

## Introduction to In Focus Graded Reading

Graded reading for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students is a way of learning English through reading. It involves reading lots of books at a level that matches the student's proficiency. These books use simple words that many people know. The idea is to read without stopping to look up hard words in a dictionary. Graded readers are books that help students to do this. They are written in simple English, which makes them perfect for practicing and improving English reading skills. Reading a lot helps students learn better and faster.

On the *In Focus* website, there are special readings like this. These readings use common high-frequency words from the NGSL (New General Service List). They also include keywords and topics from each unit of the *In Focus* textbook series. This helps students learn English in a fun and easy way by reading stories that match what they study in the *In Focus* textbook.

The readings on the *In Focus* website are also linked to comprehension questions. These questions help students check if they have understood the story correctly. It's up to the teacher to decide whether to use these questions in class. However, the main goal is to encourage students to read a lot. To do this, students can begin with these readings, but students should also use bookstores and the school library to find many graded readers that are interesting to them and at a level that is only a little challenging. The target is to be able to understand the reading without the need to use a dictionary.

The organization of the 12 graded readings is structured to complement each unit of the *In Focus* textbook, covering a wide range of topics. Each reading examines a specific theme, such as advertising, sports and competition, aging society, robots and AI, animal rights, and online information issues. They are designed to provide engaging narratives that align with the educational content of each textbook unit, enhancing EFL students' learning through contextually relevant stories. This approach aids in reinforcing the concepts taught in the textbook through diverse, interesting narratives.

The graded readings are accompanied by comprehension questions in Aiken format and a vocabulary review. Aiken format is commonly used for creating multiple-choice questions. It presents a question followed by several answer options, typically labeled A, B, C, and so on. This format is straightforward and effective for testing comprehension and can be directly imported into LMSs such as Moodle. Additionally, the vocabulary review in each reading focuses on keywords used in the text. It includes definitions and example sentences from the reading, providing context and helping students to better understand and remember these words. This combination of Aiken-format questions and vocabulary review effectively reinforces students' understanding of the text and the new vocabulary they encounter.

Following is a summary of each reading:

### Unit 1: The World of Advertising—The Story of Anna and the New Shoes

**Themes:** Exploration of advertising's influence on consumer behavior through the story of Anna, a young girl who learns about the power of branding and the importance of making wise purchasing decisions.

**Keywords:** assume, behavior, brand, income, industry, label, prevent, stock, trend, warn

**Summary:** Chronicles Anna's desire for new shoes, leading her to confront the allure of advertising and the reality of brand value. Through her journey, Anna discovers the significance of looking beyond ads, evaluating true needs, and the impact of consumer choices.

### Unit 2: Online Advertising: Making Our Lives Better?—Cookies That You Can't Eat

**Themes:** Discussion of the dual role of internet cookies in enhancing user experience through personalization while raising concerns about privacy and data protection.

**Keywords:** award, benefit, blame, campaign, factor, mass, opportunity, promote, resource, technique

**Summary:** Explores the inception and evolution of internet cookies, highlighting their utility in tailoring online experiences and advertising. It addresses the privacy implications and the ongoing debate between personalized marketing and user consent, reflecting on the balance between innovation and ethical considerations.

### **Unit 3: Going to Extremes—Skydiving**

**Themes:** The historical evolution of skydiving from a daring experiment to a widely appreciated sport, reflecting human ambition to push boundaries and seek thrilling experiences.

**Keywords:** achieve, athlete, coach, complain, feature, further, seek, suggestion, typically, victim

**Summary:** Traces the development of skydiving, from the first pioneering jump to modern advancements in parachute technology and skydiving techniques. It highlights key figures and milestones in skydiving history, underscoring the sport's role in challenging human limits and fostering community among enthusiasts.

### **Unit 4: Winning at Any Cost—Ben Johnson's Olympic Journey**

**Themes:** The moral and ethical implications of doping in sports, illustrated by the story of Ben Johnson, whose quest for Olympic glory was tarnished by a scandal.

**Keywords:** bill, competition, deliver, increase, mention, observe, plus, rate, root, status

**Summary:** Follows Ben Johnson's rise in athletics, culminating in his fall from grace at the 1988 Seoul Olympics due to a doping scandal. It explores the consequences of violating sportsmanship, the repercussions on Johnson's career, and the broader impact on the sporting community's stance on doping.

### **Unit 5: Our Aging Population—Silverton: A Village United**

**Themes:** The fictional village of Silverton responds to its aging population by rallying together to ensure the elderly are supported and integrated within the community.

**Keywords:** average, category, duty, growth, ignore, material, option, separate, solution, supply

**Summary:** Silverton's mayor, Mr. Lee, recognizes the village's shifting demographics toward an older population and initiates community efforts to adapt. Through collaborative planning and action, villagers, young and old, come together to enhance the lives of their elderly residents.

### **Unit 6: Do You Want to Live Forever?—Extending Lifespans**

**Themes:** The villagers of Silverton explore the complex implications of scientific advancements that could extend human lifespans indefinitely.

**Keywords:** divide, environmental, extend, gain, pension, principle, proposal, relative, schedule, survive

**Summary:** In a reflective discussion, Silverton's residents weigh the benefits and challenges of potentially living forever due to scientific advancements. Concerns range from environmental sustainability and resource allocation to the impact on community dynamics and personal life plans. While the prospect excites some,

especially children imagining endless opportunities, others, like the elderly, value life's natural cycle.

