

THE TYPES OF READING AND EXERCISES FOR TEACHING READING

WHAT IS READING?

Reading is

- a skill which enables us to get a message;
- recognizing the written words (written symbols);
- getting (understanding) the meaning;
- used to teach pronunciation;
- grasping information from texts.

Reading is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text.

Readers typically make use of background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies to help them understand written text.

There are the following types of reading and the corresponding types of activities to develop the corresponding reading skills:

- Skimming reading is reading to confirm expectations; reading for communicative tasks.
- General reading or scanning is reading to extract specific information; reading for general understanding.
- Close reading or searching reading is reading for complete understanding; reading for detailed comprehension (information; function and discourse).

Skimming is the most rudimentary type of reading. Its object is to familiarize you as quickly as possible with the material to be read.

Scanning is a skill that requires that you read quickly while looking for specific information. To scan a reading text, you should start at the top of the page and then move your eyes quickly toward the bottom. Generally, scanning is a technique that is helpful when you are looking for the answer to a known question.

Close reading is the most important skill you need for any form of literary studies. It means paying especially close attention to what is printed on the page. Close reading means not only reading and understanding the meanings of the individual printed words, but also involves making yourself sensitive to all the nuances and connotations of language as it is used by skilled writers.

Exercises aimed to teach receptive skills required for detailed reading comprehension can be divided into several groups depending on the purpose you want to achieve.

The first group of exercises works to familiarize the students with the topic, develop guessing skills and create expectations and interest in the text they are going to read. Pre-reading activities allow the reader to make predictions about text that will be read by eliminating possibilities that are unlikely. They are a way to prepare a reader prior to a reading assignment by asking them to react to a series of statements, questions, or words related to the content the material.

PRE-READING EXERCISES

While doing pre-reading exercises the students should see all the tasks before reading the text. The following questions may be used.

1. Can you guess what the text is about judging by the title?
2. What do you think the following names, figures or dates (if there are any) have to do with the story?
Note: the teacher can arrange what the students say in a column on the blackboard and then give the task to look through the text quickly to prove if their guesses were true or false.
3. What do you know or what have you heard about the subject you are going to read about?

WHILE-READING EXERCISES

The next group of exercises aims to teach the students to extract specific information. These are while-reading exercises.

- The students should scan the text to extract the information which the tasks demand. They do not have to pay attention to the parts of the text they do not understand.
- Previewing for the topic. Ask the students to read the first sentence of each paragraph and the last sentence of the passage and guess what the text is about, or what the general idea is.
- The teacher offers some statements and the students are to find out if they are false or true.
- The students may be given some questions to answer.

Note: the students may be divided into groups, each group given the same number of questions to make the work more competitive.

POST-READING EXERCISES

These exercises are more concerned with summing up the content of the text, investigation into the writer's opinion and may entail some kind of follow-up-task related to the text. Here you can use the following tasks:

- Find the most important sentence in each paragraph.
- Match each sentence of the jumbled summary with the correct paragraph.
- Use your imagination and write your end of the story.
- Express your attitude to the story, etc.
- What is your attitude to the story? Write a letter to the editor.
- Organize a press conference.

All the exercises described here can be used in whatever combination the teacher chooses but the succession of the types of exercises should be as offered here.

EXAMPLES 1 OF READING ACTIVITIES

Here are the examples of some reading activities, which I have used in my own experience.

►► Pre-reading task

Look at the sentence.

“Great Britain” has several different names, some people say “Britain”, or “the United Kingdom”, or just “the UK”.

Answer the questions:

1. How many names of the country are mentioned?
2. What do you think is the official name of the state?
3. What is the abbreviation?
4. What do you already know about this country?

►► While-reading tasks

1. Look at the map of Great Britain. Read the text about this country.

There are four different countries in the United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Altogether more than 56 million people live in Britain, many of them in big industrial cities like London, Liverpool and Manchester. Northern Ireland is situated in the northern part of Ireland. The territory of the United Kingdom is about 244 square kilometers and it takes the 75th place among other countries in the world. The capital of the country is London.

2. Look at the sentences and correct them if necessary:

- There are five different countries in the United Kingdom.
- Altogether more than 56 million people live in Britain.
- Northern Ireland is situated in the northern part of Britain.
- The territory of the United Kingdom is about 422 square kilometers.
- The capital of the country is London.

3. Make three groups. Each group gets:

- the geographical map of the UK;
- short information about mountains, rivers or waters that wash Great Britain;
- new words with the transcription to help you to read new geographical names.

Read the texts and put them in correct order to make the story about Great Britain.

The task for group 1

Great Britain is separated from the continent by the English Channel, the narrower part of which is called the Strait of Dover. The British Isles are surrounded by the shallow waters of the Irish Sea and the North Sea, the North Channel and the Atlantic Ocean. Britain is comparatively small, but there is hardly a country, in the world where such a variety of scenery can be found.



■ The symbol of England is a red rose (left — Lancaster rose; right — Tudor)

■ The symbol of Scotland is the thistle



■ A red dragon is the oldest symbol of Wales

The task for group 2

Great Britain can be divided into two parts: Lowland Britain in the south and east, and Highland Britain in the North and West. The most important mountain territories are those located in the north of Scotland. Geologically these North West Mountains and the Grampians are among the oldest in the world. The highest peak is Ben Nevis (1343 m.). In the centre of England is a range of mountains called the Apennines. The Cambrian Mountains occupy nearly the whole of Wales. The highest peak there is Snowdon (1085 m.).

