

**ACADEMIC STUDIES**

**ENGLISH**

**Support Materials and Exercises  
for**

**INTRODUCTION TO  
READING COMPREHENSION**



**SUMMER 1999**

# INTRODUCTION TO READING COMPREHENSION

## ACADEMIC ENGLISH

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following persons have contributed to the development of this learning material:

---

#### **Content and Structure:**

##### Curriculum Developer(s)

Leslie Childs . . . . . English Curriculum Content Expert  
New Brunswick Community College . . . . . Bathurst

---

##### Project Supervision/Co-ordination:

Angela Acott-Smith . . . . . Project Co-ordinator  
New Brunswick Community College . . . . . Woodstock

Kay Curtis . . . . . Literacy Co-ordinator  
New Brunswick Community College . . . . . Woodstock

---

This document is available full-text on the World Wide Web thanks to  
the National Adult Literacy Database.

<http://www.nald.ca/CLR/search/>

The financial support for this learning materials project was provided by  
the [National Literacy Secretariat](#) of [Human Resources Development Canada](#).

Summer 1999

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to provide the learner with instruction in using context clues to improve his/her work attack skills and comprehension.

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. define new or difficult words based on their use in a sentence or group of sentences.

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Context Clues</b>	1	explain context clues and how to use them	3/4
	2	find context clues provided by writer	3/4
	3	often between commas	3/4
	4	in examples given by writer	3/4
	5	in definitions given by writer	3/4
	6	modifying phrase or clause provided by writer	3/4
	7	in main idea of passage	3/4
	8	in general sense of the passage	3/4
	9	practice decoding & defining words using context clues	3/4
	10	encourage learner to “guess” at meaning	3/4
	11	use dictionary: only as last resort	3/4
	12	to check that “guess” is correct	3/4
	13	importance of context clues: for reading factual material	3/4
	14	for better reading comprehension	3/4
	15	for increasing reading speed	3/4
	16	for improving reading enjoyment	3/4

**Note:** Learners should continue to develop this strategy as they build their reading/speaking vocabulary.

**Note:** Using context clues is an essential skill for building reading and listening comprehension. Facilitators should use BAU-ENG 3.8 READING WITH UNDERSTANDING to check that learners continue to improve their ability to use context clues and, thus, their reading comprehension to a level appropriate to the end of Grade 6.

<b>BAU-ENG 3.2</b>	<b>MAIN IDEA</b>
--------------------	------------------

**PURPOSE**  
The purpose of this unit is to provide the learner with instruction in determining the main idea in print materials.

**OBJECTIVES**  
Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to  
1. identify the main idea in a passage.

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Main Idea</b>	1	explain main idea: central thought of paragraph/essay/speech	3/4
	2	can be stated in one sentence or 1st paragraph of longer essay	3/4
	3	sometimes called thesis or topic sentence	3/4
	4	restate main idea in own words	3/4
	5	main idea may be implied from details presented	3/4
	6	differentiate between topic and main idea	3/4
	7	practise finding main ideas in variety of sources: articles	3/4
	8	essays, textbooks, etc.	3/4
<b>Note:</b> This unit should be used in conjunction with BAU-ENG 5.1 <u>TAKING NOTES</u> and BAU-ENG 5.2 <u>FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS</u> to help build good listening skills.			
<b>Note:</b> Learners at Level 3/4 should be able to find the main idea in a passage. Learners at Level 5/6 should also be able to support answers with details from the text.			
<b>Note:</b> Identifying main ideas is an essential skill for building reading and <u>listening</u> comprehension. Facilitators should use BAU-ENG 3.8 <u>READING WITH UNDERSTANDING</u> to check that learners continue to improve their ability to find main ideas and, thus, their reading comprehension to a level appropriate to the end of Grade 6.			

<b>BAU-ENG 3.3</b>	<b>FACTS AND DETAILS</b>
--------------------	--------------------------

**PURPOSE**  
 The purpose of this unit is to provide the learner with instruction in noting facts and details in print materials.

**OBJECTIVES**  
 Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to  
 1. read a variety of print materials and find/report facts and details

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Facts and Details</b>	1	explain facts and details	3/4
	2	use of who, what, when, where, why, and how to find details	3/4
	3	use of visualization while reading to isolate details	3/4
	4	develop awareness that facts and details are important	3/4
	5	notetaking for recalling facts when reading some materials	3/4
	6	practise reading variety of materials: articles, stories, etc.	3/4
<b>Note:</b> This unit should be used in conjunction with BAU-ENG 5.1 <u>TAKING NOTES</u> and BAU-ENG 5.2 <u>FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS</u> to help build good listening skills.			
<b>Note:</b> Learners at Level 3/4 should be able to find facts and details in a passage. Learners at Level 5/6 should also be able to support answers with details from the text.			
<b>Note:</b> Finding facts and details is an essential skill for building reading and <u>listening</u> comprehension. Facilitators should use BAU-ENG 3.8 <u>READING WITH UNDERSTANDING</u> to check that learners continue to improve their ability find facts and details and, thus, their reading comprehension to a level appropriate to the end of Grade 6.			

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to guide the learner in improving his/her reading comprehension skills by making inferences while reading.

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. read a variety of print materials and answer questions based on an understanding of inference.

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Inference</b>	1	explain inference	3/4
	2	differentiate between stated details and implied details	3/4
	3	practise making inferences	3/4
	4	difference between words “imply” and “infer”	5/6
	5	clues to inference: details in a passage	5/6
	6	organization of details	5/6
	7	use logic to make an inference	5/6
	8	discuss the role of inference in advertising	5/6
	9	practise making inferences	5/6
<p><b>Note:</b> At each level of training, the inferences should become more complex.            e.g. Grade 3/4: Mark pulled on his mitts and hat. What season is it? Winter            Grade 5/6: Ebenezer wakened to the clank of milk bottles on the back step.            When does this story probably take place? at least 30 years ago</p>			
<p><b>Note:</b> Learners at Level 3/4 should be able to identify and interpret inferences.            Learners at Level 5/6 should also be able to support answers with details from the text.</p>			
<p><b>Note:</b> This unit should be used in conjunction with BAU-ENG 5.1 <u>TAKING NOTES</u> and BAU-ENG 5.2 <u>FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS</u> to help build good listening skills.</p>			
<p><b>Note:</b> Using inference is an essential skill for building reading and <u>listening</u> comprehension. Facilitators should use BAU-ENG 3.8 <u>READING WITH UNDERSTANDING</u> to check that learners continue to improve their ability to find and use inference and, thus, their reading comprehension to a level appropriate to the end of Grade 6.</p>			

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to guide the learner in improving his/her reading comprehension skills by determining the sequence of events in print material.

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. determine the sequence or order of events presented in a passage.
2. sequence correctly details in a paragraph describing an event or giving instructions.

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Sequencing</b>	1	explain sequence	3/4
	2	types of sequence: chronological order	3/4
	3	importance order	3/4
	4	spatial order	3/4
	5	logical order	3/4
	6	importance of determining sequence in a passage	3/4
	7	improves comprehension for reader	3/4
	8	makes it easier to find specific information	3/4
	9	helps improve writer's message	3/4
	10	sequencing as a method of organizing your own writing	3/4
	11	practice identifying sequencing in print materials	3/4
	12	practice using sequencing in writing	3/4
<b>Note:</b> This unit should be used in conjunction with BAU-ENG 5.1 <u>TAKING NOTES</u> and BAU-ENG 5.2 <u>FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS</u> to help build good listening skills.			
<b>Note:</b> Learners at Level 3/4 should be able to determine sequences in a passage. Learners at Level 5/6 should also be able to support answers with details from the text.			
<b>Note:</b> Identifying and using sequencing is an essential skill for building reading and <u>listening</u> comprehension. Facilitators should use BAU-ENG 3.8 <u>READING WITH UNDERSTANDING</u> to check that learners continue to improve their ability find and use sequencing and, thus, their reading comprehension to a level appropriate to the end of Grade 6.			

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to guide the learner in improving his/her reading comprehension skills by learning to draw logical conclusions from print materials.

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. read a variety of materials and answer questions demonstrating how to reach the next logical step or draw a logical conclusion.

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Logical Conclusions</b>	1	explain logic	3/4
	2	explain how predicting the ending can increase enjoyment	3/4
	3	to predict successfully: use evidence from content	3/4
	4	use details presented in material	3/4
	5	use organization of details	3/4
	6	use inferences	3/4
	7	use sequencing	3/4
	8	provide the next logical step in a situation	3/4
	9	predict the outcome of a story or conclusion of an article	3/4
	10	predict how characters may act after the end of a story	3/4

**Note:** Learners in Grade 3/4 should be able to draw conclusions.

Learners in Grade 5/6 should be able to support their answers with details from the text.

**Note:** This unit should be used in conjunction with BAU-ENG 5.1 TAKING NOTES and BAU-ENG 5.2 FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS to help build good listening skills.

**Note:** Drawing logical conclusions is an essential skill for building reading and listening comprehension. Facilitators should use BAU-ENG 3.8 READING WITH UNDERSTANDING to check that learners continue to improve their ability draw logical conclusions and, thus, their reading comprehension to a level appropriate to the end of Grade 6.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to guide the learner in improving his/her reading comprehension skills by learning to differentiate between fact and opinion in print material.

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. discriminate between fact and opinion in print material.

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Fact versus Opinion</b>	1	define fact, opinion, bias	5/6
	2	explain the terms “subjective” and “objective”	5/6
	3	read materials that contain facts only: e.g. surveys, statistics, instructions, and hard news	5/6
	4	read materials that contain largely opinion: e.g. letters to the editor, editorials and advertising	5/6
	5	read materials that contain both: e.g. news stories, newspaper columns, and film reviews	5/6
	6	isolate facts and opinions in an article and explain which is which	5/6
	7	discuss techniques for “tricking” reader into seeing an opinion as a fact	5/6
	8	discuss possible reasons for disguising opinion as fact	5/6

**Note:** This unit should be used in conjunction with BAU-ENG 5.1 TAKING NOTES and BAU-ENG 5.2 FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS to help build good listening skills.

**Note:** Discriminating between fact and opinion is an essential skill for building reading and listening comprehension. Facilitators should use BAU-ENG 3.8 READING WITH UNDERSTANDING to check that learners continue to improve their ability discriminate between fact and opinion and, thus, their reading comprehension to a level appropriate to the end of Grade 6.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to guide the learner in integrating the use of context clues, main idea, fact and details, sequencing, drawing conclusions, and discriminating between fact and opinion so as to improve his/her reading comprehension.

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. read a variety of print material and demonstrate proficiency in reading comprehension

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>	1	read widely at grade level	3-6
	2	skim for main idea	3-6
	3	scan for particular details: i.e. dates, names	3-6
	4	use table of contents	3-6
	5	use dictionaries	3-6
	6	use glossaries	3-6
	7	read and follow directions	3-6
	8	interpret symbols: i.e. fabric care symbols	3-6
	9	read newspapers: headlines, ads, editorials, etc.	3-6
	10	read short stories at grade level	3-6
	11	read poetry at grade level	3-6
	12	short novel (at facilitator's discretion)	3-6

**Note:** The print materials that learners read in this section should be used to provide continuous evaluation of all the reading comprehension skills presented in Section 3.

**Note:** As facilitators evaluate reading comprehension, they should also attempt to identify areas of learner weakness (i.e. inference, sequencing, etc.) and address these areas with remedial work.

**Note:** Learners at Grade 3/4 level should be able to answer comprehension questions.  
Learners at Grade 5/6 level should also be able to support their answers with reference to the text.  
Learners at both levels should have experience answering multiple choice questions as well as writing answer in full sentences.

**Note:** Reading and listening comprehension are closely linked. Learner activities in this unit should be linked to BAU-ENG 5.1 LISTENING SKILLS and BAU-ENG 5.2 FOLLOWING ORAL INSTRUCTIONS. In addition to using print materials in this section, learners may also practice their comprehension skills by watching and listening to a variety of media. (e.g. TV news, documentaries, debates, radio talk shows, oral presentations, guest speakers, etc.)

