

I Reading techniques

downstairs Flora said let's go to the A and P things are cheaper there all right I don't care but those people don't sell on credit so what Flora answered crossly we have to economize they passed a record shop Flora give me a dollar Simplicio said I want to buy *La mano de Dios* are you crazy Flora burst out we aren't going to have any money left over and you want to buy a record besides you broke the arm of the record player and that's expensive so don't think we can get it fixed right away I hope it's never fixed because when it works all you do is play records so loud the whole neighborhood can hear ah Flora give it to me Flora opened her purse and threw a dollar bill at her husband.

(From Oscar Lewis: *Days with Simplicio in New York* (Random House, 1965))

Predicting – further hints

- The students can be given unfinished passages and asked to propose an ending.
- Widdowson ('The process and purpose of reading' in *Explorations in Applied Linguistics*) also suggests taking a written text, dividing it into utterances and asking the students to ask pertinent questions about what should follow at differing points in the passage. Thus they will see the various directions in which a text may naturally develop.

3.2 Previewing

Exercise 1

Specific aim: To train the students to use titles and tables of contents to get an idea of what a passage is about.

Skills involved: Reference skill.

Anticipation.

Scanning.

Why? This exercise is one of many that can be used to show the students how much they can guess about a passage by simply looking at its title and at the table of contents. This will be useful to most students later in the course of their studies.



You have been given a page from a book to read.

It is entitled 'The New Famines'. What do you think the passage is about? Think of at least three possibilities.

The title of the book is *The End of Affluence* (Paul R. Ehrlich (Ballantine, 1974)) and here is the beginning of the table of contents. Does this lead you to reconsider your former opinion and make a more accurate guess at the contents of the passage?

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Exercise 2

Specific aim: To train the students to use a newspaper index.

Skills involved: Reference skill.

Why? Being able to use an index is essential when scanning to locate specific information.

You have just bought *The Daily Telegraph* in order to know the latest news. Here is the index to the pages.

1 On what pages would you expect to find an answer to the following questions?

INDEX TO OTHER PAGES

PAGE	PAGE
Home News ... 2, 3, 6 and 11	Leader Page 10
Foreign News 4	Obituary 8
Arts Notices 7	Personal 8
Births, Marriages and Deaths 18	Personal View 8
City News 13 and 14	Social Events 8
City Prices 12	Sport 14, 15 and 16
Entertainments Guide 17	TV and Radio Programmes 17
Films 7	Woman's Page 9

**TV and Radio Programmes
and Entertainment Guide
Inside Back Page**

I Reading techniques

- a) Have the U.S.A. decided anything about the Teheran hostages?
.....
 - b) Is it true that Sir Norman Denning has died?
 - c) Are there any Letters or Opinions about the article on libraries that appeared a few days ago?
 - d) What's on TV tonight?
 - e) Is there a review of that new film with Anthony Quinn?
.....
 - f) Is the new Education Bill likely to be passed?
- 2 On page 2 an article is entitled: **QUAKE NUCLEAR WARNING**
You can guess it is about an earthquake in South America
in England
in the United States
- On page 4 a headline says: **RAIL CRASH KILLS 13**
Some friends of yours have taken the train to go to Scotland. Would you get worried on their account?

Exercise 3

Specific aim: To train the students to use the text on the back cover of a book, the preface and the table of contents to get an idea of what the book is about.

Skills involved: Reference skill.

Why? It is often important to be able to get a quick idea of what a book is about (e.g. when buying a book or choosing one in the library). Besides, glancing through the book, the text on the back cover, in the preface and in the table of contents gives the best idea of what is to be found in it.

You have a few minutes to skim through a book called *The Rise of The Novel* by Ian Watt and you first read the few lines written on the back cover of the book, the table of contents and the beginning of the preface. What can you tell about the book after reading them? Can you answer the questions that follow?

