunciation of certain words, as the ordinary alphabet cannot convey such information in as precise a manner.

*D. P. Pereira*

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# Comprehension

1 How Spider Escaped Death .....	2
2 How Animals Keep Warm .....	6
3 The Atlantic Ocean .....	10
4 Childish Endeavours .....	13
5 The First to Climb Everest .....	18
6 Father Damien .....	22
7 Fallacies about Food .....	26
8 Advertising .....	30
9 The Lion Dance .....	34
10 The Red Cross .....	37
11 Animal Architects .....	41
12 Rembrandt .....	44
13 Terror of Trengganu .....	48
14 Stalking an Antelope .....	52
15 Invitation to Fight .....	56
16 Hobbies .....	61
17 Tracking down Criminals .....	64
18 The Crocodile .....	69
19 The Curious Kiwi .....	73
20 Environmental Pollution .....	76
21 The Moon .....	80
22 The Tribesmen of New Guinea .....	84
23 Helen Keller .....	88
24 Aerobatics .....	92
25 Descending the Rapids .....	96

## Lesson 1

### How Spider Escaped Death



Once upon a time Death was walking about the country. He was looking for victims, and as a bait, he led behind him a very fat ox. He only asked one price—that after a year had gone by the purchaser should not forget his name. If he should forget his name, then Death would carry him off. Now Spider was poor and starving, with no idea where the next meal was going to come from, and of course he hastened to buy the fat ox at that price.

After Spider had bought the ox and had agreed with Death upon the price—that he must be able to repeat Death's name, Wanabéri, at the end of a year—he led the beast home in triumph. There he killed it and skinned it and cut it into pieces for the members of his family, and their time of hunger was passed.

Death went on his way, and Spider called his wife and his son, and ordered them to sing this new song every day while working: "Wanakiri, Wanabéri." By this means Spider hoped to fix Death's name in their memory so that it would not be forgotten.

For six months, no other song was heard in that household. It pounded with the pestle crushing the millet, it blew with the fan winnowing the husk from the grain. That song accompanied the jug to draw water at the well, it heard all the stories of the village, and returned home between the high walls of the compound. It went to the fields with the women in the morning, and kept time with the hoe tending the rows of maize or millet or digging the sweet potato. And in the evening the same song rocked the child and lulled him to sleep. 20

But the seventh month came, and only one word was left of the song. 25

In the eighth month there was only a tune.

By the ninth month it was only as dust in dust.

But at last the twelfth month came. There came the last day of the twelfth month, the three hundred and sixty-fifth day of the year and finally the last hour and the last minute of that day. 30

Then suddenly, there came a knock at the door.

Spider called out, "Who is there?"

But came the grim answer: "It is I, Death. Can you tell me my name?"

"One moment!" cried Spider in panic. "It is hidden in my granary!" Quickly he ran to his wife. "That song I told you to sing! Do you remember it? What is Death's name?" 35

Spider's wife had forgotten, but any answer was better than no answer, so she told him, "Dindin-Dingouna!"

Spider was greatly relieved, went back to the door where Death was waiting, and repeated, "Dindin-Dingouna!" 40

"Oh indeed! So you call that my name?" cried Death in fury and triumph, and he snatched up Spider and strode off, carrying him away.

In the yard the wife was weeping bitterly as she realized what her forgetfulness had led to. Her son asked what the matter was, and she told him. 45

"Wait!" the child cried, and he rushed to a tree, climbed as high as he could, saw Death going away and carrying off his father and cried out, "Wanakiri! Wanabéri!" 50

Spider was saved, and Death went away.

(From *Myths and Legends of Africa* by Margret Carey)

**A Meaning in context**

**1. Choose the best explanation for each phrase.**

(a) "as a bait" (l. 2) means

- A as food for fish.
- B as something to attract.
- C as something to sell.

(b) "with no idea" (ll. 5, 6) means

- A not knowing.
- B not able to guess.
- C not able to think.

(c) "in triumph" (l. 10) means

- A showing off.
- B feeling victorious.
- C feeling proud.

(d) "to fix . . . in their memory" (ll. 15, 16) means

- A to help them think.
- B to make them aware.
- C to make them remember.

(e) "was only as dust in dust" (l. 27) means

- A was dry as dust.
- B was out of tune or unmelodic.
- C was completely lost or forgotten.

**2. Find out the meaning of each word and use it in a sentence.**

(a) victims (l. 2)

(f) grim (l. 33)

(b) purchaser (l. 3)

(g) panic (l. 35)

(c) hastened (l. 7)

(h) granary (ll. 35, 36)

(d) winnowing (ll. 18, 19)

(i) relieved (l. 40)

(e) lulled (l. 24)

(j) realized (l. 45)

**B Choose the best answer.**

**1. What did Death ask for in return for his fat ox?**

- A The life of the purchaser.
- B The lives of the purchaser and his family.