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to guide learner in improving his/her oral reading skills

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. orally read a selected passage demonstrating expertise at grade level.

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Oral Reading</b>	1	group words appropriately	1-6
	2	pronounce words correctly	1-6
	3	interpret punctuation correctly	1-6
	4	use expression	1-6
	5	speak clearly at acceptable auditory levels	1-6
	6	demonstrate understanding of material read	1-6

**Note:** The learner's oral reading skills should be evaluated at Grades 1/2, 3/4, and 5/6.

**Note:** Reading aloud can be very stressful and difficult for adult learners. In general, oral reading should be done on a one-to-one basis in a private setting. Facilitators should take special care to ensure that no learner is embarrassed by being asked to read aloud until he/she is ready.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this unit is to guide the learner in improving his/her silent reading while retaining comprehension of material read.

**OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to

1. read silently and answer questions concerning content in complete sentences.

**TEACHING POINTS**

<b>TEACHING POINTS</b>			<b>Level</b>
<b>Silent Reading</b>	1	find best personal silent reading speed	1-6
	2	reading too fast or too slowly may detract from understanding	1-6
	3	practice blocking out distractions	1-6
	4	find a quiet comfortable place to read and study	1-6
	5	slowly increase silent reading speed	1-6
	6	not every word has to be read in silent reading	1-6
	7	importance of directed silent reading: promotes the reading habit	1-6
	8	increases reading comprehension	1-6
	9	increases attention span for reading	1-6

**Note:** Some facilitators may choose to allot time regularly to silent reading which does not require the answering of questions. Other facilitators may choose to have learners complete book reports as a response to direct silent reading.

**Note:** Learners at early levels in BAU should be asked to answer comprehension questions orally. As their expertise and confidence in writing improves, they can move to written answers. In either case, be sure to insist on full sentence answers.

## **NOTE TO FACILITATORS AND LEARNERS:**

1. This module presents information and exercises to accompany the objectives of BAU-ENG for Section 3: READING COMPREHENSION, including 3.1, Context Clues; 3.2, Main Ideas; 3.3, Facts and Details; 3.4, Inference; 3.5, Sequencing; 3.6, Drawing Logical Conclusions; 3.7, Fact Versus Opinion; 3.8, Reading With Understanding; 3.9, Oral Reading; 3.10, Directed Silent Reading
2. Facilitators are free to use any support materials appropriate to their learners' needs.
3. Additional resource materials will probably be required for those wanting more information on this topic or for those needing more practice mastering certain areas. Reading materials can be drawn from any source and should be chosen to meet the individual interests and needs of each learner.
4. Alternate support materials may be appropriate. The Internet provides a wide variety of written materials, both the printed word and literature, at many reading levels.
5. Learners should participate in daily silent reading practice.
6. It is the learner's responsibility to search out additional reading materials to supplement the practice work included in this module by consulting with his/her facilitator.
7. Do **NOT** write in this module. Please make your notes and complete the exercises in your own notebooks so that other learners may also use these booklets.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION .....	1
TWO METHODS OF COMMUNICATION .....	2
A FEW FACTS ABOUT HOW READING WORKS .....	2
READING SURVEY .....	9
SOME TIPS FOR BETTER READING COMPREHENSION .....	10
GETTING READY TO READ .....	12
RELIEVE YOUR STRESS .....	14
THE READING PROCESS	
Pre-Reading .....	15
Reading .....	23
Post-Reading .....	36
WHAT IS LITERATURE? .....	40
CONCLUSION .....	52
FEEDBACK FORM .....	58

# INTRODUCTION TO READING COMPREHENSION

*Some books are to be tasted,  
others to be swallowed,  
and some few to be chewed and digested*

*Francis Bacon (1625)*

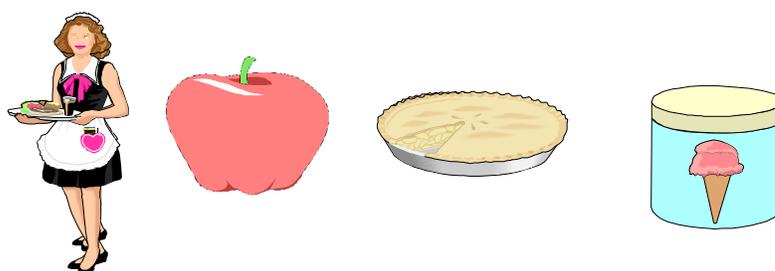
Reading comprehension means **understanding** and **remembering** the **ideas** you find as you read.

As you know, reading begins by learning the shapes of letters and the sounds they represent. When letters are written in groups, they become words. Words are just groups of symbols that stand for the names of things, actions, and ideas that you see, hear, smell, touch or taste every day.

People choose to write messages because they want to

8. share their ideas with a lot of people (receivers).
9. reach a number of people who are in different locations.
10. make sure their messages last a long time.
11. give the receiver a chance to really understand their message by reading it more than once.
12. create a record of their ideas.

## EXERCISE 1



Write a set of *symbols* that represent the event above.

## EXERCISE 2

Most people think of *books* when they think of *reading*, but lots of useful and important everyday information is found in other places. Make a list of 10 places you can read useful information every day that is not in a book or at school. Think about how *not understanding what you read* could make things difficult for you.

## TWO METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

When you “**speak**” messages about the ideas in your head, the person receiving your message must **listen** to the words in order to understand what you want to communicate. At other times, you **write** the words that stand for the ideas in your mind, and the receiver of your message must **read** your ideas in order to understand them. Writing (sending messages) and reading (receiving messages) are partners in a process called *communication*. (Speaking and listening are another part of this same process.)

Successful communication takes place only when the receiver *comprehends the exact ideas* that the sender intended to send.

*Reading is about constructing meaning from the symbols (letters and words) the sender has placed on the page.* This module presents a number of strategies and techniques that will help you *comprehend* what you read. In other words, you will learn new ways to turn groups of words on the page into meaningful ideas.

## A FEW FACTS ABOUT HOW READING WORKS?

If you are reading this module, you have obviously learned how to read. In order to continue to improve your reading skills, you need to know a little bit about how reading works.

### 1. *Oral Reading and Silent Reading*

When you first learned to read, you probably were asked to read out loud. Many people found oral reading a painful experience because they were shy, or they felt that they had to read every word correctly. One of the reasons teachers ask students to read aloud is to make sure that each new reader is reading accurately.

As skills improve, readers are expected to spend more of their time reading silently. Did you know that it's possible to read well orally and have real difficulty reading silently, or vice versa?

Oral reading and silent reading are quite different skills. When you began reading, you started by learning the shape and sounds that letters make. Soon, you were able to pronounce words and start reading sentences. When you read orally, you say every letter and every sound. You stop for periods and question marks. You pause for commas. The fastest anyone can read aloud is about 250 words per minute because that's as fast as you can pronounce the words..

Later in your school career, you began to read silently to yourself. Many people, including beginning readers, often think that they have to "say every word on the page right" even when reading silently. Good silent readers seldom read this way. In fact, they often actually read only one third to one half of the words on a page. Their brain fills in the rest.

## 2. *Reading Speed*

The speed you read is not important by itself, but studies show that if you read too slowly, you may have trouble comprehending<sup>1</sup> what you read. When you read too slowly, you may get bored or discouraged. You may be easily distracted. You often forget the beginning of a sentence (idea) before you get to the end it. Learning the silent reading strategies in this module will help you increase your speed and, more importantly, your comprehension.

### **EXERCISE 3 (optional)**

Find your own reading speed. This is **not** a test. The results show only the number of words you can now read a minute. This is **private** and **personal** information that you should **not** share with anyone.

1. Choose any printed material that you enjoy reading and that is not too difficult for you. Ask your instructor to help you choose the right material.
2. Count the number of words in the first 3 full lines on any page. Divide the total by 3 to find the average number of words per line. Record this number.
3. Use a stopwatch or get someone to time you as you read.
4. Read silently for three minutes (or more if you choose.)

---

<sup>1</sup> Understanding

5. Count the number of lines you read. Record this number.
6. Divide the total number of lines read by the number of minutes you read to find the average number of lines per minute.
7. Multiply the average number of lines per minute by the average number of words per line. This is your reading speed.
8. You may want to do this exercise more than once, particularly if you were tense or nervous the first time.

### 3. *Reading Groups of Words*

If your reading speed is less than about 200 words per minute, it is probably because you are using oral reading techniques when you read silently. Many people think that good reading means “saying” each word perfectly in your “mind’s ear”. This is called reading “word for word”. Silent reading techniques include learning to recognize words and groups of words without having to say them. To get a better idea of the difference between reading words and reading ideas, try reading the material below.

The  
big  
back  
hoe  
pulled  
up  
in  
the  
drive  
way  
and  
started  
to  
dig  
the  
foundation  
for  
the  
new  
house.

How easy was it to understand? Most people find it difficult to understand when they read one word at a time.

Even when the words are presented in a normal line, but are separated by commas, it is still hard to get a complete idea of the meaning because you are still looking at single words, not whole ideas.

The, big, back, hoe, pulled, up, in, the, drive, way, and, started,  
to, dig, the, foundation, for, the, new, house.

Once the words are grouped, the meaning is clearer.

The big back hoe, pulled up, in the driveway, and started to dig,  
the foundation, for the new house.

Although reading “word for word” may be the right way to read some difficult material, most of the time, effective readers learn how to “see” groups of words all at once, sometimes as many as six words at one time. They recognize the meaning of words without having to pronounce them. They can, therefore, read faster than 250 words per minute because they are not slowed down by trying to pronounce the sound of each letter. As a result, they read and absorb groups of words rather than saying individual words.

#### **EXERCISE 4**

Practise seeing more than one word at a time. Use a 3 X 5 index card to do this exercise. Place the card just below the asterisk (\*) in each item. Then pull the card down to reveal the phrase. Quickly push the card back up. What did you see? Could you comprehend the meaning of each phrase? Try to work a little more quickly than you feel comfortable. Exercises like this one will help you get over the “word by word” oral reading habit you may be used to using.

\*  
two cats

\*  
at home

\*  
in a bag

\*  
red boots

\*  
hit the ball

\*  
turn the page

\*  
Stop at the store.

\*  
Don't run or you'll fall

\*  
Take a big blue ball.

*If you find this exercise helpful, ask your instructor or another student to create more practice pages for you. You may start with two or three words and work up to larger groups.*

#### **4. *Skipping Words***

When you read silently, you may actually skip many words because the author's meaning is carried by only a few important words. All the other words on the page are *structure words* that tie the ideas together. Go back to your answer for Exercise 1. What did you write? Perhaps your sentence looked like one of these.

*The waitress served us some apple pie **and** ice cream.  
 We ate **the** apple pie **and** ice cream **the** waitress brought.  
 The waitress took my order for apple pie **and** ice cream.*

The structure words are written in bold type. Structure words represent about 65% of the words on every page<sup>2</sup>. A study at Brown University looked at a passage with 134,000 words. Of these, the word “*the*” was used 20, 172 times, and the word “*of*” was used 10, 427 times. Learning to sliding over these structure words when you read greatly increases your speed and comprehension.

### 5. *How Your Eye Sees*

Your eye actually sees in a circle. Look at any picture. Do you see only one small word-sized space or do you see quite a few details at once? Look at any paragraph in this module. Can see one word alone, all by itself, when you look at the page? Take advantage of your eye’s natural ability to see more than one word at a time as you read.

### 6. *Reading is a Process*

Reading is a process and not a single act. In general, there are three stages in reading.

1. Pre-reading
2. Reading
3. Post-reading

### 7. *Some Myths About Reading*

#### **Myth Number 1: You should read everything the same way: word for word.**

There are many different ways to read as you will see later in this module. Good readers choose how they will read depending on what they are reading and their reasons for reading.

