



HANDBOOK

How are titles chosen ?

How important is style ?

What is information control ?

What about structure and vocabulary control ?

How do the four levels differ ?

How can teachers make the best use of the Readers ?

Heinemann Guided Readers

HANDBOOK

John Milne



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Foreword

"Let our main object . . . be as follows: To seek and to find a method of instruction, by which teachers may teach less, but learners may learn more . . ."

(COMENIUS *The Great Didactic* – circa 1628)

The aim of this Handbook is to explain to teachers and to others involved in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language the theoretical basis of the Heinemann Guided Readers (HGR). The Handbook discusses how titles are chosen for the Series and it gives an outline of each level of the Series with details of the relevant language and information controls. Many topics are covered which have to do with the classroom activity we know as 'the reading period'.

I wish to thank Mike Esplen for his help in the creation of the HGR Series and in the writing of this Handbook. Also, I wish to express my gratitude to Alan Hill and Keith Sambrook of Heinemann Educational Books and to T C Jupp all of whom took a keen and close interest in the project from the beginning.

John Milne

The Heinemann Guided Readers are published at four levels:

Beginner (B)

Elementary (E)

Intermediate (INT)

Upper (U)

A list of titles can be found on pages 26 and 27.

A personal recollection

I first taught English as a Foreign Language in Iraq in 1956. On my first day at school, the headmaster gave me a timetable and copies of the set reading book for the coming year.

My first Reading Period arrived and I took the books to the classroom and gave them out to the students. When they all had a copy and had settled down, I spoke to them.

'This is your reading book,' I said. 'You will be examined on it at the end of the year. Now, start reading.'

This is what I thought a reading lesson would be: a period of silence when I could do some of my own work and the students would ask questions only when they came across something that was really too difficult to work out for themselves. I soon found I was wrong.

The students were silent for a few seconds, then they began their protest.

'No, sir,' they cried. 'You read and we listen.'

I tried to argue with them, but it was no good. This was how it had always been done and I had to do the same. And I soon discovered that it could not have been done in any other way because the book I had given out was totally unsuitable for them. Many sentences contained difficulties of vocabulary and difficulties in structure which were far beyond their standard of English. And, even if their standard had been higher, there were difficulties of cultural reference which they would have found impossible to understand without long explanations from me as the teacher.

We can take as an example of these difficulties of cultural reference the following sentence:

'His father was a mere policeman.'

Even if we replaced the archaic 'mere' by the word 'only', it would not have made it any easier for my Iraqi students to understand. Most of them

were sons of farmers — a student whose father was a policeman would have been proud of his father's position. Yet here the writer was trying to say that it was a social disadvantage to have a policeman as a father. What could these students make of this?

Since 1970 I have visited various countries in Europe and in the Middle East taking part in courses and seminars organised by the British Council for teachers, lecturers, and inspectors of English. Quite often I am given a book to look at and then asked: 'This is our Fourth Year Reader for next year. Can you tell us how to teach it?' And many times I have been tempted to reply: 'Don't bother trying — it's unreadable and unteachable.'

It is true that in the past fifteen years many attempts have been made to improve the standards and to widen the choice of Readers for students of English as a Foreign Language. Great attention has been paid to vocabulary selection and structural grading. We now have an increasing number of books which look suitable for foreign learners; but, unfortunately, this is in many cases only a surface appearance. When the student starts to read he finds either that he cannot read it or, for various legitimate reasons, he does not want to read it.

My experience of trying to use many Readers in many different teaching situations has convinced me that the control of vocabulary and the grading of structure are not by themselves enough to produce a readable and interesting Reader. Much more is needed and what this 'much more' is will be explained in the following pages.

1 Choice of titles

BOOKS WHICH STUDENTS WANT TO READ

Our first aim in the HGR Series has been to provide a selection of books which students are likely to *want* to read. The choice of suitable titles comes first — the problem of ironing out the language difficulties comes later. No matter how simple the language in which the book is written, it will remain unread if students find that the subject matter is of no interest to them. Or, if the book is set for an examination, it will be read grudgingly and so with no profit for the reader.

We have chosen titles which are likely to have a special appeal for teenagers and for adults. We have done this because in most school systems the learning of English does not begin until the students are into their teens. A book which appeals to a ten-year-old English boy is unlikely to appeal to a sixteen year old Egyptian.

Also, we have not tied the language level of a Reader to a particular age level. There is a growing army of adult beginner learners of English and so even at the Beginner level of the Series we have included some titles which have an appeal for mature adults.

THE NEED FOR MODERN BOOKS

The difficulty, of course, lies in deciding which particular books students will want to read. At one time it was thought that the main aim of producing readers for foreign learners of English was to introduce them to the 'classics' of English literature. Today it is recognized that only in a few, special cases is the foreign students' reading related to a study of English Literature. Foreign students read English books in order to extend their general vocabulary and to improve their reading fluency. They also read English books to find out more about the world around them.

The HGR Series contains a number of original books specially written for the series and a number of rewritten books. In both cases the titles have been chosen because the subject matter, the background settings and the themes are suited to young men and women living in today's world. Only in a few cases at Upper level are the titles chosen for rewrites from authors living in the last century. Most of the titles in the HGR Series are by modern authors and deal with up-to-date topics in the language of today.

FICTION AND NON-FICTION

Most of the recognized categories of fiction — detective, thriller, etc., — can be found in the HGR Series. Later titles will include some horror stories, some science-fiction and some stories which have a special female interest. However, as well as wanting to read fiction, older teenagers and adults are often eager to read factual books which deal with topics in which they have a special interest.

