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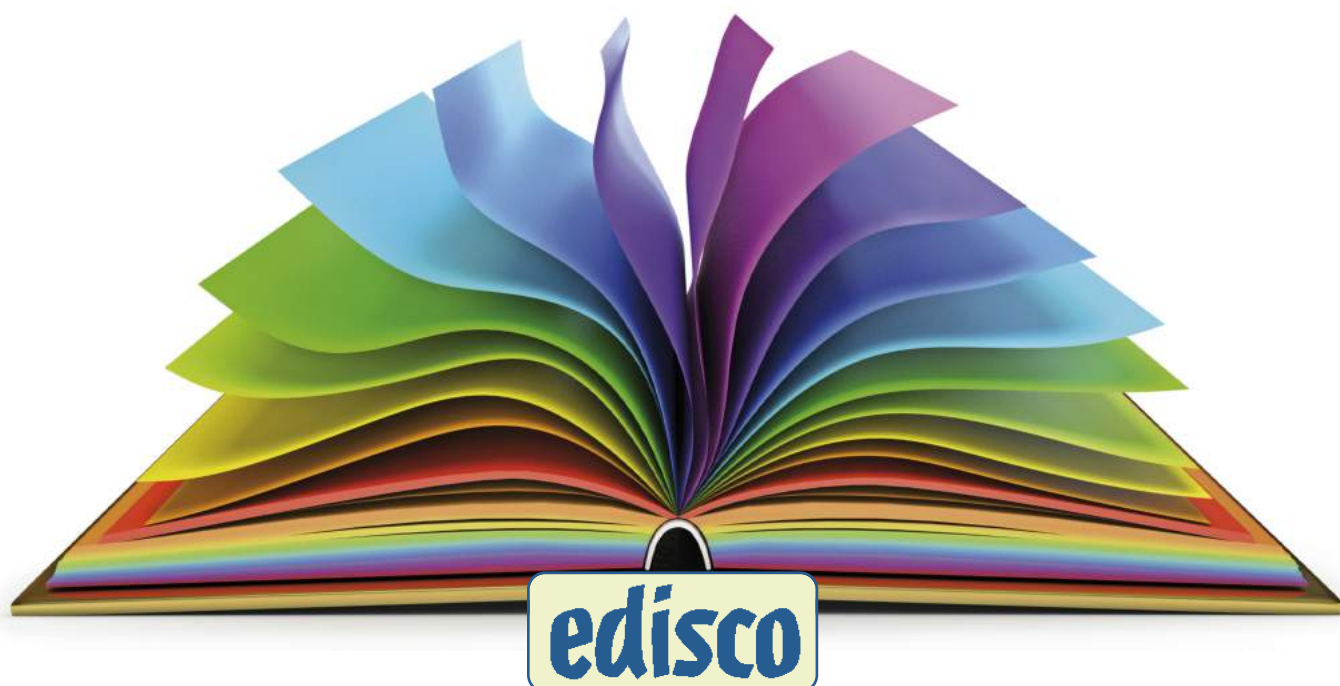
HOW TO MAKE THE MOST
of
GRADED READERS

edisco

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FOREWORD

The aim of this handbook is to highlight how accessible and user-friendly **graded readers** are, demonstrating the varied and creative ways in which they can be used as teaching tools and how they offer learners greater exposure to language with a minimum of stress.
It is not intended in any way to be a linguistic publication or to cover the theoretic process of reading, merely to guide teachers into providing their students with the chance to boost their confidence by improving their proficiency, general knowledge, enjoyment and reading skills.

Beginner A1 (Breakthrough)
RAINBOWS

The Canterville Ghost
Oscar Wilde

post-intermediate C1 (Effectiveness)
RAINBOWS

Elizabeth Regina
Anthony Boyle - Daniela Castellazzo

Elementary A2 (Waystage)
RAINBOWS

The Strange Case of
Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde
Rob

Intermediate B2 (Vantage)
RAINBOWS

Dubliners
selected short stories
James Joyce

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Pre-Intermediate B1 (Threshold)
RAINBOWS

**Romeo
and Juliet**
William Shakespeare

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EDISCO GRADED READERS SERIES

LANGUAGE COMPETENCE A THREE-LEGGED STOOL

"To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture."
(Frantz Fanon)

Fundamentally, **language competence** is the knowledge that enables one to speak and understand a language. In more complex terms, it is the knowledge of the language code, i.e., its **grammar** and **vocabulary**, and also of the conventions of its written representation (script and orthography). The grammar component includes the knowledge of the sounds and their pronunciation (phonetics), the rules that govern sound interactions and patterns (phonology), the formation of words by means of inflection and derivation (morphology), the rules that govern the combination of words and phrases to structure sentences (syntax) and the way that meaning is conveyed through language (semantics).

But this is not all about language competence. If a language learner is asked what they think the goal of a language course is, they would probably answer that it is to teach the grammar and vocabulary of that language. However, if they are asked what *their* goal is as language learners, they would most probably answer that it is to be able *to communicate* in that language.

It has been a long time since the focus of second language teaching was grammar and vocabulary. The focus of ESL teaching has moved to providing the **skills for effective communication**. In linguistics terminology, a language course should not only have "linguistic competence" as its goal, but "communicative competence" in general. "Communicative competence" is a term coined by Dell Hymes in 1966 in reaction to Noam Chomsky's (1965) notion of "linguistic competence". "Communicative competence" is the intuitive functional knowledge and control of the principles of language usage. In conclusion, language competence can be defined as the combination of linguistic competence and communicative competence.

We can say that language competence is a three-legged stool (→ Fig. 1), which couldn't stand if one of its legs were missing. The three legs are: grammar, vocabulary and communication, the latter being in turn made up of four inter-related skills – Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing.

Fluency

Listening + Speaking + Reading + Writing
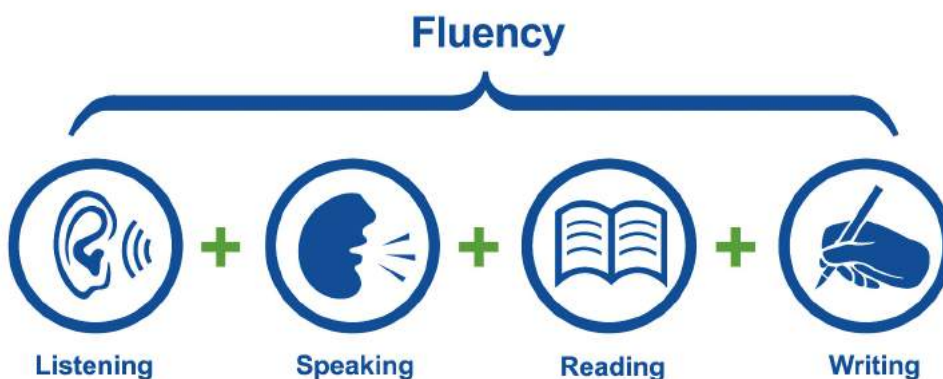
It is common knowledge that the four skills can be divided into **oral** (Listening and Speaking) and **written** skills (Reading and Writing); furthermore, they can be subdivided into **receptive** (Listening and Reading, with which you *receive* information) and **productive** (Speaking and Writing, with which you *produce* information).

But which is the most difficult language skill when studying English? According to many, *Listening* is the most difficult by far; think of the fact that English is not an orthophonic (transparent) language, i.e. the written word does not often correspond to the oral word. Instead, Italian and German, for example, can be considered orthophonic languages, even though there are a few exceptions in these, too. In confirmation of that, some linguists state that when you study English, you have to study not one but *two* languages.

Being productive skills, the difficulties of *Speaking* and *Writing* depend on the target recipient (the person receiving the communicative information); the different levels of formality required make these skills more or less difficult.

Reading is the easiest one. All the words are there and if you don't know the meaning of one, you can guess it from the context or even forget about it (→ *Unfamiliar Words*, p. 16). You can re-read any sentence as many times as you want.

According to some research in this field, the four language skills in English can be ordered from the most difficult to the least difficult as follows: • Listening • Writing • Speaking • Reading.
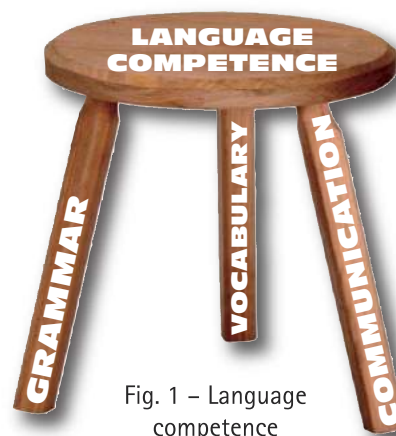
Fig. 1 – Language competence

READING

"I spend a lot of time reading."
(Bill Gates)

Even though it is the least difficult language skill, **Reading** is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (reading comprehension). Reading is a means of language acquisition, communication and of sharing information and ideas. It is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude and language community. The reading process requires continuous practice, development and refinement. In addition, reading requires creativity and critical analysis.

As Françoise Grellet (1981) states: "Understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible." For example, the reading strategies we apply when looking at a notice board to see if there is an advertisement for a particular type of flat are different from those we apply when carefully reading an article of special interest in a scientific journal.

Yet, locating the relevant advertisement on the board and understanding the new information contained in the article demonstrate that the reading purpose in each case has been successfully fulfilled. In the first case, a competent reader will quickly reject the irrelevant information and find what s/he is looking for. In the second case, it is not enough to understand the gist of the text – more detailed comprehension is necessary.

WHAT DO WE READ?

Here are the main **text types** one usually comes across:

- ✓ novels, short stories, tales, *graded readers*, other literary texts (e.g. plays, poems, essays), diaries, biographies
- ✓ comic strips, cartoons
- ✓ text messages, emails, letters, postcards, notes, leaflets
- ✓ documents (websites, online encyclopaedias, forums, etc.) on electronic devices, such as computers, mobile phones, e-readers
- ✓ newspapers and magazines
- ✓ specialised articles, reports, reviews, business letters, summaries, accounts
- ✓ handbooks, textbooks, guidebooks
- ✓ advertisements, travel brochures, catalogues
- ✓ puzzles, problems, instructions (rules for games, warnings, regulations)
- ✓ notices, posters, signs (e.g. road signs), forms (e.g. application forms), graffiti, price lists, tickets, menus, recipes
- ✓ statistics, diagrams, flow/pie charts, timetables, maps and map legends
- ✓ dictionaries, phrasebooks.

WHY DO WE READ?

There are two main reasons for reading:

- ✴ reading for pleasure
- ✴ reading for information (in order to find out something or in order to do something with the information we get).

HOW DO WE READ?

|		
PREDICTING	⟼	anticipating information and events
SKIMMING	⟼	in search of the general gist
SCANNING	⟼	in search of specific information
INTENSIVE READING	⟼	careful and detailed understanding
EXTENSIVE READING	⟼	global understanding of longer texts (usually read for one's pleasure)

Predicting

Predicting is an activity learners carry out before reading or listening to a text, where they anticipate what they are going to read or hear. This gives them a reason to read or listen, as they confirm or reject their predictions. Predicting or prediction is a valuable stage in listening and reading activities. Both content and language can be predicted.