#### **Myth Number 2: Good readers need to read a passage only once.**

This may be true for some kinds of reading, but generally, good readers look at a passage more than once, especially when they want to get accurate details and the author’s full meaning.

---

<sup>2</sup> English has over 1,000,000 words but there are only about 400 structure words. Structure words represent about 65% of the words on a page.

**Myth Number 3: Good readers can recall everything they have just read.**

Life would be a lot easier if this were true. Unfortunately, no one can remember everything<sup>3</sup>. If that were possible, then there would be no need for studying, taking notes, or photocopying.

**Myth Number 4: Do not skip ahead.** When reading *non-fiction*, skipping ahead can actually add to your understanding.

**Myth Number 5: Never skip words or pages.** Readers should have a purpose for reading a passage and choose how they will read it: skim, scan, or read in depth. Then they can choose which words, sentences, etc., are important and which ones they can skip. For example, “He persuaded her easily with his *fluency*. If you know that *he convinced her*, the words *with his fluency* may not be important or necessary to your understanding. If, in another situation, if you are reading about German shepherd dogs, you may decide to skip the chapter on Breeding because your pet has been neutered and the information is no interest to you.

Before you begin the next section of this module, please complete the reading survey on the next page. Do not write in the module. Photocopy the survey or simply record your answers in your note book.

---

<sup>3</sup> There are some people who claim to have “photographic memories”, but they are rare.

**READING SURVEY**

1. Do you consider reading as  
a leisure activity       a part of everyday life       a school activity
2. Do you find reading  
relaxing       a chore
3. What was the last thing you read? (e.g. grocery list, TV guide, novel, text, etc)  

---
4. How many hours a week do you read outside of school?  
0-1       1-5       6-10       11-20       20+
5. How often do you usually read something to get the meaning?  
once       2-3 times       more than 3 times
6. Do you move your lips when you read silently?  
Yes       No       Sometimes
7. Do your vocal cords move when you read silently?  
Yes       No       Sometimes
8. Do you have trouble seeing the words (or letters) on the page?  
Yes       No       Sometimes
9. Do you have trouble keeping your eyes on one line of text or moving from  
one line to the next?  
Yes       No       Sometimes
10. What do you remember about reading in school?  

---
11. What do you like to read best? (e.g. magazines, catalogues, novels, comics,  
newspapers, etc.) Make a list of the topics you read about.

## SOME TIPS FOR BETTER READING COMPREHENSION

**Do you have a positive attitude towards reading?** Your attitude influences how well you perform any task. When you believe you can do something, you are usually successful. Work to create a positive attitude about reading. Positive attitudes don't just happen; they need to be built and maintained daily. Begin every reading session by repeating several times, "I can read this. I will read this. I will find it interesting"

Most people who have difficulty reading have a negative attitude towards it. Maybe they had bad experiences in school, or perhaps they think reading is boring and offers them nothing they need. They may even have a learning disability that makes reading extra hard.. Whatever the case, building a positive "Yes, I can!" attitude almost guarantees that reading will quickly become fun and "do-able".

Reading has never been more important to success in life than it is today. Only a few years ago, most Canadian jobs centred on natural resources like wood products, fishing, farming, and mining; today most available jobs relate to handling information, usually in written form. As information grows and more and more jobs are created around it, understanding what you read is an essential skill.

**Do your lips move when you read silently?** If so, you are really doing oral reading rather than silent reading. When you read silently, your brain should absorb whole words (and groups of words) at a time. If your mouth and lips form words as you read, you are slowing yourself down. When you read too slowly, it is very difficult to get the full meaning because you often forget the beginning of the sentence before you get to the end of it. Make a real effort to stop moving your lips as you read. Moving your lips when you read silently is called "*subvocalization*".

**Do your vocal cords move when you read silently?** Place your hand lightly on your throat as you read silently. If you can feel a vibration, it means that you are using oral reading techniques to read silently. As a result, you are probably reading so slowly that it is hard for you to understand what you are reading. This is another kind of *subvocalization*.

**Do you have a hard time seeing the letters on the page?** If you have to hold the book close to your eyes or at arms length, you may need glasses or contacts. If you already wear glasses, perhaps you need a new prescription. Changes in eye sight happen so gradually that many people are unaware that they have poor vision. After all, they have nothing to compare it to.

**Do you have trouble keeping your eyes on one line of text or moving from one line to the next?** If you lose your place frequently when you read, it is a good idea to use a piece of paper, or ruler, placed under the line you are reading. As you finish one line, simply slide the “guide” down as you read.

During your early years at school you may not have been allowed to do this, but as an adult, you can choose to use any strategy which makes your reading easier. Try this one to see if it works for you.

There are also several ways to use your hands or fingers that may improve your reading.. You may try using your index or second finger to lightly follow the line you are reading. When you get to the end of a line, sweep your hand quickly to the left to pick up the beginning of the next line. Some reading experts suggest a “dusting” motion with the hand when you are trying to increase your reading speed and comprehension. This quicker hand motion forces your eye and your brain to move across the page more rapidly than you can actually pronounce the words “in your mind’s ear”. As a result, it may help get rid of the subvocalization habit that slows down reading speed and contributes to poor comprehension.

When you are skimming or scanning a text, you may run your finger quickly down the middle of the page to help focus your concentration on what you are looking for.

**Do you find your mind wandering when you read?** Even good readers often report that they “lose their concentration” and begin daydreaming. Actually, it’s impossible to “lose” your concentration unless you fall asleep. Your brain is always concentrating on something. When you daydream or look out the window, your brain is concentrating on something, just not on the written material you are supposed to be reading. Try these suggestions to improve your concentration.

1. Create a **purpose** for reading. Know why you are reading and what you expect to get out of it before you start.
2. Be **active** when you read. Think of questions you want answered and then look for the answers. Disagree with the writer and look for “holes” in his/her arguments. Try to predict what will happen next in a novel or short story. Some experts suggest that the index finger method or dusting method helps keep you actively involved.
3. Read material that is at your reading level, or slightly above.
4. Read material that is interesting to **you** and that you have some background knowledge about.
5. Don't read for too long at one time. Break longer reading assignments into manageable parts (paragraphs, pages, sections, or chapters).
6. As much as possible, try to make reading a pleasant experience.

## GETTING READY TO READ

Now that you know that reading is more than moving along word by word, it's time to look at some strategies that will help you understand what you read. Good readers know that it is important to “get ready to read” before they actually start reading.

1. **Check your posture.** Sit in a comfortable chair with your back firmly against the back of the chair. The book should be at about a 45° angle to your eyes. Don't sprawl on the couch or read in bed unless you are trying to fall asleep.
2. **Check the lighting.** You've probably heard that reading in poor light will ruin your eyes. New research shows that's probably not true, but reading under good light makes the process a lot easier. Use diffuse lighting. This means light should fall on the page from several sources. Find a place to read where you don't get a glare off the pages and try not to have any shadows on the page.

3. **Make a commitment to your reading.** Remember the “Yes, I can” attitude. Make a promise to yourself that you will complete the reading<sup>4</sup> (even in several stages) and that you will come away with an understanding of what you have read. If it helps to focus your concentration, repeat the phrases, “I can read this; I will read this; I will find this interesting<sup>5</sup>.”
4. **Reduce the distractions.** Find a quiet place where you won’t be disturbed for a while. (If you’re a parent, the bathroom may be your only safe haven). Try to organize your life so that when you read, the phone won’t ring and kids/family won’t need your immediate attention. Turn off the TV and/or radio. If you must listen to background music to drown out other sounds, make sure that it is easy listening music that won’t demand your attention.
5. **Decide on a purpose for reading.**  
People read for entertainment, for fulfilment, and for information. Before you even open the book or look at the article ask yourself these questions:  
How important is the material I am about to read?  
What do I need or want to remember after reading?  
Do I need just the main points, or do I need some key ideas too?  
Does anyone expect me to report on what I’ve read?  
Do I need specific details for a major test or project?  
Do I need just some general ideas for a brief quiz or meeting?
6. **Relax your book.** You may know about relaxing yourself, but did you know you can relax a book? This helps keep the pages from flipping over by themselves and keep the pressure off your thumb as you try to hold a new book open as you read. Here’s how to relax a book.

---

<sup>4</sup> This is important when reading for information or for school. If you are reading for pleasure, you don’t have to finish reading a book you find boring or too difficult.

<sup>5</sup> When reading for your own *personal pleasure*, never force yourself to read anything that you find boring. Try the first 15 or 20 pages of a novel. If it doesn’t catch your interest and you are bored, stop reading immediately. Don’t feel guilty for not having finished a book. If you don’t like it, put it down and find another. The world is full of wonderful books. Often you have to start several books before you find one that is entertaining to you.

## **RELIEVE YOUR STRESS; RELAX THAT BOOK**

1. Place the spine on a flat surface.
2. Open just the front and back covers of the book.
3. Run your thumbs and fingers up and down the pages as close to the binding as possible.
4. Take a few pages, front and back, and repeat the process.
5. Continue until you have reached the centre of the book.
6. Ruffle the pages several times to make sure they are supple.
7. Do not start at the centre and work out. This may crack the spine and greatly reduce the life of the book. This is especially important with paperbacks and cheaply bound books which rely on glue to hold the pages together.

## THE READING PROCESS

Try the strategies suggested by the SQ3R<sup>6</sup> described in the module on Learning Strategies) as you move through the three stages in the reading process.

1. Pre-reading - Survey and Question
2. Reading - Read (according to your purpose)
3. Post-reading - Recite and Review

### *Stage 1: PRE-READING*

If you give your brain a chance to get organized and “get on the right track” before you start, it will do most of the work for you, automatically. You will have a better chance of understanding if you preview what you are about to read before you read in depth.

Reading can be compared to taking a trip. You need to know where you are going and how to get there, before you set out so you won’t get lost along the way. The author has already made the trip, and his/her writing provides a map, so you can both travel the same roads and end up in the same place. As you travel or read, it saves time and energy if you first look at the map and get a general idea of the “pathways” you will travel. Doing this will keep you from making a wrong turn, getting confused, or having to backtrack.

The starting place on your reading trip is what you already know about the subject. Your destination is an understanding of the ideas the writer has presented. Along the way, you will probably change highways a couple of times and pass through several major cities. Previewing the text will give you a headstart on understanding what you are about to read.

---

<sup>6</sup> SQ3R stands for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review. It is a technique often taught for studying that also works well for reading effectively. (Studying is really just reading efficiently so that you understand and remember what you have read.)

Here are two things you should do when you preview.

- Survey: Try to find the writer's **main idea** (his/her destination) by:
1. Looking at and thinking about the title, pictures, charts, headings
  2. Reading the first and last paragraphs (or sentences, if the passage is short.)
- Question: Based on your surveying, try to **predict** what the writer will say by:
1. Asking yourself questions like "What is this going to be about.?"
  2. What words can I expect to read?
  3. What questions will the writing answer?

As you survey and predict, you give your memory a chance to use all the information it already has stored, like vocabulary, place names, and other details.

### ***Finding Main Ideas***

The main idea in any piece of writing is a short summary of the writer's message, what he/she is really trying to say. One way to explain **main idea** is look at a fable<sup>7</sup>. Read this example of one of Aesop's fables.

#### **The Fox and the Grapes**

One hot summer's day a fox was strolling through an orchard. He came across a bunch of grapes just ripening on a vine which had been trained to grow over a high branch. "Just the thing to quench my thirst," said the fox. Walking back a few paces, he took a run and a jump, and just missed the bunch. He tried again. With a one, two, three, he jumped up, but with more success than he had had the first time.. Again and again he tried to get the tempting morsel, but at last he had to give it up, and walked away with his nose in the air, saying: "I am sure they are sour."