Non-fiction titles are included at each level. There are books on sport such as *Football* (INT 7) by Duncan Forbes and *The Olympic Games* (U5) by Bruce Tulloh. Fans of pop music will be interested in *The Story of Pop* (U4) by John Byrne. And, of more general interest, is Barrie Ellis-Jones's book on *The Cinema* (U8).

VARIETY OF CULTURES AND BACKGROUND SETTINGS

Students are learning English and so it is only natural that they become interested in England. We have found from experience that foreign students want to know how young people live in England, their interests and their activities. This is why many of the Readers are set in an English cultural background. The background setting is a particular slice of a general culture and, of course, this setting can vary considerably within the same culture. Foreign students are interested in these variations and how they affect people's lives and attitudes.

The HGR Series contains a number of stories set in England with different background settings. For example, Michael Hardcastle's *Don't Tell Me What To Do* (E3) has a middle-class background, whereas *Money for a Motorbike* (B4) is set firmly in a working-class area, among working-class people.

The HGR Series also offers stories with a wide variety of background cultures in many different parts of the world. *Shane* (INT 1) is set in the American West, while *Things Fall Apart* (INT 8) is set at the end of the last century in Africa. The *Learning English with Heinemann* catalogue gives an indication of the background setting of each of the Readers in the Series.

THEMES OF HUMAN INTEREST

Maturing teenagers and adults look in their reading for themes of interest to them. In the HGR Series, we have tried to choose titles which contain themes of wide human interest. These themes should not, of course, thrust themselves at the reader, but the alert reader will be aware of them and will be interested in their development.

Even a story which at first glance is intended as light entertainment can have a theme. For example, *Bristol Murder* (INT 4) is an adventure/detective story, but it also raises the problem of who the maturing teenager is to trust in the adult world. Such themes add to the value of a story and the older reader finds them more interesting and more rewarding.

SUMMING UP

The need to provide books which contain interesting subject matter, a wide variety of background settings and themes of interest to young adults in the modern world has been our first priority. We read when we are motivated to read and only those books which motivate the students to read them will be read successfully and profitably.

2 The importance of style

An unfortunate side effect of the emphasis which has been placed in the past on the control of vocabulary and structure has been a total neglect of style. It seems to have been forgotten that a book which is badly written will not be easy to read. A native English reader finds it difficult to read through a badly written book and there is no reason to suppose that a foreign learner of English will find the same book any easier.

The ease with which a book can be read is related to the quality of the style in which it is written. The difficulty about style lies in saying exactly what we mean when we use this word. At a very basic level, style can be described as an orderly arrangement of the subject matter of the story which the writer is telling. Each sentence has to be well balanced internally, running on smoothly from the sentence which preceded it and leading on naturally to the one which follows.

At another level, the word style can be used to refer to the distinctive features of language used by a particular writer and so we speak of the style of Steinbeck, the style of Maugham, etc.

The style of a book, also, has to be suited to the subject matter. For example, a light entertainment like Philip Prowse's *The Woman Who Disappeared* (INT 11) has a rather flippant style which fits the slightly cynical attitude of the story teller, Lenny Samuel the detective. And this same style suits exactly the denouement of the plot.

Writers of originals in the Series have been asked to make it their main aim to write well. If something is well written it is easy at a later editorial stage to tighten up the vocabulary and structure control as required. On the other hand, if something is badly written, no amount of tinkering with the vocabulary and the structure can ever turn it into an easily readable book.

As far as rewrites are concerned, it is obvious that the changes made in order to simplify the language of the story affect the style of the original writer. The individual style of John Steinbeck, for example, cannot survive the tampering with the text which has had to be done in order to make a story like *The Pearl* (INT 8) suitable as reading material for foreign students of English.

On the other hand, the rewriters in the Series have striven to retain something of the overall style of the original and, at the same time, to develop within their limitations a style which suits the subject matter of the story they are retelling. The success of these attempts can be seen by studying the

differences in style between, say, the rewrites of John Galsworthy's *The Man of Property* (U3), of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (INT 9), and of Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* (INT 12).

SUMMING UP

Our first priority has been to find titles which will interest students and our second priority has been to make sure that the books have been written or rewritten in a style which suits the subject matter and which students of English as a foreign language can read easily and with enjoyment.

3 Information control

We began this guide by claiming that the control of vocabulary and structure are not by themselves enough to produce a story which the foreign learner of English will be able to read easily. First, titles have to be chosen which the students will want to read and next the material has to be well written. After that we can come, as now, to the discussion of the controls which are necessary.

Little or no attention has been paid in the past to what we consider the most important control of all — that is 'information control'. Any book contains within its covers a certain amount of information. This information must be presented to readers in easily digestible amounts if they are to be able to read the story successfully. The writers and rewriters in the HGR Series have kept constantly in mind the need to control the amount and flow of information which the reader has to absorb in order to continue reading. Information control affects all stages of the writing and rewriting process.

LENGTH OF A STORY

Foreign learners read a story in English more slowly than their native English counterparts and so they have to live with any one book for a much longer period of time. For this reason stories for foreign learners have to be kept reasonably short.

Of course, as students progress in their English studies and as they learn

to read more quickly, so the length of the Readers can be increased. This progress is reflected in the increasing length of Readers in the four levels of the HGR Series. At Beginner level, Readers contain exactly 32 pages and this increases up to a possible 96 pages at Intermediate level and 144 pages at Upper level.

