

READ THIS!

Fascinating Stories from the Content Areas

Daphne Mackey **Intro**

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Introduction

ABOUT THE SERIES

Read This! is a four-level reading series for beginning, low intermediate, and intermediate-level English learners. The series is designed to enhance students' confidence and enjoyment of reading in English, build their reading skills, and develop their vocabulary.

The readings in the series are high interest and content-rich. They are all nonfiction and contain fascinating true information. The style of writing makes the information easily digestible, and the language is carefully controlled at each level to make the texts just challenging enough, but easily accessible.

Each book in *Read This!* consists of five thematically related units. Each unit is loosely connected to a different academic discipline that might be studied in an institution of higher education, such as business, engineering, psychology, health care, or mathematics. Each unit is divided into three chapters, and each chapter contains a reading accompanied by exercise material. Besides the main theme of the unit, each chapter is tied to a secondary academic content area so that students can experience an interdisciplinary approach to a topic.

Accompanying each reading is a variety of pre- and postreading activities. They are designed to provide a balance of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and reading skill development. Many activities also provide opportunities for student discussion and a chance for students to connect the topics of the readings to their own lives and experience. Each unit ends with a wrap-up that reviews ideas and vocabulary from all three chapters of the unit.

Vocabulary instruction is an important focus of *Read This!* Selected words from each reading are previewed, presented, practiced, and recycled. These words are drawn from the two academic disciplines that are brought together in each reading. In addition, selected words from the Academic Word List (AWL) are pulled out from each reading for instruction.

Each unit is designed to take 6–9 hours of class time, depending on how much out-of-class work is assigned by the teacher. The units can either be taught in the order they appear or out of sequence. It is also possible to teach the chapters within a unit out of order. However, by teaching the units and chapters in sequence, students will benefit fully from the presentation, practice, and recycling of the target vocabulary.

All the readings in the *Read This!* series have been recorded for those students whose language learning can be enhanced by listening to a text

as well as by reading it. However, since the goal of the series is to build students' readings skills, students should be told to read and study the texts without audio before they choose to listen to them.

The audio files can be found on the *Read This!* Web site at www.cambridge.org/readthis. Students can go to this site and listen to the audio recordings on their computers, or they can download the audio recordings onto their personal MP3 players to listen to them at any time.

An audio CD of the readings is also available in the back of each Teacher's Manual for those teachers who would like to bring the recorded readings into their classroom for students to hear. Also in the Teacher's Manual are photocopiable unit tests.

THE UNIT STRUCTURE

Unit Opener

The title, at the top of the first page of each unit, names the academic content area that unifies the three chapters in the unit. The title of each chapter also appears, along with a picture and a short blurb that hints at the content of the chapter reading. These elements are meant to intrigue readers and whet their appetites for what is to come. At the bottom of the page, the main academic content area of the unit is repeated, and the secondary academic content area for each chapter is given as well.

1 Topic Preview

The opening page of each chapter includes a picture and two tasks: Part A and Part B. Part A is usually a problem-solving task in which students are asked to bring some of their background knowledge or personal opinions to bear. Part B always consists of three discussion questions that draw students closer and closer to an idea of what the reading is about. In fact, the last question, *What do you think the reading will be about?* is always the same in every chapter: This is to help learners get into the habit of predicting what texts will be about before they read.

2 Vocabulary Preview

This section has students preview selected words that appear in the reading. It contains two tasks: Part A and Part B. Part A presents selected words for the students to study and learn. Part B has the students check their understanding of these words.

In Part A, the selected words are listed in three boxes. The box on the left contains words that relate to the main content area of the unit. The box on the right contains words that relate to the secondary content area of the reading. Between these two boxes are words from the reading that come

from the Academic Word List (AWL). Placing the AWL words between the two lists of content area words creates a visual representation of the fact that the content area words are specific to separate content areas, while the AWL words are general academic words that might appear in either content area.

Note that the part of speech of a word is given in the chart only if this word could also be a different part of speech. Also note that some words are accompanied by words in parentheses. This alerts students to some common collocations that can form with the word and that will appear in the reading.