*It is easy to despise what you cannot get.*

---

<sup>7</sup> Fables are short fictional stories that usually have animals as characters. Aesop's fables are the best known examples. No historical facts exist to prove that Aesop actually lived, but if he did, he was probably a Greek slave, who lived about 1400 years ago. Some experts think that Aesop's fables were written by several writers.

### EXERCISE 5

1. Write one sentence that retells the story.
2. What message is the writer trying to send about human behaviour?
3. Look at your answers to questions 1 and 2. Which is the main idea of the fable?
4. What is the purpose of the last line of the fable (written in italics)?

Sometimes the main idea is easy to find, and sometimes it isn't. In **expository**<sup>8</sup> writing, main ideas should be easy to find because the writer's purpose is to make his/her ideas easy for you to understand. Main ideas are usually clearly stated in the first sentence (or paragraph) or near the beginning of the writing. Sometimes, the writer places the main idea at the end of the first paragraph. On rare occasions, it is included near the end of the piece of writing.

In narrative<sup>9</sup> writing, the main idea may be harder to find because the writer's purpose may really be to entertain you rather than to teach, inform or persuade you. Even so, a glance at the first few pages along with the first paragraphs of several chapters should help you get started in the right direction.

### EXERCISE 6

1. What is the main idea in these stories?
  - a) Beauty and the Beast
  - b) The Lion King
  - c) The Little Mermaid
  - d) Roots (the mini-series)
  - e) If none of these are familiar, choose any four stories and write the main idea

### *Making Predictions About the Content*

Previewing also means predicting what the text will say before you read it. It's really a bit like being a detective. Always start a piece of reading by asking yourself what you know about the subject. Look for clues that will point the way to what they writer will say. The best strategy for predicting is to pay attention to the

---

<sup>8</sup> Expository - non-fiction writing intended to give information or persuade.

<sup>9</sup> Narrative - fiction and non-fiction writing that tells a story about events that happened.

title, chapter headings, pictures, charts, and first/last sentences (or paragraphs)

### EXERCISE 7

Use the sample titles, headings, pictures and charts to guess what the writer will say.

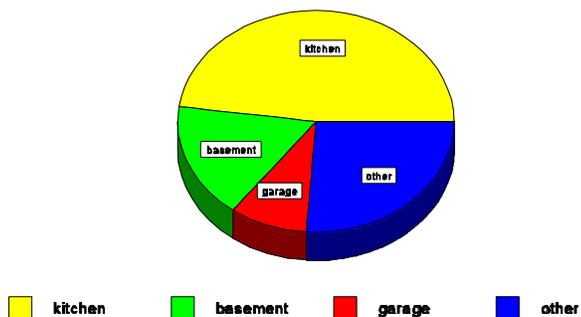
1. **“HELPING HANDS”**



2. **“THE HIDDEN ENEMY”**



Origins of House Fires in Milton: 1995



3. **“BESSIE AND ME”**



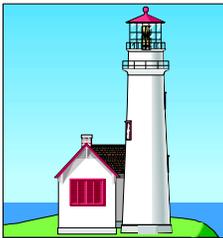
4. **“THE BARGAIN”**



5. **“YOU’VE GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN YOUR HANDS”**

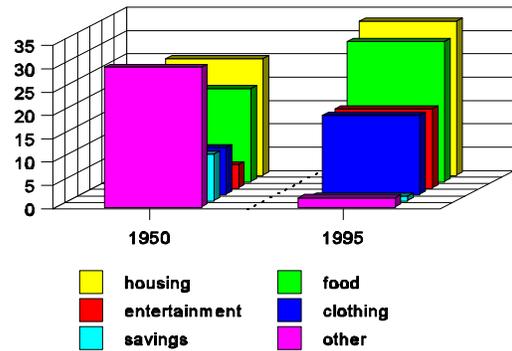


6. **“NIGHT LIGHTS”**



7. **“HOW MOM SLICED THE PIE”**

**Household Expenses**



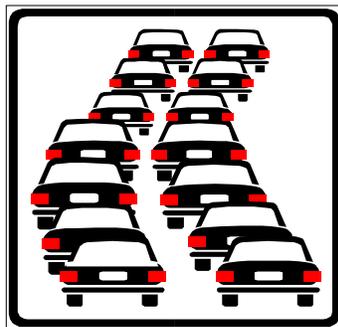
**EXERCISE 8**

Preview each of the three selections below. **DO NOT READ THE WHOLE PASSAGE NOW.**

1. Think about the title; look at the pictures/charts. **Write** down your prediction of what you think each selection will be about.
2. Read the first and last sentences (paragraphs in selection 3).
3. Record the **main idea** of each piece of writing.
4. **List** some details you might expect to find. What **words** might the writer have used?

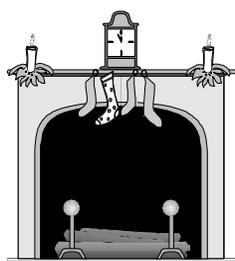
**LIFE IN THE FAST LANE**

When it comes to big city living, there's nothing spoils my day faster than driving home on the expressways in rush hour. First, there's the inconsiderate older driver who hogs the left lane at 90 kph in 110 kph zone, backing up commuters for miles. When asked, he'd probably say, "I was just shopping downtown and the time got away from me. I really meant to be on my way earlier than this." Then, of course, every heavy traffic situation has its impatient tailgater, endangering my life and his, with the wimpy excuse that he figured it would make me go faster. A little difficult with 90 zillion cars jammed into three lanes of traffic, all doing the speed limit. What really makes my blood boil though is the "lane-jumper" who darts from lane to lane, without so much as a shoulder check, cutting off semis and leaving fender benders by the dozen behind him. No wonder I'm stressed to the max every day, my stomach churning with anger, and my teeth clenched with impatience.



## HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

. Opening the kitchen door releases the deep, rich smell of something baking: spicy ginger snaps, fresh doughnuts, or sinfully sweet cheesecake. The scent of Mom's holiday desserts wanders through the big old farm house where I grew up, so many years ago. It blends easily with the smell of the fresh pine boughs Dad has draped over the dining room windows, as he always does. Then it reaches out toward the living room where it twists and pulls into itself the sharp smell of woodsmoke from the fireplace that warms the living room where the family will soon gather. These smells of childhood pull me back through the years and fill me with a comfort I can find nowhere else except when I'm home for the holidays.



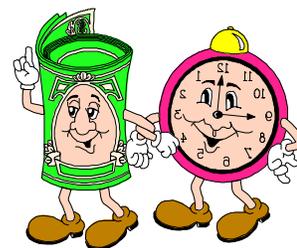
## SOMETHING FOR NOTHING



Paying bills at the end of the month can be a nightmare, especially if you don't have quite enough to keep all your creditors happy. If this sounds like you, it's probably time to take a cold, hard look at how you spend your money. If you're like many people, you shop on credit, using installment plans, credit cards or bank loans regularly. Credit is a service you pay for, just like having your hair done, or hiring someone to clean your house. And it's more expensive than you think. Eliminate credit from your daily life and start paying cash. The results will be like "pennies from heaven".

No, you don't have to give up the basics, you don't have to live like a hermit, and you can still have lots of nice things. Say you want a new entertainment system.

You shop carefully and find just the right product for a really good price, \$2,000. Buy it on time and the down payment is an affordable \$200 with 24 monthly payments of \$100. Total cost \$2,600; that's \$600 that you could have had in your pocket.



Putting it on your credit card is still going to cost you a bundle. Credit card interest is calculated from the date of your purchase if you don't pay it off in full every month. For the same entertainment system costing \$2,000, you decide to pay off \$100 per month. At the end of the first month, you owe interest at 17.5%<sup>10</sup> on \$2,000 for one month, calculated daily. That's \$29.72 in interest. This means only \$70.28 of your \$100 payment goes towards reducing the amount you owe. At the end of the second month, you owe interest on \$1929.72. That's another \$25.90. In total, it will take 24 months and \$397.72 extra to pay off your purchase. Couldn't you use an "extra" \$400?

Even a bank loan to finance a purchase costs money. Two thousand dollars borrowed from the bank for two years at 10% interest would cost you \$2,400 to repay.



So where does the "something for nothing" come in? Pay cash for your \$2,000 entertainment system, and you'll have between \$400 and \$600 more to spend. As a bonus, if you decide to save this money in a savings account, you'll be earning interest on money you would have paid to the credit company. That's ALMOST as good as winning the lottery.



<sup>10</sup> This is an average card rate for 1999. Some cards charge a much higher rate.

## *Stage 2: READING*

- Read:
- Choose how you will read, based on your purpose for reading
  - Read the text from start to finish with as few interruptions as possible.
  - Look for patterns of organization (sequencing) the author uses.
  - Decide whether you are reading facts, opinions, or fiction.

### *Types of Reading*

There are several different methods of reading depending on your *purpose* for reading. When you just need a *general idea*, you can read *skim*. You do this by focusing your eyes as widely as possible and moving them down the centre of the page, reading only a small portion of every line. When you skim, do not read every word. Instead pay attention to words that carry meaning (often nouns and verbs). Reading structure words, like *a, the, and, in, of, etc.*, will only slow you down.

If you are looking for *specific details*, like a name or a date, you can *scan* the text. Have you ever noticed how your own name stands out on a piece of paper? That's because your brain is familiar with the look of certain groups of letters and shapes of words. When you are looking for a name or place, concentrate on finding capital letters. For numbers and dates, visualize (or see) the shape of the numbers in your head before you start scanning. Other clues like, hyphens (-), quotation marks (“..”), question marks (?), **bold type**, *italics*, etc. are easy to spot.

If, on the other hand, you need **in-depth, accurate information**, you will need to read more slowly. This still does not mean that you have to read every word. Instead focus on the words that carry meaning and skip the structure words. Read groups of words, all at once, without subvocalizing and force yourself to read a little faster than you can say the words out loud, so you won't be tempted to use oral reading techniques.

Sometimes, the material you are reading may be very difficult. Perhaps the ideas are complicated. Maybe it is badly written, poorly organized or filled with jargon<sup>11</sup>. When the material is very important or hard to understand, this is the time

---

<sup>11</sup> Jargon - words with special meanings that are familiar only to people who know the subject well.

to read slowly and carefully, paying attention to every punctuation mark and paragraph break. If the material still isn't making sense to you, you may then decide to read it word for word. If even this doesn't help, try reading it out loud.

In general, readers only sample as much of the text as they need to make sense of it. So long as the author's message remains clear, they keep on reading. If it does, they read on. If it doesn't, then the reader must find the part of the writing that doesn't make sense and figure out the unknown word, phrase or sentence until its meaning becomes clear. For example, you are reading an article called, Build a Better Budget. Based on the title, you predicted that it would contain words like *money, dollars, saving, etc.* One sentence reads, "Even if it's only a dollar or two, save some money from each pay cheque." If you read, "Save some *monkey* from each pay cheque", you will instantly realize that it doesn't make sense. Although you may make an instant correction based on your predictions, you may sometimes have to reread to find out where you went wrong.

## ***READING STRATEGIES***

Have you ever read a page and then said, "I didn't get one word of that!" Why didn't you understand?

1. There were too many words you didn't understand. Use context clues.
2. The writing was poorly organized. Use knowledge of sequencing.
3. You were reading too slowly. Use silent reading techniques.
4. Something kept you from concentrating. Eliminate distractions.

### ***1. Using Context to Increase Comprehension***

Do you stop to look up almost every new word?

It's good to learn new words, but every time you stop to look in the dictionary, you lose some of the writer's meaning. A good vocabulary helps comprehension, but you can often guess the meaning of a new word for its **context**, without having to look it up. Good readers regularly use **context** to avoid stopping in the middle of their reading..

What is context? Context is like knowing what your birthday present is before you open it because of the shape of the box, the sound it makes, or the way it

feels:

- a long thin box = a tie;
- a thicker square one that rattles = a jigsaw puzzle;
- a soft squeezable parcel = clothing.