Effective readers use pictures, titles, headings and text – as well as personal experiences – to make predictions before they begin to read. Predicting involves thinking ahead while reading and anticipating information and events in the text. After making predictions, students can read through the text and refine, revise and verify their predictions.

The strategy of making predictions actively engages students and connects them to the text by asking them what they think might occur in the story. It activates students' prior knowledge about the text and helps them make connections between new information and what they already know. By making predictions about the text before, during and after reading, students use what they already know – as well as what they suppose might happen – to make connections to the text.

Speed reading strategies

Skimming and scanning are two very different strategies for *speed reading*. They are each used for different purposes and they are not meant to be used all the time. People who know how to skim and scan are flexible readers. They read according to their purpose and get the information they need quickly without wasting time. They do not read everything, which is what increases their reading speed. Their skill lies in knowing what specific information to read and which method to use. Both strategies can prove to be precious as 'soft skills' in every field of life.
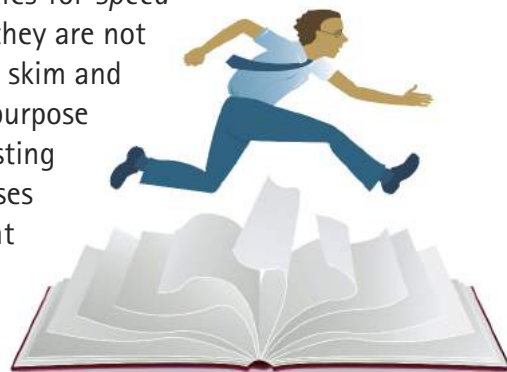
Skimming

Skimming is one of the tools that can be used to read more in less time. It refers to looking *only* for the topic or the main idea of a text and works best with factual (or non-fiction) material. With skimming, the overall understanding is reduced because not everything must be read – only what is important to the purpose is. Skimming takes place while reading and also allows the reader to start looking for details in addition to the topic / main idea. *What is read is more important than what is left out.* So what material is to be read and what material is to be left out?

Let's say you are doing research on a long chapter or a website. By reading the first few paragraphs in detail, you will get a good idea of what information will be discussed. Once you know where the reading is headed, **only the first sentence of each paragraph can be read**. Also called **topic sentences**, they give the **main idea** of the paragraph (see *Topic vs. main idea*, p. 14). If you do not get the main idea in the topic sentence or if the paragraph greatly interests you, then you may want to skim more.

How to skim. Continue to read only topic sentences, dropping down through the rest of the paragraphs, until you are near the end. Since the last few paragraphs may contain a conclusion or summary, you should stop skimming there and read in detail. While skimming, if you feel you are grasping the topic / main idea, then you are skimming correctly.

When to skim. While reading, ask yourself the following questions to help you decide whether or not to skim – if you answer yes to any of these, then skimming is a useful tool:

✴ Is this material non-fiction?

✴ Do I have a lot to read and only a small amount of time?

✴ Do I already know something about this?

✴ Can any of the material be skipped?

If you have sufficient background knowledge or believe you don't need the information, then skip it! That's right – don't read it at all! **Skipping material may sometimes be the best use of your time.** Just because someone wrote something doesn't mean you have to read it... If you pick and choose carefully what to skim and skip, you will be pleasantly surprised at the large amount of information you can get in a short period of time.

Scanning

Scanning is another useful tool for speeding up your reading. Unlike skimming, when scanning**,** you look *only* for a specific fact or piece of information without reading everything. You scan when you look for your favourite show in a list of TV programmes, for a person's phone number in your mobile's Contacts List, or for the sports scores in a newspaper. For scanning to be successful, you need to understand how your material is structured as well as comprehend what you are reading so you can locate the specific information you need. Scanning also allows you to find details and other information in a hurry.

How to scan. Because you already scan many different types of material in your daily life, learning more details about scanning will be easy. Establishing your purpose, locating the appropriate material and knowing how the information is structured before you start scanning is essential. The material you scan is generally arranged in the

following ways: **alphabetically**, **chronologically**, **non-alphabetically**, by **category** or **textually**.

Your peripheral vision can also help you scan effectively. When your hand moves down a list of names, you see not only the name your finger is pointing to, but also the names above and below. Let your eyes work for you when searching for information.

Keep the concept of **key words** or **key graphic signs** in mind while scanning – your purpose will determine them. Suppose you are checking the departure time of a plane leaving from Milan Malpensa to London Gatwick. The key words to keep in mind are "Milan" and "London". If you are looking for the cost of a computer printer with the code number PX-710, the graphic signs to locate in a list of many printers are capital letters ("PX") and numbers ("710").

When to scan. We have said that you scan when your aim is to find specific pieces of information. If you were doing the research for an oral presentation, you could scan the index of books, websites and reference materials. You would discover whether they contain any information you want and the pages where the information can be found.

Skimming and scanning the news

We read in different ways. You don't always need to read every word. Sometimes you leave bits out.

You can **skim** to find out what it is all about.

Headings and pictures can help you do this.

Or you can **scan** to look for important information.

Look for key words or numbers to help you do this.

Cat up a tree? Chimp in a chimney?

Fire crews in the capital had to help 820 animals last year. The fire brigade says if an animal is stuck call the RSPCA first.

Unusual rescues
Unusual rescues include a chimp in a chimney, a parrot trapped in its cage, an iguana stuck on a roof and a hamster trapped in a disabled lift. Fire crews have also captured a snake at a retirement home and rescued a kitten with its head stuck in a bongo drum.

More important work
The commissioner says, "Our crews are highly trained emergency service personnel. When we are out rescuing animals, we can't attend real emergencies."

Wasting tax payers' money
"Animal rescues cost money and in these tough financial times many people question why their taxes are being spent on animal rescues. After all, when was the last time you saw a cat's skeleton up a tree?"

TEACHING TIP

Because students may be used to reading every word and may be uncomfortable leaving some words out, they need to give themselves 'permission' to overlook some words by skimming, scanning and skipping material according to their reading purpose.

Reading approaches

In language learning, intensive reading and extensive reading are two different but complementary reading approaches which may be used concurrently.

Intensive reading

Intensive reading implies slow, careful reading of a small amount of difficult text in detail, with specific learning aims and tasks. It occurs when:

✳ the learner is focused on the language rather than the text;

✳ testing, evaluating and increasing knowledge are the primary focus;

✳ understanding the literal meaning is very important.

In intensive reading, note-taking and attention to details are often included. There is also an emphasis on deconstructing sentences to understand grammar and syntax rules as well as to extract the details of the topic. It can also involve reading comprehension testing, such as finding answers to specific questions.

Possible examples of intensive reading material are reports, contracts, news articles, blog posts and short pieces of text, e.g. short stories. In the classroom, intensive reading activities include skimming a text for specific information to answer true/false statements or filling gaps in a summary, scanning a text to match headings to paragraphs, and scanning jumbled paragraphs and then reading them carefully to order them correctly.

Extensive reading

Extensive reading involves learners reading texts for enjoyment and to develop general reading skills. The idea behind extensive reading is that increased exposure leads to stronger language skills. Seeing the structure, idioms and cadence of a language leads to familiarity, which leads to reading competence. Or, to put it in another way, the idea of extensive reading is to give students the opportunity to practise the skills learnt through intensive study by reading longer texts and developing the ability to read quickly in English. The ultimate goal is to read authentic texts fluently for pleasure, for information or for reference. Even at lower levels of learning, teachers can work towards this goal by using **graded readers**.

To conclude this paragraph, we can say that intensive reading practice in class needs to be complemented by extensive reading in or out of class. And this is where graded readers are invaluable, because they offer the possibility of controlling the level of difficulty as well as the possibility of giving a balance between a challenging and a frustrating reading task.

HOW DO WE COMPREHEND?

TOPIC	➡	what the text is about
MAIN IDEA	➡	what the writer is trying to convey in their entire message
KEY WORDS	➡	words that tell you about the topic or main idea of a text
UNFAMILIAR WORDS	➡	four ways to cope with them
DRAWING INFERENCES	➡	deduced information

Topic vs. main idea of the text

We have said that skimming refers to looking *only* for the topic or the main idea of a text[1]. But what is the difference between them?

The **topic** of a text is the subject that is discussed. It is supposed to be in its simplest form and, in general, is composed of one word, phrase or short sentence. In a text, the topic is usually stated repeatedly and is often present in the title to the extent that at times it corresponds to the title.

The **main idea** of a text, on the other hand, is the focal point or concept that the author wants to communicate to the readers. It is the brief but all-encompassing 'summary' of a text. It covers everything the text talks about in a general way but does not include the specific details. Finding the main idea is critical to understanding what you are reading. In general, it is composed of an entire sentence expressing the main thought of the text.
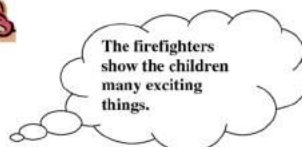

Comprehension Skills:
Topic, Main Idea

Topic
tells you what the selection is mostly about.

Main Idea
gives you the most important information about the topic.

A trip to the firehouse

The firefighters show the children many exciting things.

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1 Another term for main idea is 'topic sentence'.

The topic and the main idea are related. If you are able to determine one, it will be easier to distinguish the other. Example:

Giant panda no longer endangered

In a welcome piece of good news for the world's threatened wildlife, the giant panda has just been downgraded from 'Endangered' to 'Vulnerable' on the global list of species at risk of extinction, demonstrating how an integrated approach can help save our planet's vanishing biodiversity.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) announced the positive change to the giant panda's official status in the Red List of Threatened Species, pointing to the 17% rise in the population in the decade up to 2014, when a nationwide census found 1,864 giant pandas in the wild in China.

"For over 50 years, the giant panda has been the globe's most beloved conservation icon as well as the symbol of WWF. Knowing that the panda is now a step further from extinction is an exciting moment for everyone committed to conserving the world's wildlife and their habitats," said Marco Lambertini, WWF Director General.

"The recovery of the panda shows that when science, political will and engagement of local communities come together, we can save wildlife and also improve biodiversity," added Lam-bertini.

While the panda's status has improved, other species are under increasing threat, including the Eastern gorilla that is now listed as critically endangered, just one step away from extinction, due primarily to poaching.

(WWF, September 04, 2016)

We can say that the *topic* of the text is "The giant panda is no longer endangered" and the *main idea* is "When science, political will and engagements of local communities come together, we can save wildlife."

TEACHING TIP

Surf the Net to find texts suitable for your students. In the language lab, ask them to find the **topic** and the **main idea** of each text. Alternatively, hand out photocopies of one or two of them.

Key words

Key words (also spelt key-words or keywords) are words which are especially important to the meaning of the text. They help the reader understand the global meaning and the main points. They often appear in the title, if there is one. If not, one can try to find them in the body of the text, where the context should be helpful to understand them. They may also appear in bold type.

Key words are often repeated in a text, but they may be replaced by other words with the same or a similar meaning.

Skimming a text and finding key words can help you discover clues about what you will read. The great thing about these strategies is that you can do both of them at the same time.

Unfamiliar words

Most of the time, an **unfamiliar word** can be deciphered by the surrounding text and if not, that's fine, too. In receptive skills (Listening and Reading), it is not necessary to understand every single word to grasp the meaning of a sentence/paragraph.

