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LEARNING
WITH A
DIFFERENCE

READ and UNDERSTAND

Sharpens your reading comprehension
and vocabulary skills

- Reading texts deal with social and contemporary issues
- An accompanying audio CD records the reading texts
- Pre-reading questions for small group work and oral practice
- Ample exercises for practice in comprehension skills and summary writing
- Answer Key provided

3

*Betty Kirkpatrick
Rebecca Mok*

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LEARNERS
PUBLISHING

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Preface

Read and Understand is a series of four workbooks written for secondary or intermediate students who want to improve their reading comprehension skills. The 15 reading texts in each of the two lower-level books deal with social and contemporary issues of interest to teenagers. Each of the two upper-level books contains 20 reading passages covering a range of highly interesting topics written in different types of text, which include formal and informal letters, newspaper reports, speeches, recounts, conversations and information texts. Students can hear the reading of all the passages on an accompanying audio CD.

Every unit begins with three or four *Pre-Reading Questions* to encourage students to think about issues related to the topic. The questions are designed for students to work in pairs or small groups to develop their ability to make predictions and to understand information by drawing on their own knowledge and experience.

The *Vocabulary Study* section makes it convenient for students to look up the meanings of words and phrases highlighted in the passage.

The questions and activities in **Workbooks 3 and 4** are specially developed to help students sharpen specific reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. They are organized into the following three categories:

◆ Recalling Information

The questions in this category test students, at the knowledge level, their ability to pick out from the reading text what happened, to whom, where, when, how or why it happened. At this level, students will have a chance to:

- read and recall information from the text;
- note the relevance of dates, events and places; and
- trace the development of main ideas or points of view.

Students are given ample practice in these skills as they recall information and details in letters, conversations, descriptions, explanations, or give evidences/reasons that support a main idea or point of view.

◆ Understanding Information

In this category, students are required to practise answering a wide range of questions. They are asked to:

- compare and contrast information;
- order, group, and infer causes and effects;
- understand and organize information;
- grasp meaning;
- perceive thought patterns;
- recognize the features or components of different text types;
- generalize from given facts;
- use idioms or expressions;
- give meanings of words; and
- summarize information.

The exercises above are designed to help students develop their skills in:

- inferring and drawing conclusions by using contextual clues and prior knowledge;
- organizing, summarizing and synthesizing information using sequence, comparison, contrast and chronology;
- giving evidence or reasons to support a response or a point of view;
- using knowledge of text organization;
- understanding how the purpose of various text types is achieved;
- evaluating information for exaggeration or persuasive language; and
- inferring meanings of words in context.

◆ Writing Activity

With the aid of given notes, students are set writing tasks which require them to apply what they have learnt about features and organization of different text types. The tasks in each unit are linked to the reading text in its theme or in the text type, or both.

For the writing tasks at this level, students will have the opportunity to:

- plan and organize information;
- write in a variety of text types to suit different purposes;
- support and elaborate on ideas with relevant details; and
- use imagination.

All the writing activities aim to help students develop specific skills in:

- presenting and developing ideas in writing for a variety of purposes and audiences;
- exploring possible factors such as causes and effects, and reasons related to a topic or an issue;
- giving evidence or reasons to support a response, a point of view; and
- solving problems imaginatively and creatively.

SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO USE WORKBOOKS 3 AND 4

◆ Use of Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers provide visual 'images' for the organization of information. Where appropriate, graphic organizers are used in the exercises to guide students to a better understanding of the information, for example, by making comparisons and contrasts, showing causes and effects, outlining sequence of events, and so forth.

◆ Practice in Summary Writing

The skill of summarizing is one of the key skills in reading comprehension. Hence, a summary writing activity is given in every unit.

Here are five steps in ensuring effective summary writing:

1. Make sure you understand the requirement of the summary question.
2. Mark the parts of the reading text that answer the summary question.
3. Make a draft first, writing out all the main points only. Details and examples need be filled in only if the main points are well within the word length specified for the summary.
4. Check and double check your work, asking yourself:
 - Have I got all the main points down?
 - Have I used my own words as much as possible?
 - Have I repeated myself?
 - Have I skipped anything?
 - Are all the important information in the summary?
 - Is the summary within the required word length?
5. Edit or 'polish' your work to improve the overall accuracy, style and expressions. Improvements will include insertion of connectors like *and* and *because*, and correction of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

◆ Expression of Opinions

Where appropriate, the questions in the workbooks are set to elicit students' views and comments based on their own experience and cultural setting. One approach is for students to discuss these questions in small groups, confident in the knowledge that there are no right or wrong answers. Each student is encouraged to voice his/her views and to give reasons to support that point of view, which is a valuable life skill.

We acknowledge that developing language skills is a challenging and ongoing endeavour. It is hoped that this series of **Read and Understand 1-4** will serve its purpose in supplementing the materials that students need in order to be better thinkers and readers.



Bad News

The owner of a company announces its bankruptcy.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Based on the title and subtitle above, make a guess about three things that the owner of the company will say.
2. Imagine you are an employee who could lose your job, how would you feel?
3. For what reasons would a company have to face closure?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Thank you all for giving up your Saturday morning to come into the office. My partner, Robert Brown, and I have asked you here today to give you some rather bad news, I am afraid. We were anxious that you should hear this news directly from us, rather than **hear it on the grapevine**. Inevitably, **it is only a matter of time** before it is all over town.

To come straight to the point, I have to tell you that the firm of Blair and Brown Ltd has gone into receivership. I am sure many of you are aware of how badly small firms like ourselves have been hit by the recession. We have struggled on as long as we could, but we were forced to accept that **the writing was on the wall**. Despite various budgetary **strategies**, which included cutting our operating costs to the minimum and having to **let** several valuable members of staff **go**, we just do not have enough money to pay our creditors and carry on trading.

Some of you may well be wondering why another firm did not buy us. Originally, we hoped that this would be the solution to our problems, but this was not to be. We **explored every avenue**, but **to no avail**. At other times, the firm would have been an attractive prospect to prospective buyers, but not now. Because of the recession, many small to medium firms **have their backs to the wall** and are looking for **white knights**. It is very much a buyer's market, but there are too few buyers around. Larger companies appear to be conserving their capital and are unwilling to become involved in takeovers or mergers.

It goes without saying that we are very sad to have had to come to such a decision and to be leaving you all in such an uncertain position. However, we are simply **bowing to the inevitable**. What happens from now on will be the responsibility of the official receiver. Someone will be appointed to examine the financial position closely and further efforts will be made to find a buyer. We do hope that these efforts are successful and that your jobs will be safe.

Thank you all for the loyal service which you have given us over the years. We wish you all the best for the future.

Vocabulary Study

avail, to no avail (*cliché*) unsuccessfully. This cliché sounds rather formal, but, in fact, it is very commonly used in quite informal contexts, as well as formal ones. The word 'avail' means 'use' and the expression **avail yourself of**

(*formal*) means to make use of something.

avenue, explore every avenue (*idiom/cliché*) used to emphasize how thorough an investigation or search is, although it is often regarded as being used just

for effect or to stop people complaining, and that, in fact, very little is being done by way of investigating or searching; it is often found in formal replies to letters of complaint or in promises from politicians, civil servants or company executives.

bow to the inevitable (*cliché*)

to accept that something is going to happen or has happened and that there is nothing which you can do about it. The cliché **face facts** carries the same suggestion that you should accept and deal with the circumstances in which you find yourself.

grapevine, hear something on the grapevine (*idiom/cliché*)

to get to know something because it has been passed informally from person to person, rather than from some official source. An alternative form is **hear something through the grapevine**. The cliché **hear something on the bush telegraph** is used in informal humorous contexts to mean the same. The 'bush telegraph' is a reference to primitive methods of passing information in the Australian bush. A rather coy cliché conveying the same idea is a **little bird told me**.

knight, a white knight (*idiom/cliché*)

a person who rescues someone or something from some form of disaster, especially a person or company that rescues a business company from financial disaster or from an unwelcome takeover bid. The cliché **a knight in shining armour** also refers to a person who rescues someone

or something, but it does not have a specific connection with business. Both clichés refer to the role of the medieval knight in legend. Many of these legends refer to knights rescuing beautiful young women from dangerous situations.

let someone go (*cliché*)

to declare someone redundant. Getting rid of workers number is never a popular thing to do and people who are in the position of having to do this often use euphemisms, in the hope that the use of softer words will make the situation seem less harsh. This cliché is seen as a more acceptable term than 'sack' or even 'declare redundant', which itself was originally regarded as a euphemism.

point, to come straight to the point (*cliché*)

not to waste any time by talking about things which are not relevant. This cliché is opposite in meaning to **beat about the bush**. In origin, this is a reference to the practice of beating bushes to encourage birds and animals which are being hunted to come out into the open and be shot.

say, it goes without saying (*cliché*)

used of something that is so generally known or obvious that it need not be said. Since this is frequently followed by

the very statement which, supposedly, there is no need to state, it is more or less meaningless, although it is used for emphasis. The cliché is used quite a lot by politicians or business leaders and, in these contexts, it is frequently used to refer to things which are not at all generally known or are obvious, or even to things which may not even be true.

strategy (*jargon*)

a plan of action. This noun is much overused by a wide variety of people, such as politicians, educationists and marketing managers in an effort to sound impressive, but they have just succeeded in depriving the word of much of its force and meaning. The word should be used to indicate a detailed plan which is put together to achieve a particular purpose, being originally used in a military context, but it is now used for any plan.

time, it is only a matter of time (*cliché*)

used to emphasize the fact that something is bound to happen.

wall, have your back to the wall (*idiom/cliché*)

to be in a very difficult or desperate situation. It is derived from the idea of someone who is being pursued and who, on reaching a wall,

can retreat no further and so is forced to stand and fight from a defensive position. The cliché **be in a tight corner** has a similar meaning.

writing, the writing is on the wall (*idiom/cliché*)

it is inevitable that failure or some kind of disaster is going to happen. Sometimes the cliché takes the form of the

writing on the wall. A less common form of the cliché is **the handwriting is on the wall**. Many clichés are based on quotations or literary allusions. This one is an allusion to a biblical passage, in this case a passage from the Book of Daniel. In the course of a feast, which was given by King Belshazzar, a hand suddenly

appeared and wrote some words on a wall. Belshazzar asked Daniel to interpret this writing for him and was told that the words indicated the king's downfall. Later that night, Belshazzar was killed by his enemies.

Recalling Information

1. What was the bad news that was announced?

2. What had the management done to try and save the company?

3. State the reason that no buyer wanted to buy the company.

4. What would the official receiver do before the company finally closed?

5. What could save the jobs of the employees of the company?

Understanding Information

1. How do you know that the news was verbally delivered?

2. When you look closely at the announcement, you will notice that the owner of the company tried his best to soften the blow of the bad news. An outline of the announcement is given in the first column below. Write a fuller version in the second column, using one sentence for each part of the outline. The first one is done for you as an example.

Outline of the announcement	What the owner said
Acknowledge employees' attendance	He thanked the employees for giving up their Saturday morning to go to the office.
Announce the owners' decision	
Give reasons for the decision	
Explain efforts made to avoid the sad outcome	
Prepare employees for what to expect	
Express appreciation	

3. Choose the most appropriate idiom from the box for each of the blanks below.

explored every avenue

it's only a matter of time

backs were to the wall

heard it on the grapevine

(a) Seeing that the police were closing in on them and their _____, the culprits owned up.

(b) Determined to find his missing daughter, Mr Tan _____.

(c) It's not official, but I _____ that we're going to have a new boss.

(d) _____ before technology will make it possible for large numbers of people to work from home.

4. Imagine you are one of the employees of Blair and Brown Ltd. That night when you return home, you briefly tell your family about the announcement. Write out, in 80 words, what you told your family. Include the main points of the announcement.

[illegible]

Writing Activity

Suppose that after the announcement, the owner allowed employees to ask questions. Imagine you are one of the employees of Blair and Brown Ltd that has gone into receivership. Make a list of 8 questions you would ask the owner. Here is the first one to get you started:

1. When is the last day of work?

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Surprising News

A letter providing gossip of an unexpected engagement.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Take a few minutes to skim the letter and say what the surprising news is.
2. Recall some surprising news that you yourself once heard.
3. Do you like surprises? Why or why not?

Reading Passage

Now read the letter below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

25/5/02

Dear Kay,

I am writing this in a hurry before I go to work. I just couldn't wait to tell you some amazing news. You'll never guess who've just got engaged! Rose Barnes and Mark Wilson! There, I bet that's surprised you!

We heard about it last night at Rose's birthday party. It was a fantastic party with lots to eat and drink and some great music. We were all having a brilliant time, when Mark suddenly got to his feet and started speaking. It took him a while to get everyone to stop talking and listen to him, but he announced that he had decided to **make an honest woman of** Rose and that he had **popped the question** the previous evening. He talked some more about how

happy Rose had made him by agreeing to become his wife and **waxed lyrical** about how wonderful she is. By this time, hardly anyone was listening. Most of us were **gobsmacked**.

I didn't know that they were even friends, because I don't see either of them very often. Pam said that **with the benefit of hindsight** she should have realized that there was something going on between Rose and Mark, because they had seemed to be **joined at the hip** in recent weeks. However, they and Pam work in the same firm and she thought business was bringing them together a lot.

As you know, Rose and Mark are **chalk and cheese** and the idea of them **tying the knot** seems impossible. Besides, we all thought that Mark was a **confirmed bachelor**. Jill says that she is quite certain that **it will all end in tears**. Of course, she is a well-known cynic, but I think there is some truth in what she says. Apparently there are already signs of trouble. Rose wants a huge wedding **with all the trimmings**. Mark wants them to go abroad and get married quietly on a beach somewhere. **Watch this space!**

I'll have to go now or I'll be late for work. Write soon and let me know how you're getting on at college. I'm looking forward to Easter when you'll be home for the holidays and we can have a good chat.

Much love,

Jenny

Vocabulary Study

bachelor, a confirmed bachelor (*cliché*)

a man who seems unlikely ever to marry, having been unmarried for quite a long time.

chalk and cheese (*cliché*)
to be completely different; used in a wide variety of contexts to emphasize difference, often between people. In origin, the cliché is a reference to the fact that chalk, which is virtually tasteless, and cheese, which is distinctive in flavour, are very different in taste. Sometimes the cliché takes the form of **like chalk and cheese**.

gobsmacked (*colloquialism*)
extremely surprised, amazed; used in very informal or slang contexts. 'Gob' is a slang term meaning the mouth, and so **gobsmacked** means as though you had been struck on the mouth.

hindsight, with the benefit of hindsight (*cliché*)
with the advantage of the kind of knowledge or understanding of a situation or event which is obtained only after it has happened and which might well have affected your actions, had you had this knowledge and understanding before the situation or event occurred. The cliché **be wise**

after the event is also used in connection with this idea.

hip, joined at the hip (*colloquialism*)

of two people, to be together most of the time. The suggestion is that two people are walking so close to each other that they look as though they are joined to each other at the hip. A cliché conveying the same meaning as this colloquialism is **be (or live) in each other's pockets**.

honest, make an honest woman of someone (*cliché*)
of a man, to marry a woman, often after they have been together for quite some time; used in informal humorous contexts. In origin, the cliché refers to a woman who was either seduced by a man before marriage or who had lived with him without being married, thereby having done something regarded as being wrong or unlawful. The modern cliché is not restricted in this way.

knot, tie the knot (*idiom/cliché*)
to get married; used in all but the most formal of contexts.

lyrical, wax lyrical (*cliché*)
to speak in a very complimentary or admiring way about someone or something, often in an

exaggerated way; a formal-sounding expression but widely used. Literally, 'wax' means to grow and 'lyrical' means expressing one's feelings in an imaginative or poetic way. The cliché **sing the praises of** has much the same meaning.

question, pop the question (*cliché*)
to ask someone to marry you; used in informal contexts.

space, watch this space! (*cliché*)
used to indicate that there is likely to be news about what has been talked about. In origin, it refers to a statement on a blank poster which is about to announce a new product.

tear, it will all end in tears (*cliché*)
a warning that something is likely to have an unfortunate ending. In origin, the cliché refers to an old warning to children when playing games to indicate they might get hurt or start quarrelling.

trimming, with all the trimmings (*cliché*)
having all the extra things which are traditionally associated with a special occasion.

Recalling Information

1. What was the piece of news that Jenny wanted to give Kay?

2. What was the reaction of the party guests when they heard Mark's announcement?

3. Give the three reasons for Jenny's reaction to Mark's news.

4. Give one example of how Rose and Mark are different.

Understanding Information

1. Do you think that Jenny was in support of the marriage of Rose and Mark? Give evidence for your answer.

2. Jenny used several idioms that made her letter interesting. Paraphrase these sentences using plain language.
 - (a) He **waxed lyrical** about how wonderful she is.

 - (b) Rose and Mark are **chalk and cheese**.

 - (c) The idea of them **tying the knot** seems impossible.

 - (d) Rose wants a huge wedding **with all the trimmings**.

3. Summarize the main points of Jenny's letter in 70 words. Begin your summary with this sentence: "Mark gave a party with lots of food, drink and good music."

Writing Activity

1. Pick out some features that indicate this was a friendly letter. (*Hint: Look at the salutation, the complimentary close, the relationship between the writer and addressee, the subject matter of the letter and the way it was expressed.*)

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

Coping with Misery

Jane's friends try to get her to stop being sad.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Talk about a time when you were miserable.
2. How did you overcome your misery?
3. Do you think that people react similarly or differently to misfortunes?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Jane was feeling extremely miserable. Just a few months ago she had been happily looking forward to her wedding day, but three weeks ago she had received a letter **out of the blue** from her fiancé, Peter. The letter said that he wanted to break off their engagement because he had fallen in love with someone else.

Jane was devastated. She was extremely fortunate in having several very loyal and supportive friends and they provided a **shoulder to cry on**. However, as time went on and Jane still could not stop crying and could not stop talking about how her life was ruined, her friends gradually became impatient with her. One by one, in their different ways, they tried to get her to **put the past behind her**.

Lucy was quite gentle with Jane and pointed out to her that she would not always feel so bad about her broken engagement as she did just then. '**Time is a great healer**', she said. 'Obviously, you'll never forget what's happened, but the pain will get less.' Jane was not convinced and went on weeping.