In reading, context refers to the words, phrases, and ideas in a piece of writing that surround an unfamiliar word. Most sentences included context clues to help you understand new words. Here are some strategies for making accurate guesses at the meaning of new words without having to look them up. Look for clues in

1. **word(s) or phrase set off by commas.**  
**Biology**, *the study of all living plants and animals*, is an important part of cleaning up our environment.
2. **word(s) or phrases in brackets**  
Improve your writing by starting more sentences with **participles** (*words ending in “ing”*).
3. **separate sentences that define the new word.**  
Grocery stores should include the **tare** when they weigh your purchase. *The word tare refers to the weight of a container or paper that should be subtracted from the weight shown on the scale.*
4. **an asterisk (\*) or a small number after the word<sup>12</sup> that sends you to the bottom of the page for an explanation or definition.**  
“Set the **spinnaker\***, my lad,” said Nathaniel.
5. **comparisons that start with “like” or “as”**  
Money always **placated** Max just *as surely as a lullaby soothes an tired child.*

---

<sup>12</sup> \* spinnaker - a large triangular sail on a light pole raised at the front of a sailboat when travelling with the wind behind it.

6. **the “picture” painted by clue words within the sentence itself.**

The *blacksmith* raised his *heavy hammer* and began to *beat* the *red hot iron* into a *horse shoe* on his **anvil**.

The meaning of *anvil* is obvious when you think about the picture painted in the sentence itself.

7. Sometimes you can skip an unfamiliar word because it doesn't affect the meaning much.

Send this file to Alice Jones, the **executrix**, whose address is 305-45 Centre Street, Almira, NB, E9X 4Y9.

### EXERCISE 9

Make a guess about the meaning of the words in italics in the following. Use context strategies to help you. Check your answers in the dictionary.

1. This rock is from the *Precambrian* era, the earliest period in the history of the earth.
2. Her happiness *infused* itself into the group like tea steeping in a pot.
3. Many people in the 1800s died from *consumption* (the old name for tuberculosis)
4. His smooth words and clear logic were *eloquent* enough to persuade her instantly.
5. The sweetness of any fruit product comes partly from *fructose* it naturally contains.
6. *Mendicants*, no longer seen in North American, can still be found begging for pennies and food scraps in many Third World Countries.
7. Unlike animals, humans cannot eat and breath at the same time because the *larynx*<sup>13</sup> is placed too high in the throat.
8. Your work will be carefully inspected before we decided to promote or *demote* you.
9. The judge said he had to make *restitution* for his crime. His restitution included paying back the \$300 he stole, doing 60 hours of community service, and going on the radio to say he was sorry.
10. Before the bridge was built, his grandparents *traversed* the river in a rowboat.

---

<sup>13</sup> Larynx - a special structure in the throat of most animals that contains the vocal cords which vibrate when air passes over them to form sound.

## EXERCISE 10

Read the following passage. Guess at the meaning of every word written in italics.

The brown trout *lunged* at the bait like a cat after a mouse. As it broke the surface, it sent *minute* droplets of water that produced *prisms* of colour brighter than any rainbow, *cascading* in every direction. This fish was *pugnacious*, a true fighter. Leaping and twisting *incessantly*, it repeatedly *surged* back and forth across the *placid* little lake, making waves where only seconds before the calm water had reflected only sky and clouds. I truly admired this fish and its spirit. For me, fishing is mostly about winning, about reeling in an *opponent* that is equal to my skill. The thought of him broiling over an open fire in the wilderness and the delicious *repast* that would follow is really just a delightful bonus.

Record your guesses and then check them in the dictionary.

### 2. *Using Sequence to Improve Comprehension*

Previewing a piece of writing tells you where you are going (main idea) before you start and having a good map will help you get there. When a piece of writing is done well, the writer makes a map for you to follow so that you can easily what route he/she is taking through the ideas. The map the writer creates is called **structure** or **sequencing**. Four basic types of sequencing guide most writers.

1. Time sequence (chronological order)
2. Listing (e.g. most important to least important)
3. Cause and effect
4. Comparison

As you already know, all writing falls into one of two groups: narrative (fiction or non-fiction) and expository (informing or persuading)

Most narrative writing uses *time order* to arrange the events in the story. The story begins at the beginning and works it way through the events in the same order that they happened in time. Sometimes, the writer plays with the time order, using flashbacks or foreshadowing. *Flashbacks* are found in the middle of the story and tell you about an event that happened before the story began. *Foreshadowing* is

also placed in the middle of the story, but it tells about things that will happen at the end or after the end of the story.

Most stories start by introducing the main characters who then get themselves involved with a problem. The rest of the story (the plot) usually follows the characters as they work to solve the problem, usually living “happily ever after.”

Expository writing uses listing, cause and effect, or comparison to organize the details, facts, ideas and opinions the writer wants the reader to understand.

**Listing** organizes the writer’s most important major points in some order that the writer thinks is logical and easy to follow: least important to most important; known to unknown; general to specific.

**Cause and effect** order follows one of three patterns. After introducing the main idea, the writer can

- (1) present all the causes followed by all the effects.
- (2) list each single cause followed by its effect
- (3) create a chain like structure where an effect becomes the cause of something else. For example, *We had an ice storm (cause) so Jane fell (effect). Because she fell (cause), she broke her wrist (effect). Since she broke her wrist (cause), she hasn’t been able to go to work (effect)* Here’s a rhyme that explains why it’s important to look after the small details.

“A little neglect may breed great mischief.....

CAUSE	EFFECT
For want of a nail,	a shoe was lost;
For want of a shoe,	a horse was lost;
For want of a horse,	a rider was lost;
For want of a rider,	a battle was lost;
For want of a battle,	a crown was lost
And all for the sake of a horseshoe nail!	

**Comparison** is another common sequence, or structure, used in expository writing. When a writer organizes his ideas around this pattern, he/she has two choices:

- (1) present all the details about one part of the comparison in a block, followed by all the details of the other (block by block);
- (2) present one aspect at a time and discuss the both of the things being compared in relation to that aspect.

Recognizing the sequencing patterns an author is using as you read will make following his/her train of thought a lot easier. You will know what to expect and where you are going before you get there.

Besides using these basic structures, writers also help readers by leaving sign posts for them to follow. These sign posts, called **transition words**, show you what method of organization the writer is using and whether he/she is at the beginning, the middle, or the end of the writing.

Here are some sample **transition words** that you might find in each kind of sequencing.

**Time:** before, after, when, until, meanwhile, the next day,

**Listing:** first, second, lastly, finally, next, then

**Cause and effect:** therefore, thus, hence, as a result, consequently

**Comparison;** in the case of ....., on the one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, conversely, in contrast

Here are some transition words that can show you whether you are at the beginning, middle or end of the writing.

**In the introduction:** main, central, important, major, basic, (i.e. "There are three important reasons for this.")

**In the body:** for example, by comparison, by contrast, first, second, another major concern, next, further, turning now to, etc.

**In the conclusion:** finally, at last, in conclusion, in summary, in closing, to summarize, etc.

\*Look for sequencing and transition words as you read. They will not only guide you through the writer's thoughts, but help you understand the writer's message.

**EXERCISE 11**

Read the passages in Exercise 8. Name the sequence or patterns used. Record the transition words that guided your reading.

**EXERCISE 12**

Read the following paragraphs. Use the transition words to help you decide what method or pattern of sequencing the writer has used in each. Record and explain each answer.

**“TRUE PATRIOT LOVE”**

Canadians, in general, are quiet, humble people who rarely say or do anything to draw attention to themselves. Heaven forbid that they should be aggressive about an opinion. But you'll have a fight on your hands if you ask any Canadian this question: “Which part of Canada is the best?” First ask a westerner, anyone from Banff to Kenora, your question. These prairie folk will claim that their farms are bigger, their flat lands more mysterious, and their life style more civilized. Next, make your enquiry of central Canadians. Their response is quick. Their trees are bigger, their industries more prosperous, and their rolling countryside more picturesque. Finally, Maritimers will gladly tell you that their coast lines are more rugged, their seafood divinely delicious, and their hospitality unequalled. Oh yes, don't forgot the people from British Columbia in your survey. They believe so firmly that everything about their province is beyond compare that they don't even bother making a list but simply say, “Is there any question? B.C. is the only place to be.” Every Canadian honestly believes his part of the country to be the best. What can we conclude from all of this? The answer's really simple; Canada, from coast to coast, is the best country in the world..

**REQUIESCAT IN PACE<sup>14</sup>**

Marriott decided to bury the dog first. He'd have to worry about the burned out shell that used to be his family home later. He carried the little terrier wrapped in an old blanket from his pickup and started up into the hills that Hairy had loved

---

<sup>14</sup> Requiescat in pace (RIP) - an inscription often found on old gravestones which means, “May he rest in peace.”.

so well. He passed the pond where the ducks used to tease Hairy until the poor old dog would nearly collapse from exhaustion. Then Marriott followed what was left of the path down into the quiet little glen that had somehow managed to escape the wildfire. Here by the side of the brook, Hairy's favourite summer retreat, he dug a small hole and gently arranged the charred body, saying a few quiet words of thanks for the lifetime of companionship and good humour the playful dog had given him. Slowly rising, he began to shovel dirt into the hole that seemed way too small to contain such a large and generous spirit. As he worked, he saw a leaf float by on the surface of the bubbling water. He knew that the leaf would stay with the stream until it reached the river and that, in all likelihood, the river would carry this same leaf on its long journey through the hills and onto the flat lands. Somehow Marriott realized that he, too, would carry his memories and love of Hairy with him through the rest of his life, just as the river would carry the leaf to the sea.

### **BY WHOM?**

“Some kids are just doomed to fail,” I overheard a primary teacher say the other day. That's a death sentence that hardly any six year old can overcome. But the real issue is WHO is dooming them to fail? Everyone and everything that has to do with education; that's who. It can start with something as simple as a mispronounced word. “Brian” somehow becomes “brain” and “horse” becomes “house”. His classmates titter quietly and the teacher says, “Come on now, let's be serious here. Surely, you can read that. It was on your spelling list last week.” A simple observation by the teacher suggesting that this child is less skilled than his peers quickly turns into permission for the others to taunt him at recess with, “Come on, what's the matter with you? Are you stupid or something?” His friends start to see him as “stupid” and soon he starts to believe he is stupid. Now, he doesn't like to read out loud for fear he will be embarrassed by another “stupid” mistake. His reading skills fall farther behind. Now everyone *knows* he's slow. When the time comes for the class play, he is passed over for the larger speaking role and ends up in the background as a tree or a turnip. Over the years, he learns to sit at the back of the room, just one among thirty-two students, where he will hopefully go unnoticed, where he can't hear properly, and where he can “zone out” when he doesn't understand. Because he tunes out so much of the time, he learns very little, and the standardized tests show clearly that his skills are below grade level. As a

result, he gets moved into a program that's "less demanding" and where the expectations are lower. He may graduate with a piece of paper that's meaningless or he may drop out before he's finished, but the bottom line is that he'll only be able to get minimum wage jobs where he'll be the last one hired and the first let go.

### **AAAND...THE VAN IS THE WINNER**

There's no question that the new mini-vans are the way to go. When it comes to comfort, convenience, and style, vans win out every time. Vans have plenty of well upholstered seating in a spacious compartment which is supported by shocks and springs that provide a soft, floating ride. Pickups, however, rarely seat more than two comfortably and have a very hard ride that will make your back ache on the first stretch of rough road. When it comes to convenience, vans come out on top again. With five easy-to-open doors, passengers and cargo can be quickly loaded and unloaded. In addition, your goods and riders are dry and well groomed when they arrive at their destination. On the other hand, trucks tend to be built higher off the ground, are harder to climb into and with only two doors (or even with four) it's always awkward to get extra people in and out. As well, trucks require a long lift to load cargo and even with the best truck cap, your belongings can shift around and sometimes get wet. The last point of comparison between vans and trucks is their style. Vans have smooth flowing lines and an aerodynamic shape while pickups are square and boxy. Consider all this and you won't have much trouble deciding that mini-vans are the best choice when it comes to transportation.

