21 Focus on reading skills

A Warm-up

Here are some statements about reading. To what extent do you agree? Discuss these statements in pairs or groups.

a Reading means knowing how to sound out the letters in words.
b Comprehension means understanding all the words in a text.
c Reading, in the classroom, means reading aloud.
d For teaching purposes, texts should be simplified.
e Reading is a good way of improving vocabulary.
f If you can read well in your first language, you should be able to read well in a second one.

B Reading purposes and strategies

1 Identify the reasons for reading, and the ways of reading, for these different text types:

Text type	Reason for reading		Way of reading		
	primarily for pleasure	primarily for information	close (intensive) reading	skimming for gist	scanning for specific information
instructions for playing a board game		✓			
a memo from your boss					
a weather forecast					
the news report of a sports event					
a short story					
a research paper published in a scholarly journal					

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C Reading in a second language

1 a Look at this text (in Esperanto) and answer the questions.

1 What kind of text do you think it is?
2 What is it about?
3 How are these names connected: Tonto, Andreo, Betty?
4 How does the story end – happily, unhappily?

KATO RETROVIS SIAN FAMILION POST 4.000 KILOMETRA VOJAĜO

Kato, kiu vojaĝis 4.000 kilometrojn, revenis al siaj posedantoj, kiuj kredis, ke ĝi estis mortinta. La kato, Tonto, malaperis kiam ĝiaj posedantoj, kiuj loĝas en Hamilton, Ontario, feriis en Vankuvero. La tagon, kiam ili devis reveni hejmen, ili ne sukcesis trovi la katon. Andreo kaj Betty Overden ne havis alian elekton ol lasi Tonton al lia sorto. Mirakle Tonto ekkomencis la 4.000-kilometran vojaĝon trans Kanado. Li bezonis nur 3 semajnojn por alveni hejmen. 'Mi ne povis kredi miajn okulojn', diris Betty kiam la kato aperis unu matenon en ŝia ĝardeno en Hamilton. 'Tonto sidis tie, malsata kaj malpura, sed vere feliĉa revidi nin!'





b Read the text again and try to answer the questions (also in Esperanto).

1 Kiel nomiĝas la kato?
2 Kiom da kilometroj vojaĝis la kato?
3 Kiom da semajnoj li bezonis?
4 Kie Betty trovis sian katon?

2 Compare ideas with a partner.

1 How many questions (in parts 1a and 1b) could you answer? What clues were you using in order to answer them?
2 Rate your comprehension of the text on a scale from 0 to 10.
3 What does this tell you about reading in a second language?
4 What can the teacher do to help learners understand a text like the one above?

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D Coursebook reading texts and tasks

1 a Identify the purpose of the tasks 1, 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b in this coursebook extract. Decide if they are pre-reading, while-reading or post-reading tasks.

b Why do you think some sections of the text are in bold type?

9A Get healthy!

Vocabulary health
Grammar relative clauses with *who*, *that*, *which*, *whose*, *where* and *when*

QUICK REVIEW Warnings and advice
Imagine a friend from the UK is coming to live and work in your town/city. Think of five warnings or pieces of advice to give your friend. Work in pairs. Compare sentences. What's the most important warning or piece of advice?

Reading and Listening

1 Work in groups. Discuss these questions.

1 Do you think you have a healthy diet? Why?/Why not?
2 How often do you eat things that you know are bad for you?
3 Has your diet changed since you were a child? If so, how?

2 **a** Before you read, check these words with your teacher or in a dictionary.

a fast | go on a retreat | toxins | digest

b Read the article. Did the journalist feel healthier after doing the retreat? Why?/Why not?

3 **a** Read the article again. Tick the true sentences. Correct the false ones.

1 You only drink vegetable juice on the retreat.
2 Joanne wasn't looking forward to the experience.
3 Louise worked at the retreat centre.
4 Fasting helps your body get rid of toxins.
5 Joanne felt fine on day two of the retreat.
6 The fifth day was easier than the third day.
7 Joanne has changed her diet since the retreat.

b Work in pairs. Discuss these questions.

1 Would you like to go on a retreat like the one in the article? Why?/Why not?
2 Do you know anyone who has been on a retreat like this? If so, did they enjoy it? Why?/Why not?

Just Juice



Can giving up food really improve your health? Joanne Fullerton spent a week at a retreat centre to find out.

When I arrived at the Just Juice Retreat Centre, I was feeling a bit nervous. I was going to do a seven-day fast, drinking only fresh organic fruit and vegetable juices. I'm the type of person [1]**that eats three meals a day** and can't wake up without a cappuccino, so the idea of living on juice for a week was rather terrifying.

After checking in, I was taken to the guest house [2]**where everyone was staying**. Louise, the woman [3]**who I was sharing a room with**, had been on the retreat four times and she looked healthier than anyone I'd ever met. According to Rachel Carr-Hill, the woman [4]**whose fasting programme we were following**, going without food is one of the best things we can do for our health. The food [5]**that we usually eat** contains toxins [6]**which stay in our bodies** and stop our digestive system working properly. When we fast, our body doesn't have to digest food, so it has time to get rid of these toxins.