LENGTH AND COMPLEXITY

There is clearly a relationship between the length of a story and its complexity. But this relationship is not always a straightforward one. For example, a short story can contain a great deal of information. In a short story, the background setting and the characterization have to be established quickly in the first few pages. And this often results in the information needed to do this being presented to the reader in a highly compressed form.

In the original Readers at the Beginner and Elementary levels, care has been taken to avoid such compression of information. The number of characters in each story is strictly limited and the background setting is spelled out clearly and carefully. The same care has been taken in the rewriting of short stories and this explains why Somerset Maugham's *A Man From Glasgow* (INT 3) is somewhat longer in the rewritten version than in its original form.

Longer stories and full length novels, on the other hand, are not necessarily so compressed as short stories; but the amount of information they contain is usually increased by a number of sub-plots and the extra characters they introduce. All of this adds to the load of information which the reader has to absorb. In original readers in the HGR Series, such sub-plots have been avoided and the information load has been spread evenly throughout the story.

The same care has been taken in rewriting, and sub-plots and unnecessary characters have been omitted in the rewritten versions. Such omissions are justified by this need to limit the amount of information being presented to the reader. A major fault of many rewrites for students of English as a foreign language has been the attempt to keep in the rewritten version all the action and all the characters which appear in the original. As the rewrites are shorter than the originals, this means that the information has had to be compressed and so is more dense and more difficult to absorb. In fact, the resulting rewrite is often more difficult to read than the original on which it is based.

NUMBER OF CHARACTERS

As has been suggested in the preceding paragraphs, information control also means that the number of characters in any one story has to be kept to a reasonable limit. Each character in a story adds to the amount of information which the readers have to absorb and remember. Each character has to be introduced, his or her background built up carefully and his or her motivating drive explained. The more important the character, the more fully this has to be done. And, as the readers read the story, they have to learn to differentiate between the characters and to remember who is who.

In the HGR Series, particularly at the lower levels, the number of characters in a story is very limited. The characters are introduced gradually and their backgrounds and place in the story are made clear. In the case of a re-written book, the number of characters in the original version has often been reduced by omitting entirely those characters which are not central to the development of the main plot.

THE BACKGROUND SETTING

Information control also affects the way in which the culture and background setting, which are often central to the understanding of a story, are made clear to the reader. We can assume that references to features of life in present day England will be quite obvious to someone who is living in England. But it would be totally wrong to make the same assumption about a foreign learner who may never have been to England at all. A reference to a background setting will be obscure to someone who is unfamiliar with that setting and such references have to be made clear and explicit.

In order to read *Shane* (INT 1) successfully, for example, the reader has to know something about the situation in the American West at the time of the story and about the struggle between the smallholders and the owners of the large ranches. In the HGR rewrite of *Shane* this background is first explained in a preliminary note and this explanation is then carefully reinforced in the story itself.

Similarly, in the HGR version of *Things Fall Apart* (INT 9) the disrupting influence of Christianity on traditional tribal customs and values is spelled out carefully so that the reactions of the main characters to the new situation can be fully understood.

INFORMATION CONTROL: THE CHAPTER AND THE PARAGRAPH

The length of each chapter and of each paragraph in a Guided Reader has been determined by the amount of information which the chapter or para-

graph contains. An easy chapter or paragraph which contains little information will tend to run on longer than one which contains material which is vital to the understanding of the story. This is why the opening chapter of a Guided Reader is often very short. It has to lead the reader slowly and carefully into the background of the story and into the beginning of the movement of the plot and at the same time introduce some of the main characters.

INFORMATION CONTROL AND THE SENTENCE

Since any two sentences can have the same structure but contain quite different loads of information, it is meaningless to control the structures of the sentences without at the same time controlling the amount of information which those sentences contain.

For example, compare the following sentences:

1. The early history of Greece begins in myth and legend.
2. The next train to London stops at Wakefield and Doncaster.

These two sentences are structurally identical, but the first sentence refers to abstract concepts and so is more difficult than the second sentence which refers to things in the physical world around us.

The structural arrangement of a sentence itself carries meaning and information. In a sentence such as:

'Tom kicked Bill'

we know who did the kicking and who was kicked because Tom is the subject of the sentence and Bill is the object. But the information conveyed by the structural arrangement is only a part of the total information carried by that sentence. The rest of the information comes from the actual words which are used in the sentence.

The structural controls which writers in the HGR Series are asked to observe are discussed in the next section of this Handbook (page 11). But, as well as observing these controls, writers are asked to pay special attention to the total amount of information conveyed by a sentence and to avoid using a relatively easy structure to express a load of information which would be beyond the students' ability to comprehend.

INFORMATION CONTROL AND THE WORD OR PHRASE

Similarly, it would be meaningless to have any form of vocabulary control which did not take into account the information value which a particular

word or phrase can have in a particular context. In some contexts a word is relatively unimportant and as far as the meaning of the whole is concerned can be safely ignored by the reader. In another context the same word can contain a lot of information and be a vital clue to the understanding of what is happening.

For example, if we meet the sentence:

'Peter is in hospital with hepatitis'

and we simply want to know where Peter is, it is enough to know that he is in hospital and we can ignore the word 'hepatitis' completely. On the other hand, if we want to take Peter some food in hospital, it will be much better for Peter if we know what 'hepatitis' is and how it affects Peter's diet.