### **3. *Using Inference to Improve Comprehension***

*Inference* is a writer's "trick" to give a lot of information in a few words. In order to understand the inference, the reader must first look at the facts and details the writer has included. These details form "clues" or inferences that point the reader toward deeper or extra meanings within the sentence. For example,

*The fishing boat, its hull in serious need of paint, was still riding high in the water when it returned to harbour.*

What can you figure out about the owner of the fishing boat and his catch by paying attention to the facts and details he/she includes?

If the boat is *riding high in the water*, it means that it is empty or nearly empty and that they have caught nothing. The word *still* suggests that this is not the first time this has happened. When you add *its hull in serious need of paint*, you would probably be correct in guessing that the owner is down on his luck and has neither the money nor the energy to paint his boat. You might even conclude that he is depressed.

The writer has left you clues that will give you a bigger picture than his exact words do, and you, the reader, have “inferred” some new information from his words. In other words, you have used ***inference*** to get closer to the writer’s meaning.

Try this one.

*Frankie shifted his weight from one foot to the other several times and drew designs in the dust with the toe of his sneaker. For the tenth time in as many minutes, he shielded his eyes against the blazing sun and looked up the road toward town.*

Where is Frankie and what is he doing? What time of year is it? How is Frankie feeling? How old is Frankie?

Frankie is standing beside a dusty country road, waiting for someone or something. It’s summer time. Frankie is probably a child. Look for the clues in the sentence that support these inferences.

To get the most out of the printed word, readers can’t just sit around, waiting to be filled up with a story or information. They need to keep themselves involved as they read by asking questions and looking for answers as they read. They use inferences to “read between the lines” and discover the writer’s full meaning.

Inference is most commonly used in fictional writing but is sometimes found in persuasive material too. In informative writing, the author is less likely to use inference because readers need accurate, precise details and the writer probably doesn’t want to take the chance of the reader making an incorrect inference..

**EXERCISE 13**

Here are some more examples of inference. Find clues in each sentence that will help you answer the questions that follow each one.

1. *Martha carefully adjusted her best bonnet, tucking in a few wisps of grey hair, before climbing into the buggy.*  
How old is Martha? When did this story take place? Where is Martha going?
2. *The sound of shattering glass and tearing metal seemed to last forever. David struggled into his pants and shoes as he felt his way toward the window.*  
What time of day is it? What was David doing before he heard the sound? What did David hear?
3. *My grandfather's hands reflect a lifetime of handling animals and planting crops.*  
What do his hands look like? How old is he? What is his occupation?
4. *The roadside bushes and weeds all wore a thick coat of dust, and even the toughest ones had started to wilt and turn brown.*  
What time of year is it? What has the weather been like for the past few days?
5. *"She's a good mother who always feeds her family top quality meats from Cloverdale's".*  
What kind of mother are you if you shop somewhere else?
6. *Elmer turned the key in the ignition and whispered to it, "Bessie, I know you can do it."*  
Describe Elmer's car. Describe Elmer.
7. *When rattling her keys didn't get the clerk's attention, Melissa started drumming her fingers on the counter.*  
How is Melissa feeling?

8. An advertisement in a business magazine reads, “*Now that you’ve got that big promotion, don’t you think you should be driving a BMW too?*”  
What does this ad imply about your present car? About your new co-workers? About your salary?
9. *Lucy, wearing cut-off jeans and a tiny pink tank-top which showed off her bare midriff, whistled softly and almost skipped around the kitchen as she finished the dishes.*  
How old is Lucy? What time of year is it? What emotion is Lucy feeling?
10. *Lisa yawned, rubbed her eyes and stretched.*  
What has Lisa been doing?

### ***Stage 3: POST-READING***

- Recite:** When you have finished reading, ask yourself, “What was that all about?” Try to “retell” what you have just read in your own words. If you can “retell” something, it generally means you have understood it. Retelling also helps you remember.
- Review:** Often when you are reading something important or complicated you will need to read it more than once. People who read well know that rereading is often necessary to get the writer’s full meaning. Rereading is not a mark of a poor reader. In fact, it’s just the opposite. If you were taking notes as you read, it is a good idea to review them within twenty-four hours and then regularly after that to keep the ideas and details fresh in your mind.

### ***Drawing Logical Conclusions***

Often writers expect you to think about what you’ve just read and then draw your own conclusions after you have finished reading.. When you do this, it’s important to be sure that your conclusions are logical. In other words, are there enough facts and details to be sure that your conclusion is a likely outcome.

### **EXERCISE 14**

Use the sentences in Exercise 13 to determine which of the following statements are logical conclusions.

1. Martha is a widow.
2. David will go outside to see what happened.
3. My grandfather are tanned and covered with scars.
4. The road is in Manitoba.
5. This is an advertisement.
6. Elmer is in a hurry.
7. Melissa will yell at the clerk.
8. The person with the new job is under 25 years of age.
9. Lucy has three children.
10. Lisa is getting ready to write an exam.

### ***Identifying Fact and Opinion***

After reading, it's a good idea to decide whether the writer's information is based on facts or opinions. ***Facts are always provable.*** For example, "The Daily News of June 14 says that, according to a recent survey they conducted, 77% of their readers agree that the town needs a new sewage disposal plant." If asked, the newspaper will be able to present proof of their study and its results. Opinions, on the other hand, simply tell you what one person "believes" on a subject. "Our current sewage disposal system is shameful and must be replaced." This is an opinion. The writer believes that his town's waste treatment system is poor but offers no proof. Some writers may try to make opinions look like facts, just to get you to agree with their point of view. As an effective reader, you need facts to form your own opinions and you should never accept an opinion until you have that it is logical and accurate.

### **EXERCISE 15**

Which of the following statements are facts and which are opinions?

1. This salad is delicious.
2. She is taller than her brother.
3. Birthdays are not important after 30.
4. Body piercing is unacceptable if you work here.
5. Linda said, "This is an ugly house!"
6. The minimum wage should be \$7.50 per hour.
7. The population of our town is shrinking, so it will disappear soon.
8. He doesn't make enough to afford a house like that.
9. High income taxes are responsible for our poor economy.
10. Suzanne is always well organized at work.

### **EXERCISE 16**

Use the strategies in this module as you read these passages.

### **Reading Ancient Mail**

About 6,000 years ago, the people of Sumer, (ancient Iraq) wrote records of their business transactions.

They used a system of writing called cuneiform. Cuneiform is somewhat like our alphabet. Scribes, people who were specially trained in writing things down, used pens made from reeds to press the shapes of the letters into damp clay tablets.

After the record was written, a thin, clay envelope was wrapped around the tablet. On the envelope, the scribe wrote a summary of the tablet's contents and stamped it with a seal that showed it was a valid document.

For many years, archaeologists have found these letters whenever they dug up old cities in the Middle East. The envelopes have given them many important pieces of information about the way the Sumerians lived their lives and conducted their local businesses. Some of the envelopes are particularly interesting because they contained messages sent between nations or kings. Until recently, however, very few of the letters themselves have been read because the only way to open them was to break the envelopes. Often when the envelopes were broken, the clay tablet inside was badly damaged and could not be read anyway. As a result, the scientists decided to be content with the messages on the envelopes and stored the unbroken parcels carefully in museums.

Recently an Israeli research team has found a way to read the letters without breaking the envelopes or the letters inside. They are using a form of tomography (a CAT scan is usually reserved for diagnosing human illness). They aim a CAT scan - a medical device that builds a three dimensional picture of the interior of something - at the clay tablets. The computer sees the differences in the thickness of the clay inside the envelope and translates them into shades of grey. Researchers can then read the shape of the symbols in the clay and learn what was actually written by the scribes more than six thousand years ago.

1. Where were these ancient letters written?
2. Scientists have always been able to read these letters. True? False?
3. The computer translates the letters for the scientists. True? False?
4. Where would you likely find a CAT scan?
5. What kind of information do the letters contain?

### **Making Up in Old Egypt**

Make-up and face decoration have been part of life for both men and women for thousands of years. Although scientists aren't always sure why people used make-up, pictures on the walls of tombs definitely show people in all walks of life, from farmers to kings, wearing a variety of colours on their faces as well as on other parts of their bodies. The Egyptians wore make-up that was mostly black, green, or white.

Recently scientists examined powders taken from Egyptian tombs that were

built between 3,000- and 4,000 years ago. The cosmetics they examined had been stored in jars of alabaster (a kind of white stone), wood, or reed and were probably used as eye liners and eye shadow. They found that the powders contained lead based minerals like galena and cerussite, as well as man-made compounds.

Cosmetic makers of four millennia ago first crushed lead oxide and mixed it with water and rock salt and filtered the mixture many times. Then they added fats and oils to the dry powders much as make-up is made today, although modern cosmetics don't contain lead because it was discovered about a hundred years ago that lead has toxic effects on humans.

Egyptian cosmetics weren't always just to make you look beautiful and appealing. One jar, now in the museum in Cairo, carries the words, "Eye lotion to be dispersed, good for eyesight." An Egyptian from 3,500 years ago even talked about recipes for treating a variety of eye problems. Some jars bore a "three-star" column of letters which meant it was high quality stuff.

1. What health hazard was caused by ancient cosmetics?
2. How long ago were the powders prepared?
3. What are some differences between ancient cosmetics and modern ones?

### **What about some beer, eh?**

If you're a Canadian, you likely know about "hosers" and our international reputation as beer drinkers. But Doug McKenzie of SCTV fame wasn't the first to discover the joys of a cold "brewski". Spanish researchers recently found two large pottery jars from about 3,100 years ago that contained ancient grains of wheat (emmer) and barley. When they looked at them closely, they realized that they "had been deformed and gelatinized through a malting process".

When a Spanish brewery heard about the find, they offered to fund the research and production of a Bronze-age style beer which they called "Zythos".

They began by finding out which plants from the area where the jars were found could have been used as preservatives. Then they collected emmer, barley, plant preservatives and honey from the same area. They even used water from a nearby spring.

To create the malt, they let the grain germinate, then cooked and ground it. This heated mixture was then added to the contents of specially made jars that were just like the ones the scientists had discovered earlier. Although several other groups have produced beer based on recipes as old as 6,000 years, Zythos is the

first to be made using actual plants similar to the original and based on actual historical research.

1. What name did they give the beer?
2. In which country was it made?
3. Name three ingredients in the beer?
4. How did they know that they had found beer making ingredients?
5. Is it logical to conclude that the beer would taste good? Why?

## **Canoe**

Canoe -  
Bright,  
Yellow  
Arrow

That cuts the morning stillness,  
That breaks the mirror surfaces,  
That carries me in silence,  
That lifts my soul towards a rosy sky,  
My comfort and solace in a busy world.

1. How does the writer feel about the canoe?
2. What similarities does the writer find between canoes and arrows?
3. What does he get from paddling his canoe?

## **WHAT IS LITERATURE**

The word “literature” can refer to any written communication, but it is usually used to describe writing which is especially well written and carries a message about ideas of permanent or universal interest. For example, Shakespeare’s poetry and plays are part of the literature of the English language. First, they use the English language well; second, they present human beings dealing with life problems that are as understandable today as they were 400 years ago. Shakespeare wrote about powerful men who would commit any crime to keep or advance their positions in the world; about young lovers whose lives were destroyed by the hate and violence of a family feud; or who were so blinded by love that they trusted the wrong people.

Writing does not have to be old to be considered literature. Anyone, even you, can create literature if it is well written and deals with a common human problem. It can be a narrative about true events, fictional happenings, or it can be an expository essay stating facts or opinions about the world.

English courses often include a section on literature because these writings

- demonstrate how to use the language well
- deal with problems that are familiar to most people
- have important comments on human behaviour
- help us make sense of the world we live in

Literature is usually divided into five categories: novel, short story, poetry, essays, and drama. In the IAU section of this program, you will learn more about these five different kinds of writing.