Mary was anxious to make Jane see that the broken engagement was not her fault, but that it was not Peter's fault either. '**These things happen**', she said in what she hoped was a comforting manner. Jane, alas, was in no fit state to be comforted. By this time, she was suffering from depression and was seeing a professional counsellor. She had stopped attending her college classes and hardly ever left her house.

Judy, not realizing that Jane was actually ill, tried a more brutal approach than the rest of her friends. 'You're just going to have to **pull yourself together**,' she said. '**What's done is done** and **there's no use in crying over spilt milk**. Peter's not coming back and you must **face facts**. You'll just have to **get on with your life**. **It is time to move on**. If you don't **get your act together** and start going to college, you'll have to repeat the year.' People who are suffering from depression have very little energy and Judy's boisterous approach to her problems had little effect on Jane, except that she took to avoiding her as much as possible.

The person who had given the best advice was Lucy. In time, Jane did begin to feel better, but her recovery was slow.

Vocabulary Study

act, get your act together
(*cliché*)

to start becoming more organized and effective; used in informal contexts. In origin, the cliché refers to an entertainer having to organize their act for a performance.

blue, out of the blue (*cliché*)
without being expected. The

'blue' referred to is the clear blue of the sky.

done, what's done is done
(*cliché*)

the meaning conveyed by this cliché is perfectly obvious and does not need saying; everyone knows that we cannot change the things which happened in the past,

however much we may regret them. It is used meaninglessly for something to say or sometimes for emphasis. Another version of this cliché is **what's done cannot be undone**. Much the same sentiment is expressed by **there's no use in crying over spilt milk** below.

fact, face facts (*cliché*)

to accept and deal with the circumstances in which you find yourself, rather than ignoring them or being unrealistic about them. A similar sentiment is expressed by the cliché **bow to the inevitable**, to accept that something is going to happen or has happened and that there is nothing which you can do about it.

happen, these things**happen** (*cliché*)

directed at someone who has suffered some form of misfortune and is feeling downcast about this, in order to try to get them to realize that such misfortunes are part of the pattern of life and that they are not alone in suffering from them. As with many clichés which offer advice, this is not found especially helpful by the person to whom it is directed. When you personally are feeling bad, it is not much comfort or consolation to realize that such misfortunes are global. Even less comforting is the cliché **there are thousands worse off than you**, which also emphasizes this sentiment.

life, get on with your life(*cliché*)

a pointless expression, since people have no choice but to get on with their lives; while people are still alive their lives go on whether they want them to stand still or not. It is used as an encouragement to action

to people whose unhappiness or regret is making them inactive and making them dwell on the past. The cliché **it is time to move on** (below) is similar in sentiment.

milk, there's no use in crying over spilt milk (*cliché*)

used to emphasize to someone the fact that there is no point in worrying about something which has happened and which cannot be changed, however much they may regret it. See **what's done is done** above.

move, it is time to move on (*cliché*)

one of several clichés which encourage people suffering from some form of misfortune to think about the future rather than dwelling on what happened in the past and urge them on to action. This sentiment is also expressed by the cliché **put the past behind you** below.

past, put the past behind you (*cliché*)

as is the case with some other clichés, such as **get on with your life** (above), the meaning of this cliché is pointless because it is so obvious. By its very nature, the past is always behind us. However, it is used to try to urge people not to dwell on the past, but to look to the future and take appropriate action. The cliché **it is time to move on** (above) carries the same suggestion.

pull yourself together (*cliché*)

to regain your self-control; often found in the imperative and used to people who are very upset about something and showing their emotions in reaction to this. Nowadays, this piece of advice is not thought to be helpful although the cliché is still very common. According to modern thinking, it is thought to be a good thing to spend some time grieving or otherwise expressing your emotions. See **get your act together** above.

shoulder, a shoulder to cry on (*cliché*)

a person who listens sympathetically to your troubles. The cliché **a sympathetic ear** means much the same thing.

time is a great healer (*cliché*)

originally a saying or proverb but it is so commonly used as words of comfort or consolation to people in some kind of distress that it can be regarded as a cliché. It also has the advantage of being true, although this is often not appreciated at the time by the sufferer who is concentrating on the present. Just as physical wounds heal in time, so does mental pain get less sharp in time. An alternative form of this cliché is **time heals all wounds**.

Recalling Information

1. What was the cause of Jane's misery?

2. What was Jane's response to the news from Peter?

3. What was Lucy's advice to Jane?

4. What did Mary want Jane to understand?

5. For what reason did Judy take a brutal approach with Jane?

Understanding Information

1. Look at the different approaches taken by Lucy, Mary and Judy to help Jane cope with her misery and say what you like or dislike about each approach.

Lucy: _____

Mary: _____

Judy: _____

2. Make sentences with the following idioms so as to bring out their meaning:

(a) what's done is done

(b) there's no use crying over spilt milk

(c) face facts

3. In small groups, list six to eight characteristics of Jane's personality.

Here is an example: *Jane expresses her feelings openly.*

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(f)

(g)

(h)

4. Summarize what Lucy, Mary and Judy advised Jane, without using the idioms that they used. Keep your summary to 70 words.

Writing Activity

A relative had promised that you would receive an item that you dearly would like to own if you achieve good results in your examination. After you had passed your examination with good results, your relative told you that the promise could not be kept.

In about 200 words, write an account of the incident using some or all of the following points and adding further details to create interest:

- name the item you would like to own
- state the results you had achieved
- give the reason that the relative could not keep the promise
- describe how you felt

Time to Study

A principal gives a pep talk to students about how to sit their final exams.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Looking at the title and subtitle above, what advice do you expect the principal to give?
2. Why would someone give a pep talk?
3. Do you think pep talks are useful?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

I hope that you are all aware of the importance of this year. It is the year when you will take your final exams and it is, therefore, **make-or-break** year. Some of you have worked hard throughout the years and what all these students will need to do is to **keep up the good work**. Some have worked fairly hard, but may have to **go the extra mile** in order to be sure of passing the exams well. Others among you, and I suspect they are **too numerous to mention**, have left themselves **a mountain to climb**. They will have to study very hard and do a great deal of revision if they are going to pass the forthcoming exams.

It is important to understand that, if you start working hard now, it is not too late. You must not simply **throw in the towel** at this stage and think that you have no chance of success. Provided that you are prepared to **put your back into it**, there is still enough time to get the required amount of work done. However, you must start now. Don't decide to **put the whole thing off until tomorrow**.

You must try to work out a study timetable and stick to it. You also need to make sure that you have **peace and quiet** to work in. If some of you find it difficult to find the right study conditions at home—perhaps you may have rather noisy younger brothers and sisters—then we will be happy to let you stay on after the official end of the schoolday and provide you with a quiet place to study.

I am not suggesting that you **keep your noses to the grindstone** all the time. You will need plenty of rest and relaxation if you are to study effectively. However, this is a year for making some social sacrifices. It is time to give up the parties and take up the books. Don't think you can carry on your social life and start studying when you get home. That means that you will **burn the midnight oil** and be too tired to concentrate either on your home studies or your schoolwork next day.

With that I wish you all a successful year and some excellent exam passes at the end of it. I will now **leave you to the tender mercies of your form teachers**.

Vocabulary Study

back, put your back into it
(*cliché*)

to work as hard as you can at something; not used in very formal contexts; often used in the imperative. In origin, the cliché refers to hard physical work, such as digging, where the back is used to a great extent. Another cliché that

conveys the same kind of meaning is **put your shoulder to the wheel**.

grindstone, keep your nose to the grindstone
(*idiom/cliché*)

to continue working hard without stopping; often used with reference to some kind of monotonous work which

you do not like or do not want to do. In origin, it refers to a revolving stone which was used for sharpening knives.

make-or-break (*cliché*)
used of something which has the ability either to make someone very successful or make them fail completely.

mercy, leave someone (or something) to the tender mercies of someone (*cliché*)

to leave someone or something to be taken care of or dealt with by someone who is not really suited to the job for some reason, perhaps because they are inefficient or unkind; sometimes used humorously.

mile, go the extra mile (*idiom/cliché*)

to put in the extra effort or money that is necessary to achieve something.

mountain, have a mountain to climb (*idiom/cliché*)

to have a great deal to do if you are to achieve your goal. The idea, of course, is that climbing requires a great deal of effort and represents a challenge to the average person. The cliché **have it all to do** has a similar meaning and is used, in particular, in informal sporting contexts. It means to have the greatest part of the work relating to something still to do.

numerous, too numerous to mention (*cliché*)

used to emphasize the very

great numbers of people or things which are involved in something. The cliché is frequently used in public speeches and, despite its meaning, is sometimes used as an introduction to a list of names.

oil, burn the midnight oil (*idiom/cliché*)

to stay up late studying or working. In origin, the cliché refers to the days before electricity when oil lamps were used to provide light.

peace and quiet (*cliché*)

quiet surroundings, used for emphasis. This is one of several clichés which contain two words which mean the same and which are used together for emphasis. Another example is **safe and sound**.

tomorrow, put something off until tomorrow (*cliché*)

to postpone action on something until later. This cliché comes from the proverb **never put off until tomorrow what you can do today** which advises instant action rather than delay. A humorous version of this is **never do today**

what you can put off until tomorrow. Another cliché which is connected with delay is **put something on the back burner**. A proverb, now also a cliché, which suggests that delay is sometimes preferable and that everything need not be done right away is **tomorrow is another day**.

towel, throw in the towel (*idiom/cliché*)

to give up; to admit defeat; used in informal contexts. An alternative form of this is **throw in the sponge**. In origin, both forms of the cliché refer to an old boxing practice by which a boxer indicated that he was acknowledging defeat by throwing into the ring the towel or sponge which was used for wiping his face between bouts.

work, keep up the good work (*cliché*)

to continue working well and efficiently; used as words of encouragement to others and often used in the imperative. See **keep your nose to the grindstone** above.

Recalling Information

State whether these statements are true or false:

1. The talk was given to all the students in the school.
2. The principal believed that most students worked fairly hard.
3. The students who had worked consistently were told they should continue working well.
4. The students were told that they should not admit defeat and make up their minds to put in their best effort.
5. Students whose homes were noisy were advised to get their family members to cooperate.
6. The school would extend its closing hours to allow students to study.
7. Students were advised to give themselves breaks in between study sessions.
8. Socializing was recommended as one of the ways for students to unwind between studies.

True / False

True / False

True / False

True / False

True / False

True / False

True / False

True / False

Understanding Information

1. If you were a student present at the talk, how would you react to the last sentence: 'I will now leave you to the tender mercies of your form teachers'?

2. Match each idiom in column A with its correct meaning in column B. Write the letter of the correct meaning in the box that corresponds with the idiom.

Column A: Idiom	Column B: Meaning
1. make or break	A. be in a state of hard work
2. throw in the towel	B. work or study till late at night
3. peace and quiet	C. admit defeat
4. keep your noses to the grindstone	D. cause success or failure
5. burn the midnight oil	E. calmness

3. Imagine that you were one of those who attended the principal's talk. That evening you told your parents about the principal's advice. Sum up the main points of the talk in 80 words, as if you were telling it to your parents. Begin with this sentence:

This morning, our principal gave us a pep talk.

[illegible]

Writing Activity

From the information in the principal's talk, write a set of instructions for final-year students in the form of Dos and Don'ts.

DOs	DON'Ts
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Job Losses

A member of senior management tells trade union representatives of company plans.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. From the title and subtitle above, what news do you think will be given?
2. Think of one or more reasons why someone would lose a job.
3. If you were a manager, how would you go about telling employees that they may lose their jobs?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Gentlemen, I have here a memo from our parent company in the United States which contains important news for us all. The decision has been made to adopt a global policy of **rationalization**. As each company is autonomous, we have all been asked to propose a plan of **restructuring** and to send details of this as soon as possible. This will inevitably involve redundancies, but the board of directors here can do nothing to prevent this. **Our hands are tied**.

We have here copies of our plan and it is hoped, gentlemen, that you will cooperate with us in trying to implement this as effectively and speedily as possible. Obviously, we would wish, where possible, to give people early retirement or voluntary redundancy, rather than impose compulsory redundancy on anyone. You will note that generous redundancy **packages** have been outlined.

We hope that both you and your members will see these redundancies as a way of conserving jobs. **In the present climate**, only companies which are prepared to rationalize their workforce will survive. Those who do not will **go to the wall**. We are confident that if the recommendations are carried out, the company worldwide, and our part of it in particular, will be able to **weather the storm**.

You know how tough the market is just now and you also know that recently we have had rather a **rocky ride** in some parts of the country. It is a question of **the survival of the fittest** and we must make ourselves fit. This means slimming down our workforce.

We appreciate that your members will be concerned to learn of the proposed job cuts, but we hope that they will accept them as being inevitable. If the workers do try to oppose these cuts, they will be **on a hiding to nothing**. It has been made clear to us that any industrial action, or threat of it, is likely to put more jobs in jeopardy.

We would like you to inform your members that the proposed job cuts will apply to all members of staff, to management, office workers and factory workers alike. Be assured that this is not a case of there being **one law for the rich and another for the poor, so to speak**.

We hope that you will have fruitful negotiations with your members and let us know as soon as possible the outcome of these negotiations.

Thank you.

climate, in the present climate (cliché)

in the present circumstances. 'Climate' is literally applied to the pattern of weather conditions which is typical of a particular place, but here the word is used more generally. The cliché, like several others, is often used as a more pretentious or pompous way of saying 'now' or 'just now'. Others include **at this moment in time**.

hand, my hands are tied (cliché)

I do not have the power or freedom to take action, however much I may want to; often used by people in charge as an excuse for not taking any action. The cliché refers to the image of a person unable to use their hands because they have been tied together with rope, etc.

hiding, on a hiding to nothing (cliché)

with no chance of succeeding in whatever you are trying to do.

law, there's one law for the rich and another for the poor (cliché)

because wealth often brings influence, power or education, the rich are likely to be treated much better by people in authority than the poor are. Originally a proverb, this cliché is sometimes shortened to **there's one law for the rich**, since people will be familiar enough with the saying to know its ending.

package (jargon)

a word widely used, and indeed overused, to indicate that there are several different elements to something. It became very popular in connection with holidays. In this sense the word indicates that the price quoted includes the cost of travel and accommodation, and possibly some extras, such as excursions. From its holiday connection the word became used in a wide variety of contexts. However, as is frequently the case with jargon, 'package' has lost the force of its meaning and is used simply because it is thought to sound professional or impressive. For example, 'a package of proposals' may be used to describe suggestions which in no way form a related set.

rationalization (jargon)

the making of changes to a business in order to make it more efficient. This piece of jargon is often a euphemism for cutting expenditure and reducing the workforce. Getting rid of workers number is never a popular thing to do and people who are in the position of having or wanting to do so often avoid saying so in a direct way. Instead they choose jargon.

restructuring (jargon)

literally meaning the organization of a company in a different way, this word is often used as a jargon in much the same way as **rationalization**.

rocky, a rocky ride (idiom/cliché)

a situation in which there are a lot of difficulties or problems. An alternative form of it is **a bumpy ride**. Opposite in meaning is the cliché **a smooth ride**.

speak, so to speak (cliché) sometimes used to emphasize that you have just expressed something in an unusual, interesting or humorous way, although this is not necessarily the case, since the expression which has preceded the cliché is often itself a cliché.

storm, weather the storm (idiom/cliché)

to survive some kind of difficulty or crisis. In origin, it refers to the idea of a ship surviving a heavy storm.

survival, the survival of the fittest (cliché)

the ability of people who are particularly strong, clever, talented or best equipped to succeed where others might fail. The expression was first used by Herbert Spence in *Principles of Biology* (1864) when describing Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection.

wall, go to the wall (idiom/cliché)

to experience financial failure or bankruptcy. A cliché which means the same as **go to the wall**, but which is only used in very informal contexts, is **go belly-up**.

Recalling Information

State whether these statements are true or false.

1. The parent company decided on a global policy of rationalization.

True / False

2. Each company had to follow exactly the detailed restructuring plan given by the parent company.

True / False

3. The company would have to impose compulsory redundancy for some.

True / False

4. The company had already worked out the redundancy packages.

True / False

5. The purpose of the recommendations is to enable the company to survive.

True / False

6. The management was sure that market conditions would improve soon.

True / False

7. Only some levels of staff would be affected by the job cuts.

True / False

8. The trade union representatives were asked to report back to management after talking to their members.

True / False

Understanding Information

1. You read the talk given by a member of senior management to trade union representatives. When you analyse the talk you will find that it was well planned. Use the clues given below to write the main points of the speech in the boxes provided.

- (a) The news that started the change.

--

- (b) What the company did to act on the news.

--

- (c) Reason for redundancies.

--

- (d) Extent of job cuts.

--

- (e) What management hoped would happen next.

--

2. Suggest some reasons why senior management would prefer to give people early retirement or voluntary redundancy, rather than impose compulsory redundancy.

3. Replace the words in bold in each of the following sentences with one of the idioms from the box.

his hands were tied
weather the storm

in the present climate
the survival of the fittest

- (a) In the animal kingdom, the law of nature is **that only the strongest will live**.

- (b) When everyone in a family pulls together they can **overcome difficulties**.

- (c) The manager said that **he had no power to make changes** and the workers would have to follow the rules.

- (d) **Now** when people are unwilling to spend, shopkeepers cannot raise prices.

4. Taking only the main points you picked out in question 1 above, write a summary of the senior manager's talk in 70 words.

Writing Activity

Imagine that you are the chairman of a school co-curricular club. You were told by the principal that the club would have to be closed. Prepare a short speech of about 150 words to give the news to the club members. Include these points:

- when and who gave you the news of the club closure
- the reason for the club closure
- when the closure will take place
- advice to members to accept the decision
- thank members for their support



Football Defeat

A letter describing a local team's poor performance.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Talk about a time when the sports team you supported lost the match.
2. Are you interested in football? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think so many people are enthusiastic about football?

Reading Passage

Now read the letter below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

28/2/02

Dear Jack,

I know you like to hear about home news when you're away at college and so I'm writing to keep you **up to speed** on the performance of our football team. I know your mother writes frequently, but she's not likely to be interested in the activities of Rowanby United.

For most of the season so far the team's been doing quite well. We've won three games and drawn two. **So far, so good**, but all this changed on Saturday when we had an away game against Barrowgreen United. I'm not sure that I should tell you **the gory details**. It's probably best to leave you **in blissful ignorance**.