The vocabulary in the Vocabulary Preview is recycled over and over. The words appear in the reading; in Section 5, Vocabulary Check; in the Unit Wrap-Ups; and in the unit tests.

3 Reading

This section contains the reading and accompanying photos or illustrations. Some words from the reading are glossed at the bottom of the page. These are low-frequency words that students are not expected to know. Understanding these words might be important for understanding the reading; however, it would probably not be useful for students to incorporate the words into their active vocabulary.

The icon at the top of the page indicates that the reading is available as an MP3 file online. Students can access this by going to the *Read This!* Web site at www.cambridge.org/readthis.

4 Reading Check

This section is designed to check students' comprehension of the text. Part A checks their understanding of the main ideas. Part B asks students to retrieve more detailed information from the reading.

5 Vocabulary Check

In this section, students revisit the same vocabulary that they studied before they read the text and that they have since encountered in the reading. The Vocabulary Check contains two tasks: Part A and Part B. In Part A, students are asked to complete a text by choosing appropriate vocabulary words for the context. The text in Part A is essentially a summary of the most salient information in the reading. This activity both reinforces the target vocabulary for the chapter and the content of the reading.

Part B varies from chapter to chapter. Sometimes it has a game-like quality, where students have to unscramble a word or find the odd word out in a group of words. Sometimes the task helps students extend their understanding of the target words by working with other parts of speech derived from the words. Other times, the task tests students' knowledge of other words that the target words often co-occur with (their collocations).

6 Applying Reading Skills

An important strand of *Read This!* is reading skill development. Students are introduced to a variety of skills, such as finding main ideas and supporting details, identifying cause and effect, and organizing information from a reading into a chart. Practicing these skills will help students gain a deeper understanding of the content of the reading and the author's purpose. The section opens with a brief explanation of the reading skill and why it is important.

This section has two tasks: Part A and Part B. In Part A, students usually work with some kind of graphic organizer that helps them practice the skill and organize information. This work will prepare them to complete Part B.

7 Discussion

This section contains three questions that will promote engaging discussion and encourage students to connect the ideas and information in the readings to their own knowledge and experience. Many of the questions take students beyond the readings. There is also ample opportunity for students to express their opinions. This section helps students consolidate their understanding of the reading and use the target vocabulary from the chapter.

WRAP-UP

Each unit ends with a Wrap-Up, which gives students the chance to review vocabulary and ideas from the unit. It will also help them prepare for the unit test. (The photocopiable unit tests are to be found in the Teacher's Manual.) Teachers may want to pick and choose which parts of the Wrap-Up they decide to have students do, since to do all the activities for every unit might be overly time-consuming. The Wrap-Up section consists of the following:

Vocabulary Review. All the target vocabulary from the three chapters of the unit is presented in a chart. The chart is followed by an activity in which students match definitions to some of the words in the chart.

Vocabulary in Use. Students engage in mini-discussions in which they use some of the target language from the unit. Students will be able to draw on their personal experience and knowledge of the world.

Interview. Students work with the concepts of the readings by participating in a structured and imaginative oral activity. The interviews require that the students have understood and digested the content of at least one of the readings in a chapter. One advantage of interviews is that they are self-leveling. In other words, the sophistication of the interview is determined by the level and oral proficiency of the students. Students will need help in preparing for the interviews. They will also need time to prepare for them.

It might be a good idea for the teacher to model the first interview with one of the stronger students in the class.

Writing. This section of the Wrap-Up provides the teacher with an opportunity to have students do some writing about the content of the unit. The setup of this section varies from unit to unit.

WebQuest. For those students, programs, or classrooms that have Internet access, students can log onto www.cambridge.org/readthis. They can then find the WebQuest for the unit that they have been studying. The WebQuest is essentially an Internet scavenger hunt in which students retrieve information from Web sites that they are sent to. In this way, students encounter the information from the chapters once more. The Web sites confirm what they have already read and then broaden their knowledge of the unit topics by leading them to additional information. The WebQuests may be done individually or in pairs. Students may either submit their answers to the teacher online or they can print out a completed answer sheet and hand it in to the teacher.

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Daphne Mackey