Past studies in vocabulary control have paid little attention to these differing weights of information which the same word can have in different contexts. But the ability to realize when it is vital to know the meaning of a word and when the meaning of a word can be safely ignored is a basic technique used by all fluent readers. And students must be given some opportunity to develop this technique if they are ever to become fluent.

The vocabulary controls exercised in the HGR Series are discussed in Section Five (page 16). Writers in the Series are asked to observe these controls, but at the same time to remember the importance of information control in the choice of a particular word or phrase.

INFORMATION CONTROL AND THE PRONOUN

A pronoun can often cause special difficulty for a student if it is not absolutely clear to what or to whom a pronoun refers. Information control in the Guided Readers has required that each use of a pronoun be checked carefully to avoid ambiguity about its reference. Also the distance between a pronoun and its antecedent has been controlled so that the pronoun is not so far away from its antecedent that the reader will have forgotten who or what is being referred to.

The same care has been exercised when pronouns are used after stretches of Direct Speech. In a passage such as:

'“What are we going to do?” he asked'

the person to whom the 'he' refers has been made quite clear to the reader. Where any doubt is possible, the name of the speaker has been repeated in full.

SUMMING UP

In order to read a book successfully, students are involved in a process of absorbing a stream of information from the printed pages in front of them. In the HGR Series, the controlling of this stream of information — making sure that it flows smoothly and evenly and that it can be easily absorbed by the students — is given priority over all other forms of control.

4 Structure control

STRUCTURAL GRADING AND THE MAIN COURSE

Sometimes teachers have asked why it is not possible to base the structural grading of a reading scheme on that followed in one of the main courses in common use. This would be easy to do if there were a main course in common use whose chief aim was to promote the skill of reading. But such a main course does not exist.

All main courses aim primarily, especially in the early stages, at achievement in the skills of listening and speaking. The development of these skills requires an emphasis to be given from the beginning to certain features of the spoken language. Important features of the written language are ignored and left to be dealt with later in the course.

On the other hand, if the aim is to develop in the students the skill of reading, certain features of written language have to be dealt with from the very beginning. Students learning to read have to acquire quickly:

- (1) the ability to recognize the simple past tense of a number of frequently used verbs since the simple past tense is the tense most commonly used in narration.
- (2) an understanding of how sentences are arranged in paragraphs.
- (3) an understanding of the conventions of Direct Speech.
- (4) an ability to recognize sentence introducers such as 'Then . . .' and 'After that . . .'. These sentence introducers are again a feature of written language rather than of spoken language.

Apart from these features, however, a comparison of the structure schemes of the HGR Series with the structural grading of most main

courses will show that there is no great clash in the ordering of structures. Very detailed plans of the structural controls are available for intending writers, but it is not possible to reproduce these in a short handbook because of their length and complexity. The main features of the controls exercised at each level are discussed below.

INTUITIVE APPLICATION OF CONTROLS

The structure schemes in the HGR Series are complicated because, as has been explained earlier, writers are not asked to apply structure controls rigidly and automatically. Instead, writers are expected to have constant resource to their intuitive feeling for language and hold a balance between those structures which may be necessary for the telling of a particular story and those which might cause students insurmountable difficulty.

This is why intending writers are given lists of structures for each level under three headings: *freely-permitted*; *not permitted*; and *to be used occasionally and with care*. This last category makes it possible for a writer in the Series to make use of a particular feature, e.g. a tense, which, while it is not listed as *freely-permitted*, would not in certain contexts cause the students any difficulty in understanding the text.

SENTENCE LENGTH

We begin at each level with a statement of the length of sentence permitted. These statements relate to clause structure, but writers also take into account any expansions of the nominal and verbal phrases within clauses which add to length and complexity. The writer has, in fact, to perform a constant juggling act and strive to maintain a balance between the clause structure of the sentence and the phrase structure of the clauses within the sentence. The main controlling factor in obtaining such a balance will be the total amount of information conveyed by a particular sentence. This procedure has already been discussed in the preceding section on information control (see page 9).

With these qualifications kept in mind, the maximum length of sentence permitted at each level is:

- Beginner Level:* two clauses forming a compound sentence with the conjunctions 'and', 'but', or 'or'.
- Elementary Level:* two clauses in either a compound or complex sentence.

Intermediate Level: three clauses — four possible if two of the clauses are linked by simple co-ordination.

Upper Level: four clauses.

THE VERBAL GROUP

The table on page 14 shows the tenses and compound verbal phrases which are freely permitted. The lists are accumulative and any feature permitted at one level is freely permitted at any higher level.

THE NOMINAL GROUP

Every addition to a nominal group adds to the amount of information contained in the group and so at every level the writer has to keep in mind the need to control this information carefully.

At *Beginner Level* one or two adjectives are freely permitted with a noun. A noun can also be followed by a simple prepositional phrase — e.g. 'a bundle of newspapers' — but in this case no other adjectives will be included. Simple co-ordination is permitted — e.g. 'Stuart and Martin . . .' and also simple apposition — e.g. 'Martin, a friend of Stuart's, . . . '.

At *Elementary Level* a progressive development permits two or three adjectives with a noun and co-ordination is possible within a prepositional phrase attached to a noun with an adjective e.g. 'a simple meal of bread and cheese.'

At *Intermediate Level* this progression permits an extension of the nominal group to a noun with two adjectives and one prepositional phrase or adjectival clause — e.g. 'She had a big, brown handbag over her shoulder.'

At *Upper Level* more extended nominal groups are permitted, again subject to the need to observe information control.