The first day started with yoga at seven o'clock and then we had 'breakfast' – a big glass of carrot juice. We spent the day listening to talks about health, having massages and relaxing, with a different juice meal every three hours. On the second day I had an awful headache and felt as if I was getting a cold. Apparently this was a normal reaction because my body was starting to get rid of the toxins. On day three my headache was much worse and this was also [7]**when I started getting *really* hungry**. I began daydreaming about cheeseburgers, pasta, chocolate – anything but more juice. However, by day five the hunger had gone and I felt more relaxed than I'd been for years. At the end of the retreat I'd lost three kilos and felt like a new woman. Now I'm much more careful about what I eat – but I still can't live without my morning cappuccinos!



face2face Intermediate

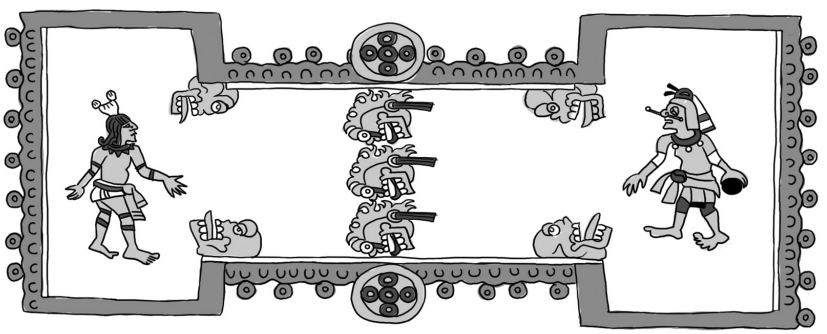
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2 Work in groups. Imagine that you are going to use the following text with a group of intermediate learners.

a Decide which features might help understanding and which might make it difficult to understand.

b Design at least one *pre-reading,* one *while-reading,* and one *post-reading* task to use with this text

Then compare ideas with another group.



Pok-a-tok:

THE MEXICAN BALL GAME

From ancient times a ritual ball game was played by all the peoples of Mexico and Central America. The ruins of almost every ancient city include a walled court that was used for this sacred game. In Mexico alone, well over 600 stone ball courts have been found.

The game (called *pok-a-tok* by the Aztecs) is no longer played and the rules were never written down. What we know about it is based on drawings and on descriptions by the first European visitors. Apparently, the players were divided into two teams. Each team fought for possession of the ball. On either side of the rectangular court were two long sloping walls. The object of the game was to drive the ball through rings that were positioned on these walls. The ball was solid rubber, probably a little larger than a modern basketball, and would have weighed several kilos. The rings were almost identical in diameter to the balls, which must have made it extremely difficult to score. It seems that the first team to score won.

The players were not allowed to hit the ball with their hands or feet. They could use only their knees, hips and elbows. The ball could not touch the ground. Ballplayers used cotton pads and thick leather clothing to protect themselves from the ball. Evidently, players were often injured, despite these protective measures. The game seems to have had a religious significance. It may have been a re-enactment of an ancient creation myth. Perhaps the ball symbolized the sun as it moved from the east to the west across the sky. If played correctly, the game would cause the sun to shine, the rain to come at the right time, and the crops to grow.

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E A reading lesson

1 Put these stages of a reading lesson in a logical order. (There may be more than one order).

a Check detailed understanding by asking true/false questions.
b Focus on vocabulary in the text by asking learners to find words that mean X, Y, Z.
c Use a picture or some discussion questions to generate interest in the topic.
d Ask learners to read the text quickly in order to answer gist questions, e.g. *What's it about? Who wrote it? Why?* and then check their answers.
e Ask learners to talk about their personal response to the text and its topic.
f Teach essential vocabulary that learners may be unfamiliar with.
g Focus on a grammar structure in the text by, for example, asking learners to underline each instance of it.
h Use the title of the text to encourage students to predict the content of the text.

2 Choose a reading text in a coursebook that you are using. Identify any *pre-*, *while-* and *post-reading* tasks. Using ideas from the previous activity, could you add anything to the sequence of tasks?

KEY WORDS FOR TEACHERS

Check you know the meanings of these terms.

- *skimming*
- *scanning*
- *comprehension*
- *bottom-up/top-down knowledge*
- *reading for gist*
- *intensive reading*
- *extensive reading*
- *reading strategies*

REFLECTION

Discuss these questions.

a What is the advantage of choosing reading texts that are accompanied by illustrations, diagrams or maps?
b What are the pros and cons of using real (i.e. authentic) texts, rather than texts that have been specially written or adapted for classroom purposes?
c Why is setting a task in advance of reading a good idea?
d What does 'matching the task to the text' mean? (If in doubt, refer to Task B above). Why is it a good idea?
e Why is it often a good idea to let students compare their answers to reading comprehension questions?
f Should learners be allowed to consult dictionaries and/or translation apps while reading? What is the alternative?
g Should learners answer comprehension questions from memory, or should they be allowed to consult the text? Why / Why not?

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