## **EXERCISE 17**

The readings in the rest of this module are examples of literature. Read the samples that follow. Then ask your instructor to help you find more pieces of literature to read.

### **The Dog in the Manger<sup>15</sup>**

A dog looking for its afternoon nap decided to take a nap in the manger of an ox. He quickly climbed in and curled up on the straw. But soon the ox, returning from its afternoon work, returned to the manger to eat some of the straw. The dog became angry because he was being awakened from a deep sleep. The dog stood up and barked at the ox, and whenever it came up and tried to eat some of the straw from its manger.. At last the ox had to give up any hope of getting at the straw, and went away muttering:

*“Ah, people often grudge others what they cannot enjoy themselves.”*

---

<sup>15</sup> Manger - a large box from which animals, like cows, often eat.

## **The Fox and the Grapes**

One hot summer's day a fox was strolling through an orchard. He came across a bunch of grapes just ripening on a vine which had been trained to grow over a high branch. "Just the thing to quench my thirst," said the fox. Walking back a few paces, he took a run and a jump, and just missed the bunch. He tried again. With a one, two, three, he jumped up, but with more success than he had had the first time.. Again and again he tried to get the tempting morsel, but at last he had to give it up, and walked away with his nose in the air, saying: "I am sure they are sour."

*It is easy to despise what you cannot get.*

## **The Shepherd's Boy**

Once a shepherd's helper was put in charge of a flock of sheep at the foot of a large mountain near a dark forest. It was very lonely there for him because he had to stay there all day and there was no one around for miles. One day, he thought up a plan to get some company and some attention. He ran back to his village and breathlessly shouted, "Wolf, wolf!". Many of the villagers ran to the field where the sheep were kept to help the young shepherd fight the wolf and save the sheep. When they arrived at the field, the sheep were grazing quietly, they could find no sign of wolves or anything else that might have threatened them.

The shepherd's boy enjoyed all the attention he got, and a few days later when he got lonely again, he tried the same trick. Again the villagers raced to help him, and again, they found no sign of any trouble.

Shortly after this, however, a wolf really did come out of the forest and start to chase the sheep. Of course, the boy ran quickly to the village calling even more loudly than before, "Wolf, wolf!" This time the villagers, who had been fooled twice before, thought that the boy was once again making up a story, so they remained in their houses and did nothing. No one came to his aid, so the wolf killed and ate several of the boy's flock. The shepherd's master was angry when he learned about the sheep the wolf had eaten and he punished the boy. When the boy complained about what had happened, one of the wise men in the village said:

*"A liar will not be believed, even when he speaks the truth."*

### **When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer** by Walt Whitman

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,  
 When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause  
     in the lecture room,  
 How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
 Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
 In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
 Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

### **What Redburn Saw** by Herman Melville (retold in modern English)

On the way to my boarding house, I usually passed through a narrow street called "Lancelott's-Hey". It was lined with dingy prison-like warehouses full of cotton ready for shipping. In this street, or rather an alley, you seldom saw anyone except the odd deliveryman and sometimes an old watchman, sitting in his smoky office like a ghost.

Once as I was passing through the alley, I heard a weak moan, which seemed to come from someplace below me. I was standing on a narrow strip of sidewalk. There were dark walls on every side of me and no one in sight. I jumped at the sound, and almost started to run, but then I heard the dismal sound again. It was the low, hopeless, endless wail of someone forever lost. At last I had the courage to move towards a narrow opening which went down several feet to the cellars beneath the warehouse. There some fifteen feet below the sidewalk, crouching in nameless squalor<sup>16</sup>, with her head bowed over, was the figure of what had been a woman. Her blue arms folded around two shrunken things, like children, that leaned toward her, one on each side. At first, I didn't know whether they were alive or dead. They made no sound and they did not move, but from that deep pit came that soul-sickening wail.

I made a noise with my foot, which in the silence echoed far and near, but

---

<sup>16</sup> Squalor - filth caused by poverty and neglect

there was no response. Louder, still; when one of the children lifted its head and looked briefly up at me, then closed its eyes and lay motionless. The woman also now gazed up, and saw me; but let her eyes fall down again. They were silent and almost dead with want. How they had crawled into that den, I could not tell, but there they had crawled to die. At that moment, I never even thought of trying to help them; for death was so deeply stamped on their faces, that I almost saw them as dead already. I stood looking down on them, while my whole soul swelled within me; and I asked myself, what right anybody in the whole wide world had to smile and be glad, when sights like this one were to be seen. Who were these ghosts that I saw? Were they not human beings? A woman and two girls? With eyes and ears and lips like anyone queen? With hearts that beat with the dull ache that was their life?

At last I walked on towards the open end of the alley. I hoped to see one of the ragged old beggar women I had seen there several times, digging in the rubbish for bites of food or bits of other garbage they could sell for a few cents.

I found them. Stopping one of them, I asked if she knew about the people I had just left. She replied that she did not; nor did she want to. I then asked another woman, a dirty toothless old woman, with ragged clothing tied around her body. Looking at me for an instant, she just went on picking through the rubbish. She said that she knew who I was talking about, but that she had no time to pay attention to beggars and their brats. Speaking to another woman, who seemed to know what I was talking about, I asked if there was someplace the woman could be taken. "Yes," she replied, "to the churchyard." I said she was alive, not dead.

"Then she'll never die," was the answer. "She's been down there these last three days, with nothing to eat; -- that I know myself."

"She deserves it," said the old hag as she lifted her bag of pickings on her crooked shoulders and turned to totter away, "that Betsy Jennings deserves it --was she ever married? Tell me that."

Leaving the alley, I turned towards busier streets. When I met a policeman, I told him of the condition of the woman and the girls.

"It's none of my business, fella," he said. "I don't belong to that street."

"Who does then?"

"I don't know. But what business is ti of yours? Aren't you a Yankee?"

"Yes," I said, "but come on, I'll help you remove that woman if you say so."

"There now, fella, go on board your ship and stick to it; and leave these

matters to the town..”

I stopped two more policemen, but with no better success. They wouldn't even go with me to the place. The truth was that it was out of the way, in a silent secluded spot. The misery of the three outcasts, hiding away in the ground, did not make an impact on anyone.

Returning to Launcelott's-Hey, I stamped my feet again to get their attention, none of the three looked up or even moved. As I stood there trying to decide what to do, a voice called to me from the warehouse across the street and asked what I was doing. I called the man over and when he came I pointed down into the dark hole.

“Well,” he said, “what of it?”

“Can't we get them out: I said. “Haven't you got some place in your building where you can put them? Have you anything you can give them to eat?”

“You're crazy, boy,” he said, “do you suppose that Parkins and Wood want their warehouse turned into a hospital?”

I then went to my boarding house, and told Handsome Mary, my landlady, what I had seen. I asked her if she could do something to get the woman and girls removed; or she could not do that, let me have some food for them. But though she was a kind woman, Mary replied that she gave away enough to beggars in her own street (which was true) without looking after the whole neighbourhood.

Going into the kitchen, I asked the cook to give me some cold leftovers. She started to swear about the miserable “no-goods” in the pit and refused. I then stepped into the dining room where our dinner was being spread, and waited until my landlady's assistant left. I grabbed some bread and cheese from the table and left the house. Hurrying to the lane, I dropped the food down into the hole. One of the girls tried to catch it, but fell back, fainting. The sister pushed the other's hand aside and took the bread in her hand, but with a weak, uncertain grasp. She put it to her mouth, but let it fall again, murmuring something like “water”. The woman did not stir; her head was bowed over, as I had first seen her.

Seeing how it was, I ran down towards the docks near where my ship was moored and into a tiny little tavern. I begged for a pitcher; but the cross old man who owned it refused, unless I paid for it. But I had no money. My boarding-house was a long way off, and it would be lost time to run back to the ship, so, I hurried to a nearby drinking fountain. Taking off my hat, which had been loaned to me for the day, I filled it with water.

With this, I returned to Launcelott's-Hey. With great difficulty, I was able to get down into the hole where the three were. The two girls drank out of the hat and

looked at me with blank stares. The woman didn't say a word and did not move. While the girls were breaking and eating the bread, I tried to lift the woman's head, but weak as she was, she seemed determined on holding it down. Seeing her arms still wrapped around her chest, and that something seemed hidden under her ragged clothes, a thought crossed my mind. When I moved her hands for a moment, I caught a glimpse of a tiny baby, its legs wrapped up in an old cloth cap. Its face was dazzling white, even in this squalor; but the closed eyes looked like balls of indigo<sup>17</sup>. It must have been dead for several hours.

Since the woman refused to speak, eat, or drink, I asked one of the girls who they were, and where they lived; but she only stared vacantly, muttering something I couldn't understand.

The smell of the place was now getting too much for me, but I stood for a moment, trying to figure out if it was possible to drag them out onto the street. But if I did, what then? They would only perish in the street, and here they were at least protected from the rain; and more than that, they could die in peace.

I crawled up into the street. Looking down on them, I was almost sorry that I had brought them food, for it would only prolong their lives, with no hope of any permanent help. They would die soon; they were too far gone for any medicine to help. I really don't know if I should confess another thought that went through my mind as I stood there, but it was this --I felt an urge to do them the last mercy, of somehow putting an end to their miserable lives. I could almost have done if I had been stopped by thoughts of the law. I knew the law well. It would let them die all by themselves without giving them one cup of water, would spend a thousand pounds<sup>18</sup>, if necessary, in convicting the person who might offer to quicken their death and release them from their miserable lives.

The next day, and the next, I passed the hole three times, and each time saw the same thing: the girls leaning on the woman on each side, and the woman with her arms folded around the baby, and her head bowed. The first evening I did not see the bread that I had dropped down that morning.; but the second evening, the bread I had dropped that morning remained untouched. On the third morning the smell that came from the hole was so awful that I stopped the same policeman I had stopped before, who was patrolling the same street. I told him that the people I had

---

<sup>17</sup> Indigo - a plant that produces a blue dye

<sup>18</sup> Pounds -- the unit of money used in England, like the dollar

mentioned before were dead, and he had better have them removed. He looked like he didn't believe me, and added that it wasn't his street.

When I arrived at the docks on the way to my ship, I went into the guard station and asked for one of the captains. I told him the story. But from what he said, I was led to believe that the Dock Police were different from the town police, and this was not the right place to report my information.

I could do nothing more that morning for I had to go to work on the ship. At noon, when I went for dinner, I hurried into Launcelott's-Hey and found the pit empty. In place of the woman and children, a heap of quick-lime was glistening<sup>19</sup>.

I tried, but I couldn't find who had taken them away, or where they had gone, but my prayer was answered -- they were dead, departed, and at peace.

I looked down into the hole again and imagined I still saw the little forms crouching there. Oh, what do we believe and how do we hope to be saved? Tell me, oh Bible, that story of Lazarus<sup>20</sup> again that I may be able to find comfort in my heart for the poor and forgotten. We are surrounded by the needs and hardships of our fellow men, and yet we usually follow our own pleasures regardless of what others are suffering. Are we not like people sitting up with a corpse and having a really good party in the house of the dead?

### **The Forsaken** by Duncan Campbell Scott

I  
 Once in the winter  
 Out on a lake  
 In the heart of the north-land,  
 Far from the Fort  
 And far from the hunters,  
 A Chippewa<sup>21</sup> woman  
 With her sick baby,  
 Crouched in the last hours  
 Of a great storm.

---

<sup>19</sup> Quick-lime -- a dry white powder used to keep disease from spreading.