- 1 For what kind of public was the book written?
- 2 The book is about
 - reading
 - novelists
 - literature in general
 - eighteenth century
 - Middle Ages
 - nineteenth century
- 3 What major writers are considered in this book?
- 4 The main theory of the author is that the form of the first English novels resulted from:
 - the position of women in society
 - the social changes at that time
 - the middle class

published by Penguin Books

Contents

In these studies of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, Ian Watt investigates the reasons why the three main early eighteenth-century novelists wrote in the way they did – a way resulting ultimately in the modern novel of the present day. The rise of the middle class and of economic individualism, the philosophical innovations of the seventeenth century, complex changes in the social position of women: these are some of the factors he finds underlying an age which produced the authors of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pamela*, and *Tom Jones*.

'An important, compendious work of inquiring scholarship . . . alive with ideas . . . an academic critic who in lively and suggestive detail is able to assemble round his novelists the ideas and facts among which they worked' – V. S. Pritchett in the *New Statesman*

'This book is altogether satisfying within the wide framework of its scheme, and certainly a major contribution to the subject, in some respects the most brilliant that has appeared. . . . Every page of Dr Watt's admirably written book repays study, as enlivening and enriching, the works the purport of which we are too often inclined to take for granted' – *The Times Educational Supplement*

Cover design by Bruce Robertson

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Preface

In 1938 I began a study of the relation between the growth of the reading public and the emergence of the novel in eighteenth-century England; and in 1947 it eventually took shape as a Fellowship Dissertation for St John's College, Cambridge. Two wider problems, however, remained unresolved. Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding were no doubt affected by the changes in the reading public of their time; but their works are surely more profoundly conditioned by the new climate of social and moral experience which they and their eighteenth-century readers shared. Nor could one say much about how this was connected with the emergence of the new literary form without deciding what the novel's distinctive literary features were and are.

United Kingdom £1.50
Australia \$4.95 (recommended)
Canada \$3.95

Literature
ISBN 0 14
02.1480 1

- 5 The different chapters are arranged – chronologically
– thematically
- 6 What kind of influence did the literature described in this book have?
- 7 Does the book have an index?
- 8 Does the book have a glossary?

3.3 Anticipation

Exercise 1

Specific aim: To encourage the students to think about the theme of the passage before reading it (psychological sensitizing).

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Skills involved: Anticipation.

Why? One of the most important factors that can help us in the process of reading is the desire we have to read about a given subject. The more we look forward to reading and anticipate in our minds what the text could hold in store for us, the easier it will be to grasp the main points of the passage. In this exercise, questions are asked before the text is read to make the students aware of what they know, what they don't know, what they wish to learn about the topic.

Before studying a text about robots:

- 1 What is a robot?
- 2 Is there any difference between a robot and an automaton?
- 3 What can robots be used for?
- 4 Do you think they can ever completely replace human beings for some jobs? Which ones?

Exercise 2

Specific aim: } Same as for exercise 1 but a quiz is used instead of
Skills involved: } questions.
Why? }

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

- a) The first automatons date back to 1500.
- b) The French philosopher Descartes invented an automaton.
- c) The first speaking automatons were made around 1890.
- d) In the film *Star Wars* the most important characters are two robots.
- e) One miniature robot built in the United States can imitate most of the movements of an astronaut in a space capsule and is only twelve inches tall.
- f) Some schools have been using robot teachers for the past few years.
- g) One hospital uses a robot instead of a surgeon for minor operations.
- h) Some domestic robots for the home only cost £600.
- i) A robot is used in Ireland to detect and disarm bombs.
- j) Some soldier-robots have already been used for war.

What's your score?

a) F b) T c) F d) T e) T f) T g) F h) T i) T j) F

You have probably discovered that there is quite a lot you don't know about robots. The following will probably tell you some of the things you wish to know about them.

From skimming to scanning

The advantage of a quiz is that it allows students to think for themselves, to get involved, to commit themselves. This can often create the desire to learn and read more effectively than simple questions.