It is generally accepted that 90-95% of the words should be familiar in order to read comfortably in a foreign language. However, most of us can get along pretty well even without having all that vocabulary in our toolboxes. Guessing, especially when reading extensively, does work.

The four steps to follow when the reader comes across an unfamiliar word are the following:

1. skipping   **2.** contextualising   **3.** analysing   **4.** consulting

1. Skipping. As we said before, it is not vital to understand each word in order to comprehend a sentence/paragraph – we can skip it and carry on. However, if the unknown word appears too many times and keeps the reader from understanding what is going on, he/she can try with Step 2.

2. Contextualising. The reader can try to contextualise the word, that is, examine the words that come just before and after it and which can help him/her to understand its meaning.

Example:

- *How was your XXXXXX?*
- *Oh, terrible! I'll never forget that XXXXXX. All XXXXXXs to Moscow were delayed because of bad weather. So, I had to wait twelve hours at the airport!*
- *Better than my XXXXXX – it was cancelled and I had to catch a train to Berlin – it took me 15 hours in all!*

In this example, the typical language of aviation provides the learner with a context from which to **infer** the meaning of the unfamiliar word (here *flight*).

3. **Analysing.** It is quite common to find words which can be understood by means of an accurate examination of the elements which make it up. Prefixes and suffixes are very important in this case. For example, let's consider the following long adjective, which at lower levels might look obscure:

unforeseeable

It is made up of two prefixes: *un-* (meaning *not*) and *fore-* (meaning *before*) + a verb (*see*) + a suffix (*-able* meaning *that can be...*).
The Italian equivalent is:

non-prima-ved-ibile → *imprevedibile*

4. **Consulting.** The reader should consult a dictionary/phrasebook/glossary or the teacher him/herself *as a last resort*. However, a dictionary is of great help especially to students who are learning a language because it also enriches vocabulary, provides the correct spelling, gives the right pronunciation and information about which part of speech a word belongs to.

TEACHING TIP

Write the 4 steps in alphabetical order on the board:

- ☐ analysis
- ☐ context
- ☐ consulting
- ☐ skipping

Then ask the students which item they would choose as the first step to follow when they come across an unfamiliar word. Write 1 next to the one with most 'votes'; 2, 3 and 4 for the others. In our experience, surprisingly, the one with least 'votes' is generally... *skipping*.

Drawing inferences

Inferring when you read is an important strategy. It occurs when you find out information, not expressed explicitly, in an indirect way from what you already know. You use inferring skills every time you read, usually without knowing it. For example, if we say:

"*It's raining a lot and Tom went to school without an umbrella,*"
the student is likely to think that Tom arrived at school *soaked to the skin*.

S/He used:

✳ *context clues*, which are little bits of information surrounding the main idea;

✳ his/her *prior knowledge*: you can only infer about things you are familiar with.

TEACHING TIP

According to several linguists, *skimming* is the most important reading technique. As we have already seen, it is a strategic, selective reading method in which the reader focuses on the main ideas of a text to have a general understanding of it by going through it without halting on unknown words or phrases.

If you want to know something more about this procedure, read... the fairy tale on p. 62.

GRADED READERS

"The original recreates the incidents, the simplified version simply reports them."
(Davies and Widdowson, 1974)

A **graded reader**, or **simplified book**, is a book which is made less complicated and therefore easier to understand. It is not to be confused with an *abridged book*, which is generally a classic book made shorter by removing unimportant details and information[1]; it goes without saying that an *unabridged book* is a complete one in its original form, without being made shorter.

Graded readers (hence GR/GRs) offer learners of English the opportunity to immerse themselves into the language and culture independently, to discover the pleasure of doing this and the sense of achievement it can give them. Just as reading a variety of interesting and stimulating texts in their own language is extremely beneficial to the growth and development of students, so is reading in the language they are learning.

Simplified books give them the chance to read where and when they want for their own enjoyment and to learn to read, speak, write and even listen more fluently. This, in turn, motivates them to study English and also to adopt a positive attitude to reading as a stress-free part of the learning process.

The largest quantity of GRs is produced for the intermediate levels (B1-B2) although, if **reading for pleasure** is the main purpose of graded readers, it would seem logical to find a greater number of texts at the lower levels, to inculcate good reading habits from the start.

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1 E.g. *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville has a few abridged versions, all of which cut out the long digressions about Cetalogy (whale classification).

WHAT EXACTLY ARE GRADED READERS?

GRs are basically well-known books or original stories which have been suitably adapted for the various levels of students of English, thus providing them with easy and constructive reading material, well within their level of language competence. Their aim is to avoid the problem of reading in a foreign language being too difficult or challenging, so that students are able to discover the value of reading for pleasure, not as a task, even in another language.

In general, GRs are well-thought-out, attractive books with colourful, relevant illustrations and fun, creative, Before and After Reading activities to aid and consolidate the comprehension of the text.

New vocabulary is generally limited to very few words per page depending on the level, the golden rule being that the student will still be able to follow the story without knowing the exact meaning of every word (see *Unfamiliar words*, p. 16). These new words are added as footnotes and can be found in the Multilingual Glossary at the end of each Edisco GR (see *Multilingual Glossary*, p. 32). The grammar structures used are also suitably limited in their complexity for each level of English (see *List of grammar structures per level*, p. 28).

Overall, the style of writing is clear, the content being concise and well-explained. Teacher guidance will help a student to find the right level and a subject which interests him or her. The basic guidelines for finding appropriate levels are the three following questions to which the answers should all be in the affirmative:

✷ Can the student read it without a dictionary?

✷ Can he/she read it relatively quickly?

✷ Does he/she understand almost everything?

WHAT IS TO BE GAINED FROM GRADED READERS?

The most obvious benefit of using GRs is that students are exposed to good-quality, natural language, which allows them to improve faster in all areas of English learning. GRs give them the opportunity to make another language their own by becoming involved in another world and culture, seeing events taking place in the narrative and even sharing the emotions of characters in the stories. They experience the language being used in different, more authentic ways, rather than in texts prepared solely for learning with a language book or course. This personal involvement gives students a degree of independency which leads to a sense of achievement and satisfaction. The creative and imaginative stimulus offered encourages discussion and critical thinking, so that they feel more responsible and motivated in their approach to learning through reading.

On a more practical language level, using GRs undoubtedly develops vocabulary and improves spelling, while students are also able to focus on grammar and sentence construction, thus gaining confidence and lexical knowledge, in other words – language competence. In this way, the discouragement and loss of self-confidence which can come from reading books or texts which are too difficult and challenging is avoided and is replaced with the advantages of discovering reading and learning in another language for pleasure.

THE BEST WAY TO USE GRADED READERS

It has been some time since GRs were a set of books which collected dust on a shelf in the classroom. A change of approach in both authors and teachers has led to an ever-growing list of innovative uses of GRs as teaching tools, both in the classroom and out.

Guiding your students to have the right approach is very important. Make sure that they do not expect to understand every single word, but they should focus on what is clear to them, allowing themselves to become engaged in the story and to keep reading, even when it may appear to be momentarily more demanding.

For this reason, GRs are organised into achievable parts: chapters/scenes/acts of nearly equal lengths, which can be easily and advantageously read from start to finish – a habit students should be encouraged to have so that they feel they are making progress. At the end of each part, this can be summarised, looked back at and its activities carried out so that they get the picture clearly before moving on to the next part.

Perhaps the most classic use of GRs is for students to select a book of their choice and read it in their own time out of class. Teachers can encourage this by starting a class library, or a book reading chart and by holding regular discussions and summary time in class of the various books; the books could be exchanged among students every week/month. It could also be very rewarding to hold reading 'circles', where groups of five or six students give their opinions and ideas on the book they have read; in their speaking, this also gives them an opportunity to use the grammar structures they have learnt while reading. This offers teachers a good opportunity to test the students' speaking abilities. Using the reader as a basis for the discussion can develop into an interesting social and cultural exercise.

Within the classroom, GRs would obviously be used on a group rather than on an individual basis. Depending on the needs and personalities of the students involved, the reading could be either silent, in groups or even out loud, the difference being that all the students would have the same book. This can create a positive sense of solidarity and a common point for discussion on the characters and events narrated.

A great variety of activities can be initiated from this, and GRs already provide the basis for them within the book, giving teachers a solid platform from which to develop their students' language and creative skills (see *Practical examples for using GRs*, p. 45).

The advantages are many and show that GRs maintain an important role in both language learning and teaching, as well as advocating the joys and benefits of reading for personal development and broadening of the mind.

SENTENCE LENGTH AT VARIOUS LEVELS

GRs follow established schemes on sentence length and complexity, according to the level of language at which they are aimed. These are part of the surface features of the difficulty of a text.

Obviously, lower levels require simpler sentences, not merely in length, but also in the narrative cohesion of the story. Sometimes, it is not enough to write several sentences of a few words as this does not necessarily lead to easier understanding. To connect ideas and link the narrative for easy comprehension, clauses and their conjunctions are required. GRs for beginner-elementary (A1-A2) students need **coordinate clauses** to create a natural, coherent flow in the text and to allow the student to move forward in the language.

Coordinate clauses serve this purpose because they join two sentences with related, **equal** ideas. To link the ideas and make understanding clearer, they use commas and the most common conjunctions, such as: *and* (expressing Addition), *but* (Contrast), *or* (Clarification, Contrast), *so* (Consequence).

For example, *The Wizard of Oz*, Chapter 2, p. 19 (Edisco Publishing House):

"You haven't got a brain!" says Dorothy, "How can you talk then?"

*"I don't know... **but** the world is full of people without a brain **and** they can talk!" answers the Scarecrow.*

This is far more natural and easier to follow and understand as part of the narrative than saying,

"I don't know. The world is full of people without a brain. They can talk.", which can be found in some publications in an attempt to facilitate comprehension and which not only sounds unnatural but at the same time isn't less difficult.

As the levels progress (B1-B2), sentences become more involved and need to deliver more complex information to the student reading the story or play. This is where **subordinate clauses** come in.

A subordinate clause joins two or more related ideas of **unequal** importance and uses such conjunctions as: *if, unless, because, al/though, since, before, after, as soon as, once, when, while* (Time).

For example, *The Swan on the Avon,* Chapter 1, p. 13 (Edisco P. H.):

*"John Shakespeare was a glove-maker, who transformed calf² skins into fine, soft gloves. It was a messy³ but respectable trade, **although** it wasn't what he really wanted to do."*

---

2 *calf:* baby cow
3 *messy:* dirty and untidy

MOST COMMON WORDS SORTED OUT BY LEVEL

Word lists help GRs to keep within certain lexical limits so that students are able to read without the stress of too many unknown words.

'The New General Service List' (NGSL → p. 26) is a list of approximately 2,800 core vocabulary words published by Charles Browne, Brent Culligan and Joseph Phillips in March 2013. The words in the NGSL represent the most important high-frequency words of the English language for second language learners of English and is a major update of Michael West's 1953 GSL. Although there are more than 600,000 word families in the English language, the 2,800 words in the NGSL give more than 90% coverage for learners when trying to read most general texts of English.

'English Profile' is a programme founded in 2006 with the collaboration of Cambridge University Press. Its first important development was 'English Profile Wordlists', now known as 'English Vocabulary Profile', which is an extremely helpful reference guide for all learners of English and covers each level of **CEFR** (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). A great deal of research has gone into creating these lists and they are kept up to date with current approaches to vocabulary. Words are classified according to their meaning, so that different senses of a word are learnt at different levels, depending on the context which is familiar within each one.