<sup>20</sup> Lazarus -- a dead man that Christ made come back to life

<sup>21</sup> Chippewa -- or Ojibwa, an native group living around Lake Superior

Frozen and hungry,  
 She fished through the ice  
 With a line of the twisted  
 Bark of the cedar,  
 And a rabbit-bone hook  
 Polished and barbed:  
 Fished with the bare hook  
 All through the wild day,  
 Fished and caught nothing;  
 While the young chieftain  
 Tugged at her breasts,  
 Or slept in the lacings  
 Of the warm tikanagan<sup>22</sup>.  
 All the lake-surface  
 Steamed with the hissing  
 Of millions of iceflakes  
 Hurlled by the wind;  
 Behind her the round  
 Of a lonely island  
 Roared like a fire  
 With the voice of the storm  
 In the depths of the cedars.  
 Valiant, unshaken,  
 She took of her own flesh,  
 Baited the fish-hook,  
 Drew in a grey-trout,  
 Drew in his fellows,  
 Heaped them beside her,  
 Dead in the snow.  
 Valiant, unshaken,  
 She faced the long distance,  
 Wolf-haunted and lonely,  
 Sure of her goal  
 And the life of her dear one:  
 Tramped for two days,

---

<sup>22</sup> Tikanagan -- cradle board, portable baby bed

On the third in the morning,  
 Saw the strong bulk  
 Of the Fort by the river,  
 Saw the wood-smoke  
 Hang soft in the spruces,  
 Heard the keen yelp  
 Of the ravenous huskies  
 Fighting for whitefish;  
 Then she had rest.

## II

Years and years after,  
 When she was old and withered,  
 When her son was an old man  
 And his children filled with vigour,  
 They came in their northern tour on the verge of winter,  
 To an island in a lonely lake.  
 There one night they camped, and on the morrow  
 Gathered their kettles and birch-bark  
 Their rabbit-skin robes and their mink traps,  
 Launched their canoes and slunk away through the island,  
 Left her alone forever,  
 Without a word of farewell,  
 Because she was old and useless,  
 Like a paddle broken and warped,  
 Or a pole that was splintered.  
 Then, without a sigh,  
 Valiant, unshaken,  
 She smoothed her dark locks under her kerchief,  
 Composed her shawl in state,  
 Then folded her hands ridged with sinews and corded with veins,  
 Folded them across her breast spent with the nourishing of children,  
 Gazed at the sky past the tops of the cedars,  
 Saw two spangle nights arise out of the twilight,  
 Saw two days go by filled with the tranquil sunshine,  
 Saw, without pain or dread, or even a moment of longing:  
 Then on the third great night there came thronging and thronging

Millions of snowflakes out of windless cloud;  
They covered her deep and silent.  
But in the frost of the dawn,  
Up from the life below,  
Rose a column of breath  
Through the tiny cleft in the snow,  
Fragile, delicately drawn,  
Wavering with its own weakness,  
In the wilderness a sign of the spirit,  
Persisting still in the sight of the sun  
Till day was done.  
Then all light was gathered up by the hand of God and hid in His breast  
Then there was born a silence deeper than silence,  
Then she had rest.

**Trees** by Henry David Thoreau  
 They battle with the tempests of a century.  
 See what scars they bear,  
 What limbs they have lost before we were born!

Yet they never adjourn;  
 They steadily vote for their principles,  
 And send their roots further and wider  
 From the *same center*.  
 They die at their posts,  
 And they leave a tough butt for the choppers  
 To exercise themselves about,  
 And a stump which serves as their monument.,  
 They attend no caucus<sup>23</sup>,  
 They make no compromise.  
 They use no policy.  
 Their only principle is growth.

### **EXERCISE 18** (optional)

Test your reading speed and comprehension again. Follow the instructions in Exercise 3 at the beginning of this module.

Has your reading speed improved?

Do you feel that you are understanding more of what you read?

### **EXERCISE 19**

Now that you have read about how to improve your reading skills, you need to practice what you've learned. Before completing this module, set up a personal silent reading program.

1. Set aside a few minutes at the same time every day (even Saturday and Sunday) when you will read. You can start with as few as five minutes a day, but you should work towards spending at least 20-30 minutes per day reading quietly without interruption.
2. Create a library of materials you would like to read during your daily reading time. Your personal library can contain anything that looks interesting to you.

---

<sup>23</sup> Caucus -- a closed meeting held by elected politicians, usually to discuss policies and choose candidates.

- (e.g. catalogues, flyers, CD liners, magazines, newspapers, books, etc.) The reason for keeping an assortment of reading materials at hand is so that you can choose something quickly if you become bored.
3. Make sure your reading time is as comfortable and quiet as possible. Try to eliminate all distractions and interruptions during your silent reading time. Some classrooms call this USSR time (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading).
  4. Make periodic checks on your comprehension. Try some of these methods.
    - An oral book<sup>24</sup> report to the instructor.
    - An oral book review to the class
    - A chart, map, table, etc. to illustrate what you've read.
    - Make a set of study notes to accompany your reading.
    - Discuss the main idea of a piece of writing with your instructor.
    - Write a song, draw a picture, or write a poem to go with what you are reading
    - Retell what you have read to another student.
    - Enter your comments in your journal or in a personal Reader's Diary.
    - Respond in some way to everything you read.

## CONCLUSION

Reading is a skill that can always use improvement, no matter who you are or how long you've been reading. Learning to read effectively, so that you can share the writer's ideas completely, is not something that comes overnight. It takes constant and continuous practice. The old saying, "Use it or lose it." is really true when it comes to developing reading skills. The only way to become a good reader, and consequently a good learner, is to work at building your reading skills every chance you get.

---

<sup>24</sup> The word "book" as used here means any printed material.

## **ANSWERS TO EXERCISES**

### **EXERCISE 1**

Correct responses may vary, but each should be presented as a complete sentence.

Some acceptable answers are

The waitress served apple pie and ice cream.

The maid brought us apple pie and ice cream.

The waitress carried a tray with pie, an apple, and ice cream.

### **EXERCISE 2**

Answers may vary.

Here are some acceptable answers.

- labels in the grocery store (brand names and contents - Campbell's Tomato soup
- list of ingredients on food items - peanut oil, salt, artificial colour
- menu in a restaurant
- highway information and traffic signs
- exit signs in public buildings
- posters on bulletin boards about local events
- telephone book
- names of stores and what they sell
- sale signs in stores (i.e. 30% off all items, except tobacco products)
- street signs
- pay cheques and pay stubs

The list of possible answers is endless.

### **EXERCISE 5**

1. After several unsuccessful attempts to get a bunch of grapes, a fox decides that they were probably sour away.
2. People often decided that there is something wrong with things they cannot have.
3. Number 1 is a summary. Number 2 is the main idea.
4. The last line of the fable states the main idea, or lesson, clearly, just to make sure that the reader does understand the message about human behaviour.

### **EXERCISE 6**

1. Beauty is in the mind and actions of the person, not in his/her physical appearance.

2. Don't run away from your problems.
3. Be true to your heart.
4. It's important to know where you come from.

### EXERCISE 7

Answers may vary.

### EXERCISE 8

Answers may vary.

### EXERCISE 8

Your instructor will correct your work.

### EXERCISE 12

1. True Patriot Love - Listing: first, next, finally
2. Requiescat in Pace - Time: first, later, then, as
3. By Whom - Cause and Effect
  - misreading causes teacher's comment
  - comment causes teasing
  - teasing causes negative self image
  - Can you fill in the rest of the cause and effects the writer presents?
  - also Time: start, quickly turns into, soon, now, when, over the years
4. Annnd....The Van's the Winner - Listing: comfort, convenience, style
 

Also Comparison: Point by Point

Comfort:	Van-positive	Truck-negative
Convenience	Van-positive	Truck-negative
Style	Van-positive	Truck-negative

### EXERCISE 13

1. *Martha carefully adjusted her best bonnet, tucking in a few wisps of grey hair, before climbing into the buggy.*
  - Grey hairs - over 50
  - bonnet, buggy - before 1900
  - dressed up - probably to town or someplace special
  - Other inferences may be correct.

2. *The sound of shattering glass and tearing metal seemed to last forever. David struggled into his pants and shoes as he felt his way toward the window.*  
Not dressed, dark - night time  
Not dressed, dark - in bed, sleeping  
shattering glass, tearing metal - car accident, violence
3. *My grandfather's hands reflect a lifetime of handling animals and planting crops.*  
Tanned, scarred, big joints, strong, etc.  
Animals, crops - farmer
4. *The roadside bushes and weeds all wore a thick coat of dust, and even the toughest ones had started to wilt and turn brown.*  
Dust, drought - late summer  
wilted, turn brown - no rain, hot, sunny, cloudless
5. *"She's a good mother who always feeds her family top quality meats from Cloverdale's".*  
Neglectful, uncaring, incompetent
6. *Elmer turned the key in the ignition and whispered to it, "Bessie, I know you can do it."*  
Bessie - old, battered, dented, dirty, dusty,  
Elmer - older, dressed in work clothes,
7. *When rattling her keys didn't get the clerk's attention, Melissa started drumming her fingers on the counter.*  
Rattling, drumming - impatient, angry
8. *An advertisement in a business magazine reads, "Now that you've got that big promotion, don't you think you should be driving a BMW too?"*  
Old, cheap, not luxurious, no gadgets, not good enough for successful person  
Rich, classy, stylish, pay attention to what others own, competitive  
Salary - bigger than it was

9. *Lucy, wearing cut-off jeans and a tiny pink tank-top which showed off her bare midriff, whistled softly and almost skipped around the kitchen as she finished the dishes.*

Cut-offs, tiny pink tank-top, bare midriff, skipped - young  
probably summer  
happy, carefree

10. *Lisa yawned, rubbed her eyes and stretched.*  
Sleeping

#### **EXERCISE 14**

1. Martha is a widow. (Illogical - no proof)
2. David will go outside to see what happened. (Logical - he's put on clothes)
3. My grandfather are tanned and covered with scars.(Logical)
4. The road is in Manitoba. (Could be possible but no definite proof)
5. This is an advertisement. (Logical)
6. Elmer is in a hurry.(Logical)
7. Melissa will yell at the clerk.(Probable...but not definite proof)
8. The person with the new job is under 25 years of age. (Illogical)
9. Lucy has three children.(Illogical....no proof)
10. Lisa is getting ready to write an exam. (Illogical)

#### **EXERCISE 15**

- 1.This salad is delicious. OPINION
2. She is taller than her brother. FACT
3. Birthdays are not important after 30. OPINION
4. Body piercing is unacceptable if you work here. FACT
5. Linda said, "This is an ugly house!" FACT
6. The minimum wage should be \$7.50 per hour. OPINION
7. The population of our town is shrinking, so it will disappear soon. OPINION  
(Notice that this is also an illogical conclusion.)
8. He doesn't make enough to afford a house like that. FACT OR OPINION...  
(depending on the information the speaker has)
9. High income taxes are responsible for our poor economy. OPINION
10. Suzanne is always well organized at work. FACT

**EXERCISE 16**

Ask your instructor to check your answers.

**EXERCISE 17**

Your instructor should check your work.

**EXERCISE 18**

Now that you have tried some of these new strategies, it is likely that your reading speed may have improved. Speed is not the main concern in reading. Understanding what you read is where your energies should be focused.

**EXERCISE 19**

It is important that you and your instructor work co-operatively to create a silent reading schedule.

## **FEEDBACK PROCESS**

---

For feedback, please forward your comments to:

New Brunswick Community College - Woodstock  
100 Broadway Street  
Woodstock, NB  
E7M 5C5  
Attention: Kay Curtis  
Tel.: 506-325-4866 Fax.: 506-328-8426

- \* In case of errors due to typing, spelling, punctuation or any proofreading errors, please use the enclosed page to make the proposed correction using red ink and send it to us.
  
- \* For feedback regarding the following items, please use the form below:
  - insufficient explanations;
  - insufficient examples;
  - ambiguity or wordiness of text;
  - relevancy of the provided examples;
  - others...

<b>Page number</b>	<b>Nature of the problem</b>	<b>Proposed solution (include your text if possible)</b>

## FEEDBACK PROCESS

---

Page number	Nature of the problem	Proposed solution (include your text if possible)
Comments:		