ADVERBS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Adverbials of time, place, and manner again increase the amount of information contained in a sentence. At each level the use of adverbials is controlled so that too much information is not permitted in any one sentence.

At *Beginner Level* one or two adverbials are permitted in a sentence. Time and place often occur together since they are easily understood — e.g. 'I'll wait here for half an hour.'

At *Elementary Level* the use of adverbials depends on the number of clauses in any one sentence which means that fewer adverbials are used in a complex sentence than in a simple sentence of one clause.

At *Intermediate Level* care is again taken to hold a balance between the

LEVEL	TENSES	PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS	COMPOUND VERBALS	VERBS WITH DIRECT SPEECH
<i>Beginner</i>	present & past simple present & past continuous future with 'going to' or 'shall/will'	where the passive is roughly equivalent to be + adjective	'be', 'do', 'shall/will'	say, reply, ask, shout, tell, think
<i>Elementary</i>	present & past perfect	simple passives e.g. 'They were killed in an accident three years ago.'	common catenatives e.g. try to . . / want to . . / start to . . / have to . .	as for <i>Beginner Level</i>
<i>Intermediate</i>	conditional forms — would, could, might	any of the permitted tenses in the passive e.g. 'Ernie was given a good funeral.'	simple infinitives of purpose	answer, agree, begin, continue, go on, repeat, be + noun e.g. '“ . . . ” was his reply.'
<i>Upper</i>	present perfect & past perfect continuous future perfect perfect conditionals.	no restrictions except the need to observe the conditions imposed by the control of information		

use of adverbials and the use of clauses. Again there will be fewer adverbials in any one sentence which contains a number of clauses.

At *Upper Level* adverbials are used much more freely, but again their occurrence will depend on the density of information being conveyed by any one sentence.

SHORT FORMS

The use of short forms — e.g. 'I'll', 'He's not'; where a pronoun is linked by an apostrophe to the shortened verbal form — is permitted at all levels of the Series in Direct Speech. But it is only used to a restricted extent at *Beginner Level*. It is not generally used in the narration unless a friendly and colloquial style is being deliberately aimed at — e.g. *Money for a Motorbike* (B4), *Road to Nowhere* (E1) or *The Woman Who Disappeared* (INT 11).

IDIOMATIC FEATURES

In the *first two levels of the Series*, idioms, colloquialisms and regionalisms are avoided. A very occasional use of one or other of these features is permitted, however, if this use helps to create atmosphere. But in all cases the meaning of the expression is made clear from the context.

At *Intermediate and Upper Levels*, such expressions can be used but, again, only where the meaning is clear from the context or is explained in the Glossary. e.g. 'Jeff would *pick up* a lot of tips for the horses,' Here *pick up* is explained in the Glossary.

SUMMING UP

In the HGR Series there is a gradual increase in the complexity of sentence structure from each level to the one above it.

The degree of complexity which is permitted at any one level depends partly on the detailed structural controls which are available to the writers. But the degree of complexity depends also on the intuitive feeling of the writers for what is relatively easy to read and what is impossibly difficult. Finally, the degree of complexity permitted is always subject to the constraints of information control.

5 Vocabulary control

In the HGR Series we have adopted, as in the control of structure, an intuitive, commonsense attitude to the control of vocabulary. This is based on the writers' and editors' experience of what vocabulary students can cope with at a particular level. We have replaced or omitted words in a story which we have thought difficult and we have avoided the use of unnecessary synonyms where one familiar word is enough. It is clear that without such control the students would be swamped in an endless sea of difficulties.

At the same time we have encouraged students to meet the occasional unfamiliar word. Where this happens, we have given help in various ways. Sometimes we have made the meaning clear by the use of a well-chosen illustration. And sometimes we have glossed the word in context — that is we have used the word in a situation where it is possible for the student to make an intelligent guess at its meaning.

In Readers at the Intermediate and Upper levels we have given brief explanations of any remaining words which are likely to be difficult in the *Glossaries*. At Beginner and Elementary levels we have had to rely on illustrations and obvious contexts since we found that the language needed to gloss the word in a Glossary was more difficult than the language used in the text itself.

We have thus used an intuitive approach to vocabulary control rather than relying on controls based on mechanical word counts or rigid word lists.

WORD COUNTS ARE BASED ON INTUITION

Teachers sometimes think that vocabulary control can be based on word counts which have been conducted scientifically. But, unfortunately, there is no such thing as a scientifically conducted word count. Given the same passage and asked to count the number of words in it, few people will agree on exactly the same total. For example, how many words do you think there are in the following two sentences?

'It was five o'clock on a Saturday evening. Tom Ferguson sat down and started to read the sports page in the Evening Argus.'

In a computer based calculation every group of letters with a space on either side would be counted as one word. On this basis there are twenty-three words in these two sentences.

But was this the total that you arrived at? Probably not, since you may have had doubts about including in the count the proper nouns, 'Tom Ferguson' and 'Evening Argus'. And what about 'sat down'? Two words or one? Should grammatical words like 'it' and 'was' be included in the count and what about 'sports page'? Could this possibly be regarded as one word?

So how many words are there in these two sentences? You will realise by now how difficult it is to give an answer to this question. Your answer will depend on the decisions you make about what constitutes a word and which words are to be counted and which are not to be counted.

For the purposes of preparing reading material for students who, above all, are reading for meaning, it would seem reasonable to count words not as groups of letters between spaces, but as meaningful units. A computer-based count cannot do this easily and even if the computer could be programmed to count only meaningful units, it would be the responsibility of the programmer to decide what was a meaningful unit and what not.