For example, the word **'*plant'*** is listed as:

– **A1 level**

plant (noun): *a living thing that grows in soil or water and has roots and leaves.*
(➤ *All plants need light and water.*)

– **B1 level**

plant (verb): *to put a plant into the ground or into a container of earth so it will grow.*
(➤ *We planted trees and bushes in our new garden.*)

– **B2 level**

plant (verb): *to put something in a position secretly, especially in order to deceive someone.*
(➤ *The bomb was planted in the station waiting room.*)

Another example is with the verb **'*help'*,** which is listed as:

– **A1 level**

help: *to make it easier or possible for sb to do something by doing sth for them or by giving them sth that they need*
(➤ *How can I help you?*)

- **B1 level**

  help: *to give something to someone/oneself*

  (➤ *Shall I help you to some more soup?; May I have some more bread? – Please help yourself.*)

- **B2 level**

  help: *used to say that it is impossible to prevent or avoid sth*

  (➤ *Stop laughing! – Sorry, I can't help it.*)

Lower levels are 'basic user' (A1–A2) words, that is, high-frequency words on familiar topics. Higher levels are 'independent user' words on less familiar topics as well as additional meanings for words already known (for example, Phrasal Verbs and Collocations at B2 level).

Each level has an approximate number of headwords[4]:

A1 (Breakthrough)	**400**	
A2 (Waystage)	**700**	
B1 (Threshold)	**1,000**	
B2 (Vantage)	**1,500**	
C1 (Effectiveness)	**2,000**	and beyond

It should be underlined that the lists do not give vocabulary that a student *should* know, but what they *do* know from their experience in the language.

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4 A headword is similar to a dictionary entry where a group of words share the same basic meaning. E.g.: *help → helps, helping, helpful, helpless.*

THE NEW GENERAL SERVICE LIST

It is a list of the 2,800 most frequent words in the English language. Below you can find the first 100.

1.	the	26.	will	51.	what	76.	then
2.	be	27.	or	52.	make	77.	now
3.	of	28.	his	53.	time	78.	also
4.	and	29.	say	54.	who	79.	than
5.	to	30.	go	55.	see	80.	him
6.	a	31.	she	56.	up	81.	into
7.	in	32.	so	57.	people	82.	only
8.	have	33.	all	58.	some	83.	want
9.	it	34.	about	59.	out	84.	look
10.	you	35.	if	60.	me	85.	these
11.	for	36.	one	61.	good	86.	its
12.	not	37.	my	62.	other	87.	new
13.	that	38.	know	63.	year	88.	give
14.	on	39.	there	64.	well	89.	first
15.	with	40.	which	65.	our	90.	way
16.	do	41.	can	66.	very	91.	thing
17.	as	42.	get	67.	just	92.	any
18.	he	43.	her	68.	them	93.	over
19.	we	44.	would	69.	no	94.	right
20.	this	45.	think	70.	take	95.	after
21.	at	46.	like	71.	because	96.	find
22.	they	47.	more	72.	come	97.	day
23.	but	48.	their	73.	could	98.	where
24.	from	49.	your	74.	use	99.	most
25.	by	50.	when	75.	work	100.	should

You can find the complete list on the Edisco website: www.edisco.it.

EDISCO GRADED READERS

"If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again,
there is no use in reading it at all."
(Oscar Wilde)

Edisco GRs help students develop competence and confidence. Their purpose of using GRs is mainly linguistic – extending vocabulary and extending reading fluency. The successful use of GRs is affected by four variables:

1. Students' motivation;
2. Background knowledge, which in turn can be divided into:
   a. general knowledge
   b. specific knowledge
   c. cultural knowledge;
3. Language level;
4. Graphic, layout and format presentation of the book.

The first two points are the teacher's concern, while the last two are the Publishing House's concern. However, motivation to read and interest in the subject-matter of a book are the strongest factors in successful reading.

DIDACTIC FRAMEWORK

A **didactic framework** is how a book is structured according to teaching objectives and contents; it is a supporting structure around which a lesson can be built, a system of ideas, expressions, rules, even feelings, which are used to plan a cognitive and emotional process. Edisco GRs include the following parts:

Levels

Five levels of the CEFR are covered:

A1	➡	min. 64 – max. 80 pages	*(beginner)*
A2	➡	min. 80 – max. 96 pages	*(elementary)*
B1	➡	min. 96 – max. 112 pages	*(pre-intermediate)*
B2	➡	min. 112 – max. 128 pages	*(intermediate)*
C1	➡	min. 128 – max. 144 pages	*(post-intermediate)*

Several activities are marked with a symbol representing the relevant level:

2A. PET **Decide whether the following statements are true or false.**

In addition, each of the three levels in the middle provide a bridge for the following level and are marked with a '**+**' sign. In other words, **A2+**, **B1+** and **B2+** represent the so-called *strong levels*, i.e. the strengthened levels which tend to move to the competence of the following one.

Headwords See *Most common words sorted out by level*, p. 24.

Grammar structures The following is the list of the grammar structures used in Edisco GRs divided per level.

A1 (Breakthrough) • *BEGINNER* • *Nouns, short compound nouns, common adjectives, be, have, can, must, countable/ uncountable nouns, articles, going to, will future, imperative, basic prepositions of time and place, adverbs, numbers, some/any/no, personal pronouns, possessive adjectives/pronouns, 's, demonstrative adjectives/pronouns, present progressive, present simple, past simple of be, simple wh-questions.*

A2 (Waystage) • *ELEMENTARY* • *Structures of preceding level + longer compound nouns, past simple, past progressive, present perfect simple, could, future with present progressive and present simple, some/any/no/every+compounds, comparatives, superlatives, quantifiers (a lot, much/many, a little a few), conditional sentences (type 1), have to, less common prepositions of time and place, may, simple forms of passive, that/who/which (relative pronouns), would you like/shall we?*

B1 (Threshold) • *PRE-INTERMEDIATE* • *Structures of preceding levels + defining/non-defining relative clauses, don't have to/needn't, each other/one another, had to, might, could, should, ought to, question tags, ought to, common phrasal verbs, past perfect, more complex forms of passive, present perfect simple and progressive, for/since, simple reported speech (questions/imperatives/ future in the past), conditional sentences (type 2), reflexive pronouns, will (offers), used to, want+object+to, be able/likely to, so/neither.*

B2 (Vantage) • *INTERMEDIATE* • *Structures of preceding levels + had better, have+ object+past participle, less common phrasal verbs, indirect questions, have/make/let/get+ object+infinitive, past perfect simple and progressive, conditional sentences (type 3), be used to, verbs of perception, wish, would rather, would (past habits), verbs with gerund and infinitive.*

C1 (Effectiveness) • *POST-INTERMEDIATE* • *Structures of preceding levels + idioms, other uncommon phrasal verbs, future progressive, future perfect, past conditional, formal inversion (emphasis).*

Graded readers' sections

The following is the configuration of Edisco GRs, whose components recur in all of them.

Before reading section

It consists of short activities aimed at previewing the facts of the text, anticipating new or difficult words. In the chapters following the first one, reference with preceding chapter(s) is often given (e.g. *The story so far*). There are max. 3 short activities.

Main reading text

It is divided into 5-8 parts (Chapters / Scenes / Acts / Stories / Tales) according to the type of GR.

After reading section

It is located at the end of each part and contains comprehension and practice activities. They take the cue from the text and practise some structures, functions and communicative situations, and consolidate the lexicon. This section takes the following areas into consideration:

✶ WORKING ON THE TEXT **textual area** (comprehension check): aimed at giving food for thought upon the story (characters, plot, setting, cultural aspects, etc.) with 2-3 activities;

✶ WORKING ON VOCABULARY **lexical area**: activation and consolidation of vocabulary with 1-2 activities;

✶ WORKING ON GRAMMAR **structural area**: revision of grammar aspects with 1 activity;

✶ WORKING ON SKILLS (LISTENING / SPEAKING / WRITING) **communication area**: 1 activity for each of the three skills mentioned above.

E X T E N S I O N

THE GOLDEN AGE OF EXPLORATION

Elizabeth's reign was a time of significant exploration and discovery. In the end, this activity led to the foundation of the British Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

English merchants were the main promoters of the voyages that brought new wealth to the country. Among the goods from distant lands that they wanted were the spices that preserved and flavoured[1] meat. In 1581, London merchants formed the Turkey Company to manage trade with distant lands. In 1592, it merged[2] with the Venice Company (founded in 1583) to form the Levant Company. It obtained a patent[3] from Elizabeth I for the exclusive right to trade in currants (dried white grapes, i.e. golden raisins). The Company also purchased...

The baptism of Virginia Dare, the first English child born in America.
(hand-colored woodcut of a 19th century illustration.)

Merchants had brought African slaves to England in Elizabeth's time but, in 1562, Admiral Sir John Hawkins identified a new way to profit from this "commodity"[4]. The Spanish colonies in the Americas needed labourers to replace the indigenous Amerindians, who were killed off by European diseases. Despite the conflict between the two nations, Hawkins was able to establish what historians call the 'triangular trade'. He sold African men and women to the Spanish colonisers in the Americas, in exchange for gold and gemstones, which he sold in England.

The Elizabethan era saw the emergence of brave and skilful sailors. Between 1497 and 1578, in the course of many voyages, they charted[5] the Northwest and the Northeast Passages and landed in Greenland and Canada. Sir Francis Drake, the second man to sail around the world, was knighted[6] by Elizabeth. She financed his voyages and shared in his plunder[7] of Spanish treasure ships.

Another important activity of the period was the establishment of colonies in the New World. Sir Walter Raleigh named part of North America 'Virginia', in honour of Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen. The first group of colonists landed in July 1585. On 18 August 1587, Eleanor Dare gave birth to a daughter – she was called Virginia after the territory where she was born; she was the first English child born on American soil. When a ship returned to check on their progress in 1591, all were gone. Perhaps they died at the hands of Native Americans or had been assimilated into friendly tribes – we do not know.

4. commodity: an article of trade or commerce.
5. charted: made a map of an area.
6. knighted: given the title of knight.
7. plunder: anything taken by robbery, theft or fraud, especially during a war.

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Extension

Closer examination of a theme/character/event/etc. A theme (cultural, historical, geographical, entertainment, etc.) treated in the chapter is dealt with in depth and developed. It is a free area related to the main theme to be considered as *extensive reading*.

SUMMING-UP ACTIVITIES

WORKING ON THE TEXT

1 In scrambled order, here are some of the most significant events in Elizabeth I's life. Reorder them.

☐ The Virginia Colony was founded in the New World.
☐ In 1536, after her mother's beheading she was declared illegitimate.
☐ She ordered the death of Mary Queen of Scots.
☐ After her sister's death she became queen. She was 25 years old.
☐ In her fifties... thirty years...
☐ She sent Ess...
☐ She died on...
☐ An age of d...
☐ She delivere...
☐ She was inv...
☐ England def...
☐ She was bo...
☐ She gave a...
☐ After her br...
☐ Accused of... London.