We were all **pinning our hopes on** coming away from the game with at least a draw. The more optimistic among us were confident that we

would **get a result** easily since Barrowgreen have not been playing quite as well as usual. **To be honest**, this was always a bit of a **forlorn hope**. The optimists seemed to be forgetting that, whatever their recent performance, Barrowgreen are in second place in the league at the moment. They didn't get there without being able to play reasonably well.

Still, we all got on the bus to go to Barrowgreen, full of enthusiasm and optimism, and looking forward to victory. Of course, this had something to do with the fact that most of us had taken some **Dutch courage** with our pub lunch.

It would be doing you a kindness to **draw a veil over** the actual game. It is something that is best not to know about. Our team played appallingly badly as if they had never played together before. In fact you would have thought that some of the players had never even seen a football before. It was unbelievable!

As if this wasn't bad enough, Barrowgreen played absolutely brilliantly. Somehow they had put their recent bad form behind them especially for us. They left us **dead in the water** and we needn't have bothered playing the second half of the match. The whole match was a humiliation for us and it embarrasses me to write down the score. We lost 5-nil!

Naturally, we were all **gutted**, as I'm sure you will be when you read this. Sorry to bring you such bad news.

Take care.

Terry

courage, Dutch courage

(*cliché*)

alcoholic drink; the artificial sense of confidence or courage which you can get from drinking alcohol. The cliché was originally an idiom of which the origin is uncertain. It is thought that the expression might be derived from the fact that the Dutch historically had a reputation for being heavy drinkers, but there is an alternative theory that the phrase takes its name from the fact that gin, a well-known strong alcoholic drink, was first taken to England by the Dutch followers of William III.

dead in the water (*cliché*)

having no possibility of success; used in informal or fairly informal contexts. In origin, the cliché refers to a fish which is dead in the water and of no use to fishermen or anglers.

detail, the gory details

(*cliché*)

the unpleasant particulars connected with something. The cliché is derived from the fact that 'gore' means blood which has been shed and has clotted and, originally, the expression was used of details relating to violent death or other physical violence. Today it retains its connection with blood by sometimes being used of people's medical or surgical experiences.

far, so far, so good (*cliché*)

an expression indicating that progress in some form of activity has been good up till now, but carrying the suggestion that there is much to be done and things could still go wrong.

gutted (*colloquialism*)

extremely disappointed; used in very informal contexts. The cliché **sick as a parrot**, which has the same meaning and is also used in very informal contexts, is not as widespread as **gutted**, being particularly common in sports contexts, especially those relating to football.

honest, to be honest

(*cliché*)

used as an introduction to a statement, whether or not there is any question of the speaker being regarded as not being truthful; used in informal written contexts. The statement is often complete without the cliché, which is being used as an unnecessary filler or to emphasize frankness. Such clichés are common and many people have a habit of using the same one as an introduction to what they are going to say.

hope, a forlorn hope (*cliché*)

a situation in which there is little chance of success or good news.

hope, pin (all) your hopes

on (*idiom/cliché*)

to rely on someone or something to bring you the success which you want or hope for.

ignorance, in blissful

ignorance (*cliché*)

in a position where you do not know something unpleasant which would upset you.

result, get a result (*cliché*)

a modern cliché, used to refer not to just any outcome, but to a successful outcome; used in informal contexts, particularly when referring to football; frequently used by sports commentators and people involved in football.

speed, up to speed (*jargon*)

fully informed about the progress of something; having all the most recent information about something; used in fairly informal contexts. Literally, this expression means having reached the maximum or desirable speed or rate of progress and it is also used to refer to something that has reached its highest level of efficiency or success.

veil, draw a veil over (*cliché*)

not to talk about something because it is embarrassing or unpleasant and you would rather forget about it. In origin, the expression refers to a veil which is used to cover a woman's face.



Recalling Information

1. What was the reason for Terry writing to Jack?

2. What caused Terry to say 'so far, so good' when referring to Rowanby United?

3. What was the result hoped for in the match between Rowanby United and Barrowgreen United?

4. What two reasons did Terry give for Rowanby United losing the match?

Understanding Information

1. What do you think could be the relationship between Terry and Jack? Give reasons to support your answer.

2. Why did Terry say that it was 'optimistic' to think that Rowanby United would defeat Barrowgreen United?

3. Terry used idioms in his letter. Paraphrase these sentences using plain language.

(a) I'm not sure that I should tell you **the gory details**.

(b) Most of us had taken some **Dutch courage** with our pub lunch.

(c) They left us **dead in the water**.

4. Imagine that you are Jack. After you received Terry's letter, you write a short note to a friend to tell him of Rowanby United's defeat. Keep the length of the note to 80 words, making sure you give the essential information. Begin the note with 'Dear Tom' and end with 'Regards, Jack'.

Writing Activity

1. Pick out some features that indicate this is a friendly letter. (*Hint: Look at the salutation, the complimentary close, the relationship between the writer and addressee, the subject matter of the letter and the way it was expressed.*)

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

(f) _____

2. Write a letter to an overseas friend to tell him/her of a sport event in your school, community or country that you know he/she would be interested in. Keep the length to 250 words. Your account should include these points:

- where was the event held?
- why was it important?
- who took part?
- what happened?
- how successful was it?



A Disappointment

A letter of complaint from a dissatisfied customer.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Relate an incident when you were not satisfied with the service at a shop.
2. What action did you take when you received unsatisfactory service?
3. In general, what do you think is the standard of service in the shops you have been to?

Reading Passage

Now read the letter below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

12 April 2002

Mr Ernest Blake
Chief Executive
Furniture By Design
10 Greenwood
London WC2H 8TJ

Dear Mr Blake,

I am writing to complain **in the strongest possible terms** about the non-arrival of the two sofa beds which I ordered from your firm. Your extensive advertising material stated quite clearly that all orders received by the middle of November would be processed before Christmas. I had several guests over the Christmas period and the non-arrival of the sofa beds **left me high and dry** with nowhere for the guests to sleep.

I am writing to you personally because I have failed to make any progress with this complaint with any of the employees of your

company. Immediately after Christmas I began to **go through the proper channels** by contacting your so-called customer helpline, only to find that the line seemed to be permanently engaged. Presumably this was the result of many other customers being **in the same boat** as I was.

I thought that it was **a step in the right direction** when I finally did get through, but I **could not have been more wrong**. The young woman who answered the phone listened to my complaint politely and then said that the person who could deal with my complain was **away from his desk** temporarily but that she would get him to phone me as soon as he returned.

Having waited several hours for this phone call, which never came, I once again called the helpline, but **it was the same story** as before. The line was engaged for hours and, when I did eventually get through, I was told that the person who could deal with my complaint was not available. This time I asked for this person's name and phoned him back only to discover it was his day off. I spent several days going **from pillar to post** without getting an explanation or an apology for the non-arrival of the sofa beds.

You are the chief executive of the company and **the buck stops there**. I have **left no stone unturned** in my attempts to find out what has happened to the furniture and when it will arrive. I am now seeking an explanation from you. If your pre-Christmas advertisements were, in fact, just **pie in the sky**, then please have the honesty to say so and refund my money.

Yours sincerely
Marjorie Wood
Marjorie Wood (Mrs)

Vocabulary Study

boat, in the same boat

(*idiom/cliché*)

to be in similar unfortunate or difficult circumstances; used in informal or fairly informal contexts.

buck, the buck stops here (or there) (*cliché*)

the final responsibility for something lies with the person referred to; used in informal contexts. The expression was used by Harry S Truman, then president of the United States, in 1949 and is now common in both American and British English. It is a reference to another informal cliché, **pass the buck**, which means to try to avoid responsibility or blame for something by trying to pass this on to someone else. This cliché has its origin in the game of poker, where a piece of buckshot or, later, some other object was passed to a player to remind him that it was his turn to deal.

channel, go through the proper channels (*cliché*)

to make use of the established system or method of communication in order, for example, to make a complaint, acquire information or assistance; used in formal or fairly formal contexts.

desk, away from your desk (*cliché*)

not at your workstation and so not able to come to the phone. It is a modern cliché which is often used as an excuse for a

person not taking a call because for some reasons they do not wish to do so, the excuse being given to the caller by the person's secretary, personal assistant or colleague. A modern cliché used in a similar way, and often with a similar purpose in mind, is **in a meeting**.

direction, a step in the right direction (*cliché*)

used to indicate that some progress has been made, although much remains to be done.

high, leave someone high and dry (*idiom/cliché*)

to leave someone in a very difficult position which makes them more or less helpless. The expression was originally used literally of a ship which was stranded on a beach and could not move.

pie in the sky (*cliché*)

used to refer to the promise of some kind of advantage or success which will never actually happen; originally an American expression, but now used in British English in informal contexts. The expression is a quotation from a song, 'The Preacher and the Slave' (1911), sung by an organization known as the International Workers of the World, which was seeking to get reasonable wages and working conditions for workers—'You will eat by and by, in the glorious land above

the sky. Work and pray, live on hay, you'll get pie in the sky when you die.'

pillar, from pillar to post (*cliché*)

from one place to another repeatedly, usually while looking for something, seeking assistance or information, and not making much progress.

stone, leave no stone unturned (*idiom/cliché*)

used to emphasize how thorough an investigation or search is, although it is sometimes used to exaggerate the thoroughness of such an investigation. The cliché **explore every avenue** has a similar meaning.

story, it is the same story (*cliché*)

it is a similar situation. The cliché **it is the same old story** is used to indicate that something similar has happened, often several times, in the same way before.

term, in the strongest possible terms (*cliché*)

in language which is as forceful as possible; used in formal or fairly formal contexts, often with reference to complaints, criticism, etc.

wrong, you could not have been more wrong (*cliché*)

used to emphasize how mistaken or misguided you have been.

Recalling Information

Mrs Wood wrote a letter of complaint. The table below sets out in the first column the main parts that should go into a letter of complaint. Fill in the second column with the information given by Mrs Wood.

Main parts in a letter of complaint	Information given by Mrs Wood
1. State clearly the problem.	
2. State how the customer was inconvenienced.	
3. State the actions the customer took to correct the problem and the response of the company.	
4. State what the customer wanted the firm to do.	

Understanding Information

1. Match each idiom in column A with its correct meaning in column B. Write the letter of the correct meaning in the box that corresponds with the idiom.

Column A: Idiom

1. left high and dry

2. in the same boat

3. from pillar to post

4. the buck stops

5. pie in the sky

Column B: Meaning

A. the responsibility should stop being pushed from person to person

B. left without help

C. an unrealistic promise that cannot be fulfilled

D. in the same difficult situation

E. from one difficult position to another

2. It is unusual for a dissatisfied customer to write to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Usually complaints of this kind would be sent to the Sales Department or the Customer Services Department. Do you think Mrs Wood was justified in writing to the CEO? Why or why not?

3. Do you think that Mrs Wood sounded reasonable in her letter. (*Hint: You should look at whether she made absolutely clear the cause for her complaint, and what she wanted done about it.*)

4. Suppose you are the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ernest Blake. On receiving this letter, you send an email to your Sales Manager, Mr John Smith, and give him a summary of the contents of the letter. Write this email in 80 words, giving only the essential information.

Writing Activity

You had ordered a book through a mail order service and had paid in advance. The book was expected in two weeks but it did not arrive. Write a letter of 200 words making clear the cause of your complaint and what you want done about it. Address your letter to:

Mr John Lim
The Sales Director
ACE Direct Merchants
P O Box 231
Singapore 900345

18



A Letter of Apology

A chief executive replies to a letter of complaint.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Do you agree with the statement: *The customer is always right*?
2. From the title above, what do you think the letter is about?
3. If you received poor service, would you write to the chief executive of the company? Give your reasons.

Reading Passage

Now read the letter below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Furniture By Design
10 Greenwood, London WC2H 8TJ
Tel: 020-6788 0001

15 April 2002

Mrs Marjorie Wood
12 Castle Road
Blandwell, BL3 6NB

Dear Mrs Wood,

I was extremely concerned to receive your letter dated 12 April.
Please accept my **profuse apologies** for the inconvenience which you experienced in connection with the late arrival of the furniture which you ordered from us. I understand that the sofa beds were delivered to you yesterday **safe and sound**.

I have investigated this matter thoroughly and, it appears, that our advertising campaign was successful beyond any of our expectations.

Our entire range of furniture, and especially the sofa beds, **sold like hot cakes**. This meant that, to some extent, we were **the victims of our own success**. We simply did not have enough stock in our warehouses to meet the extraordinary demand. We had been prepared for the **race against time** to get all the orders fulfilled before Christmas, but not with the lack of product.

This would not normally be a problem as we deal with extremely efficient and speedy suppliers. Usually they are **second to none** in their reliability. However, it appears that they experienced a **slight technical hitch** in their new computerized production process and were unable to supply us with as much furniture as we required. Their maintenance people **had their work cut out** to get their production line functioning again in time for the Christmas rush and valuable time was lost.

We searched around for another supplier to help us out, but **to no purpose**. Being unwilling to accept goods of a lesser quality, we had no choice but to wait for our usual supplier to get their machinery fixed. **When all is said and done**, quality is what matters to most of our customers.

I was sorry to hear that you had such problems with our complaints procedure. I have discovered that these were due to a serious reduction in the number of our helpline staff available then, owing to a local flu epidemic.

I am sorry that this has been such a **chapter of accidents**. As I have indicated, most of it was a result of **circumstances beyond our control**. Once again, my apologies for the inconvenience caused to you. We value your custom greatly and hope that you will go on being a client of the company.

Yours sincerely
Ernest Blake
Chief Executive

Vocabulary Study

accident, a chapter of accidents (*cliché*)

a series of things that have gone wrong.

apology, profuse apologies (*cliché*)

an exaggerated, and not necessarily genuine, expression used to apologize for something; used in formal or fairly formal contexts. The cliché is also used in verbal form, **apologize profusely**. It conveys the same kind of meaning and is used in the same contexts.

cake, sell like hot cakes (*cliché*)

to sell extremely well and quickly.

control, circumstances beyond our control (*cliché*)

used as a non-specific, rather pompous excuse when something goes wrong; used in formal contexts. Understandably, people receiving such a vague excuse are not very happy about it, but it saves the maker of the excuse from mentioning any details, which may in fact be unknown. See a **slight technical hitch** below.

hitch, a slight technical hitch (*cliché*)

used as a non-specific excuse for the failure of something to happen, such as the non-delivery of goods, the failure of a transport service to arrive on time, etc; used in formal or fairly formal contexts. It is a useful and thus much overused cliché, since it saves the person or people making the excuse from having to say exactly what has happened. Another cliché used in this way, but mostly used in less formal contexts, is **a gremlin in the works**, or sometimes simply **a gremlin**. A gremlin is a small mischievous gnome. See **circumstances beyond our control** above.

purpose, to no purpose (*cliché*)

with no useful or worthwhile result; used in formal or fairly formal contexts.

safe and sound (*cliché*)

without being harmed or damaged in any way; used for emphasis. This is one of several clichés which contain two words which mean the same and which are used together for emphasis. Another of these is **peace and quiet**.

say, when all is said and done (*cliché*)

in the end; one of several clichés which are used as an unnecessary sentence filler rather than to convey much meaning; often used unconsciously by those to whom it has become a habit.

second to none (*cliché*)

to be the best there is, to be outstandingly good; often used as a great exaggeration.

success, be the victim of your own success (*cliché*)

used to indicate that success has brought someone unexpected disadvantages as well as advantages.

time, a race against time (*cliché*)

used to refer to an urgent situation in which there is very little time to get something done. Time is often represented as moving swiftly as in the cliché and proverb **time flies**.

work, have your work cut out (*cliché*)

to be faced with a very difficult task which will require a great deal of effort in a short time. In origin, the expression refers to a worker being given a garment which has been cut out ready for the worker to sew.

Recalling Information

Mr Blake wrote a letter of apology. The table below sets out in the first column the main parts that should go into a letter of apology. Fill in the second column, stating the information given by Mr Blake.

Main parts in a letter of apology	Information given by Mr Blake
1. Admit the mistake.	
2. Say what was done to correct the mistake.	
3. Explain how the mistake came about: Firstly, ... Secondly, ... Thirdly, ...	
4. State that the customer is valued.	

Understanding Information

1. For each reason for the late delivery, Mr Blake had an explanation that was favourable to the company. Pick out the four reasons and statements that Mr Blake used to make it look favourable for the company.

Reason for late delivery	Statement that made it look favourable
(a)	
(b)	
(c)	
(d)	

2. Letters of apology are unlike other business letters. People like to think the company has gone out of its way to deal with them personally. Do you think it was a good idea for Mr Blake to give a long and detailed explanation of how the mistake came about? Why or why not?

Besides letters of apology at work, people write letters of apology to friends. The features of a friendly letter of apology are much the same. In about 200 words, write a letter of apology to a friend for a mistake that you made. Include these features in your letter:

- state what the mistake was
- explain how the mistake came about
- say what you did to correct the mistake
- state why you value your friend

[illegible]



A Lucky Escape

A report of an accident in a local paper.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Looking at the title above, do you think anyone was hurt in the accident?
2. Why do you think reporters interview witnesses of an accident?
3. Besides witnesses of an accident, who else might reporters interview?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Several people had a lucky escape yesterday while waiting for a bus at the corner of King Street and George Street. Some scaffolding fell from a building and landed just behind them. Fortunately, no one was injured because there is a stretch of grass around the front of the building and most of the scaffolding landed on it.

'The bits of the scaffolding landed **too close for comfort**,' said 66-year-old Bert Thomson. 'It's a miracle no one was hurt, but we were all in shock. You don't expect to **dice with death** when you're waiting for a bus. I hope the town council are going to do something about this.'

'I absolutely agree,' said 56-year-old Margaret Simpson. 'None of us got hit by the scaffolding, but **the fact of the matter** is that it was a very **narrow squeak** and I'll be contacting the council. They shouldn't allow dangerous things like that on buildings. It wasn't even windy when the stuff fell down. **Make no mistake**, if the

council don't do something soon, it'll happen again and other people might not be so lucky.'

A council representative said later, 'We are all very sorry to hear of this unfortunate accident, but it is not the fault of the council. Responsibility for maintaining such scaffolding rests **fair and square** with the contractor who erected it. Anyone who is concerned about this incident should contact the contractor directly.'