In other words, any count which is relevant to our needs involves a human being who is constantly making personal, intuitive judgements. And so it is perfectly logical to base the vocabulary used in the HGR Series on the same intuitive judgements and decisions.

The vocabulary used at each level in the HGR Series is not based on any existing word count or word list. The vocabulary used is based on the procedure outlined in this chapter. At each level a number of manuscripts were prepared in this way. Then an estimate was made of the number of basic words used across these manuscripts. By 'basic' we mean words not peculiar to the story and fully explained in the text, or illustrated or appearing in the Glossary. Using this approach, the following approximate figures were arrived at:

Beginner level	— 600 words
Elementary level	— 1100 words
Intermediate level	— 1600 words
Upper level	— 2200 words

These figures are given because teachers are accustomed to using such figures as one element in their choice of Readers for the classroom. But we would not claim any special significance for these figures in relation to reading level or difficulty which, as has been explained, is dealt with in a much more complex way in this series.

VOCABULARY CONTROL AND THE MAIN COURSE

The reasons why the vocabulary control exercised in a series of Readers should not be based on the vocabulary taught in a main course are similar to the objections to relating a series of Readers structurally to a main course — see pages 11–12.

The vocabulary taught in a main course is that of spoken English and, especially in the early stages of a course, is related to things in the students' immediate environment. Reading material, on the other hand, is intended to take students away from their everyday surroundings and so it regularly requires a different set of vocabulary items.

Also, a main course aims at teaching an active vocabulary. Students are expected to learn all the words given in a main course and to be able to use these words freely in their speech and, eventually, in their own writing. But, as well as building up a stock of words which they can use actively, students need to build up an even larger stock of words which they may not be able to use actively but which they can recognize in print.

Such a large stock of passive vocabulary items is a feature of the linguistic ability of every native user of English — or of any language, for that matter. Educated English people can read Shakespeare with fair ease, but they would rarely use many of the vocabulary items they meet in Shakespeare's works.

If the words used in a series of Readers were limited to those of a main course, this would prevent students building up this necessary stock of items in their passive vocabulary. And such a stock is essential if the students are ever to be able to read widely and easily.

MEETING NEW WORDS

There is another danger which arises from an over-rigid control of the vocabulary items presented to foreign learners of English. This is that they may never be given the opportunity of grasping the techniques which must be used when a reader is faced with a new word.

New words are constantly being added to the English language and the native user of English must know how to deal with them when he meets them. Often a new word can be met for the first time in print in a newspaper. The native user of English does not immediately run to find a dictionary — he may be reading the newspaper on a train. Instead, he has developed the technique of making an intelligent guess at the meaning of the new word from the context in which it appears. Or, as was discussed in Section Three on information control (page 9) he has learned when it

is safe to ignore the new word altogether.

These techniques are important to the native user of English and even more important to the foreign learner whose basic store of vocabulary is necessarily smaller. It is not enough for a reading series to use vocabulary which is certain to be known to foreign students. The students must be given practice in dealing with new words since it is only by practice that they can learn how to handle them.

SUMMING UP

We claim that the intuitive, commonsense approach to vocabulary control adopted in the HGR Series is the one most likely to produce reading material which the students can read easily and which, at the same time, gives them the opportunity to build up a large passive vocabulary and to learn the techniques for dealing with new words. In this way, students will learn to read widely, fluently, and easily.

6 The four levels — a progressive series

The following notes give a brief outline of the main features of each of the four levels.

BEGINNER LEVEL

Readers at this level are all short, 32 page, original stories specially written for the Series. They are all generously illustrated, but the illustrations are designed to aid the reading of the text and not to replace it.

Although the stories are simply told, they are not in any sense childish. All are suitable for teenage students and some are particularly suitable for adult beginners — for example, *Death of a Soldier* (B3) by Philip Prowse, which deals with the violence in Northern Ireland.

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

Some Readers at this level are rewrites of stories by well-known authors, but

the majority are original stories specially written for the Series. The Readers are all fairly short, 48 or 64 pages, and some contain more than one story – for example, *The Verger and Other Stories* (E5) by Somerset Maugham.

The language level of the Elementary books is again very simple, but the stories are often designed to provoke thought and challenge in a teenage student. For example, *Road to Nowhere* (E1) challenges the assumption that modern, technical development always results in an improvement to the quality of life.

The Readers at Elementary level are fully illustrated to give students help with the vocabulary and the understanding of situations. There are no glossaries provided at this level and at Beginner level since, as was stated earlier, the language needed in order to gloss a word is usually more difficult than the language used in the text itself.

The *Points for Understanding* sections provided at this and at later levels are not designed to be used as a test of language comprehension. The questions given are never exhaustive and, as the title *Points for Understanding* implies, the only points which are questioned are those which the students have to grasp fully if they are to understand the development of the plot. This explains why in some cases only one question may be asked about a particular chapter.

A few Readers at this and at Intermediate level do not contain either *Glossaries* or *Points for Understanding* sections – for example, *Star for a Day* (E7) and *The Women Who Disappeared* (INT 11). Both these Readers are intended as light entertainment and it was felt unsuitable to burden students engaged in such light reading with the apparatus of questions and glosses.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Readers at Intermediate level are 64, 80, or 96 page books. Some are rewritten stories and others are original fiction. A number of the Readers are original non-fiction and will have an appeal to students' specialized and general interests – for example, *Football* (INT 7).