2 Join with an a... in Elizabeth's...

a. Henry VIII
b. Catherine...
c. Robin
d. William Ce...
e. Philip II of S...
f. Francis D'A...
g. Sir Francis D...
h. Francis Wal...
i. Hugh O'Ne...
j. James Stuar...

3 Women played different roles in Elizabeth's life. Decide who was her enemy or rival (E/R), who had a good relationship (GR) with her or another (O) type of relationship. Justify your choice with quotations from the chapters.

WOMAN	ROLE	QUOTATION
a. Her mother Anne Boleyn		
b. Her sister Mary		
c. Her stepmother Catherine Parr		
d. Lady Jane Grey		
e. Mary Stuart		
f. Grace O'Malley		
g. The ladies at court		
h. Intellectuals and artists		
i. Lower classes women		

WORKING ON VOCABULARY

4 Fill in the blanks choosing from the *past participles* in the box.

accused • established • held • imprisoned • involved • proclaimed • released

Elizabeth's half-sister, Mary, disliked her intensely and accused her of treason. On March 18, 1554, Elizabeth was (1)................ in the Tower of London, (2)................ of being (3)................ in the rebellion. On Saturday 19 May 1554, Elizabeth was (4)................ from the Tower of London, but continued to be (5)................ under house arrest at Woodstock for some time. Queen Mary I died on November 17, 1558 and Elizabeth was (6)................ Queen of England. Protestantism was (7)................ as the country's religion.

WORKING ON GRAMMAR

5 Turn the following sentences into the *Passive Form*.

a. A booty is when soldiers steal valuable things in a time of war.
b. James, Mary's son, pointed out that God chooses kings and queens, not men.
c. William Cecil gave Elizabeth the ring taken from the finger of her sister Mary.

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Summing-up activities

Final activities which go over the whole book again, presenting the same areas of the After Reading Section with the aim of an ultimate synopsis of all the parts.

Multilingual glossary

In four languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian). It includes all the footnotes.

Glossary

A				
accomplishment	réalisation, réussite	Leistung	logro, éxito	risultato, realizzazione
achieve	atteindre, obtenir	erreichen	lograr	ottenere
appoint	nommer	ernennen	nombrar, designar	nominare
ash	cendre	Asche	ceniza	cenere
assemble	se rassembler, se recueillir	versammeln	reunirse	riunirsi, radunarsi
assert	déclarer, affirmer	behaupten	declarar	dichiarare
B				
bald	chauve	glatzköpfig	calvo	calvo
ban (v.)	interdire	untersagen	excluir, prohibir	bandire
barge	péniche	Lastschiff	barcaza	chiatta
bear (v.)	supporter	vertragen	aguantar, sostener	sopportare
behead	décapiter	enthaupten	decapitar	decapitare
bishop	évêque	Bischof	obispo	vescovo
blame (v.)	accuser	die Schuld geben	culpar	accusare
blare	retentir, résonner	schmettern	sonar	squillare
block	bûche	Richtblock	tajo	ceppo
bloodthirsty	assoiffé de sang, sanguinaire	blutrünstig	sanguinaria, despiadada	assetata di sangue, sanguinaria
bond (n.)	lien	Bindung	vínculo	legame
bonfire	bûcher, feu de bois	Freudenfeuer	fogata	falò
bonny (scot.)	joli et en plein forme	Strahlend gesund	bonito, lozano	bello e in salute
booty	butin	Beutegut	despojo	bottino
bosom	sein, poitrine	Busen	pecho	petto, seno
boundary	frontière, limite	Grenze	confín	frontiera, confine
bow (v.)	s'incliner, faire une révérence	bogen	hacer una reverencia	inchinarsi
bring about	provoquer	bewirken	determinar, provocar	causare
burden	fardeau, charge	Belastung	carga, problema	peso, problema
C				
cattle	bétail	Milchkühe	ganado	bestiame
charisme	Charisma	carisma	carisma, fascino personale
	tracer, dresser une carte	aufzeichnen	trazar	tracciare (una mappa)
	charte, statuts, acte constitutif	Vollmacht	acta constitutiva	atto costitutivo
	insolent, effronté	frech	descarado, insolente	insolente, sfacciato
	acclamant	jubelnd	entusiasta	esultante
	revendication	Anspruch	reivindicación	rivendicazione, richiesta
	culminer	kulminieren	culminar	culminare
	produit, marchandise	Ware	mercancía	merce
	préoccupation	Sorge	interés, asunto	preoccupazione
	inquiet de	besorgt (über)	preocupado (por)	preoccupato (di)
	accord, concorde	Eintracht	acuerdo, concordancia, armonía	accordo, concordia, armonia
	répugnance, mépris	Verachtung	desdén	disprezzo
	courtisan	Höfling	cortesano	cortigiano
	équipage	Besatzung	chusma	ciurma
	récolte	Ernte	cosecha	raccolto
	métisser	kreuzen	mezclar	mescolare
	écraser, anéantir	niederschlagen	aniquilar	annientare
	futé, astucieux	schlau	ingenioso, astuto	astuto

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The Virgin Queen

Chapter 3

The Coronation: January 15, 1559

Like most of the English of her time, Elizabeth believed that her destiny was written in the stars. So, she set the date of coronation after consulting an astrologer.

On her arrival in London, she was greeted by large crowds. Unlike[1] her sister, Elizabeth had charisma. She was younger, more attractive, and seemed very friendly. She moved easily among the people. In the days before she took the crown, she assured them that she would protect the nation. They, like her, knew that England had enemies. Conflict over religious belief at home and the hostility of foreign rulers put England's security at risk.

The nobles and religious figures who attended the ceremony were divided in their beliefs and only a few knew Elizabeth's religious views. Was she Catholic or Protestant? If Protestant, what kind? It was difficult to find a bishop[2] to place the crown on her head since the bishops were appointed by Mary and had Catholic beliefs. Elizabeth made clear her religious view when she left the altar to change her dress. It was at the time of the raising of the communion host[3]. Elizabeth was declaring her Protestant leanings[4].

Another notable event during the ceremony was the reading of the coronation pardon[5]. In it, Elizabeth made clear that she had not forgotten those who had put her life at risk during her sister's rule. None were forgiven. She would harm them.

When she exited Westminster Abbey, she was wearing a dress of regal purple. It was sewn[6] with many coloured threads[7] and was decorated with precious jewels.

Under the weight of a heavy crown, she held her head high.

1. unlike: different from.
2. bishop: a senior priest in charge of the work of the Church in a particular area.
3. host: bread eaten at Holy Communion.
4. leaning: tendency.
5. pardon: forgiveness of a serious offence.
6. to sew (sewed-sewn): to join two pieces of cloth together by putting thread through them with a needle.
7. thread:

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Footnotes

They are defined in English in the simplest way; at lower levels, illustrations sometimes represent the word. Not more than 120 notes for A1-level, 160 for A2, 200 for B1 and 240 for B2 are used.

With classics, a **presentation of the author** at the beginning of the book is provided.
The **GR** is richly complemented by **illustrations**.

William Shakespeare

"All the w...
And all the men and women ...
They have their exits and ...
And one man in his time plays ...

(As You Like It, Ac...)

Who was William Shakespeare? Was that really ...
Did he live in Stratford-Upon-Avon? Did he write a...
himself? Was he English? Was he Italian? Did he ...

It is not easy to answer these questions, becau...
Shakespeare is an enigma. His story could even be ...
of the biggest "cover-up jobs!" in history!

We know he was baptized on April 26th, 1564, ...
baptism was registered, and his birthday is traditi...
to be on 23rd April.

His father was John Shakespeare, a glove-maker, ...

The birthplace of William Shakespeare.

age of seven, as long as they could read and write. He left ...
school early, and never went to university.

In 1582, in Worcester, a town not far from Stratford, William
Shakespeare asked for a marriage licence. His future wife was
Anne Hathaway, a farmer's daughter from the nearby village
of Shottery. He was eighteen at the time, and she was twenty-
six. She was certainly already expecting a baby, because in May
1583, they had a daughter, Susanna, who was baptized in Holy
Trinity Church. She was followed by the twins, Hamnet and
Judith, who were born and baptized in February 1585. Their
marriage lasted until Shakespeare's death, and we know that
he sent money back to Stratford regularly.

At some point during the late 1580's, Shakespeare went to
London. In 1592, Robert Greene, another playwright[5] and poet, ...

Photo Gallery

James Joyce

1. James Joyce, his mother, father and grandfather (September 1888).
2. Nassau Street, where James Joyce met Nora Barnacle for the first time.
3. Joyce's statue in Trieste.
4. Joyce's statue in Dublin.
5. Joyce's statue in Szombathely.
6. Nora Barnacle, Joyce's wife.
7. Joyce in 1904.

E X T E ...

JOYCE A...

Joyce and Nora Barnacle ...
Continent in 1904. After going ...
settled in Trieste (in Italy today, ...
War I), where Joyce taught Eng...
in via San Nicolò 32. In autumn ...
there, securing him a teachin...
himself as a talented teacher ...
frequently in debt. Stanislaus or ...
patience at Joyce's disposal, he ...
two children. Stanislaus lived ...
1955, Bloomsday[1].

If Dublin was the city where ...
is where it developed and matu...
Trieste was Joyce's periplum, th...
a decade, met many different p...
and fathered two children. It w...
were written – Chamber Music...
Young Man, Exiles and Giacomo ...

1. Bloomsday: Ulysses deals with th...
   events of one day in Dublin: 16t...
   June 1904. For this reason, ...

James Joyce's statue in Trieste.

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...ncounter

...E READING

...e story is about two boys and their experience during a short
... Guess who they meet.

...They meet some girls they fall in love with
...They meet a strange old man
...They meet other boys they play with
...They meet an old relative

... narrator and his friend are 'playing truant' on that day. What
... this expression mean?

...They are competing in a sport game
...They are playing an instrument called truant
...They are staying away from school without permission

...ch the following words from the text with the appropriate picture.

...catapult; b. whip; c. crane; d. walking stick; e. slope; f. ship mast

1

Story

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Activities

There is a vast range of exercises which can be used with GRs, the most common of which are:
- comprehension questions,
- filling in the blanks,
- labelling,
- précis/summary, reduction of a text[1],
- summary to be completed with words suggested in a box or by pictures,
- letter grid,
- pictures giving the cue to narrate the story,
- true/false exercise with correction of false sentences,
- order of sentences according to the story,
- matching of words with definitions,
- Who said that? Who did that?
- multiple choice exercise for a word/phrase and its definition,
- matching of words having a collocation relation,
- filling in the blanks with words having a collocation relation,
- matching of words having a synonymy or opposition relation,
- cultural quiz,
- descriptions,
- pictures to be ordered first and described then,
- events to be ordered according to the story or plot,
- spotting of the main themes,
- creative writing (events seen from another point of view),
- speaking and listening activities,
- pronunciation exercises, etc.

It must be remembered that the main goal is **reading the text** not practice, this means that activities must not be excessive.

Ancillary material

An **audio CD** is provided which contains the whole text, the listening activities, stereo sound effects and background music.

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1 The reduction of a text consists in the elimination of all those words, phrases or sentences that do not supply essential information, with the aim of reaching a smaller number of words which convey the same meaning as the starting text.