Later in the day, some local residents who live in the vicinity of the building in question contacted us to give their views. 'This was **an accident waiting to happen**,' said their spokesperson, 50-year-old Tom Scott. 'It has been **a bone of contention** between the council and ourselves for quite some time. The scaffolding is in a poor state of repair and no one has worked on the building for several weeks. Not only did we think it was potentially dangerous, but it's a real **blot on the landscape**. They should be made to finish the work and take the scaffolding down. **At the end of the day**, the council have a moral responsibility to keep the town safe for their residents. As far as people in this area are concerned, the council must **carry the can**. They've been **putting** the whole issue **on the back burner** for too long.'

accident, an accident

waiting to happen (*cliché*)
a situation which is extremely likely to cause serious trouble or danger.

blot, a blot on the landscape (*cliché*)

something that is very ugly and spoils the appearance of the surroundings.

bone, a bone of contention (*idiom/cliché*)

something which is the cause of a dispute, often one that has been going on for a long time. In origin, the cliché refers to a bone which is being fought over by two dogs.

burner, put something on the back burner (*idiom/cliché*)

to postpone taking action on something because other things are considered to be more important. The cliché **put something off until tomorrow** has a similar meaning. In origin, the cliché refers to putting a pan of food on the back burner of a stove at a low heat so that it will not cook very rapidly.

can, carry the can (*idiom/cliché*)

to be blamed for something, whether or not you are responsible; used in informal contexts. It has a military origin, referring to the man whose job it was to collect a container of beer for a group of soldiers and take the container back when it was empty.

close, too close for comfort (*cliché*)

used to describe a situation in which you have been very close to danger or serious trouble, although you have avoided or escaped it.

day, at the end of the day (*cliché*)

when all things have been considered; a very common cliché which is often used virtually meaninglessly out of habit and should be avoided.

death, dice with death (*idiom/cliché*)

to take risks which could put your life in danger. The cliché **risk life and limb** is similar in meaning.

fact, the fact of the matter (*cliché*)

sometimes used for emphasis, but often used completely unnecessarily, frequently by people to whom it has become a habit, because the meaning is clear without it.

fair, fair and square (*cliché*)

fairly, according to the rules.

mistake, make no mistake (*cliché*)

used to emphasize the truth about what is about to be said or has just been said. This cliché is also found in the slightly longer form of **make no mistake about it**.

squeak, a narrow squeak (*cliché*)

used to emphasize how close you were to danger or serious trouble in a situation. An alternative form of this is the cliché **a narrow escape**.

Recalling Information

1. What saved several people from being hurt by the falling scaffolding?

2. Who did those interviewed think were responsible for the accident?

3. What was the view of the council as to who should be responsible?

4. What did Tom Scott, spokesperson for the residents, think was the cause of the accident?

Understanding Information

1. Complete the following sentences to show cause and effect.
 - (a) It can be said that several people at a bus-stop had a lucky escape because _____.
 - (b) Margaret Simpson did not think the weather could be blamed as _____.
 - (c) The council representative put the responsibility on the contractor because _____.
 - (d) Tom Scott thought the council was to blame as _____.

2. Would you say that this newspaper report is a balanced one in that it gives different points of view? Complete the organizer below before you decide.

	Report of an accident	
	The council is responsible.	The council is not responsible.
Opinion of Bert Thomson		
Opinion of Margaret Simpson		
Opinion of Council representative		
Opinion of Tom Scott		

3. Match each idiom in column A with its correct meaning in column B. Write the letter of the correct meaning in the box that corresponds with the idiom.

Column A: Idiom		Column B: Meaning
1. too close for comfort		A. justly
2. fair and square		B. postpone taking action
3. a bone of contention		C. very near being dangerous
4. carry the can		D. something that causes an argument
5. put (something) on the back burner		E. take the blame

4. Imagine you are writing out the news for a radio broadcast. Write a summary of the accident in 80 words for the radio broadcast, making sure you include the main points.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Writing Activity

You were standing at a bus-stop when you witnessed a traffic accident. Write a letter of about 250 words to a friend, dealing with such points as:

- how and where the accident happened
- what was the damage and who were injured
- how you felt about the situation

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

A Day of Misfortunes

A letter recounting events and experiences on the day.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Describe your feelings when you had a day of misfortunes.
2. Looking at just the start and end of this letter, what kind of letter do you think this is?
3. Do you write letters or emails to friends? Why or why not?

Reading Passage

Now read the letter below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

3/2/02

Dear Jenny,

It was great to get your letter. You sound as if you're really enjoying college and I can't wait to join you. I'm beginning to wish that I had **turned a deaf ear** to my dad's suggestion that I spend a year getting some work experience before going to college.

I've just got back from work and I've had a really **bad hair day**. For **starters**, I got up late. I must have switched off my alarm clock when it went off and I didn't wake up till an hour later. **Panic stations!** Instead of having a leisurely bath, washing my hair, choosing my clothes carefully and having a nourishing breakfast, I climbed into yesterday's clothes, grabbed a couple of biscuits and headed for the door.

I could still have caught a bus that would get me to work on time, but **as luck would have it**, I saw old Mrs Smart next door struggling to

put her rubbish bin out on the street. I stopped to help her and got to the bus stop just as the bus had left it. There was no possibility of taking a taxi because I'm **on my beam ends** until pay day next week. I seriously thought of calling the office to say I was sick, but I decided to go in and **face the music**.

When I got to the office, I waited until I thought **the coast was clear** and hurried past reception without being seen by any of the bosses. 'Hurray!' I said to myself, 'I've got away with it!' I **spoke too soon**. When I got to my desk, there was my supervisor, Mrs Mason. 'At **long last!**' she said sarcastically, 'you've decided to favour us with your presence. My office now!'

By this time I had a very bad headache and was badly in need of a cup of coffee. Instead, I had to listen while Mrs Mason **read me the riot act**. From what she said I'm completely useless and totally unreliable. It didn't do much for my morale! **The thing is** that it was so unfair. I work hard for very little money and I'm hardly ever late. Naturally, I didn't say this to Mrs Smart!

Sorry this is such a moaning letter, but I badly need somebody to grumble to.

I'll write a more cheerful one soon.

Love
Linda

Vocabulary Study

beam, on your beam ends (*idiom/cliché*)

to have very little money and so in difficulties; used in informal contexts. The expression was originally a nautical term used to describe a ship which was lying on its side and therefore in danger of capsizing completely.

coast, the coast is clear (*idiom/cliché*)

used to indicate that it is safe to proceed or escape without the likelihood of being seen or getting caught because there is no one watching. In origin, the expression may refer to smugglers pointing out the absence of coastguards near the shore.

ear, turn a deaf ear (*idiom/cliché*)

deliberately to ignore or pay no attention to someone or something.

hair, a bad hair day (*colloquialism*)

a day when nothing seems to go right; used in informal contexts. In origin, the expression refers literally to a day when you cannot get your hair to lie or be arranged in the way you want it to. A similar idea is expressed by the cliché **get out of bed on the wrong side**, although this refers to the fact that you are in a bad mood all day,

rather than that everything is going wrong.

last, at long last (*cliché*) finally, after a long wait or delay.

luck, as luck would have it (*cliché*)

used to indicate that something unexpected or unforeseen happened.

music, face the music (*idiom/cliché*)

to accept responsibility for doing something and be prepared to accept the consequences, such as punishment or criticism, of this. Several possible origins have been suggested for this expression. One of these suggestions is that it refers to a singer facing the orchestra when singing in opera or a musical show. Another suggests that the idea of facing punishment has come from a military practice of having drums beaten or a military band when a soldier was dismissed from the army as a punishment.

panic, panic stations (*cliché*)
used to indicate some form of emergency which requires quick action; sometimes used in humorous contexts. The expression has its origin in a naval expression **at panic**

stations, meaning to be prepared for the worst.

riot, read someone the riot act (*idiom/cliché*)

to rebuke someone angrily for doing something wrong and warn them not to do it again. The origin of this expression lies in the Riot Act passed in Britain in 1715. Under the terms of this act, when a group of twelve or more people were gathered in one place and were considered to be likely to cause trouble, magistrates had the right to read the act, or part of it, to them and order them to disperse.

speak too soon (*cliché*)
to say something before you know for certain that it is true.

starter, for starters (*cliché*)
used to introduce the first and most important of several points; used in informal contexts. 'Starter' is an informal name given to the first course of a meal.

thing, the thing is (*cliché*)
used to introduce an explanation, often an excuse or reason for not being able to do something; sometimes used meaninglessly in informal contexts by a speaker to whom it has become a habit.

Recalling Information

1. What was the reason that Linda was working?

2. What was her usual morning routine?

3. At the office, what did Linda do to try and avoid being seen by her bosses?

4. Why did Linda think that Mrs Smart was unfair in what she said?

Understanding Information

1. What would you say is the relationship between Jenny and Linda? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

2. Linda told Jenny about four unpleasant experiences she had in one day. Pick out these experiences and say why they happened. Note that for one of the experiences, the reason was not given and you are encouraged to guess the reason.

Linda's unpleasant experiences	Why they happened
(a)	
(b)	
(c)	
(d)	

3. Linda used many idioms to express her negative feelings about the day. These expressions make her letter lively and interesting. Try to use the idioms in the box to make the following sentences more colourful.

bad hair day

panic stations

on her beam ends

face the music

spoke too soon

read him the riot act

- (a) You _____ that the weather will hold. Here comes the rain.
- (b) Trembling in fear, the group had no choice but to confess their wrongdoing and _____.

Writing Activity

1. Compare this letter with the one in Unit 6. How are they similar? (*Hint: Look at the salutation, the complimentary close, the relationship between the writer and addressee, the subject matter of the letter and the way it was expressed.*)

2. Write a letter to a friend to tell him/her of your own bad hair day. Keep the length to 250 words. In your letter, state the following:

- the things that went wrong for you
- why they went wrong
- the result of things going wrong
- how you felt about the incidents



Goodbye and Hello

A managing director's address to the staff.

11

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Ask a question that you want answered after reading the passage.
2. What is unusual about the title above?
3. What is usually said about a person in a farewell speech to him?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

I have called you together today for two reasons; one sad and one happy. The sad reason is that Jack Jones, our marketing director, is off to **pastures new** and we are here to say goodbye and to wish him well. The happy reason is that we are here to welcome Jim White, who is taking over Jack's position in the company.

I know that **each and every one of you** will be aware of how much work Jack has put into the development of this company. He joined us when we were still a very young company and his efforts have helped us to become the profitable, successful company which we are today. In addition, I am aware that most of you have found him a pleasure to work with. It is rare for someone not to get along with Jack. Of course, the board of directors and I are sorry that he is going, but we quite appreciate that, after all these years, Jack wanted a **change of scene**.

There was a time, not so long ago, when people stayed with the same company **from the cradle to the grave**, but things have changed. People now move on. In Jack's case, he is moving on to a much

larger company which is very much **at the cutting edge** of the business. They were impressed with Jack's talents and **made him an offer which he could not refuse**.

People of Jack's skills are **few and far between**, but we have been very fortunate in securing the services of Jim White, who will, I am sure, **prove a worthy successor** to Jack. He has certainly been extremely **proactive** in the company which he has just left and it is obvious that they are sorry to lose him. I am sure that he will soon **find his feet** here.

Refreshments have been provided, in the form of wine and canapés, and I suspect that some of you can't wait to get started on them. **Without more ado** then, I shall, on your behalf, say an official goodbye to Jack and an official hello to Jim. Jack, I have pleasure in presenting this carriage clock to you as **a token of our appreciation** and, of course, it comes with our best wishes for the future. Jim, I have equal pleasure in saying to you, **'Welcome aboard!'**

Vocabulary Study

ado, without more (or further) ado (*cliché*)
right away, without saying or doing anything else. 'Ado' means, literally, fuss. This cliché is often used when some form of action is about to be taken and is often used by people making formal speeches.

change, a change of scene (*idiom/cliché*)
different surroundings; a change of environment. This cliché, which is derived from changing scenes in the theatre, often refers to a change of surroundings which lasts a relatively short time, unlike **pastures new** (below), which usually

suggests a more permanent move.

cradle, from the cradle to the grave (*cliché*)
all your life; all your working life. Like several clichés, especially those which are also idioms, this is based on quite interesting and clever imagery, but it has been spoilt from overuse.

cut, at the cutting edge

(*jargon*)

at the most advanced stage in the development of something. The same idea is suggested by **state-of-the-art**, also an example of jargon, which means modern and advanced.

each and everyone one of you (*cliché*)

all of you. This is sometimes used for emphasis, being more emphatic than just 'all of you', but it is often used rather meaninglessly in a speech by someone wishing to impress others and can be considered as rather pompous. The cliché **every man jack of you** has the same meaning, but is more often used to add emphasis to what is being said, rather than meaninglessly.

feet, find your feet

(*idiom/cliché*)

to become able to deal with a new situation after gaining some experience of it; to adjust or become accustomed to a new situation.

few and far between (*cliché*)

rare, not occurring very often. This is a very common cliché which is used in a wide range of contexts for emphasis. **Thin on the ground** is a cliché which means much the same as this, but it tends to be used in fairly informal, sometimes humorous, contexts.

offer, make someone an offer (which) they can't refuse (*cliché*)

to make someone such a generous or advantageous offer of something that it would be very stupid to turn it down. This cliché is often used with reference to an offer of employment or an offer to buy something and there is often a suggestion that there was some reluctance to accept if the amount of money involved was not so great.

pastures new (*cliché*)

a new place or location of some kind; a change of surroundings; a new environment. This is a shortened, and more common, form of the cliché **fresh fields and pastures new**. Both the long and short forms often apply to rather a long-term change of surroundings, unlike **a change of scene** (above). Several clichés came into the language originally as quotations, but this is part of a misquotation from the poem *Lycidas* by John Milton. The original quotation is 'fresh woods and pastures new'.

proactive (*jargon*)

of a person, quick to take action rather than wait for something to happen and then act in response to this; of a policy, based on swift action of this kind. The word is very

commonly used now and in many contexts it has virtually lost the force of its meaning, having come to mean simply 'active' or 'taking an active part in'. It has become just a pretentious term to make a piece of speech or writing sound impressive.

successor, a worthy successor (*cliché*)

someone who is considered talented or skilful enough to take someone else's place in a job. This is obviously intended to flatter the person referred to and is often found in formal speeches.

token, a token of our appreciation (*cliché*)

a gift given to someone in recognition of something which they have done or services which they have provided. This is a formal expression and is often found in formal speeches; it can sound rather pompous.

welcome aboard (*cliché*)

used to welcome someone when they join a new company, club, etc. This cliché, which is naval in origin, is now rather old-fashioned and can sound pompous. It is sometimes used not as a cliché, but literally, by cabin crew to passengers as they enter an aircraft.

Recalling Information

1. Give the two reasons for the managing director's address to the staff.

2. What contribution did Jack Jones make to the company?

3. What were the reasons for Jack Jones leaving the company?

4. Pick out two favourable statements made about Jim White.

(a) _____

(b) _____

Understanding Information

1. Do you think that it was appropriate for the managing director to spend most of his address talking about the departing staff member, or should he have given equal emphasis to Jack Jones and Jim White? Justify your view.

2. Fill in the blank in each of the sentences with one of the expressions given in the box.

token of appreciation

a change of scene

from the cradle to the grave

find his feet

each and every one of them

- (a) Kim Seng is taking off for a holiday as he needs _____
_____.
- (b) When Jane retired, her colleagues presented her with a _____
_____.
- (c) The principal thanked _____
for rallying round to raise funds for the school.
- (d) People should not expect that the government would give them subsidies
_____.
- (e) The pupils were asked to be helpful to the new student till he could _____
_____.

3. In 50 words, write a summary of what the managing director thought of Jack Jones.

Bridge Delay

A radio interview with a Member of Parliament.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. What is a member of parliament?
2. What does a member of parliament do?
3. Why would a member of parliament be interviewed?

Reading Passage

Now read the interview below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Interviewer: Mr Jones, I am sure that you are aware that commuters in the area are growing very concerned about the delay in opening the new bridge across the Brunton. It is already nearly a year overdue. The ferry service has been greatly reduced in anticipation of this opening and people have been greatly inconvenienced. They say that they are tired of being promised **jam tomorrow** and want to be given a definite opening date. Are you able to supply this?

MP: Unfortunately, I am not in a position to do so **at this moment in time**. What I can tell you is that a committee has been set up to investigate the delay and that this committee will report to us **in due course**. **At this juncture**, we can say that there have been a number of unexpected **teething troubles**, but we are unaware of the exact nature of these. Of course, we very much regret the delay and the position which commuters now find themselves in.

Interviewer: Meanwhile, Mr Jones, people are having to drive miles to get to work because they cannot get across the river. It appears that the ferry companies **jumped the gun** when they so drastically reduced the service across the river.

MP: The ferry company's decision was a commercial one and is in no way the responsibility of the government or, indeed, of the local authority. **Far be it from me** either to criticize or defend their decision, but **business is business** and presumably they wished to avoid substantial losses by providing too many ferry boats for the numbers using them. It is easy to **be wise after the event**, but their decision was made as a result of the original building forecast.

Interviewer: In view of the inconvenience caused to the public, is it not possible for the government to intervene to try to persuade the ferry company to reintroduce their original service temporarily until the bridge is actually opened?

MP: We will **give this our earnest consideration**, but not until we have had the report of the committee which is investigating the **state of play** on the building of the bridge. In the meantime, I must urge everyone to be patient. The splendid new bridge will mark the **beginning of a new era** for our area and I can assure you that it will be worth waiting for.