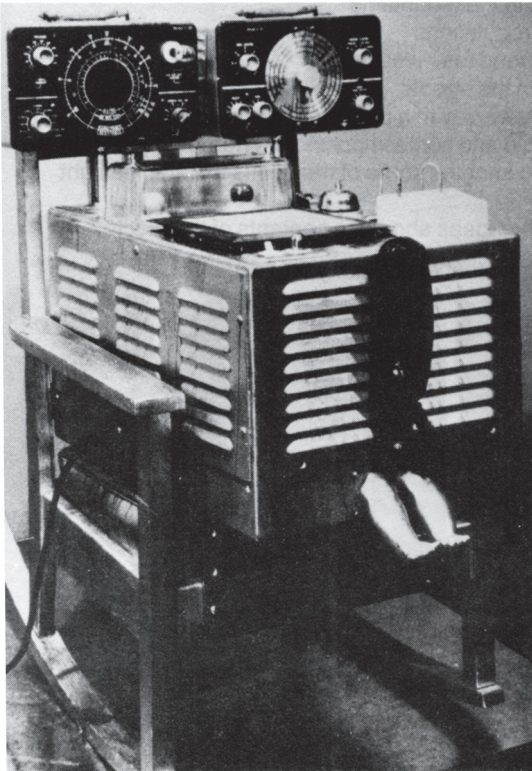
Starting with a quiz or with questions doesn't mean that the answers will be found in the text. It is not a 'pre-questioning' type of exercise in which students are asked to look for detailed information in the text.

Here, the aim is simply to create the need and wish to read as well as to familiarize the students with some of the ideas they will come across in the text.

Exercise 3

Specific aim: } Same as for exercise 1 but this time a picture –
Skills involved: } which lends itself to a variety of interpretations –
Why? } is used as the starting point of a discussion.

What do you know about robots and what do you think of them?



Edward Kienholz. *The Friendly Grey Computer – Star Gauge Model 54*, 1965; materials include fibreglass, paint, electronic components, doll parts, rocking chair; 40 x 39½ x 24½ in. (101.6 x 99.4 x 62.2 cm). collection: Museum of Modern Art, New York

Directions for operation

Place master switch in *off* position. Plug computer into power supply. Print your problem on yellow index card provided, in rack. Word your question in such a way that it can be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

IMPORTANT: Next, program computer heads (C-20 and G-30) by setting dials in appropriate positions. You are now ready to start machine. Throw master switch to *on* setting. Red bulb on main housing and white tube on C-20 will light indicating computer is working. Remove phone from rack and speak your problem into the mouthpiece exactly as you have written it on your index card. Replace phone in rack and ding dinger once. Under **NO** circumstances should you turn computer off until answer has been returned. Flashing yellow bulb indicates positive answer. Flashing blue bulb indicates negative answer. Green jewel button doesn't light so it will not indicate anything. Computers sometimes get fatigued and have nervous breakdowns, hence the chair for it to rest in. If you know your computer well, you can tell when it's tired and sort of blue and in a funky mood. If such a condition seems imminent, turn rocker switch on for ten or twenty minutes. Your computer will love it and work all the harder for you. Remember that if you treat your computer well it will treat you well. When answer light has stopped flashing, turn master switch to *off* position. Machine will now re-cycle for the next question. Repeat procedure from beginning.

I Reading techniques

Exercise 4

Specific aim: To train the students to use the title, the picture and their prior knowledge to anticipate the contents of the text.

Skills involved: Anticipation.

Why? By simply looking at the title and the accompanying picture, one can often guess what the text is about. This will allow us to ask ourselves preliminary questions and expect to find some answers in the text – which will greatly help the process of reading. This technique is essential when skimming (e.g. through a newspaper).

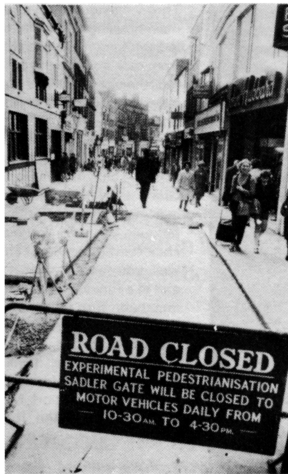
1 The text that you are going to read is entitled 'Keep off the grass'. Can you guess what the text might be about? Tick the boxes corresponding to what you think are possible ideas.

- Everyday life in a large park
- Camping in the country
- Going for a picnic in London
- Going for a picnic in the mountains
- Interdictions and regulations
- How teenagers spend their week-ends
- Children playing in the streets

Now discuss your answers with a partner. Explain why you think some of these ideas possible and some impossible. Whenever you think an idea is possible, try to imagine some of the points the article might mention.