HOW GRADED READERS ARE SIMPLIFIED

Let's look at how GRs are graded or simplified or made 'easy'. What types of **control** operate on the language of GRs? There are three types of control which together constitute a good GR: lexical control, structural control and information control.

Lexical control

Edisco readers range from a vocabulary of 400 words at A1 level to about 2000 at C1 level. Each level has a core vocabulary, that is to say, basic words, which are considered to be familiar to the student. Those words which are beyond the level but are necessary for a better and more natural comprehension of the text are annotated and can be found in a specially-provided section (→ *Multilingual Glossary*, p. 32).

The lexical control ensures **readability**, which takes the following into account:

✳ word frequency,
✳ sentence length,
✳ sentence complexity.

Readability is obtained through a process of simplification which consists mainly in:

✳ eliminating those words/phrases which are not essential for the structural organisation and comprehension of a text;
✳ using more common, frequent words;
✳ paraphrasing, i.e. expressing what has been said/written using different words, especially in order to make it easier to understand.

Another important issue to be considered is **passive vocabulary** and **active vocabulary**. Passive vocabulary refers to words that learners understand but are not yet able to use. Active vocabulary, on the other hand, is the words that learners understand and use in speaking or writing. One of the main aims of a GR is to painlessly *transform the largest possible amount of passive words into active ones.*

Structural control

Structural control can be obtained in two ways:

✳ grammar control
✳ syntactic control.

Grammar control is made following the CEFR guidelines which divide the grammar structures according to the levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 (→ *List of grammar structures per level*, p. 28).

At A1 level, Edisco Readers do not use the Past Simple Tense, except for the verb *to be* (*was/were*). When narrating past events, the Present Simple Tense is employed (narrative or historical present).

Likewise, to avoid complexity, **syntactic control** is exerted through the careful use of coordinate and subordinate clauses according to the level (→ *Sentence length at various levels*, p. 23).

Information control

The information of GRs is controlled through omission and alteration of descriptive details, even of events, characters and parts of the dialogue. If students are to read the story successfully, the information must be presented in easily digestible amounts. Edisco adapters or writers and editors keep constantly in mind the need to control the flow of information which the reader has to absorb in order to continue reading. These are the devices employed:

✴ limiting the number of characters or the depth of their definitions;

✴ controlling the range and complexity of situational or cultural background;

✴ avoiding flashbacks using, instead, straight, chronological narrative at least at lower levels;

✴ keeping a careful balance in the length of chapters;

✴ writing an introduction to a story which clarifies characters and context. At lower levels, a simple list of characters can prove to be enough.

FROM LITERATURE TO GRADED READERS

A well-simplified GR provides learners with an authentic reading experience, which in time will eventually lead them to be able to cope with more difficult texts. There are some basic mechanisms to simplify a classic work of literature and create a GR:

✳ it needs shortening to make it more accessible to the learner;

✳ pictures can be used instead of long definitions;

✳ characters can be omitted to avoid confusion;

✳ the account of the story is made simpler;

✳ 'difficult' words are replaced with easier, already known ones;

✳ paraphrasing;

✳ clarifying;

✳ deleting unnecessary information;

✳ elaborating or explaining;

✳ creating dialogues which are easier to understand and more communicative, mostly at lower levels;

✳ making sure that emotions are communicated;

✳ highlighting important sections.

Without going into theoretic details of language simplification, a good GR should retain patterns in language, without undermining the content. An appropriate use of structures, collocations, redundancy, discourse markers and high/low frequency words at the respective levels, the removal of unnecessary information, and coordinate and subordinate clauses, all provide the student with 'normal' language, which makes their reading of the story free of stress and enjoyable. That, after all, is the aim of GRs.

Examples of adaptation

The following are examples of well-known literary works in the adapted form, followed by the original one. The adaptation shows the footnotes present in the text, which are sometimes represented with drawings, mostly at lower levels.

A1 ● From *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, Tale **2**: *The Selfish Giant*, p. 21 (opening lines)

GR *Every afternoon after school, the children go and play in the Giant's garden. It is a lovely, large garden with soft green grass and beautiful flowers. There are twelve peach-trees[2]; in the spring-time they open delicate pink flowers and in the autumn they have rich fruit. The birds sit in the trees and sing sweetly. The children stop their games to listen to them.*

"We're very happy here!" they say.

Original *Every afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden. It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the spring-time broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. 'How happy we are here!' they cried to each other.*

──────────
2 *peach-trees:*

A2 ● From *The Gold Bug*, Chapter 1 (p. 7, opening lines)

GR *Many years ago, I met Mr. William Legrand. He came from a rich family but one day he became poor because of some financial problems.*

He lived in New Orleans but after his misfortunes[3], he moved to Sullivan's Island, in South Carolina. The island is quite strange. It is about five kilometers long, it is separated from the land by a little bay with shallow[4] water, its beaches are sandy and there is little vegetation on the island.

Original *Many years ago, I contracted an intimacy with a Mr. William Legrand.*

He was of an ancient Huguenot family, and had once been wealthy: but a series of misfortunes had reduced him to want. To avoid the mortification consequent upon his disasters, he left New Orleans, the city of his forefathers, and took up his residence at Sullivan's Island, near Charleston, South Carolina.

This island is a very singular one. It consists of little else than the sea sand, and is about three miles long. Its breadth at no point exceeds a quarter of a mile. It is separated from the mainland by a scarcely perceptible creek, oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime, a favorite resort of the marsh hen. The vegetation, as might be supposed, is scant, or at least dwarfish.

---

3 *misfortune:* bad luck
4 *shallow:* not deep

B1 ● From *The Black Cat and Other Stories, Story 5, The Black Cat*, (p. 70)

GR *One night, returning home drunk from town, I imagined that the cat avoided[5] me. I seized[6] him and he, frightened, bit my hand. Immediately, the fury of a devil possessed me. I no longer knew myself. It was as if my soul had left my body. I took a penknife[7] from my pocket and I cut one of the cat's eyes out of its socket[8]!*

Original *One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer.*

My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fiber of my frame. I took from my waistcoat-pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

---

5 *avoided:* tried not to be seen
6 *seized:* caught, took
7 *penknife:* small knife that folds into the handle
8 *socket:* hole containing the eye

● From *Hamlet,* Act III, Scene I, p. 31 (*To be or not to be*)

GR   *"Ah!" thought Hamlet, "we must keep in mind the dreams which come in sleep... what if they are frightening, horrible, disgusting? That is why we prefer to face the tribulations of our daily life, the disillusionments, the offences, the passing of time and the inevitable decay of our body and mind. Sure, it would be easier to end all this by committing suicide, but then?"*

Original

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause: there's the respect
Which makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?"

Examples of "double" adaptation

It should also be pointed out that the same story can be simplified at different levels; Edisco has published *Romeo and Juliet* both at A2 (in a graphic version) and B1 levels, while *Elizabeth Regina* is C1 and *The Invincible Queen* is B1+, both of which relate the life of Elizabeth I.

Below are extracts from them. Note the differences in style to make the story suitably accessible to readers of the appropriate level.

Romeo and Juliet – 'The balcony scene'

A2 pages 21–22.

Here speech bubbles have been used and Shakespeare's lines have been adapted to suit the context of a graphic version at this level.

B1 page 28.

In this version, the adapters have kept quite faithfully to the original lines, updating the language by changing 'thou' to 'you', 'art' to 'are', 'thy' to 'your', 'wilt' to 'will' and providing the text with notes for 'deny' ('refuse'), 'be but sworn' ('link yourself with a promise'), 'belonging' ('being the property of') to keep part of the original Shakespearean flavour.

> *"O Romeo, Romeo! Why are you Romeo?*
> *Deny your father and refuse your name;*
> *Or, if you will not, be but sworn my love,*
> *And I'll no longer be a Capulet.*
> *(...)*
> *What's a Montague? It is nor hand or foot,*
> *Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part*
> *Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!*
> *What's in a name? That which we call a rose*
> *By any other name would smell as sweet;"*
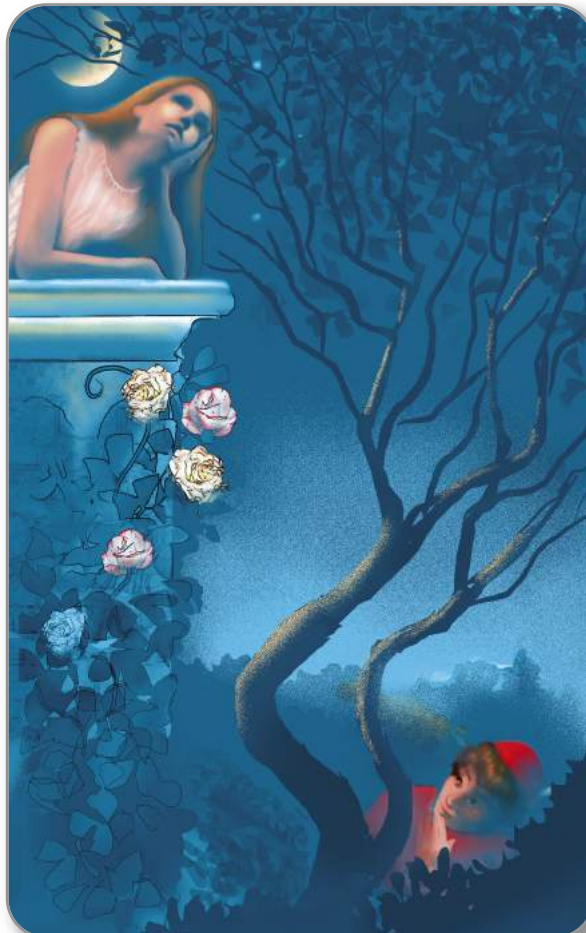
The Invincible Queen was written to give readers at a lower level the opportunity to look into the fascinating life of Elizabeth I as portrayed in *Elizabeth Regina* (C1). The two extracts which follow show the difference in detail and choice of vocabulary and footnotes in the description of the young queen.

B1+   *The Invincible Queen*, p. 40

The coronation was an experience that Elizabeth enjoyed throughout her life. It was a theatrical event and Elizabeth loved being on stage. She was twenty-five. She was strongly built. Her lips were thin, her hair was golden-red, her face was painted white and her cheeks were marked with a red powder. Her long and bony nose was a reminder of her Tudor ancestry. She looked like Henry's daughter. Perhaps she was even suggesting, by the seriousness of her look, that she intended to outshine[9] him. As she moved among her cheering[10] subjects[11], she was on her way to becoming England's Gloriana, a demigod.

C1   *Elizabeth Regina*, p. 43

She was twenty-five, tall, strongly built, and imperious. Her lips were thin, her golden hair was more reddish than yellow, her face was painted with white lead[12] and vinegar, and her cheeks were marked by a rouge made of red dye and egg white. She was comely[13], pleasant in appearance, rather than beautiful. Her long, somewhat bony nose was a sign of her Tudor ancestry. Her looks and her demeanour[14] revealed that she was Henry's daughter. The seriousness that could be seen in her gaze and her movements suggested to all that she intended her rule to outshine his. As she moved amongst her cheering subjects, she was on her way to becoming England's Gloriana, a demigod.