The task for group 3

The rivers of the region are short and of no great importance as waterways. The longest of them are the Severn (354 km) and the Thames, which is 346 kilometers long. Other comparatively long rivers are: the Trent, the Tweed, and the Wye. Lakes are found in the Lake District in England and in the highlands of Scotland. One of the best known lakes is Loch Ness in Scotland, famous for its 'Loch Ness Monster'.

► **After-reading tasks**

1. Share the information. (Students speak and listen to each other in order to get first outlook.) Don't forget to use the maps.
2. Here are the models of the maps where you can see only the shape of the country. Your task is to colour them, write all the geographical names there and speak about the geography of the UK using your own maps.

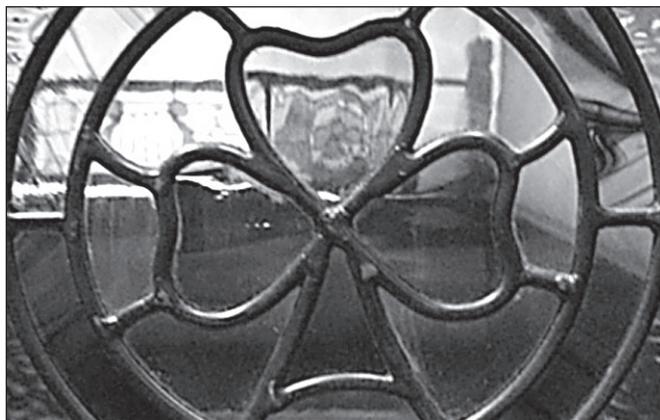
EXAMPLES 2 OF READING ACTIVITIES

Here is another example of the tasks. The text is dedicated to the national symbols and the life of people of these countries.

► **Pre-reading task**

Do you think the following statements are true or false?

1. English people keep their traditions with great honour.



■ The most famous symbol of Ireland is shamrock

2. Every country in the UK has got its own symbol.
3. The symbol of Ireland is a red rose.
4. The shamrock is the most famous symbol of Wales.
5. Everyone in the UK speaks English.

► **While-reading task**

Work in pairs

Read a magazine article about people of Britain. Six sentences have been removed from this text. Choose which sentences (A–G) fit into the gap (1–6). There is one extra sentence.

- A. Red dragon is probably the oldest symbol of Wales.
- B. They like to speak Welsh, to sing Welsh songs.
- C. Green is one of the symbols of Ireland and everyone wears green on St. Patrick's Day.
- D. The English are famous for their love of animals.
- E. People from Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland are not English.
- F. Traditional tartan skirts are called kilts and many Scots wear them.
- G. Every country in the UK has got its own symbol.

PEOPLE IN BRITAIN

The symbol of England is a red rose, and English people are crazy about gardening.

1

A lot of families have pets. English football is famous, of course, but there is another national sport too, cricket.

2

Scotland is very famous for its beautiful scenery and the lakes called lochs. An important symbol of Scotland is a special kind of material called tartan. Another symbol of Scotland is the thistle.

3

Another symbol of Wales is a vegetable called the leek. People wear them on their coats on St. David's Day, the Welsh national holiday. Welsh people are famous for their singing and their musical festivals.

The most famous symbol of Ireland is shamrock. In Ireland you may see different shades and tones of green.

4

The Irish are famous for their playing, singing and dancing.

Everyone who was born in Britain is British. People from England are the English.

5

They are Scottish or the Scots; the Welsh and the Irish. People from Scotland and Wales don't like when they are called the English.

Everyone in Britain speaks English. But in some parts of Scotland and Wales people speak different languages as well. The Welsh are especially proud of their language.

6

Everyone in the UK speaks English but they all speak it differently.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

►► **After-reading task**

Choose A, B, or C.

- The United Kingdom consists of four different countries
 A England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.
 B England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
 C Britain, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- Great Britain is separated from the continent by
 A the English Channel.
 B the North Channel.
 C the Irish Sea.
- The highest peak in Great Britain is
 A Ben Nevis.
 B Snowdon.
 C Loch Ness.
- The longest rivers in the UK are
 A the Trent and the Tweed.
 B the Wye and the Strait of Dover.
 C the Severn and the Thames.
- The British Isles are surrounded by the shallow waters of
 A the Irish Sea and the North Sea, the North Channel and the Indian Ocean.
 B the Irish Sea and the Black Sea, the North Channel and the Atlantic Ocean.
 C the Irish Sea and the North Sea, the North Channel and the Atlantic Ocean.
- The population of the United Kingdom is
 A 48 mln people.
 B 56 mln people.
 C 244 mln people
- The symbol of England is
 A a thistle.
 B a rose.
 C a daffodil.
- What colour are London's buses
 A black.
 B red.
 C black and white.

	A	B	C
1			
2			
3			
4			

	A	B	C
5			
6			
7			
8			

So, teaching reading is a difficult work. Teachers must be aware of the progress that students are making and adjust instructions to the changing abilities of students. It is also important to remember that the goal of reading is to understand the texts and to be able to learn from them.

Reading is a skill that will empower everyone who learns it. They will be able to benefit from the store of knowledge in printed materials and, ultimately, to contribute to that knowledge. Good teaching enables students to learn to read and read to learn.