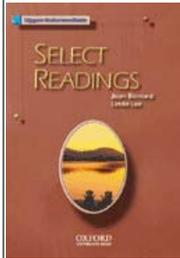


<i>Select Readings</i>			
Author:	Linda Lee and Erik Gundersen		
Publisher:	Ann Arbor: Michigan Press		
Title	Pages	ISBN	Price
Pre-Intermediate Student's Book (2000)	Pp.xiii+178	0-19-437700-8	£12.95
Intermediate Student's Book (2003)	Pp.xiii+196	0-19-437475-0	£12.95
Upper-Intermediate Student's Book (2003)	Pp.xiii+176	0-19-438601-5	£12.95
Pre-Intermediate Audio CD (2003)		0-19-439126-4	£10.50
Intermediate Audio CD (2003)		0-19-439127-2	£10.50
Upper-Intermediate Audio CD (2003)		0-19-439128-0	£21.50



Linda Lee and Erik Gundersen offer language teachers and students at the pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate level a series of *Select Readings*.

The goal of *Select Readings* is to generate good English language skills with the main focus on reading skills. The authors use both the bottom-up and top-down approach where appropriate.

Each volume of *Select Readings* contains the following sections: Scope and Sequence, Introduction, the body of the book (consisting of fourteen chapters), Culture and Language Notes, Maps, and Vocabulary Index. The pre-intermediate volume includes two additional sections: Irregular Verbs and Vocabulary Logs.

The Scope and Sequence section provides, in a table format, a brief summary of the material presented in each chapter. The Introduction offers guidelines and detailed teaching suggestions to teachers on how the material in each chapter can be used in the classroom.

The fourteen chapters of the body of the book contain interesting, well-written reading selections. The readings cover a variety of topics such as sports, cultures, technology, business, and geography. The readings and topics are chosen carefully to ensure that the students at each level can relate to them easily. For example, the readings in the pre-intermediate volume are not as complex and as long as the ones in the intermediate

and upper-intermediate volumes.

Each of the fourteen chapters is divided into eight sections (so called activity/exercise): 1) Opening Page; 2) Before You Read; 3) Reading Passage; 4) After You Read: Understanding the Text; 5) Reading Skill; 6) Building Vocabulary; 7) language Focus; and 8) Discussion and Writing. These sections follow a three-phase structure: a pre-activity phase, an activity phase, and a post-activity phase. The activities and exercises involve pair work and group work as well as individual alone. The activities are aimed at developing all the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in such a way that at each level the student has a firm foundation before entering the next level of language proficiency. The inclusion of all four language skills in the activities (even though the main focus of the series is reading) is an excellent idea. It is in keeping with the principle that no single language skill develops in isolation from the rest.

Culture and Language Notes, Maps, Vocabulary Index, Irregular Verbs and Vocabulary Logs are included at the end of the text. These are useful features, for they serve as aids to the students not only in reflecting on and becoming familiar with the vocabulary that is contained in each reading, but also in getting to know the social and cultural environment in which each selection was written. This cultural background is essential to in-depth reading comprehension.

While the series contains some excellent features, it has its shortcomings as well. These relate mainly to the suggested timeframe. The timeframe suggested for a Reading Passage section is 45 to 60 minutes. This may be a bit too long, especially at the lower levels, since students at these levels may find it difficult to concentrate on the activities for this length of time. It may also be difficult for teachers to incorporate the whole thing as one unit into their program, since one reading passage and its related activities will take up almost the entire class period, leaving no time for other unrelated but necessary activities. It might have been better to have set up the reading and its related activities in smaller modules that could be used separately and spread out over several days.

Another shortcoming of the series is the way the Culture and Language Notes are presented. Many of them contain social and cultural stereotypes and the sources of the information given in the notes are not provided. For example, in the pre-intermediate volume, the notes state:

Potatoes In England, the United States, and other Western countries, many people eat potatoes with dinner every night. French fries, baked potatoes, and, mashed potatoes are the most popular potato dishes in the States. People eat potatoes with meat, chicken, and fish (p. 152).

This explanation seems to ignore the fact that both England and the United States today have multicultural societies with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, who may not necessarily eat potatoes for dinner every night. Thus, while the explanation for the word "potatoes" is satisfactory, it gives the students the false impression that the countries mentioned are ethnically and culturally fairly homogeneous. The Culture Notes would serve students better if they had been written in a more culturally sensitive manner and if more care had been taken to ensure that the facts provided did not mislead students by inadvertently creating a false impression.

The *Audio CDs* that accompany the series contain audio recordings of the reading

passage in each chapter, read by a well-chosen group of speakers of English. This is an excellent accompaniment to the series, since it exposes the students to a broad variety of accents and inflections of English, not just that of their teacher. As a teaching tool, it provides students with an opportunity to practice their listening skill and become familiar with the diversity of accents to be found among English speakers.

Overall, *Select Readings* and its supplementary materials make a fine series for the development of English reading and related skills at the pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate level. A book like this is long overdue, and teachers of English as a Second Language everywhere will find it useful, especially if they can find ways to adapt it to their own particular needs.

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