---

9 *outshine:* to surpass in splendour
10 *cheering:* giving loud shouts of approval or encouragement
11 *subject:* citizen

12 *white lead:* cerussite, lead carbonate
13 *comely:* attractive
14 *demeanour:* behaviour

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES FOR USING GRADED READERS

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies.
The man who never reads lives only one."
(George R. R. Martin)

Teachers are always on the outlook for practical new ideas which work in the classroom and provide students with stimulating activities to speed up and consolidate the learning process.

By working on GRs, students can:

✳ participate in project work
✳ re-order jumbled chapter titles
✳ guess the story from the cover illustration
✳ do quizzes and puzzles
✳ take part in enhanced activities such as:
    – creating comic strips
    – re-writing endings
    – transforming narrative into dialogue or newspaper articles
    – writing radio plays and recording them
    – making a movie trailer of the reader
    – inventing predictive horoscopes for characters in the story
    – and, of course, write reviews of the book once read.

ACTIVITIES WITH STUDENTS

Several activities can be carried out with learners in and out of the classroom. A list of exercises typically used in language teaching can be found in the *Didactic Framework* on p. 27.

In the following part, you will find less common but nonetheless enjoyable and motivating classroom activities to use with learners aged 12–18.

▄▄ Before reading the book

Project work

In the Before Reading section of *Tales of the Supernatural*, Story 4, *The Ghost Upon the Rail*, as the story is based in Australia, students are encouraged to discover places mentioned in the story on the map, to answer general knowledge questions on the country and describe various animals to be found there. Thus, a 'ghost story' can be used as a base for project work which stimulates both language use and curiosity, especially when carried out as a class activity.

Re-ordering jumbled Chapter / Scene / Act titles

If we take for example *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, we can mix up its chapters in this way:

> *A Sad End*
> *A Strange Man*
> *Dr Lanyon*
> *Looking for Mr Hyde*
> *Murder*
> *Something Wrong*
> and ask the students to rebuild the correct order.

> (The correct order is:
> *A Strange Man*
> *Looking for Mr Hyde*
> *Murder*
> *Dr Lanyon*
> *Something Wrong*
> *A Sad End*.)
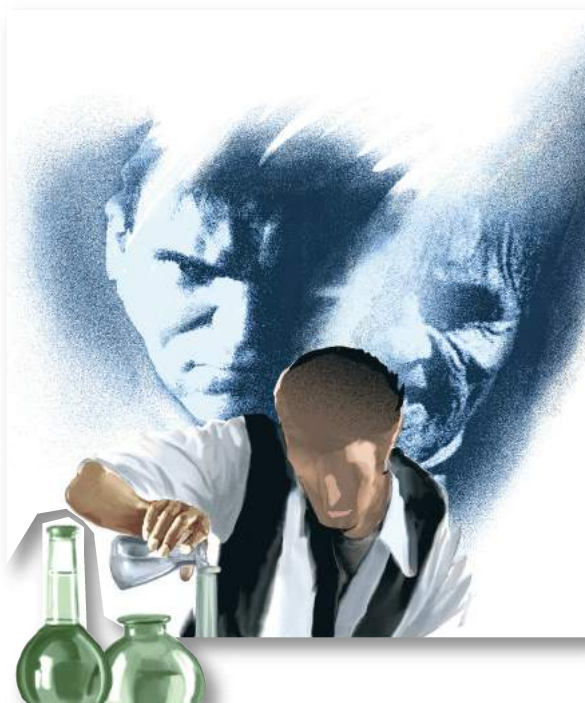
Using the cover illustration

These are the cover illustrations from *Wuthering Heights* and *The Secret Garden.*
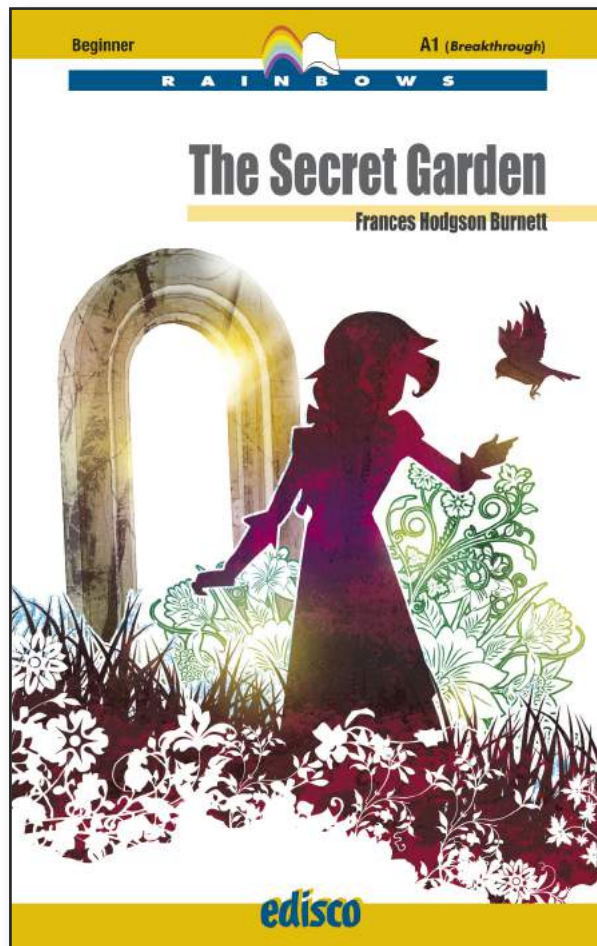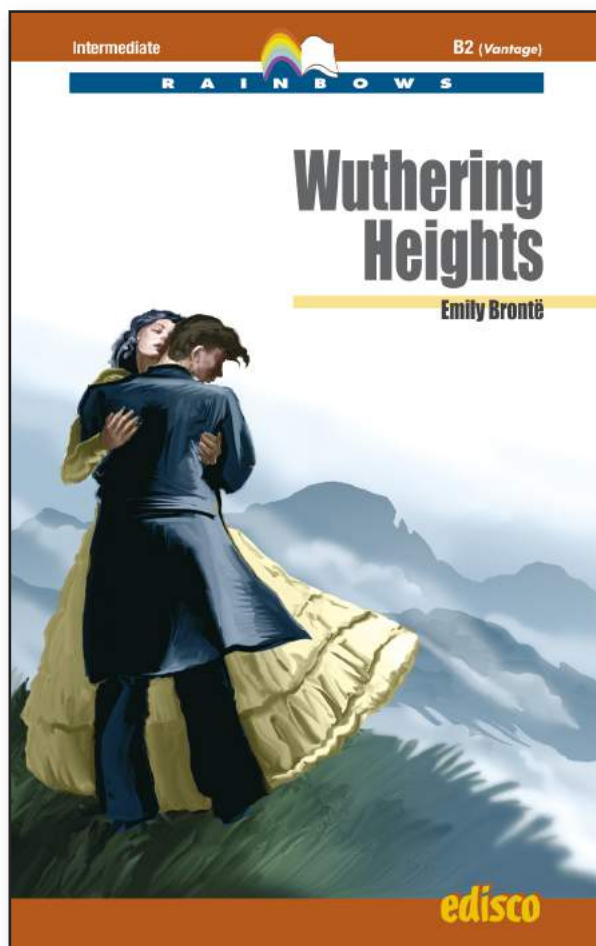
They can be used for questions such as:

✳ What genre do you think it depicts?

✳ What can you see?

✳ What do you think it is about?

✳ Can you imagine the plot?

✳ Do you think it will have a happy or sad ending?

 The students' ideas can be put down and then they can see who was closest to the actual storyline.

Illustrations

The illustrations in the book can also be used to introduce the characters to the students. They can be given a list of characters and try to match the pictures to each one, giving their ideas on what sort of people they think they will be in the book. For example:

The Canterbury Tales, pages 16, 17, 18:

Characters: a. The Franklin, b. The Friar, c. The Manciple, d. The Parson, e. The Reeve, f. The Doctor.

About the author

The short biography of the author can also be developed with the students to learn and talk about not only him or her, but also the social and historical context of the story or play. Groups or pairs of students can be asked to find out more themselves and decide why they think the author wrote the book.

For example, Mary Shelley's biography in *Frankenstein* is extremely interesting in itself, as well as in a social and historical context.

Quotes

Dialogue quotes can be taken from the text and students try to predict which character says them. This helps them to establish a clear identity of each character in the story.

The author
Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley (b. Aug. 30, 1797, London – d. Feb. 1, 1851, London) was the only daughter of well-known parents: William Godwin (1756-1836) – a philosopher, political theorist, novelist and publisher who introduced her to eminent intellectuals and encouraged her youthful efforts as a writer – and of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), a writer and early feminist thinker. Ten days after Mary's birth, her mother died. Two years later her father married Mrs Jane Clairmont. She and one of her daughters, Jane Claire, were to be the cause of Mary Shelley's sufferings and troubles for many years of her life. Godwin's house was visited by some of the most famous writers of the day; one of these was Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). The poet was immediately attracted by the beautiful young intellectual, Mary Godwin. In July 1814 the couple eloped[1] to France. Mary, Shelley and Jane Claire travelled through France and Switzerland but financial problems obliged them to come back to England. In February 1815, Mary gave birth to a baby girl who died a few days later. The couple were married in 1816, after Shelley's first wife had committed suicide. Later Shelley rented[2] a house on the banks of Lake Geneva near Villa Diodati, lived in by Byron (1788-1824) himself. It was at Villa Diodati that the talks leading[3] to the writing of *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) took place. In the introduction to her best known work, Mary Shelley gives her own account[4] of *Frankenstein*'s origin. It seems that a number of things, like the reading of ghost stories, theories about the reanimation of corpses or the creation of life, her anxiety about her role as a mother, and the memories of her sense of guilt and loss[5] at the death of her own mother came together at that point in her life, creating the waking dream or nightmare that so terrified her.

Mary Shelley wrote several other novels, such as *Valperga* (1823), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837), but *The Last Man* (1826), an account of the future destruction of the human race by a plague, is still ranked as her best novel. Her travel book *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817) recounts the continental tour she and Shelley took in 1814 following their elopement and then recounts their summer near Geneva in 1816. After her husband's death in 1822, she returned to England and devoted herself to publicising Shelley's writings and to educating their only surviving child, Percy Florence Shelley. She died at the age of 53.

1. *elope:* fuggire insieme (di due innamorati).
2. *rent:* affittare.
3. *lead:* condurre, portare.
4. *account:* resoconto.
5. *loss:* perdita.

While the students are reading the book

Creating and performing plays

It can be great fun to create a play from a prose story, developing character roles and giving students a chance to act; this can be an excellent activity for practising speaking and pronunciation and can be recorded for real and listened to afterwards. Classes can also be divided into groups, each one being given a different part of the story to transform, and then putting them all together to create the play.

The class can become journalists and report events taken from the story, turning them into articles and inventing headlines. If we take, for example, *The Oval Portrait*, Story 4, *The Cask of Amontillado*, the headline could be, "ITALIAN BUSINESSMAN DISAPPEARS ON CARNIVAL NIGHT".

Comic strips

Another creative work to do with students is to turn the story or play into comic strips, by taking chunks from chapters, scenes or acts and then using their imaginations to form pictures, and of course, importantly from a language point of view, speech bubbles. See Edisco example on next pages taken from Oscar Wilde's *The Canterville Ghost,* Chapter 1.