Vocabulary Study

business is business (*cliché*)

used to emphasize the importance of business and of making a profit in comparison, especially in comparison with the importance of other things.

consideration, give something your earnest consideration (*cliché*)

used in formal contexts, usually formal letters, to try to pacify someone and to try to persuade them that something is being dealt with carefully and thoroughly, although this is by no means always the case, and the expression is thus often meaningless.

course, in due course (*cliché*)

at some point in the future, when it is considered to be the right or appropriate time; used in formal contexts. The expression is rather pompous and people who read it tend to assume that it is to be taken as an indication that it will be a long time before the matter is dealt with.

era, the beginning of a new era (*cliché*)

used to indicate the start of some new development or stage of something; often used by journalists. The cliché is sometimes used in connection with a major, innovative development, when it is reasonably appropriate, but it is often used to refer to something minor, or even trivial, when it is not appropriate, in order to make something seem more important than it actually is. Another form of the cliché is **the beginning of an era**. The opposite of this cliché is **the end of an era**, which is used to indicate the end of some stage or aspect of something. Again, it should be used of something extremely important, but it is often used exaggeratedly of something trivial.

far be it from me (*cliché*)

used seemingly to suggest that the user of the expression is too modest or tactful to make a comment, but, in fact, the cliché is usually followed by such a comment. The cliché is often used meaninglessly by people for whom it has become a habit.

gun, jump the gun

(*idiom/cliché*)

to act too soon or before the proper or expected time; not

used in formal contexts. In origin, the expression refers to someone in a race who starts to run before the starter's gun has signalled the start of the race.

jam tomorrow (*cliché*)

used to indicate that good things of some kind will happen in the future, often with the implication that a certain amount of bad things will have to be endured until that happens, and often also with the implication that the good things will never happen. The cliché **pie in the sky** suggests the same idea, being used to refer to the promise of some kind of advantage or success which will never actually happen.

juncture, at this juncture

(*cliché*)

a longer way of saying 'just now'; used in formal or fairly formal contexts.

moment, at this moment in time (*cliché*)

a longer way of saying 'just now'; used by people who wrongly think that it sounds impressive or as a way of filling time or space while thinking of something to say. This is a very common cliché and one which is much disliked by many people. It is best to avoid using it

altogether. *See at this juncture* above. This cliché was much in vogue in the 1970s, being used a great deal in connection with the Watergate investigation in the United States, and has stayed popular ever since.

play, the state of play

(*cliché*)

the stage or position which has been reached in a situation or activity.

trouble, teething troubles

(*cliché*)

problems which occur in the early stages of something. An alternative form of this cliché is **teething problems**. The origin of the cliché is the pain and discomfort which babies experience when their teeth are coming through.

wise, be wise after the event (*cliché*)

to realize what was the correct thing to do with reference to a particular situation or event after it has passed and it is too late. The cliché **with the benefit of hindsight** also conveys this idea of obtaining knowledge after an event has occurred which might well have affected your actions had you had it in advance.

Recalling Information

1. What was the concern of commuters in the area?

2. What were the reasons for their concern?

3. What action did the MP say had been taken with regard to the delay?

4. Who did the MP say was responsible for reducing the ferry service?

5. What solution was suggested by the interviewer?

Understanding Information

1. Using information from the passage, complete the sentences below so as to show cause and effect.
 - (a) The ferry service was reduced because _____

 - (b) In order to find out the cause of the delay in the building of the bridge,

(c) The government could not be held responsible for the reduced ferry service as

(d) The MP said he could not take up the interviewer's suggestion because

2. Imagine you are one of the commuters facing inconvenience because of the delay in opening the new bridge. What do you think of the MP's reply?

3. Replace the words in bold in each of the following sentences with one of the idioms provided in the box below.

jam tomorrow

at this juncture

teething troubles

jumped the gun

beginning of a new era

- (a) Maggie **acted too soon** in booking the buses, even before she knew the numbers who were going.
- (b) The Internet can be called the **dawn of a new period** in global communication.
- (c) We do not know **now** whether we will have a full house, as we are still selling tickets.
- (d) When a new company first starts operating there will surely be **initial difficulties**.
- (e) The bus commuters are tired of being promised **better service** when they know it's an empty promise.

4. You are asked to write a brief report of the interview in 100 words. Make sure you have all the main points of the interview in your report.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Writing Activity

You have been granted an award for being one of the most active students in your school in your recycling efforts. The student reporter for your school newsletter wants to feature you in the newsletter. He gives you a list of questions and asks you to provide the answers so that he can write his article. Give your answers to the following questions:

1. What first started you on recycling?
2. How did you go about getting others to be interested in recycling?
3. What difficulties did you encounter?
4. What have you learned from your recycling efforts?
5. If you had to start all over again, how would you have gone about recycling differently?

A Birthday Party

An account of pre-party events.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. How do you and your friends celebrate birthdays?
2. Do you think it is important to celebrate birthdays? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think that usually only the very young and very old have birthday celebrations?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

It was Julie's eighteenth birthday and her parents were holding a formal party to celebrate this **red-letter day** in their daughter's life. In fact, the day after the party was also going to be a red-letter day, not only for Julie, but also for many of her friends who would be at the party. That was the day the results of the final school exams were due to be announced, **the moment of truth** when some careers would be begun and others abandoned.

Perhaps it was not the best time to hold a party, but Julie had wanted to celebrate her birthday on the actual day, rather than postpone it until after the results were announced. Most of Julie's student friends were glad to have something pleasant to do while they waited for the announcement which, as their English teacher said, would **separate the sheep from the goats**. Besides, after the results were known, not everyone would have something to celebrate.

Tonight, everyone was determined to forget about the results, **let their hair down** and have a good time, no matter what news the following day brought. As Tom said, '**Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!**' The students had been studying very hard for

weeks before the exams, and there had not been time for much of a **social whirl**. Tonight they planned to **make up for lost time**. Julie's parents were quite well off and could afford to host a good party. There was to be a lavish buffet, champagne and a band to dance to. **No expense** had been **spared**.

It was not long until the start of the party and several of the girls had gathered at Julie's house so that they could enjoy the fun of getting ready together. They were all planning to get **dressed up to the nines** and so getting ready took a considerable time. Just as they had all finally finished, the doorbell rang and Mike, Julie's escort for the evening, appeared. '**Your chariot awaits!**' he cried before telling Julie how beautiful she looked and that she would certainly be **the belle of the ball**.

The other girls' escorts soon joined Mike and everyone went off in taxis to the party, but not before Julie's father had a cautionary word for them. 'Have a wonderful time, but don't forget that **big brother will be watching you**.' No one was quite sure whether he was joking or not.

Vocabulary Study

belle, the belle of the ball
(*cliché*)

the most attractive or most striking woman at a social gathering, not now necessarily a ball or dance. The word 'belle' is French in origin and means a beautiful woman.

brother, big brother is watching you (*cliché*)

used to indicate that someone in authority is watching you closely; often now used humorously as well as seriously. Like several other clichés, this one is a quotation. It comes from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a novel written by George Orwell and published in 1949.

chariot, your chariot awaits
(*cliché*)

used to indicate that your transport, a modern car rather than a chariot, of course, is waiting for you; a formal-sounding and rather archaic-sounding expression but quite commonly used as a cliché in humorous contexts.

day, a red-letter day (*cliché*)

a special or memorable day of some kind. The expression has its origin in the practice of printing important days, such as feast days, in red on calendars. The cliché **big day** also refers to a special or memorable day, but it is most often used for a wedding day.

eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die (*cliché*)

used to indicate to someone that they should enjoy themselves now because life may shortly become worse, less carefree, etc. The cliché often appears in the shorter form **eat, drink and be merry**, which has the same meaning. The cliché is a reference to the Bible (Ecclesiastes 8:15): 'A man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink and to be merry.'

expense, no expense spared (*cliché*)

used to indicate that a very large amount of money has been or will be spent on something. The cliché **push the boat out**, used in informal

contexts, also conveys the idea of spending a lot of money, especially on some kind of celebration.

hair, let your hair down (*idiom/cliché*)

to behave in a relaxed way and enjoy yourself.

nine, dressed (up) to the nines (*cliché*)

wearing very smart or glamorous clothes; used in informal contexts. The cliché **dressed to kill** carries much the same meaning. The origin of the expression is uncertain, but it has been suggested that it perhaps refers to some kind of standard of which ten was the highest point which you could reach, nine, therefore, being very high.

sheep, separate the sheep from the goats (*idiom/cliché*)

to distinguish the good, clever or competent people in a group from the bad, stupid or incompetent.

time, make up for lost time (*cliché*)

to try to get as much experience or enjoyment

of something as possible to compensate for not having had the opportunity to do so before, or for not having taken advantage of a previous opportunity to do so.

truth, the moment of truth (*cliché*)

a crucial or critical point, especially one at which something will be proved to have been successful or otherwise; used in a wide range of contexts, including humorous ones in which the crucial point can be quite a trivial one. The cliché is a translation of the Spanish phrase *el momento de la verdad*, which is used to describe the moment of climax of a bullfight when the matador kills the bull.

whirl, social whirl (*cliché*) full social life with many invitations and engagements; sometimes used ironically in humorous contexts to indicate how lacking in social occasions life is.

Recalling Information

1. With reference to the passage, give as many details as possible about the birthday party.

2. Why did Julie not want to wait till after the results to celebrate her birthday?

3. Why did Julie's friends look forward to the party?

4. Why did several of the girls gather at Julie's house?

Understanding Information

1. Why do you think the writer said 'Perhaps it was not the best time to hold a party ...'?

2. Explain the sentence: '... after the results were known not everyone would have something to celebrate.'

3. Do you think it was a good idea for Julie to hold her party the day before the announcement of the final school exam results? Why or why not?

4. Give your views on whether you think an eighteenth birthday is special.

5. Make a sentence with each of the following expressions that will bring out the meaning.

(a) red letter day

(b) the moment of truth

(c) let their hair down

(d) social whirl

(e) make up for lost time

6. Summarize the first three paragraphs in 60 words, so that all the main points are included.

Writing Activity

You have been chosen by your classmates to organize the end-of-year party for the class. Write a proposal of about 200 words for the party to present to your classmates. Your proposal should include the following:

- Date, time and place for the party
- A programme of activities
- Types of food that will be required
- Transport that will be needed
- Estimated cost of the party



A series of horizontal lines for writing, consisting of 20 lines in total.

Reluctant Attendance

An account of pre-meeting anxieties.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Ask one question that you want answered after reading the passage.
2. Why do you think someone would be reluctant to attend a meeting?
3. Talk about a time when you were reluctant to attend a meeting or similar event.

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Mr James was on his way to a meeting in the town hall and he was not looking forward to it. The meeting had been called by the parents of some of the children in the town to complain about the lack of playground facilities in the area. Unfortunately for Mr James, he was the councillor who had responsibility for recreation. Otherwise, **wild horses would not drag him** to such a meeting.

He was **hoping against hope** that it would be a short meeting and that he could join his wife at the party which was being held at the golf club later in the evening. It was useful to **show one's face** at such events and, as an estate agent, he sometimes picked up some useful business. Mr James would far rather be there than at the meeting.

However, he **had a sinking feeling** that the meeting would drag on and that he would not be at the party. Very likely, there would be quite a few parents in attendance and he doubted that he would be able to get rid of them very quickly. Some of the people who came to such meetings were intimidated by the fact that they were in the company of **a big noise** from the council and could be sent away with a few **empty promises**. That would not be the case tonight. He had already met some of the parents and quite a few of them **had the gift of the gab** and would not be content with a few excuses.

Usually, Mr James would have **laid** the responsibility for going to this meeting **at the door** of his deputy, Mr Sharp, but he had said that he was attending an important family gathering which had been arranged months ago and was unable to attend. Mr Sharp was a fairly truthful person, but on this occasion Mr James had a feeling that he was being **economical with the truth**.

Meeting angry parents was **no picnic** and all of the other councillors had claimed to be **otherwise engaged** when Mr James raised the subject. This was a great pity as **there was** always **safety in numbers** at such meetings. If you were unable to come up with a convincing answer, then you could always pass it on to one of your colleagues, at least until you could think of something to say.

Vocabulary Study

door, lay at the door of someone (*idiom/cliché*)

to hold someone responsible for something; to blame someone for something.

engaged, otherwise engaged (*cliché*)

to have a previously arranged, but unspecified, engagement or appointment; used in fairly formal contexts as a reason or excuse for being unable to attend an event or meet someone

face, show one's face (*idiom/cliché*)

to be present at or attend something, frequently for a short time, often because you really ought to attend or because doing so is likely to be of advantage to you. Another cliché which has a similar meaning is **put in an appearance**.

gift, have the gift of the gab (*cliché*)

to have the ability to speak easily and fluently; used in informal contexts.

hope against hope (*cliché*)

to continue hoping that something which you want very much will happen, although you realize that this is very unlikely.

horse, wild horses would not drag him (*idiom/cliché*)

used to emphasize how reluctant someone is to do something and how determined they are not to do it.

noise, a big noise (*cliché*)

an important person; used in informal contexts. The cliché **a big cheese** has the same meaning and is also used in informal contexts.

number, there is safety in numbers (*cliché*)

a saying used to indicate that it is less risky for someone to do

or say something if there are several other people doing so as well.

picnic, no picnic (*cliché*)

used to emphasize how difficult something is or how much effort it requires; used in informal contexts.

promise, empty promise (*cliché*)

a promise which is very unlikely ever to be fulfilled or carried out.

sink, have a sinking feeling (*cliché*)

to have a feeling that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen.

truth, economical with the truth (*cliché*)

not to tell the absolute truth; often used when someone wants to suggest that someone is being dishonest, but does not want to say openly that they are lying.

Recalling Information

1. What was the reason for the meeting to be called?

2. Why was Mr James not looking forward to the meeting in the village hall?

3. Why would it have been useful for Mr James to attend the party at the golf club?

4. What did Mr James expect of the parents at the meeting?

5. Why was Mr Sharp unable to attend the meeting in place of Mr James?

Understanding Information

1. You can put together a profile of Mr James as a councillor using the information given in the passage. Use the headings below to guide you.

Name: _____

Occupation: _____

Councillor in charge of _____

Marital status: _____

What he did not enjoy: _____

What he dreaded: _____

What he would have liked to do instead: _____

2. From the profile you have drawn up, what is your opinion of Mr James as a councillor? Give supporting evidence for your answer.

3. What is your opinion of the other councillors?

4. Match each of the sentences in column A with the correct follow-up comment provided in column B by joining the dots.

Column A

- (a) He dislikes the theatre. •
- (b) Tom wanted his friend to know that he cared. •
- (c) After a while, the workers no longer believed their employer. •
- (d) The trekkers trained for months before the event. •
- (e) The prefect asked a few student leaders to accompany him to see the principal. •

Column B

- They had heard too many of his empty promises.
- They knew that the expedition was no picnic.
- Wild horses would not drag him to attend the play.
- There was always safety in numbers at such a meeting.
- He made a special effort to show his face at his friend's performance.

5. Summarize in 100 words the reasons why Mr James did not look forward to the meeting with the parents. You will find one reason in each of the five paragraphs of the passage.

Writing Activity

Imagine that you are one of the parents who will meet Mr James in the village hall. You are upset that the authorities have not provided playground facilities in the area. You look forward to the chance to meet Mr James, the councillor in charge of recreation to find out more about the plans to build the playground. Prepare 5 questions you want to ask him.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Facing Angry Parents

An account of unpleasant confrontation at a meeting.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Read the title above, the first and last paragraphs and say what you understand the passage to be about.
2. Recall a time when you had to face someone who was angry.
3. What were your feelings on that occasion?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

The local town hall was full of angry parents awaiting the arrival of Mr James, councillor in charge of recreational facilities in the town. They had hoped that some of the other councillors would appear, but Mr James arrived on his own, other councillors **being conspicuous by their absence**.

They were concerned about the lack of playground facilities in the town and were determined that something be done about this. Mr James was famous for his smooth talking, but the parents were determined that he would not get away with eloquence tonight. Tonight they would make the point that **actions speak louder than words**.

As the parents expected, Mr James immediately **went on the charm offensive** when he entered the hall. **True to form**, he had prepared a speech which said how much the children of the town meant to all the councillors and how concerned the councillors were about the welfare of the young, and he began to read from this. To his surprise, he had hardly **got into his stride** when he was interrupted by a man who suggested that he **cut the cackle** and **get down to brass tacks**. Mr James was appalled at the man's rudeness, but the other parents were on the side of the interrupter.

They were already **up in arms** about the lack of action on the part of the council and Mr James's smooth talking was simply **adding fuel to the flames**. Mr James had suspected that the parents would be a difficult audience to please, but he was **getting more than he had bargained for**.

Many of them had spent several years trying to get the provision of playground facilities improved and increased and they were quite determined to **get their impatience and dissatisfaction off their chest**. Mr James tried to point out that some improvements had been made in that existing equipment had been repaired. However, this was simply dismissed by the parents as **too little, too late**.

Mr James was absolutely exhausted by the time the parents had finished telling him exactly what was required if their children were to have safe and interesting places to play. He made a great many notes and he also made a mental note not to attend the next meeting on this subject. He would send his deputy.

Vocabulary Study

absence, be conspicuous by your absence (*cliché*)

an expression used to indicate that someone is not present and that their absence is noticeable and likely to be commented on.

actions speak louder than words (*cliché*)

used to emphasize that what you do is more important than what you say; originally a proverb.

arms, up in arms (*idiom/cliché*)
to be very angry and make a protest about something. In

origin, the cliché refers to people arming themselves for war.

bargain, get more than you bargain for (*cliché*)

to be faced with a more difficult situation than you had expected or were prepared for.

cackle, cut the cackle (*cliché*)
used to suggest to someone that it is time to stop meaningless, pointless talk and start acting or discussing something seriously and meaningfully; used in informal

contexts and regarded as rude. In origin, the cliché refers to the noise made by a hen.

charm, go on the charm offensive (*cliché*)

to set out to be more charming, pleasant or attractive than you actually are in order to gain popularity.

chest, get (something) off your chest (*idiom/cliché*)
to talk about something which has been upsetting, worrying or annoying you, often for quite a long time; used in informal contexts.

form, true to form (*cliché*)

in the way that you would expect someone to behave from your past experience of them; often used of behaviour that is unacceptable in some way.

fuel, add fuel to the flames (or fire) (*idiom/cliché*)

to do something which makes an already difficult situation worse.

little, too little, too late (*cliché*)

used to indicate that some action taken to improve a situation or solve a problem is inadequate and has been undertaken too late to be worthwhile.

stride, get into one's stride (*idiom/cliché*)

to become accustomed to doing something so that you begin to do it more confidently and effectively, after being rather slow and hesitant at the beginning. In origin, the expression refers to a runner getting into a comfortable stride pattern. The cliché **find your feet** conveys a similar idea.

tack, get down to brass tacks (*idiom/cliché*)

to begin to deal with the important, basic details of something. Two possible origins have been put forward for this expression. One is that it refers to the series of brass tacks which were marked at

intervals on a shop counter for measuring cloth, so that getting down to brass tacks literally meant to measure something accurately. The other suggestion is that the expression is an example of cockney rhyming slang, 'brass tacks' being rhyming slang for facts. Cockney rhyming slang is a variety of idiomatic speech which originated in London at the beginning of the twentieth century in which a particular word is replaced with a phrase of two or three words which rhyme with it. The clichés **get down to the nuts and bolts** of something and **get down to the nitty gritty** convey the same idea.