The *Glossaries* provided at this level give students some help with vocabulary whenever it is considered necessary. There are also *Points for Understanding* sections in most of the Readers.

UPPER LEVEL

Readers at the Upper level are 80 to 144 page books. They consist of original and rewritten fiction and also some non-fiction originals – for

example, John Byrne's *The Story of Pop* (U4). The Readers are suitably illustrated and contain *Points for Understanding* sections. The *Glossaries* at this level are organized into sections and provide students with opportunities for further language study.

At this level more freedom has been exercised in the choice of titles and rewrites of some well-known nineteenth and early twentieth century novels have been included – for example, *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens (U6) and *The Man of Property* by John Galsworthy (U3).

A PROGRESSIVE SERIES

The basis for the selection of language and content at each level has been fully explained in earlier sections. However, teachers will notice that there is some variation in difficulty between Readers at the same level. Within any one level, there are some slightly easier than others. We have deliberately allowed this to happen in order to avoid putting students into the situation of having to make a big leap every time they want to move up from one level to another.

In this way, the HGR Series is a progressive series and students can advance gradually to more demanding material as their reading ability improves.

Teachers will be able to make their own decisions about which books at each level are most suitable for their own classes. The decisions the teacher makes will depend on motivational factors such as the students' interest in or familiarity with the subject matter or background of a particular book as well as on the linguistic factors involved. For example, students who are very interested in athletics may possibly find it easier to read *The Olympic Games* at Upper level than a book at Intermediate level whose subject matter does not interest them.

A book does not exist in a vacuum: it is easy or difficult, interesting or uninteresting, rewarding or unrewarding only in relationship to the person who is reading it.

WHICH LEVEL FOR WHICH STUDENTS?

Teachers often want to know how the different levels of the HGR Series can be related to their own classroom needs. There can be no general answer to this question since schools and institutes have different syllabuses: the number of hours devoted to the teaching of English varies considerably and different standards are expected and achieved. Teachers who are considering buying a number of copies for classroom use are advised in all cases to write

to the publishers for specimen copies of any titles which interest them.

When reading the specimens, teachers should bear in mind the special features of written English which are discussed on page 11 and also the motivational factors in respect of their own students which can greatly affect the actual difficulty students experience (see previous page).

There is a general trend in English language teaching today towards a reappraisal of the importance of the reading skill. In many situations throughout the world there is a great need for students to develop fluency in reading as well as fluency in speech. In such situations, students should start their reading as early in their English course as possible and during their course they should be encouraged to continue reading more and more Readers which will lead them on the road to reading unsimplified books in the whole range of written English.

7 Using the readers in and out of the classroom

The notes below offer some advice and suggestions for teachers on the use of the Readers in the classroom.

WHEN TO READ OUT LOUD

Reading is essentially a private, silent activity. The aim of every reading lesson should be to encourage students to read on their own. Teachers should only read out loud from Readers when they are trying to achieve a special effect. Students should never be asked to read out loud unless they are of outstanding ability.

Reading out loud by the teacher is especially effective when a new Reader is being introduced to a class for the first time. But it should not be a matter of simply beginning at page one and reading the first chapter. Teachers should always choose a chapter or a few paragraphs of special interest, which can come at any point in a story, and they should use the reading of this chapter as a means of arousing the students' interest and curiosity.

For example, when introducing *The Black Cat* (E2) as a classroom reader, teachers could begin by reading out loud Chapter 12 — Death on the 'Syria' — to illustrate the tension and drama developed in the story. Or, when using *The Pearl* (INT 8) for the first time, a reading out loud of the paragraphs on pages 44 and 45 describing the incident which forced Kino and Juanna to flee from their village can prove an exciting introduction.

Reading out loud can also be done after a class have read a chapter on their own and have found the chapter or passage particularly interesting or exciting. Also, when a passage or chapter contains a lot of Direct Speech, the teacher can use this with dramatic effect. The teacher can act as the narrator and selected students take the part of the characters in the story. But this should not be done without the students practising and rehearsing the passage in advance. No advantage can ever be gained from listening to students who have to stumble hesitatingly.

THE READING LESSON

A pattern for an ordinary reading lesson can be established along the following lines.

1. Students have been set a reading target in a previous lesson — say one chapter. Teachers begin by going through the Points for Understanding for that chapter and encourage the students to ask questions of their own.
2. Set another target for reading in the class period. Students read silently. If they have any questions, the students approach the teacher privately.
3. After some time, the teacher brings the class together and works through the Points for Understanding.
4. Another reading target is set for the class either in the same lesson or for a future reading period, depending on the time available.

THE LIBRARY METHOD

One of the difficulties which teachers find when using the classroom method of teaching the Readers is that every student reads at his or her own speed and some students have finished their targets well ahead of the others. These faster readers either sit still and become bored waiting for the slower readers or they go on to finish the Reader by themselves.

To overcome this difficulty, some teachers turn all reading lessons into library periods. And for a library period, it is not necessary to go to the

library: the required books can be brought to the students' classroom.

A library period can be arranged either on an individual or a group basis.

INDIVIDUAL READING

Students following this method read the Readers at their own pace. When they have completed a chapter, they go through the *Points for Understanding* individually with their teacher. When students have completed a Reader to their own and to their teacher's satisfaction, they go on to the reading of another. This method can be applied to the reading of a set book, but it is more commonly used when students are doing general reading where the students are reading books of their own choice. Small sets of a variety of titles are needed for this approach to work well.