Can you think of further ideas about the contents of the article?

2 Now look at the pictures that accompany the text:



(photographs by (L) Mark Edwards and (R) Ron Chapman)

From skimming to scanning

Do they help you reconsider your ideas and narrow down the possibilities you had in mind?

Which of these possibilities would you now choose?

- 3 Let's suppose you have come to the conclusion that the text was about 'interdictions and regulations'. Choose a partner and discuss this subject with him. You could consider the following points:
- find examples of interdictions or regulations
 - which ones do you consider fair or good? Can you think of an interdiction which you find useless or unfair? Why?
 - how do you think regulations should be enforced (i.e. made effective)?

Exercise 5

Specific aim:
Skills involved:
Why? } Same as for exercise 4 but with titles only.

- 1 Look at these headlines, all taken from the same newspaper, and choose the sentences that best describe the possible contents of the articles:

Think before you jog...

- a) The pleasures of jogging.
- b) Statistics about the number of joggers.
- c) The dangers of jogging.
- d) The popularity of jogging in the U.S.A.

Injury cash for battered wives soon

- a) Wives beaten by their husbands will soon get money as compensation.
- b) Beaten wives get together to raise money.
- c) Beating one's wife will soon be forbidden.
- d) Statistics about wives who were injured because they were beaten.

Tragedy of the slimmer who loved nice clothes

- a) It is difficult to buy nice clothes when you're fat.
- b) A young person wanted to slim too much and died.
- c) The everyday problems of slimmers.
- d) The problem of a woman who bought too many clothes and ruined herself.

I Reading techniques

Cure that 'is worse than the problem'

- a) A new drug has been discovered but it is far too expensive.
- b) A doctor criticizes the use of medicines in general.
- c) A widely used drug is found to cause more harm than good.
- d) People would face their problems better if they did not take drugs.

500 jobs to go

- a) 500 jobs will be created as a factory opens.
- b) 500 persons will have to move to another town to keep their jobs.
- c) 500 jobs will be lost as a firm closes.
- d) The result of a study on the best 500 jobs.

Can you now speculate about the following titles?

It's fun to run at 80

Winning women

Call to end maximum penalties

Three of hearts

Exercise 6

Specific aim: To help the students to think about the key words or key ideas in the text.

Skills involved: Anticipation.

Why? The students will be more ready (and find it easier) to read a passage if they have been prepared by thinking of the potential meanings and possible associations of some of the key words of the text. In this exercise, the students are given several words which do not necessarily appear in the text but which allude to the main events or ideas in the passage. Each student or group of students has a set of words and is asked to think of a story that might combine the ideas or events suggested by the words. This will lead the students to consider some possible associations between the words and even if no story in the class is remotely similar to the one that will be read, it will certainly help to motivate the students to read.

- 1 Work in groups of two. Look at the following words and think of a story that might combine them all. Then reorder the words according to the order in which they appear in your story. You can use any form of the verb and not necessarily the -ing one.

Examining	Sleeping	Rejecting
Rejoicing	Calling	Shutting up
Threatening	Plotting	Telling the truth
Eating	Fighting	Seizing

- 2 When you have decided upon a story, change partners and tell your story. Then listen to that of your partner. Ask each other as many questions as you can to learn further details or clarify some points.
- 3 Now read the text (see *The Unicorn in the Garden*, pages 215–16) and reorder the words according to what happens in the passage. When you have finished, discuss the order you decided on with other groups.

Prediction and anticipation – further hints

- Matching titles of books and titles of chapters taken from those books.
- In order to help students develop a predictive strategy when reading, R. Young ‘Predictive Reading’, *MET*, Vol. 7, No. 3, suggests a way of dealing with a newspaper article:
 - 1 Give four photographs – corresponding to four different moments in the passage – to four groups and ask them to reorder them and invent a story illustrated by the pictures.
 - 2 Give the class a ‘gapped text’ which is interrupted after the conjunctions and link-words and ask the class to imagine what the text might be.

3.4 Skimming

Exercise 1

Specific aim: To prepare the students to skim by asking them to recognize the key sentences of a passage.