Recalling Information

1. What was Mr James famous for?

2. Pick out the gist of Mr James' speech.

3. Why was Mr James not able to finish his speech?

4. What did the parents want Mr James to do?

Understanding Information

1. In Unit 14 you prepared a profile of Mr James and gave your opinion of him. What further details can you add to the following aspects of his profile after reading Unit 15?

Name: _____

What he was well-known for: _____

What he dreaded: _____

What he would have liked to do: _____

2. Has your opinion of Mr James changed after reading Unit 15? Give evidence to support your answer.

3. What did you think of the man who interrupted Mr James? Give reasons for your answer.

4. Replace the expression presented in bold in each of the sentences below with your own words.

- (a) Mr James arrived on his own, other councillors **being conspicuous by their absence**.

- (b) Tonight they would make their point that **actions speak louder than words**.

- (c) Mr James's smooth talking was simply **adding fuel to the flames**.

- (d) They were quite determined to **get their impatience and dissatisfaction off their chest.**

5. Write a summary in 80 words of the main points of the meeting as if you were Mr James making a report for the other councillors. Your summary should have these main points:

- The people who attended the meeting
- The purpose of the meeting
- The way the meeting started
- The demands of the parents

[illegible]

Reasons for the playground

- ### ***Ideas for playground facilities***

- You should begin with "Dear Sir" and end with "Yours faithfully" and your signature.

Dear Sir,

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard sheet of stationery. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

A Sudden Decision

A conversation about an unexpected career move.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Ask one question that you want answered after reading the passage.
2. Why do you think someone would make a sudden decision?
3. Do you think sudden decisions can be good decisions?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

'Have you any idea why Tom has left his job?' Fred asked Andy.

'**Your guess is as good as mine,**' replied Andy. 'I did hear that he was **under a cloud** when he left, but I think that was a rumour started by Jenny, one of his workmates, who doesn't like him. Tom has always been very hard-working and competent. I don't think he was dismissed. Whatever the reason, his resignation was **a bolt from the blue**. Everyone was surprised.'

Then Joan joined in the conversation, saying, 'He might have been bored. I would be **climbing the walls** if I had to sit in an office all day.'

'**Quite the reverse,**' replied Andy. 'Tom had a very interesting job and he loved it. He also liked his boss and the people he worked with.'

'I wonder if it is a case of **cherchez la femme,**' said Mary. 'My brother introduced Tom to an Australian girl called Mel a few weeks ago and they seemed to get on very well. I think my brother said that Tom and she had been out together quite a few times, but Mel is due to go back home fairly soon. Who knows? Perhaps Tom has decided on a life **Down Under.**'

'It's interesting that you should say that because Tom was talking about Australia just last week, but I didn't realize he had a new girlfriend. He never mentioned her,' said Andy. 'Still, we all know that Tom tends to be rather secretive and never talks about his **affairs of the heart.**'

'**The plot thickens!**' cried Sara. 'Tom was just talking the other day about doing some travelling, but I thought that he was just talking about his usual two weeks in Europe. It never occurred to me that he was talking about the other side of the world.'

'Well, there's no use in speculating,' said Andy. 'We'll just have to **wait and see.** I expect that Tom will tell us about his plans when he's ready to.'

Suddenly Tom appeared saying, '**My ears are burning!** What have you all been saying about me?' He laughed when he was told about their guesswork. 'You have colourful imaginations,' he said. 'The truth is much less exciting than what you've come up with. I left my job to go back to university to do a further degree. I'm going back to **the groves of academe.**'

Vocabulary Study

bolt, a bolt from the blue
(*idiom/cliché*)

used to describe something which happens suddenly and unexpectedly. The expression has its origin in an unexpected flash of lightning from out of a cloudless sky.

cloud, under a cloud
(*idiom/cliché*)

to be suspected of having done something wrong.

ear, my ears are burning
(*cliché*)

an expression used to indicate that you think that someone is talking about you.

femme, cherchez la femme
(*cliché*)

a French expression, meaning 'find the woman', which has been adopted into English to indicate that there is a woman involved in some way, particularly in a romantic or sexual way, in a situation and it is just a question of identifying that involvement; often used in humorous contexts.

grove, the groves of academe (*cliché*)

university or college life; sounds very formal but sometimes used in fairly informal, even humorous, contexts. In origin, the expression refers to the Grove of Academus, an olive grove adjoining Plato's house outside Athens where he met his students.

guess, your guess is as good as mine (*cliché*)

used to emphasize a lack of knowledge or information in connection with a situation; used in informal contexts. The

same idea is expressed by the cliché **search me!**

heart, affairs of the heart (*cliché*)

matters relating to love or romance.

plot, the plot thickens (*cliché*)

used to indicate that a situation is becoming more involved and more dramatic; often used in fairly humorous situations. The expression was used by the English playwright George Villiers in his play *The Rehearsal* (1672) — 'Ay now, the plot thickens very much upon it.'

reverse, quite the reverse (*cliché*)

used to indicate that the opposite of what has just been stated is the case.

under, Down Under (*cliché*)

Australia or New Zealand; used in informal contexts.

wait and see (*cliché*)

used to try to encourage patience in someone, indicating that they will find out about something later.

wall, climbing the walls (*idiom/cliché*)

to be extremely bored and full of pent-up energy.

Recalling Information

1. What was everyone's reaction to Tom's resignation and why?

2. What was Joan's guess as to the reason that Tom resigned?

3. What was Mary's guess about why Tom resigned?

4. Give the reason for Tom's resignation.

Understanding Information

1. Think of another title for this unit and explain why you decided on that title.

2. Think of at least three adjectives to describe each of these characters: Andy, Joan, Mary, Sara. You may either choose from the list of adjectives provided in the box or think of your own.

fair-minded	imaginative	rash	empathic
gossipy	sensible	sensitive	objective
speculative	fanciful	thoughtful	over hasty
well-balanced	inventive	clear-headed	creative

Andy:

Joan:

Mary:

Sara:

3. Suppose you were Tom and you overheard the conversation among your friends. How would you feel about what they said of you?

4. Were there any facts in what was said by Andy, Joan, Mary and Sara? If so, write them in the first column of the table provided below. Did they give any opinions? If so, write them in the second column. (*Hint: A fact is a thing that is known or can be proved to have happened. An opinion is a belief not necessarily based on knowledge.*)

Fact	Opinion
Andy:	
Joan:	
Mary:	
Sara:	

5. Match each of the situations described in column A with the correct feeling provided in column B by joining the dots.

Column A

- (a) The goal-keeper left the team under a cloud after a series of mistakes. •
- (b) Henry found Tom's wedding to be a bolt from the blue. •
- (c) Confined to a hospital bed for 3 weeks, he was climbing the wall. •
- (d) He will adopt a wait and see attitude as he has time on his side. •
- (e) When told that he was being talked about, his ears were burning. •

Column B

- He was bored.
- He was in disgrace.
- He was embarrassed.
- He was surprised.
- He was patient.

6. Summarize in 50 words, the three possible reasons suggested by Tom's friends for his resignation.

Writing Activity

Read the text in the box carefully and the instructions that follow.

When you arrived in class one morning, a group of classmates were talking. The talk was about a fellow classmate, James, who was leaving school suddenly. Many guesses were given as to why he was leaving. Then James himself joined the group.

In about 200 words, write down the guesses your classmates had for James to suddenly leave school. State also what James said was the actual reason for his leaving.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. From the title and subtitle above, what do you expect the passage to be about?
2. When you read a newspaper report about a robbery, what information are you looking for?
3. Why do you think robberies happen?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

Once again, there has been a series of robberies in the town. This week several homes have been broken into in Robertson Street and residents are both worried and angry. 'Something must be done about this now,' said 58-year-old Jack Clements. 'It's time the police **got their finger out** and caught these villains. A lot of elderly people live around here and they're terrified.'

A police spokesman told us, 'We are **doing all in our power** to catch the people who are responsible for these burglaries. The police are **stretched to breaking point** in this town. Because of budgetary requirements we have made drastic reductions in the number of police officers on the beat and this at a time when we are faced with **a rising tide** of crime, especially among young people.'

Said Dick Rogers, 64, another resident of Robertson Street, 'The government should **put its money where its mouth is**. They're always going on about the importance of law and order, but we still don't have nearly enough police. We used to have a police force that was **in a class by itself**, but now we hear of nothing but cutbacks.'

Mary Roberts, 67, also a resident of Robertson Street, said, 'It's a **sign of the times** that these crimes are being committed by young people. It's just **part and parcel** of their general attitude. They're no longer afraid of anyone in authority and have no respect for other people or their property. If we catch any of them around here breaking into houses we'll **give them what for**, I promise you.'

Inspector James Rowland sympathized with the concern of the Robertson Street residents, but urged them not to **take the law into their own hands**. 'If you do see someone breaking in, get in touch with us immediately. Don't be tempted to **have a go** or you could end up being badly injured. We have a lot of officers working on these burglaries at the moment, but up till now we have not made any arrests. We are, however, following up a few lines of enquiry, although we are obviously not in a position at this stage to **name names**. Meanwhile, we would ask all members of the public to be vigilant and to report anything suspicious to the police.'

Vocabulary Study

class, in a class by itself
(*cliché*)

used to emphasize how exceptionally good someone or something is.

finger, get (or pull) your finger out (*idiom/cliché*)
used to tell someone to start work or doing something or to work harder; used in informal contexts and is considered rude.

go, have a go (*cliché*)
to try to deal with or catch a criminal yourself without

waiting for the police; used in informal contexts. This specific use of the expression is quite modern, being derived from an older, more general use. Its original meaning, which is still commonly used in informal contexts, is to have an attempt at something.

law, take the law into your own hands (*cliché*)
to try to deal with law-breakers or suspects yourself rather than waiting for the police or courts to act.

money, put your money where your mouth is
(*idiom/cliché*)

to give practical support, such as money, to something which you say you are in favour of.

name names (*cliché*)
to give the names of people who have been involved in something, especially when this will cause trouble for them or cause them embarrassment.

part and parcel of something (*cliché*)

used to emphasize that something is an essential part of something and cannot be separated from it.

power, do all in your power (*cliché*)

used to emphasize that you are doing everything possible to get something done, although people are not always convinced that this is

the case and the expression is often used just for effect.

sign, a sign of the times (*cliché*)

to be typical of the present state of society or the times in which we live.

stretched to breaking point (*cliché*)

used to emphasize how insufficient or inadequate something is in comparison with what has to be done.

tide, a rising tide (*idiom/cliché*)

a marked and continuing increase. In origin, the expression is a reference to the movement of the tides of the oceans.

what, give someone what for (*cliché*)

to scold or punish someone severely; used in informal contexts. The cliché **tear a strip off someone** has the same meaning.

Recalling Information

1. What caused the residents in Robertson Street to worry?

2. What was the concern of Jack Clements?

3. What explanation did the police spokesman have for the increased break-ins?

4. What did Inspector James Rowland advise the residents to do?

Understanding Information

1. A balanced newspaper report would try to express different points of view, as was done in this report. These points of view would be from both sides, in this case the residents and the police. Write out the different points of view expressed by the following people.

(a) Jack Clements

(b) Police Spokesman

(c) Dick Rogers

(d) Mary Roberts

2. After reading the report, what impression do you have of the ability of the police to handle the robberies?

3. Suggest some reasons why the reporter ended the report with the Inspector's statements.

4. Replace the idiom in bold print in each of the following sentences with your own words.

- (a) We are **doing all in our power** to catch the people who are responsible for these burglaries.

- (b) It's just **part and parcel** of their general attitude.

- (c) Don't be tempted to **have a go**.

- (d) We are obviously not in a position at this stage to **name names**.

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- This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings visible.

Writing Activity

A fire broke out one night in a grocery shop located in a small town. The owner, Mr Tank, said at least half of his goods were destroyed and the damage to the shop would need extensive repairs. He insisted that it was arson. The owners of the neighbouring shops said that they had warned Mr Tank several times to change the electrical wiring in his shop, as it was a fire hazard. They themselves had changed the electrical wirings in their shops.

Obituary

A biographical sketch of a local personality.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. From the title above, what do you expect the passage to be about?
2. In an obituary, what is usually said or written?
3. Do you think the passage will be positive or negative?

Reading Passage

Now read the passage below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

The whole community has been saddened by the news of the death of Brian Peterson, who died suddenly last week after a short illness. Brian was well known to many of us in the town, but he was particularly well known in climbing circles and was regarded locally as **the grand old man** of rock-climbing.

As a young man, he took part in several major, and indeed dangerous, climbing expeditions, and **cheated death** on more than one occasion. He regarded it as **a real feather in his cap** that he was asked to take part in an Everest expedition in 1976 and **welcomed** the opportunity **with open arms**. The expedition was one of the major achievements of his climbing career and provided him with many anecdotes to which we all **listened spellbound**. A photograph of the expedition had **pride of place** on his mantelpiece.

Brian will also be remembered as a wonderful speaker and writer. He wrote many articles on climbing for a wide range of publications, but sadly never got round to writing any books on the subject, although this was always his intention. This is a great loss, as he was both an informative and an entertaining writer. However, who can blame him for wanting to spend time on the hills rather than spend it behind a typewriter?

Brian was a gifted writer, but it was as a speaker that he really **came into his own**. Whatever the nature of the audience, he made the subject of climbing **come alive** for them, illustrating his talks not only with marvellous slides, but also with personal anecdotes. He

could **hold** any audience **in the palm of his hand**. Sometimes they would be **on the edge of their seats** at his stories and sometimes they would be **rolling in the aisles**. Not surprisingly, he was never short of speaking engagements.

Brian was an extremely active member of the local mountain rescue team until his illness. Although always willing to **give a helping hand** to people who got into difficulties in the mountains, he often got extremely angry with people who ventured on to the mountains without appropriate clothing or equipment and without leaving exact details of where they were going.

Brian was a devoted family man and is survived by his wife, Susan, and his sons, Michael and Graham, both of whom are experienced climbers and members of the mountain rescue team. We extend our sympathy to them.

Vocabulary Study

aisle, rolling in the aisles
(*idiom/cliché*)

to laugh long and very heartily. In origin, the idea is of people in a theatre falling off their seats with laughter and rolling about in the aisles. The cliché **splitting your sides** has the same meaning.

alive, come alive (*cliché*)
to become interesting and stimulating.

death, cheat death
(*idiom/cliché*)
to do something very dangerous and survive.

edge, on the edge of your seat (*idiom/cliché*)
to be very tense or excited about something.

feather, a feather in your cap (*idiom/cliché*)
an achievement of which you can be very proud. In origin,

the expression refers to a custom of North American Indians by which they placed a feather in their headdress for every enemy killed.

grand, the grand old man of something (*cliché*)
used to refer to someone who is eminent in some area of activity and has been involved in it for a long time.

hand, give a helping hand
(*idiom/cliché*)
to give assistance to someone. An alternative form of this cliché is **lend someone a helping hand**.

open, welcome with open arms (*cliché*)
to receive someone or something with great enthusiasm.

own, come into your own
(*cliché*)
to be in a situation where you have the opportunity to demonstrate your abilities and good qualities.

palm, hold (or have) someone in the palm of your hand (*idiom/cliché*)
to have someone under your control or influence so that they pay you complete attention and act or respond to you as you wish.

pride of place (*cliché*)
used to describe a prominent position given to something.

spellbound, listen spellbound (*cliché*)
to listen to someone or something with all your attention and great interest.

Recalling Information

From the information given in the obituary, draw up a profile of Brian Peterson, using the outline given below.

Name: _____

Survived by: _____

Achievements

(i) in sport: _____

(ii) as a writer and speaker: _____

Other contributions: _____

Understanding Information

1. An obituary is often written by someone who is close to the deceased. It gives a view of what made the deceased memorable to others. The main parts of an obituary are:
 - (a) the announcement of death, which could include the date, location and cause of death;
 - (b) biographical information, which tells a little about the life, accomplishments, education, honours and hobbies of the deceased;
 - (c) survivor information.

In this obituary, what impression do you have of Brian Peterson's achievements?

2. Match each of the sentences in column A with the correct follow-up comment in column B. Write the letter of the follow-up comment in the box that corresponds with the sentence in column A.

Column A

1. She was an enthralling storyteller.
2. The stand-up comedian performed to a full house.
3. Tonight we present the lifetime achievement award to a famous painter.
4. Our manager is a family man.
5. Jessie was thrilled to be selected for the national bowling team.
6. I hear you're moving house soon.
7. John had another close shave on his motorbike.

Column B

- A. Just shout if you need me to give you a helping hand.
- B. This is the third time he has cheated death.
- C. Her whole family was delighted to hear of this latest feather in her cap.
- D. He had the audience rolling in the aisles.
- E. He is often regarded as the grand old man of the arts.
- F. She had us on the edge of our seats for most of the time.
- G. A photo of his wife and children has pride of place in his office.

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- This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard ruled sheet of paper. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

1. Discuss whether you think it is appropriate that an obituary usually gives a favourable evaluation or assessment of the deceased. Give reasons to support your opinion.

Going on a Diet

A letter recounting reasons for and experiences of dieting.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Talk about your own experience of dieting or a friend's experience.
2. How did you or your friend feel when dieting?
3. How successful was the diet?

Reading Passage

Now read the letter below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

2 March 2002

Dear Pam,

You know how I said that I was never again going to go on a diet. Well, I **take it all back**. Here I am again, counting calories and eating little more than lettuce leaves.

It's all Polly's fault. She's getting married in July and she's asked **yours truly** to be her bridesmaid. That's very nice, of course, especially since the wedding's going to be in New York. **The fly in the ointment** from my point of view is that Polly is so slim. Not only that, but the other bridesmaid is Polly's sister, Jane, who is just as slim. However much I try to slim, I'm going to **look like the back end of a bus** beside them, but I feel I have to try.