GROUP READING

This method is a compromise between class reading and individual reading. The groups can be organized in two ways.

Groups can be arranged so that each group is made up of students who are roughly equal in reading ability. When in difficulty, the students help one another and approach the teacher whenever it is necessary. After the reading of each chapter, the teacher tests the group's reading by going through the *Points for Understanding* for that chapter. When any one group has completed a reader satisfactorily, they move on to another.

Other teachers may prefer to organize the groups by making use of the students in their class who have the best reading ability. In this method, the most proficient readers among the students are shared out among the separate groups and they become the group leaders. These group leaders encourage the other students in their group, help them when necessary and test their group's reading chapter by chapter by using the *Points for Understanding*. The group leaders only refer to the teacher when they find themselves in difficulties. Given a situation where this method is working well, the teacher can form a group which contains the students with the poorest reading ability and concentrate on coaching that group.

PRIVATE READING

Students should regularly be encouraged to read privately in their own time. They should be asked to read a number of books each term and they should be expected to read by themselves. Wherever possible, the students should be allowed, with the advice of the teacher, to choose their own books. Time should be set aside near the end of term for the students to discuss

their reading with their teacher. Also, during the long holiday breaks, students should always be asked to read at least one book on their own.

SUMMING UP

The most valuable kind of learning — some would say the only possible kind of learning — is that which a student does on his or her own. Teachers should always follow the method which they find encourages their students not simply to complete the reading of one book, but to go on to read more and more.

Teachers should, in fact, to repeat the quotation from Comenius which comes at the beginning of this Handbook, always "seek to find a method of instruction, by which teachers may teach less, but learners may learn more."

A selection of titles

Titles marked † are original stories specially written for the Series; the other titles are rewrites of existing well-known stories.

Beginner Level

- † 1 Rich Man, Poor Man *T. C. Jupp*
- † 2 Death of a Soldier *Philip Prowse*
- † 3 Marco *Mike Esplen*
- † 4 Money for a Motorbike *John Milne*
- † 5 Dangerous Journey *Alwyn Cox*
- † 6 The Truth Machine *Norman Whitney*
- † 7 This is London *Philip Prowse*
- † 8 The Sky's the Limit *Norman Whitney*
- † 9 Anna and the Fighter *Elizabeth Laird*

Elementary Level

- † 1 Road to Nowhere *John Milne*
- † 2 The Black Cat *John Milne*
- 3 Don't Tell Me What To Do *Michael Hardcastle*
- 4 The Runaways *Victor Canning*
- 5 The Verger and Other Stories *W. Somerset Maugham*
- 6 The Red Pony *John Steinbeck*
- † 7 Star for a Day *Philip Prowse*
- 8 The Goalkeeper's Revenge *Bill Naughton*
- † 9 The Promise *R. Scott-Buccleuch*
- † 10 The Stranger *Norman Whitney*

Intermediate Level

- 1 Shane *Jack Schaefer*
- 2 Old Mali and The Boy *D. R. Sherman*

A selection of titles

- 3 A Man From Glasgow and Mackintosh *W. Somerset Maugham*
- † 4 Bristol Murder *Philip Prowse*
- 5 Tales of Goha *Leslie Caplan*
- † 6 The Smuggler *Piers Plowright*
- † 7 Football *Duncan Forbes*
- 8 The Pearl *John Steinbeck*
- 9 Things Fall Apart *Chinua Achebe*
- 10 The Hairless Mexican and The Traitor *W. Somerset Maugham*
- † 11 The Woman Who Disappeared *Philip Prowse*
- 12 The Razor's Edge *W. Somerset Maugham*
- 13 The Moon is Down *John Steinbeck*
- 14 Footprints in the Jungle and Two Other Stories *W. Somerset Maugham*
- † 15 The Raid *Glyn Frewer*
- † 16 Scottish Adventure *Richard Chisholm*
- 17 Mission to Kala *Mongo Beti*

Upper Level

- 1 Of Mice and Men *John Steinbeck*
- 2 The Man of Property *John Galsworthy*
- † 3 Money For Sale *Michael Hardcastle*
- † 4 The Story of Pop *John Byrne*
- † 5 The Olympic Games *Bruce Tulloh*
- 6 Bleak House *Charles Dickens*
- 7 The Great Ponds *Elechi Amadi*
- † 8 The Cinema *Barrie Ellis-Jones*
- 9 Rebecca *Daphne du Maurier*

Some comments by teachers

'At last! Easy to read readers that don't look like schoolbooks.' — *Language School Director of Studies UK*

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'... interesting, provoking and excellent material to supplement main coursebook.' — *Director of Language Institute, Greece.*

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'My students are mad about these Guided Readers!' — *High School teacher, Swaziland*

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'This Series seems to have been particularly well thought-out!' — *From a review in 'Teaching English'.*

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'An incredibly exciting reader!' (*The Runaways*) — *Language School teacher, Italy.*

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'... thrilling in spite of controlled vocabulary.' (*Bristol Murder*) — *School teacher, Austria.*

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'Snappy persuasive writing in the best Chandler tradition, and reasonably priced!' (*The woman who Disappeared*) *Head of Secondary School English Department, Greece.*

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'A well-adapted version of a great novel.' (*Of Mice and Men*) — *Grammar School teacher, Germany.*

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'A book which really does what it sets out to do, namely to start students on the road to reading unsimplified books in the whole range of English literature while at the same time controlling content and language'. (*Olympic Games*) — *From a review in the 'ARELS Journal'.*