- C That the purchaser should never forget Death's name.
  - D That the purchaser should still remember Death's name after a year.
2. Why did Spider buy the ox at the price Death asked for?
    - A He could afford it.
    - B He thought it was a good bargain.
    - C He was greedy.
    - D He was starving.
  3. Why did Spider panic when Death came?
    - A He could not sing the song.
    - B He could not remember the tune.
    - C He could not remember Death's name.
    - D He could not remember what Death wanted.
  4. The words of the song were forgotten
    - A by the sixth month.
    - B by the seventh month.
    - C in the eighth month.
    - D in the ninth month.

**C Answer these questions.**

1. What did Spider do to make sure his family would not forget Death's name?
2. Did his method work? Why?
3. Why did Spider's wife tell him a wrong name?
4. Why was Death both furious and triumphant when he heard the wrong name?
5. Who saved Spider? How?
6. Say whether each statement is true or false. If the statement is false, explain why.
  - (a) Death used a fat cow as a bait in his search for victims.
  - (b) Spider bought the ox without bargaining.
  - (c) Spider and his family satisfied their hunger by eating the ox.
  - (d) Death composed the song that Spider ordered his family to sing every day.
  - (e) Death's name was Wanakiri Wanabéri.



- (f) Spider's family sang the song even while they listened to stories in the village.
- (g) Death came to exact payment before the year was up.
- (h) Spider's wife wept bitterly when she realized she had forgotten Death's name.

## *Lesson 2*

# **How Animals Keep Warm**

Man, from the moment he appeared on earth, has had to use all his powers of thinking and reasoning to combat his enemies. In northern regions, or at great altitudes, cold can be severe and is an enemy indeed.

Man has invented ways to keep warm, but how do animals defend 5 themselves? They cannot reason in the sense that man can, but nature has taken care of the animal kingdom by providing animals with special instincts. One of these instincts is known as hibernation.

"Sleeping like a dormouse" is not only a common saying but is a reality. When winter comes, the dormouse and other hibernating 10 animals have reached a well-nourished state. They eat very well in warmer days, laying down fat in the tissues of their bodies and during hibernation this keeps them alive. Safe in their nests, or burrows, they sleep soundly until the warmth of spring arrives.

Bats, porcupines, tortoises, lizards, snakes, frogs, even insects like 15 butterflies, hibernate more or less completely. Some, like the squirrels, sleep during the coldest weather but are roused by a warm spell. During hibernation, the temperature of an animal's body falls to 40°F (4.4° Celsius), or even as low as 20°F (−6.6° Celsius). Breathing and heart-beats almost cease. 20

Another instinctive method of avoiding intense cold is to escape



by means of migration. Wild swans, storks, seagulls, swallows and cuckoos are a few of the very many kinds of birds which fly thousands of miles, twice a year, to avoid cold. Many animals, especially those of the Arctic regions, have summer and winter quarters. The caribou and the Arctic deer of North America, as well as the reindeer of Europe, move southward towards the forests when winter approaches. They return to the northern tundra when the warmth of spring begins to be sensed.

There are animals which do not attempt to leave at the first sign of winter cold. Their instinctive means of defence is to dig out a deep burrow, made soft and warm by padding out with straw, leaves, moss and fur. In it they have a “larder” containing food which they hope will last the winter through! Animals which fall into this class include those of the Alpine regions: the Arctic fox, the rabbit and the ermine, and the little field-mice.

In the most northern and icy regions of the earth, the Polar bear passes the winter in a deep cavity which is covered over with snow and ice. He, too, lays in a good stock of food, and eats as much as he can before sleeping.

(From Odhams *Child's First Encyclopaedia* Volume 1)

**A Meaning in context**

1. Match each word in the first column with its meaning in the second column.

(a) combat	(i) wide, treeless plain of the Arctic regions
(b) altitudes	(ii) awoken
(c) defend	(iii) extreme
(d) reality	(iv) stop
(e) burrows	(v) protect
(f) roused	(vi) fight
(g) cease	(vii) heights above sea-level
(h) intense	(viii) place for storing food
(i) tundra	(ix) holes in the ground
(j) larder	(x) something actually experienced

2. Explain each phrase as it is used in the passage.

**EXAMPLE**

appeared on earth (l. 1) — came into existence

- (a) can be severe (l. 3)  
(b) in the sense (l. 6)  
(c) with special instincts (ll. 7, 8)  
(d) a common saying (l. 9)  
(e) a well-nourished state (l. 11)  
(f) laying down fat (l. 12)  
(g) a warm spell (l. 17)  
(h) to be sensed (l. 29)  
(i) fall into this class (l. 34)  
(j) passes the winter (l. 38)

**B Choose the best answer.**

1. How does the dormouse defend itself against cold in winter?  
A It moves about to keep warm.  
B It grows thicker fur.  
C It sleeps continuously.
2. What keeps animals alive during hibernation?  
A The fat stored in their bodies.  
B Their thick fur.  
C Their warm burrows.