My mother's not helping because she keeps worrying about my becoming anorexic—as if!—and telling me that I'm looking far too pale. As if this wasn't bad enough, my Gran's visiting us just now and my Gran's cooking **is to die for**. I've had to take to eating on my own and cooking for myself. I just cannot bear to have to watch the rest of the family tucking into Gran's homemade pies while I am toying with a little steamed broccoli. If I did all, my diet plans would **go out the window**.

So **life's** not exactly **a bowl of cherries** at the moment. I have to **get up with the lark** so that I can have my meager breakfast before Gran appears to start cooking bacon and sausages or making pancakes. My mother tries to stop her because she's worried about Dad's cholesterol, but for Gran that kind of cooking is **the habit of a lifetime** and she just ignores Mum's advice. Naturally, my father and brother love these huge breakfasts! So would I!

I take a packed lunch—salad and a bottle of water—and eat in the park, if it's not pouring with rain. The rest of the office are getting very suspicious and apparently some of them think that I have a new man in my life and I'm rushing out to meet him. **I wish!**

I'm sorry if this letter is all about food. That's because I rarely think of anything else these days. I find myself thinking that I **could murder** a steak when, usually, I rarely eat red meat.

Much love
Alice

Vocabulary Study

back, I take it all back
(*cliché*)

used to indicate that you have changed your mind or attitude about someone or something. The cliché **eat your words** conveys a similar meaning, although it often emphasizes more strongly that you have been mistaken or wrong and that you have been forced to admit your mistake.

bus, look like the back end of a bus (*cliché*)

an exaggerated way of saying that someone is very unattractive or ugly and often large; used in informal contexts.

cherry, life is (just) a bowl of cherries (*idiom/cliché*)

used to indicate that life is full of good or pleasant things; often used either in negative constructions or ironically.

die, to die for (*colloquialism*)

used to emphasize how desirable someone or

something is; used in informal contexts.

fly, the fly in the ointment
(*idiom/cliché*)

something or someone that prevents something from being as good, successful, happy or enjoyable as it could be.

habit, the habit of a lifetime
(*cliché*)

something which you have been in the habit of doing for a very long time. **Why break the habit of a lifetime?** is an expression used to someone who is about to do something which they are in the habit of doing and which annoys you in some way.

If, as if! (*colloquialism*)

used when someone has said something that is very unlikely to be true.

lark, get up with the lark
(*idiom/cliché*)

to get up very early in the morning. A cliché which has a

similar meaning is **get up at the crack of dawn**.

murder, I could murder something (*cliché*)

used to indicate that you would very much like to eat or drink something in particular; used in informal contexts. A cliché used in similar circumstances also relates to death, **I'm dying for something**.

truly, yours truly (*cliché*)

'I' or 'me'; used in informal, sometimes humorous, contexts. In origin, this expression is a fairly informal greeting used at the end of a letter.

window, go out (of) the window (*idiom/cliché*)

to disappear completely.

wish, I wish! (*colloquialism*)

used to indicate that you do not think that something is true, even if it is highly desirable or much wanted.

Recalling Information

1. Why did Alice want to lose weight?

2. What was the reaction of Alice's mother to her dieting?

3. In what way was Alice's dieting made more difficult with Granny's visit?

4. What was the concern of Alice's mother about the breakfast that Granny cooked?

Understanding Information

1. Do you think it is advisable to follow a diet like Alice's in which she ate a meagre breakfast and had a salad and a bottle of water for lunch? Why or why not?

2. Why do you think Alice chose to eat lunch alone in the park, rather than with her office colleagues?

3. Form complete sentences by joining the dots to match the two parts of each sentence correctly.

Column A

- (a) I take back what I said about Tim •
- (b) With looks to die for, the TV star •
- (c) All these fine plans for a garden party will go out the window •
- (d) Let's get up with the lark tomorrow •
- (e) Don't expect the habit of a lifetime •

Column B

- to make the most of the day.
- now that I've heard his side of the story.
- to be changed anytime soon.
- is hounded by fans wherever he goes.
- if it rains.

4. Alice could have given her friend the same information about her dieting experience in 100 words in a short email. Write that short email below.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard sheet of stationery. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

A Change of Plan

A letter explaining the postponement of a visit.

Pre-Reading Questions

1. Think of possible reasons that would cause you to change a plan.
2. Who would be affected by your change of plan?
3. How might you break the news of a change of plan?

Reading Passage

Now read the letter below. You can look up the meanings of the words and idioms in bold in the Vocabulary Study section that follows.

3/6/02

Dear Stan,

I'm sorry. My plans to come and visit you next weekend **have gone pear-shaped**. I was really looking forward to seeing you and to having some fun in the big city. Life here can get boring with so many of my friends away at college.

Unfortunately, two things have happened to make me change my plans. We're really **under the cosh** at work just now. It's coming up to the end of the tax year and, like all accountants, we're **up to our ears**. To try and cope with the workload the boss has asked us if we could all work overtime this weekend. As usual, I'm **on my uppers** and could really use the extra cash. Also, I'd like to help the boss out if I can. He's a decent bloke and has always **played** very **fair** with me. It would be difficult to refuse to work when everyone else is going to.

Then, there's a problem with my grandfather. He's **not getting any younger** and he's been a bit **under the weather** recently. Mum was worried about him and so he's come to visit for a while. **Truth to tell**, he's not really recovered from my grandmother's death last year. My mother doesn't like leaving him alone in the house and she's agreed to babysit for my sister on Saturday night. Dad's away at a conference that weekend and so it's down to me.

So there it is. **What with one thing and another**, this weekend is not possible and it would be best from my point of view to leave coming up until some other weekend. **Looking on the bright side**, I can see that the delay will mean I have more money to spend when I do finally get there, thanks to the overtime.

I hope all is well with you. Drop me a note and let me know if there's any weekend that's not suitable for me to come up, or if there's any weekend that's specially suitable. I would give you the news from home, but there isn't any—or, if there is, I'm working so hard that I haven't heard about it!

Sorry again about the change of plan. I hope it hasn't messed up any of your arrangements. I'll think of you **living it up** in the **bright lights** while I'm watching the telly with granddad!

Cheers

Jeff

Vocabulary Study

bright, look on the bright side (*cliché*)

to be hopeful and optimistic.

cosh, under the cosh

(*colloquialism*)

to be under a great deal of pressure; to be struggling to cope. The expression also means to take a beating, as at a sports event. A cosh is a heavy stick used as a weapon.

ear, up to your ears in something (*idiom/cliché*)

deeply involved in or very busy with something. Another version of this cliché, which has exactly the same meaning, is **up to your eyes in something**.

fair, play fair with someone (*idiom/cliché*)

to treat someone in an honest, just way. In origin, the expression refers to playing a sports match of some kind according to the rules and not cheating.

light, the bright lights

(*cliché*)

the excitement or attraction of life in a city.

live it up (*cliché*)

to do things which you enjoy, especially extravagant things which cost a lot of money; used in informal contexts. The cliché **paint the town red** is another expression which means to enjoy yourself in an expensive way.

pear, go pear-shaped

(*colloquialism*)

used to describe something that has failed or not gone according to plan.

thing, what with one thing and another (*cliché*)

used to indicate that there are several reasons why something happened, why someone was not able to do something; often used as part of an excuse or apology.

truth to tell (*cliché*)

sometimes used to emphasize the truth of the statement which is going to follow, but often used meaninglessly as a sentence filler, especially by people to whom the expression has become a habit.

upper, on your uppers

(*idiom/cliché*)

to be very short of money; used in informal contexts. The expression means literally that the soles have completely worn off your shoes so that you are walking on the uppers. The cliché **on your beam ends** has a similar meaning.

weather, under the weather

(*idiom/cliché*)

unwell, to be ill, but not seriously so. A cliché which is similar in meaning is **below par**, which has its origin in the game of golf, par being the number of strokes which would be made in a perfect round on a particular course.

young, not getting any

younger (*cliché*)

an expression used to indicate that someone is getting old. People are often reluctant to use the word 'old' and tend to use euphemisms instead. The cliché **getting on a bit** is also an example of this.

Recalling Information

1. What was the purpose of Jeff's letter to Stan?

2. What had Jeff's boss asked of him?

3. What were the reasons that Jeff was willing to oblige his boss?

4. What would Jeff have to do for his grandfather on Saturday night?

5. What did Jeff see to be the advantage of a later visit?

Understanding Information

1. From what you know of Jeff in his letter, write a short character sketch of him. For each characteristic you identify, give supporting evidence. You should be able to pick out at least 5 characteristics.

2. Fill in each of the blanks in the passage below with one of the idioms provided in the box.

what with one thing or another

live it up

had gone pear-shaped

looking on the bright side

he was not getting any younger

on his uppers

Robert couldn't wait for the holidays to start as his father had promised him a trip to Bali. Two weeks before the day, his father told him their plans

(a) _____. The reason was that he had been retrenched and would be (b) _____. He worried that finding another job would be hard as (c) _____. (d) _____, Robert's father was in no mood to (e) _____ and thought it best to cancel the trip. Robert took the news well and, (f) _____, told his father that now he could attend the school camp.

3. Instead of giving detailed reasons, Jeff could have explained to his friend the change of plan in a short email. Write that short email in 100 words to communicate the main ideas in the letter.

Writing Activity

Write a letter in 200 to 250 words to inform a friend of a change of plan. Try to use some idioms from this as well as the other units you have read. Use some or all of the points below, adding points of your own to create interest.

- Description of the original plan.
- Reasons why you cannot carry out the original plan.
- Description of the new plan.



READ and UNDERSTAND 3

Answer Key

Unit 1 Bad News

Recalling Information

- The bad news was that the firm of Blair and Brown Ltd had gone into receivership.
- The company had cut operating costs to the minimum and had let several valuable staff members go.
- No buyer wanted to buy the company because of the recession. Larger companies preferred to conserve their capital rather than to spend it on buying smaller companies.
- The official receiver would examine the company's finances and try to find a buyer.
- The employees' jobs could be saved if there is a buyer for the company.

Understanding Information

- We know that the news was verbally delivered because of the statement: 'Thank you all for giving up your Saturday morning to come into the office'.

What the owner said
He wanted to tell them directly that the firm had gone into receivership and not have them hear it from others.
There is a small firm hit by recession.
The firm tried to cut operating costs and to retrench some staff.
The firm also tried to find a bigger firm to buy them out but to no avail.
The firm was in the hands of the official receiver. He hoped their jobs would be safe.
He thanked them for their loyal service.

- (a) backs were to the wall (b) explored every avenue
(c) heard it on the grapevine
(d) it's only a matter of time
- Summary - include these points:
 - Staff told that Blair and Brown Ltd had gone into receivership.
 - Hit by recession.
 - Tried various ways to save company: cut costs, retrenched staff, tried to sell company.
 - All measures failed.
 - Company still looking for a buyer.
 - Staff should wait for outcome.
 - Owner thanked staff and wished them well.

Unit 2 Surprising News

Recalling Information

- Jenny wanted to tell Kay that Rose Barnes and Mark Wilson had just got engaged.
- The party guests were gobsmacked OR The party guests were very surprised.
- One reason for Jenny's surprise was that she didn't know that Mark and Rose were even friends. The other reason was that Mark and Rose were absolutely different from one another. A third reason is that Jenny thought Mark was a confirmed bachelor.
- Whereas Rose wanted a huge wedding, Mark wanted to go abroad and get married quietly.

Understanding Information

- Jenny did not sound as if she supported the marriage of Rose and Mark. She commented that they were chalk and cheese, thus suggesting that the marriage would not work. She agreed with Jill who said that the marriage would not succeed. She thought that it was a sign of trouble that Rose and Mark had different views about the wedding celebrations.
- (a) gave high praise (b) are absolutely different
(c) getting married
(d) with those extras that will make the occasion really special

Summary - include these points:

- Mark announced that he and Rose were engaged the night before.
- Everyone was surprised.
- Jenny did not know they were good friends.
- Pam noticed they were close lately but thought it was because they were colleagues.
- Jenny did not think they were a good match.
- Already Mark and Rose had different ideas about the wedding celebrations.

Unit 3 Coping with Misery

Recalling Information

- Jane's misery was caused by her fiancé Peter writing to her suddenly to say he wanted to break off the engagement as he had fallen in love with someone else.
- Jane was heartbroken, wept continuously and felt her life was ruined.
- Lucy advised Jane to let time be the healer, saying that though Jane would always remember what happened, in time the pain will be less.
- Mary wanted Jane to understand that the break-up was not to be blamed on either Jane or Peter.
- Judy took a brutal approach with Jane because she did not realize Jane was actually ill.

Understanding Information

- Summary - include these points:
 - Lucy: let time heal the pain. Jane would not forget but after some time it would not hurt as much.
 - Mary: Neither Jane nor Peter was to be blamed for the break-up. Engagements end sometimes in a break-up.
 - Judy: Jane should stop feeling sorry about the situation. She should put the past behind and stop grieving. She should realize that life must go on.

Unit 4 Time to Study

Recalling Information

- False 2. False 3. True 4. True 5. False
6. True 7. True 8. False

Understanding Information

1. D 2. C 3. E 4. A 5. B
- Summary - include these points:
 - Those who had worked hard consistently should keep it up.
 - Those who had worked quite hard would need to put in extra effort.
 - Those who had slacked would have a lot of catching up to do.
 - For the third group: the principal advised them not to give up; they should start revising immediately, prepare a study timetable and follow it; if home was too noisy they should study in school; they should give up parties and get enough rest.

Unit 5 Job Losses

Recalling Information

- True 2. False 3. False 4. True 5. True
6. False 7. False 8. True

Understanding Information

The parent company decided to follow a global policy of rationalization.
The company proposed a plan of restructuring.
The reason was that the company wanted to save jobs.
The job cuts would affect all levels of staff.
Management hoped that the trade union would have fruitful negotiations with members.

These are two possible reasons:

- It is better for the employees' morale if they volunteered to leave or volunteered to retire early than to be forced to leave.
- There would be better goodwill between the company and the employees who chose early retirement or voluntary redundancy.
- (a) the survival of the fittest
(b) weather the storm
(c) his hands were tied
(d) in the present climate
- Summary - include these main points:
 - A senior manager announced that the parent company decided to follow a global policy of rationalization.
 - The company had proposed a plan of restructuring.
 - The reason was that the company wanted to save jobs.
 - But some job cuts would take place and affect all levels of staff.
 - Management hoped that the trade union would have fruitful negotiations with members.

Unit 6 Football Defeat

Recalling Information

- Terry wanted to tell Jack the results of the performance of their football team.
- Terry said 'so far, so good' when Rowanby United, up to that point, had won three games and drawn two.
- They hoped that the game would at least be a draw.
- One reason was that Rowanby United played appallingly badly. The other reason was that Barrowgreen United played brilliantly, beating Rowanby United 5-nil.

Understanding Information

- Terry and Jack must be very good friends. Terry knew that Jack's mother wrote frequently to him. From the first paragraph, we learnt that they both lived in the same town till Jack went away to attend college. Terry knew Jack well and knew of his interest in football and that was why he gave Jack a detailed description of the football match.
- Terry said it was 'optimistic' to think that Rowanby United would defeat Barrowgreen United as Barrowgreen was in second place in the league.
- (a) I'm not sure that I should tell you the unpleasant details.
(b) Most of us had taken some false confidence from drinking alcohol with our pub lunch.
(c) They left us with no chance of winning.
- Summary - include these points:
 - Rowanby United was doing well at first - won three games and drew two.
 - Played Barrowgreen United.
 - Many were hoping for a Rowanby victory or at least a draw.
 - Reason: Barrowgreen had not been playing well lately, though in second place in the league.
 - In the match with Barrowgreen, Rowanby suffered a crushing defeat 5-nil.
 - Rowanby supporters were devastated.

Unit 7 A Disappointment

Recalling Information

- The firm did not keep its promise of delivering before Christmas the two sofa beds that the customer ordered.
- She was inconvenienced at Christmas when she had no beds for her guests.
- She phoned the customer helpline and could not get through for a long time. When she finally got through, first she was told that the person in charge was not available and would call back. When there was no return call, she tried again and got the person's name. However, when she phoned him she was told he was on leave.
- She wanted the firm to explain the reason for the non-delivery of her order and to give her a refund if it could not deliver it.

Understanding Information

1. 1. B 2. D 3. E 4. A 5. C
2. Mrs Wood was justified in writing to the CEO because she had not received satisfactory action from the other employees of the company. She had called the customer helpline many times but had not been given help and finally she decided to take the matter to the top.
3. Mrs Wood sounded reasonable in her letter. First, she explained the problem of the non-delivery of the beds she ordered. She stated the inconvenience it caused her. She then gave in detail all the previous attempts she made to get the bed delivered but the employees of the firm had not been helpful. It was as a last resort that she wrote to the CEO to get an answer as to why the beds had not arrived.
4. Summary – suggested answer:
I received a letter of complaint from Mrs Marjorie Wood. The problem is that she did not receive the sofa beds she ordered before Christmas as promised. It inconvenienced her as her guests had no beds. When she called the customer helpline, she claimed that she couldn't get through. When she did get through, she was told the person in charge would return her call but never did. She tried again hours later with much the same results.

Unit 8 A Letter of Apology

Recalling Information

1. Mr Blake apologized for the inconvenience that resulted from the late arrival of the furniture.
2. The firm had corrected the mistake by delivering the sofa beds the day before.
3. A number of events had brought about the mistake. Firstly, the sofa beds were sold out quickly. Secondly, the supplier was unable to supply more pieces. Thirdly, the company could not find another supplier that was good enough.
4. He apologized again and expressed that he valued her custom and hoped she would go on being a client of the company.

Understanding Information

	Reason for late delivery	Statement that made it look favourable
(a)	Advertising campaign was successful	'This meant that to some extent, we were the victims of our own success.'
(b)	Insufficient stock to meet supply	'We had been prepared for the race against time to get all the orders filled before Christmas, but not with the lack of product.'
(c)	Suppliers faced a technical hitch	'Their maintenance people had their work cut out to get their production line functioning again in time for the Christmas rush and valuable time was lost.'
(d)	Company could not find another supplier	'Being unwilling to accept goods of a lesser quality, we had no choice but to wait for our usual supplier to get their machinery fixed.'