### **Unit 7: Robots in the Home—A Robot Called Yang**

**Themes:** The integration of robots into family life, their potential to enhance daily living, and the emotional connections that can form between humans and machines.

**Keywords:** adopt, aid, career, code, doubt, effort, force, oppose, potential, serve

**Summary:** Set in a future where robots significantly contribute to household management, child education, and elderly care, this narrative examines the evolving relationship between humans and robots. This reading looks at how technology can assist in cultural education and become an integral part of family dynamics.

### **Unit 8: I Lost My Job to a Machine—Mr. Lee**

**Themes:** The impact of automation on employment and the personal and communal adaptation to technological advancements in the workplace.

**Keywords:** application, army, disease, equal, gun, replace, security, union, unlikely, waste

**Summary:** Mr. Lee's story encapsulates the challenge of job displacement due to automation, reflecting a broader societal shift. After losing his long-time job at the factory to machines, he seeks new opportunities, eventually finding a fulfilling new career as an MRI operator. This transition highlights the necessity of lifelong learning and the potential for technology to open new paths.

### **Unit 9: Animals: Our Research Partners?—A Mouse Named Hope**

**Themes:** The ethical considerations and emotional impact of using animals in research are explored through the experiences of a mouse named Hope.

**Keywords:** claim, contract, employee, examine, experiment, issue, parent, patient, refuse, training

**Summary:** Hope, a mouse taken from her home into a laboratory, endures loneliness, fear, and pain as part of scientific experiments. Despite the care provided in terms of food and shelter, the emotional and physical suffering she experiences highlights the complex moral landscape of animal research. Hope's eventual escape symbolizes a quest for freedom and dignity.

### **Unit 10: Treatment of Animals—Alex and Big Ellie**

**Themes:** The story examines the mistreatment of circus animals, focusing on an elephant named Ellie and a reporter named Alex's mission to improve her living conditions.

**Keywords:** accuse, basis, feed, generate, murder, prison, protection, release, suffer, suit

**Summary:** Alex Reed, a reporter passionate about animal welfare, goes undercover in a circus to expose the harsh treatment of an elephant named Ellie. Her observations of Ellie's distress and confinement fuel a resolve to advocate for Ellie's well-being. A dramatic escape attempt by Ellie, culminating in her tranquilization in the city streets, brings public attention to her plight. Alex's detailed reporting on the incident prompts a community-wide discussion, leading to Ellie's relocation to a zoo where she can live more comfortably among her own kind.

### **Unit 11: Online (Dis)Information—Smart Chats: The Rise of Talking Tech**

**Themes:** The evolution of large language models and their role in shaping our interaction with information and technology, paralleled with a parrot’s ability to mimic human speech.

**Keywords:** aware, contribution, debate, define, editor, legal, property, shift, survey, user

**Summary:** Through the lens of a parrot named Rocky, capable of mimicking human speech, the narrative explores the capabilities and ethical considerations surrounding advanced large language models like ChatGPT. These AI-driven technologies, while enhancing communication and providing educational assistance, also pose challenges in discerning the authenticity of information and the moral implications of their usage.

## **Unit 12: News: Fact or Fake?—Fake vs. Fact: The Digital Truth Trail**

**Themes:** Navigating the complexities of distinguishing between authentic and fabricated news in the digital age, emphasizing critical thinking and verification.

**Keywords:** commit, despite, document, finance, host, penalty, refer, rely, source, vote

**Summary:** This narrative outlines the challenges faced in discerning truth from falsehood online, where the immediacy and vastness of digital information can often obscure reality. It presents a call to digital literacy, urging readers to approach online content with a discerning eye, questioning the sources, motives, and veracity of the information encountered.

### **A Note on Coverage**

Note that the coverage in each reading is over 95% of the first 3 levels of the NGSL, i.e. words 1-1200 in frequency order. The coverage would be considerably higher were we to use the 2800 words of the complete NGSL. However, note also that creating graded readers is somewhat of an art as much as a science. For coverage data creation, we included some words outside the NGSL target levels based on the following principle: The word is integral to the topic. For example, in Unit 9, “A Mouse Named Hope”, the word “mice” occurs 13 times, and even though it is outside the first three levels of the NGSL we assume that there is sufficient contextualization to make the meaning apparent.

Why 95%? The proposal that a lexical coverage of 95% for graded reader texts is sufficient to allow students to read general texts without the need for a dictionary is well-supported by theoretical and empirical research on lexical frequency and comprehension thresholds. This argument posits that learners can achieve a satisfactory level of understanding and engage with texts independently when they know 95% of the words used. This approach is predicated on the assumption that a high level of lexical knowledge enables learners to deduce the meaning of unknown words through context, thus fostering a more natural and fluid reading experience.

Graded readers that adhere to this threshold can provide a scaffolded reading experience, where learners encounter vocabulary at a controlled level of difficulty. This approach not only aids in vocabulary acquisition but also boosts learners’ confidence and motivation to read. It suggests a move towards more strategic vocabulary teaching, where emphasis is placed on high-frequency words and phrases that are essential for comprehension.