2. It was a good idea for Mr Blake to give a detailed explanation of how the mistake came about. One reason is that it would help the customer see that he was thorough in finding out all the causes for the mistake. It also showed that he cared enough about the customer to want to give her a full explanation.
3. (a) circumstances beyond our control
(b) chapter of accidents
(c) profuse apologies
(d) safe and sound

4. Summary – suggested answer:

About the sofa beds that didn't arrive before Christmas, I got a letter from Chief Executive to explain what happened. Firstly, the company had run out of stock. Apparently there was terrific response to their advertisement. To add to the problem the supplier had problems with their computer system and was slow in handling the orders. Thirdly, the company couldn't find another supplier. So it was a series of problems.

Unit 9 A Lucky Escape

Recalling Information

1. Several people were saved from injury because the scaffolding landed just behind them.
2. Those interviewed thought that the town council should be held responsible for the accident.
3. The council said the contractor should take responsibility for the accident.
4. Tom Scott thought the accident happened because the scaffolding was in a poor state of repair.

Understanding Information

1. (a) It can be said that several people at a bus-stop had a lucky escape because they were not hurt when some scaffolding fell from a building and landed just behind them.
- (b) Margaret Simpson did not think the weather could be blamed as it was not windy when the scaffolding fell.
- (c) The council representative put the responsibility on the contractor because the contractor had erected the scaffolding.
- (d) Tom Scott thought the council was to blame as the council had a moral responsibility to keep the town safe for their residents.

Report of an accident	
The council is responsible	The council is not responsible
He hoped the town council would do something to prevent future accidents.	
The council should not allow dangerous things to fall.	
	The contractor put up the scaffolding and was therefore responsible.
Council had been told that the scaffolding was in poor condition. The council did nothing about it.	

3. 1. C 2. A 3. D 4. E 5. B

4. Summary – include these points:

- Some scaffolding fell from a building.
- Landed behind several people waiting at the bus-stop.
- Luckily they were unhurt.
- The residents all agreed that the council was responsible and should take action.
- The council should act before another accident happened.
- Some residents had told the council of the danger of the scaffolding falling.
- The council blamed the accident on the contractor who erected the scaffolding.

Unit 10 A Day of Misfortunes

Recalling Information

1. Linda was working because her father suggested that she should get a year of work experience before entering college.
2. Her usual morning routine was to have a bath, a hair wash, choose her clothes carefully and eat a nourishing breakfast.
3. At the office, she waited till nobody was present at reception before she hurried in.

4. Linda thought Mrs Smart was unfair because Linda worked very hard for very little money and was hardly ever late.

Understanding Information

1. Jenny and Linda appeared to be very close friends. They wrote to each other. Linda trusted Jenny and was very frank in talking about her bad experiences on the day everything went wrong for her. Linda signed the letter with 'Love'.

	Linda's unpleasant experiences	Why they happened
(a)	She woke up one hour later than she should have.	She accidentally switched off the alarm clock.
(b)	She missed having a bath, hair wash and nourishing breakfast.	She overslept and was late for work.
(c)	She missed the bus.	She stopped to help Mrs Smart to put her rubbish out on the street.
(d)	She found her supervisor waiting for her at her	The supervisor could have been looking for her and finding desk. Linda not at her desk waited to catch her coming in late. (Other reasonable answers may be accepted.)

3. (a) spoke too soon
(b) face the music
(c) read him the riot act
(d) bad hair day
(e) panic stations
(f) on her beam ends
4. Summary – include these points:
- First of all, Linda accidentally switched off the alarm clock when it rang.
 - Therefore, she overslept by an hour.
 - She rushed to get ready for work.
 - She helped a neighbour to put out the rubbish bin and therefore missed the bus.
 - At her desk was the supervisor who told her off for being useless and unreliable.

Unit 11 Goodbye and Hello

Recalling Information

1. One reason was to announce that Jack Jones, the marketing director, was leaving the company. The second reason was to welcome Jim White who would take over his position.
2. Jack Jones helped the company become profitable and successful.
3. He was leaving as he wanted a change. Another reason was that a larger company at the cutting edge of the business made him an offer he could not refuse.
4. Any two of the following: (i) Jim White will prove a worthy successor to Jack. (ii) He has certainly been extremely proactive in the company which he has just left. (iii) It is obvious that they are sorry to lose him. (iv) I am sure that he will soon find his feet here.

Understanding Information

1. If it was right that Jack Jones was given more mention, some reasons would be: He had contributed to the progress of the company, his achievements were known and it was right that as he was leaving he should be given more attention and praise in the speech.
- If the view is that both should have been given equal mention, some reasons would be: Jim White could have been given a warmer welcome. One way to show him that he is a worthy successor is to give him equal mention with the departing marketing director.
2. (a) a change of scene
(b) token of appreciation

- (c) each and everyone of them
(d) from the cradle to the grave
(e) find his feet

3. Summary – include these points:

- Worked hard to develop the company
- Had been with the company while it was still young
- Helped company to be profitable and successful
- Easy to work with
- Man of talents

Unit 12 Bridge Delay

Recalling Information

1. Commuters were concerned about the delay in opening the new bridge across the Brunton.
2. One reason was that it was nearly a year overdue. Meantime the ferry service had been reduced causing inconvenience to commuters.
3. The MP said that a committee had been set up to investigate the delay.
4. The MP said that the ferry company was responsible.
5. The interviewer suggested that the government try to persuade the ferry company to bring back the original ferry service until the bridge was opened.

Understanding Information

1. (a) The ferry service was reduced because it was expected that the new bridge would be opened.
(b) In order to find out the cause of the delay in the building of the bridge, a committee was set up to investigate the delay.
(c) The government could not be held responsible for the reduced ferry service as it was the decision of the ferry company.
(d) The MP said he could not take up the interviewer's suggestion because he was still waiting for the committee's report.
2. If I were one of the commuters, I would be frustrated and angry with the MP's reply. It basically said that the government could do nothing anytime soon, the ferry service could not be fully resumed yet, and commuters would just have to be patient and put up with the inconvenience.
3. (a) jumped the gun
(b) beginning of a new era
(c) at this juncture
(d) teething troubles
(e) jam tomorrow
4. Summary – include these points:
 - Interviewer said commuters concerned about delay in bridge opening. Ferry service reduced. Asked MP for date of bridge opening.
 - MP said waiting for committee report. Delay caused by unexpected teething problems. Regretted the delay.
 - Interviewer said the ferry company was too hasty in reducing service.
 - MP replied ferry company made a commercial decision. Not the responsibility of the government.
 - Interviewer asked if government could get ferry company to bring back original service.
 - MP said they would consider, but awaiting committee report.

Unit 13 A Birthday Party

Recalling Information

1. It was to be a formal party. There was to be a lavish buffet, champagne and a band to dance to. Each girl had an escort.
2. Julie wanted to celebrate her birthday on the actual day, which was the day before the results.
3. Either. The party gave them something pleasant to do while they waited for their final school exam results. Or The students had been studying hard for weeks before the exam and had stopped going to parties during that time.
4. They were there so that they could enjoy the fun of getting ready together.

Understanding Information

1. The writer said that because the students would be anxious about the final school examination results that would be released the day after the party.

2. The sentence means that when the examination results are released there will be students who would not have done well and they would be disappointed, with nothing to cheer about.

5. Summary – include these points:

- Birthday for Julie's 18th birthday, held a day before release of final exam results.
- Friends looked forward to it – to have fun before exam results released and before possible disappointment, determined to enjoy themselves.
- Party to be lavish.

Unit 14 Reluctant Attendance

Recalling Information

1. The meeting was called by the parents of some of the children in the town to complain about the lack of playground facilities in the area.
2. The reason was that he was the councillor responsible for recreation.
3. As Mr James was an estate agent, at the party he could pick up some useful business.
4. He expected them to have a great deal to say and they would not accept any excuses.
5. Mr Sharp said he could not attend because of an important family gathering.

Understanding Information

1. Name: Mr James
Occupation: Estate agent
Councillor in charge of Recreation
Marital status: Married
He did not enjoy meeting with angry parents of the town OR answering difficult questions.
He dreaded unpleasant duties.
He would have liked to be at a party at the golf club instead of attending a meeting with angry parents.
2. Mr James did not seem to take his duties as councillor seriously, and he did not seem to feel a sense of responsibility for the needs of the residents of the town. This was because he was more eager that it would be a short meeting so that he could attend a party at the golf club. He would have preferred to let his deputy attend the meeting if it was possible.
3. The other councillors were also irresponsible. Mr Sharp thought it was more important to go to a family gathering than to the meeting. Similarly all the other councillors said they had other engagements and could not be at the meeting. These were excuses.
4. **Column A**
(a) ...
(b) ...
(c) ...
(d) ...
(e) ...
Column B
Wild horses would not drag him to attend the play.
He made a special effort to show his face at this friend's performance.
They had heard too many of his empty promises.
They knew that the expedition was no picnic.
There was always safety in numbers at such a meeting.

5. Summary – include these points:

- Knew parents would be complaining of lack of playground facilities and he was councillor responsible for recreation.
- Wanted to attend golf club party to pick up business. He was an estate agent.
- Knew parents were vocal. They would speak bluntly knowing Mr James was in charge. Parents would not accept excuses.
- Mr James wanted his deputy to attend in his place but deputy could not.
- No other councillor could attend either.

Unit 15 Facing Angry Parents

Recalling Information

1. Mr James was famous for his smooth talking.
2. The gist of his speech was that the children of the town meant a great deal to the councillors and these councillors were very concerned about the welfare of the young.
3. Mr James could not finish his speech as he was interrupted by one of the parents.

4. The parents wanted Mr James to provide safe and interesting places for their children to play.

Understanding Information

1. Name: Mr James
He was well-known for smooth talking.
He dreaded answering questions from angry complaining parents.
He would have liked to escape from unpleasant situations.
2. Mr James still appeared to be an irresponsible councillor who was not concerned about looking after the needs of the town people. He was defensive in pointing out that some improvements had been made to the playground equipment. He wanted to avoid further confrontations with the parents and would send his deputy the next time, showing that he was not really concerned about their needs.
3. The man who interrupted Mr James was bold. He stopped Mr James in his prepared speech and told him to get down to talking about important matters. He was determined that action should be taken and took the lead.
4. (a) by not attending, their absence was very noticeable.
(b) what is done is more important than empty promises and nice sounding plans.
(c) making a difficult situation worse.
(d) air their views and feelings forcefully.
5. Summary – include these points:
 - Parents in the town attended.
 - Meeting to question Mr James about lack of playground facilities. Knew Mr James was councillor responsible for recreation.
 - Mr James started with prepared speech. But one parent interrupted him, wanted him and to get to the point.
 - Parents wanted playground facilities improved and increased. Some had waited several years for this. Parents not satisfied with the improvements to the existing equipment.

Unit 16 A Sudden Decision

Recalling Information

1. Everyone was surprised because it was so sudden.
2. Joan's guess was that Tom resigned because he was bored with his work.
3. Mary's guess was that Tom was going to Australia to see an Australian girl he was interested in.
4. Tom resigned in order to go back to university to do a further degree.

Understanding Information

4. **Andy:** Fact – Tom's resignation was unexpected.
Opinion – Tom has always been very hard-working and competent.
Joan: Fact – She would be bored if she had to sit in an office all day.
Opinion – Tom might have been bored.
Mary: Fact – Her brother introduced an Australian girl to Tom a few weeks ago.
Opinion – They seemed to get on very well.
Sara: Fact – Tom was talking about doing some travelling.
Opinion – Tom was going to Europe.
5. **Column A**
(a) ...
(b) ...
(c) ...
(d) ...
(e) ...
Column B
He was in disgrace.
He was surprised.
He was bored.
He was patient.
He was embarrassed.
6. Summary – include these points:
 - Andy thought it was not because Tom was dismissed.
 - Joan thought Tom was bored.
 - Mary thought it was because Tom was going to Australia to get married.

Unit 17 More Break-ins

Recalling Information

1. The residents were worried because several homes in Robertson Street had been broken into.
2. He was concerned that the elderly residents living around were terrified.

3. The police spokesman explained that because of budgetary requirements there were few officers patrolling the area. At the same time more young people were committing crimes.
4. Inspector James Rowland advised the residents to get in touch with the police immediately if they saw someone breaking in. They should not try to tackle the robbers.

Understanding Information

1. Jack Clements: The police should catch the culprits or the elderly would live in fear.
 Police Spokesman: The police were doing their best but were faced with problems. As their budget was cut there were fewer officers and the crime rate had increased.
 Dick Rogers: The government should put more money into the police force.
 Mary Roberts: The blame should be on young people who were not afraid of authority and had no respect for other people and their property.
2. The impression is that the police were trying to do their job of arresting the burglars but were faced with some obstacles. One of these was that the police force was understaffed. The other was that the crime rate was increasing.
3. One reason would be to give helpful advice to the public. The Inspector urged the public not to put themselves at risk by fighting back. Another reason would be to assure the public that the police were trying their best. The third reason was to ask the public to cooperate by reporting anything suspicious.
4. (a) taking all possible actions
 (b) an important part that cannot be separated from the whole
 (c) try and handle it yourself
 (d) say exactly who are responsible
5. Summary – include these points:
 • Jack Clements thought police should try harder to catch burglars.
 • Dick Rogers suggested putting more money into the police force and increase the number of police.
 • Mary Roberts blamed the young people for the crimes.
 • The police were trying their best but were hampered in their efforts with fewer officers and a rising crime rate.

Unit 18 Obituary

Recalling Information

Name: Brian Peterson

Survived by: Wife Susan and sons, Michael and Graham
 Achievements (sport): He took part in several major and dangerous climbing expeditions. A major achievement was the Everest expedition in 1976.

Achievements (as writer and speaker): He wrote many articles on climbing for a wide range of publications and was a gifted writer. He gave many talks on climbing. He illustrated these with slides and personal anecdotes and held his audience spellbound.

Other contributions: He was a member of the mountain rescue team to help people who got into difficulties in the mountains.

Understanding Information

1. From this obituary, the impression is that Brian Peterson had spent a great part of his life as an accomplished mountain climber. He had even been on an Everest expedition. His other achievements were related to mountain climbing. For example he wrote articles about mountain climbing and he gave talks about it. What stood out as well was his gift as a speaker, one who was able to keep his audience enthralled.

2. 1. F 2. D 3. E 4. G 5. C
 6. A 7. B

Summary – include these points:

- Brian Peterson, as a young man, was in several major dangerous climbing expeditions. Nearly died in some of them.
- Took part in Everest expedition in 1976.
- Wrote many informative and entertaining articles.
- Gave many talks about climbing, illustrated with slides and anecdotes.
- Active member of local mountain rescue team.

Unit 19 Going on a Diet

Recalling Information

1. Alice wanted to lose weight because she would be a bridesmaid at Polly's wedding. Both Polly and the other bridesmaid were slim.
2. Alice's mother was worried that she would become anorexic.
3. With Granny's visit, Alice was tempted by the delicious foods that Granny cooked, such as homemade pies and huge breakfasts of bacon and sausages or pancakes.
4. Alice's mother was concerned about her husband's cholesterol level when he ate the huge breakfasts cooked by Granny.

Understanding Information

1. It is not advisable to follow a diet like Alice's as it was too severe. When a diet is too strict, it is difficult to keep up with it and the chances are that it will happen to Alice. Moreover, a diet should provide enough nutrition. It does not seem so with Alice's diet. Another thing wrong with her diet was that she had a meagre breakfast though dieticians always advise that we should eat a hearty breakfast to give us energy and to prevent us from overeating later.
2. Alice did not want to face the comments, questions or even teasing from her office colleagues.
3. Column A Column B
 (a) — now that I've heard his side of the story
 (b) — is hounded by fans whenever he goes.
 (c) — if it rains.
 (d) — to make the most of the day.
 (e) — to be changed anytime soon.

Summary (emails should be written in the first person):

Dear Pam,
 Remember when I said I would never diet again? Well that's not true. It's all because I'll be a bridesmaid at Polly's wedding. It's in July in New York. It's nice of course except that both Polly and her other sister Jane, who is the other bridesmaid, are so slim. My mother is worried about my crash diet. What makes it worse is that my Granny is visiting and she's a great cook. So to avoid those huge breakfasts, I get up early, eat my meagre breakfast and go to work. At lunch time, I'm eating salad in the park. Can't wait for this diet to end.
 Love
 Alice.

Unit 20 A Change of Plan

Recalling Information

1. Jeff wanted to tell Stan that he could not visit him the next weekend as planned.
2. Jeff's boss asked him to work overtime for the coming weekend.
3. Jeff was willing as he would like to earn overtime pay. Another reason was that he would like to help out his boss. A third reason was that it would be difficult to refuse to work when the others were willing to.

4. He would have to keep his grandfather company.
 5. He would have more money to spend on a later visit, having earned overtime pay.

Understanding Information

1. Any 5 of these or other acceptable characteristics, supported with evidence from the passage:
 • Jeff was outgoing: He wanted to have some fun in the big city. He missed his college friends.
 • He was hardworking: He agreed to work overtime during the weekend.
 • He was responsible: He could not refuse to work when everyone else in the office was going to.
 • He was caring: He understood his grandfather's situation and was willing to keep him company.
 • He was optimistic: Instead of complaining about having to cancel his holiday plans, he looked at it positively as a way to earn extra income from working over the weekend.
 • He had a sense of humour: His last remark showed this: 'I'll think of you living it up in the bright lights while I'm watching the telly with granddad!'
2. (a) had gone pear-shaped
 (b) on his uppers
 (c) he was not getting any younger
 (d) What with one thing or another
 (e) live it up
 (f) looking on the bright side
3. Summary (emails should be written in the first person):
 Dear Stan,
 I'm sorry I can't visit as promised this weekend. There are two reasons. First, I've agreed to work overtime. I couldn't very well say no when the boss asked and besides everyone else has agreed to. Anyway I could do with the extra income. The other reason is that my grandfather is visiting. He's not been in the best of health lately and hasn't quite recovered from grandmother's death last year. My mother has to babysit. Dad will be away at a conference. So it's left to me to look after Granddad. Do let me know if another weekend will be suitable.
 Cheers,
 Jeff