Original

Suddenly Mrs. Otis caught sight of a dull red stain on the floor just by the fireplace, and, quite unconscious of what it really signified, said to Mrs. Umney,

"I am afraid something has been spilt there."

"Yes, madam," replied the old housekeeper in a low voice, "blood has been spilt on that spot."

"Blood has been spilled on that spot!!! How horrid!" cried Mrs. Otis. "I don't at all care for blood-stains in a sitting-room. It must be removed at once." The old woman smiled, and answered in the same low, mysterious voice,

"It is the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville, who was murdered on that very spot by her own husband, Sir Simon de Canterville, in 1575. Sir Simon survived her nine years, and disappeared suddenly under very mysterious circumstances. His body has never been discovered, but his guilty spirit still haunts the Chase. The blood-stain has been much admired by tourists and others, and cannot be removed."

"That is all nonsense," cried Washington Otis; "Pinkerton's Champion Stain Remover and Paragon Detergent will clean it up in no time."

And before the terrified housekeeper could interfere, he had fallen upon his knees, and was rapidly scouring the floor with a small-stick of what looked like a black cosmetic. In a few moments no trace of the bloodstain could be seen.

Edisco comic strip version

Mrs Umney says that it is the blood of Lady Eleonore De Canterville. She was in this castle in 1575.

My husband is going to kill me! Here, just by the fireplace!

Don't worry, mum! Pinkerton's Cleaner will clean it away.

Washington cleans the floor with the cleaner and the stain disappears.

Well! Now let's go to bed.

Film versions

If the book or play has a film version, it can also be interesting and lead to a fruitful discussion to compare the two and see how they differ from one another, and what a producer has changed. Of course, this could also lead to students inventing their own film/short video clip version. In addition, students in pairs or groups could enjoy creating posters for a film version which can be put up in the classroom and the best one chosen.

Example:

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (B1)
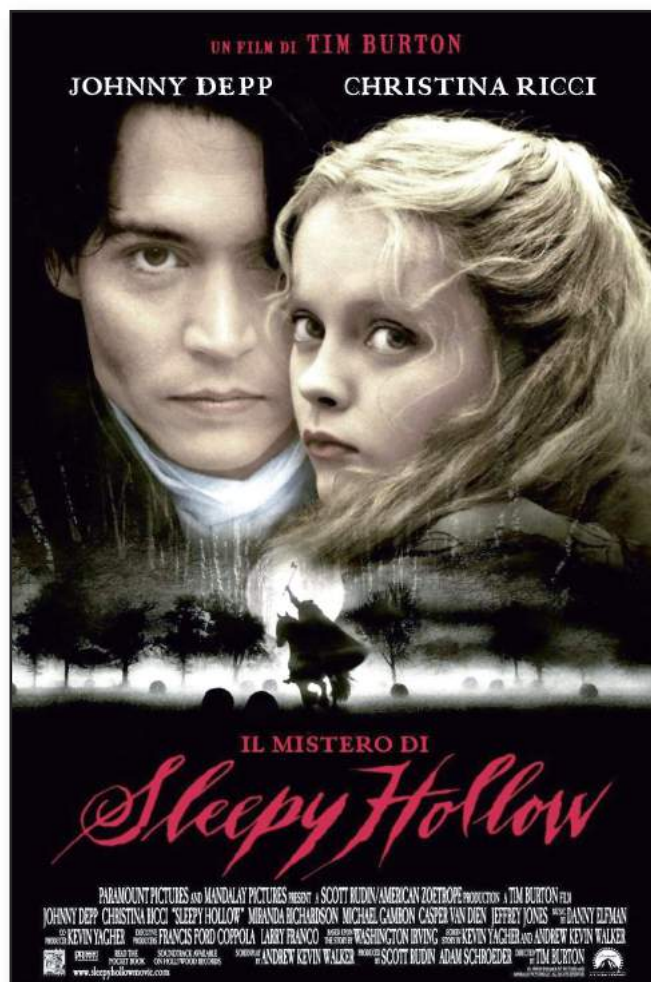
Sleepy Hollow (movie by Tim Burton, starring Johnny Depp, 1999)

Sleepy Hollow (TV series for Fox Networks Group, 2013–2017)

Horoscopes

Inventing horoscopes for the main characters and predicting their future destiny is another way of involving the students in the story and a pretext to help them understand both the characters and the plot. They can also attempt to guess which sign of the horoscope the various characters are.

If we take, for example, Elizabeth, the main character in *Pride and Prejudice*, we can ask:

✳ What sign of the horoscope would you think she is? (Leo, perhaps, as she is determined and courageous?)

✳ Would you predict that she will receive a proposal of marriage?

✳ Will she accept or refuse?

Sample answer. Personality traits: Lizzie must be Leo. She is kind and generous and a loyal friend, but if you take advantage of her kindness, she can become very angry indeed. She is a natural leader, as people feel safe with her because of her courage and the sense of protection she gives them. She is spontaneously open and sincere, confident on the outside but sensitive inside, and although she is sociable,

she also needs time alone to collect her thoughts before going into action with determination. Her vitality and energy make her unpredictable at times, but she is basically optimistic and has a fine sense of humour.

Prediction: Lizzie's life will change in the near future due to an unexpected meeting and her own actions will make an impact on someone, which could mean a proposal of marriage. If she decides that is what she wants, she will get it and accept. Her life is likely to be dynamic, with ups and downs, but in the end it will turn out for the best. Communication and showing her feelings in a relationship will be very important to reach that happy ending. Family and friends will remain very important to her.

Interviews

Finally, as the students get to know the story and characters while they are reading, try interviews. Pick two or three characters from the book and the same number of students to take on the roles. They must know them well and behave as if they were them. The other students ask them questions, in the context of a talk show, or a police interview or a report for a newspaper or magazine.

Tables

A useful activity at this point of reading is for students to make a table with a list of characters in the story and complete it under such headings as:

✳ appearance
✳ possessions
✳ personality
✳ likes and dislikes.

When they have finished reading

Reviews

Of course, writing a review of the GR they have just finished is a beneficial writing exercise, as well as allowing students to give their own independent opinion of what they have just read. It need not be formal review, it could be a short cover review for the **back of the book**, or if they have talked about a film version, it could be a film review for cinema-goers.

Example

Short review for *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

"A journey through Transylvania leads to Dracula's castle – a tense and scary build-up as the traveller slowly realises that the personification of evil lives inside it and is his host. Life, death and love are intermingled, touching on themes such as religion, savagery, xenophobia and even technology. *Dracula* is more than a vampire novel, it is a vampire name. It is the greatest in its genre, beautifully fascinating and chilling."

Quizzes

Quizzes are entertaining and help students to look back over the book and revise the events and plot, as well as allowing teachers to see how successful the reading has been.

For example: Below is part of the quiz from *The Turn of the Screw.*

Now test yourself on *The Turn of the Screw.*

1. When was The Turn of the Screw first published?
- **a.** 1897
- **b.** 1898
- **c.** 1901
- **d.** 1856
- **e.** 1862
- **f.** 1902

2. What was the name of the magazine in which it was published?
- **a.** The New York Review
- **b.** Collier's Literary Review
- **c.** The Boston Magazine
- **d.** The London Illustrated News
- **e.** The Times literary supplement
- **f.** New Criticism

3. What was the name of the governess in the tale?
- **a.** Flora
- **b.** Mrs Grose
- **c.** Lucy
- **d.** Miss Douglas
- **e.** Miss Jessel
- **f.** She is never named

4. Where does she have her interview in London with the children's uncle?
- **a.** Piccadily Circus
- **b.** Downing Street
- **c.** Harley Street
- **d.** Green Park
- **e.** Mayfair
- **f.** Oxford Street

5. What is the name of the house?
- **a.** Rye
- **b.** Wye
- **c.** Bly
- **d.** The Cottage
- **e.** Park House
- **f.** The Manor House

The quiz can also be reverted, in the sense that the students can invent the questions to test the teacher's knowledge of the book...

Setting up accounts

Setting up a Facebook or Instagram or Twitter account for the characters is fun and helps the students to portray each person as they see them, projecting them into today's world.

Alternative endings

Students often find it amusing to think of an alternative ending for a story or play, which is another way of allowing them to use their creativity and imagination in English, while having fun.

For example, *Romeo and Juliet:*

Juliet wakes earlier and screams when she sees where she is and hears violent noises outside; they stop fighting and come running in. She realises what is happening and explains to Paris that she will never be able to love him. Eventually, he understands. He calls the guards and the families who decide to make peace when they realise the tragedy that nearly took place. Paris finds someone else and Verona is quiet again.

Or *The Picture of Dorian Gray:*

Dorian was tormented by the corrupt and immoral life he led. He had been to the theatre and was tired. He came home and went up to the attic in an angry and murderous mood, armed with the same knife he had used to kill Basil. He began to slash furiously at the picture like a madman, but as he destroyed the painting, he felt his body becoming deformed and ugly and old, as his life, agonizingly, slipped away from him.

Suddenly, Dorian woke to find himself in a pool of sweat in bed, his heart pounding, and discovered that it had been a nightmare, the fruit of his imagination, no doubt caused by the ill-fated portrait that Basil Hallward had painted. He interpreted the dream as a way of showing him the importance of life and was able to see his future more clearly, realising that he was not too late to change his ways and make up for the past.

It made him realise that old age should be accepted graciously and lived as happily as possible, because even the change in our physical aspect can be seen as one of life's great experiences. Dorian decided he would give away the portrait, so that he could live without it disturbing him, now that he was able to appreciate the true value of the natural progress of life, which cannot ever be changed.

EDISCO GRADED READERS SERIES

*"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the TV set,
I go into the other room and read a book."*
Groucho Marx

◼ THE FOUR SKILLS

As we have already said (→ *Didactic Framework, Levels,* p. 27), the series is made up of 5 levels characterised by a lexical load and a structural one defined by the single level: A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1 and the three levels in the middle marked with a plus sign (A2+, B1+, B2+). Besides, in the Edisco series, all four language skills are practised and developed, particularly, needless to say, **Reading**, further enhanced by an in-depth analysis at the end of each chapter with no exercises (Extensive Reading). **Listening** also has a number of specific exercises dedicated to it; they are contained in the enclosed CD. **Writing** is practised and developed through the large number of exercises expressly devised for it, while **Speaking** has its own activities.

◼ GENERAL PLAN AND CONTENTS

Edisco Grades Readers' **thematic areas** are the following:

◼ **Stories** *(life, romance and adventure)* • Adventure, fantasy or sentimental fiction. This area contains some of the most famous titles of English and American literature in this genre, together with original works.

◼ **History** • From the Celts to the Anglo-Saxons, Tom Matrix travels through space and time thanks to his virtual reality helmet and takes the reader on a journey to learn about the cultures of these peoples (A1 and A2 levels). For higher levels, William Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth are the main characters in three different historical readers.

◼ **Mythistory** *(between history and legend)* • History and legend often have an uncertain border. Readers such as *King Arthur*, *Robin Hood*, *Doctor Faustus* belong to this thematic area, containing literary archetypes or cultural myths.

◼ **Entertainment** *(sport, music, cinema and TV)* • The entertainment world gives the opportunity to produce stimulating and amusing readers dealing with films (*Young Frankenstein*, *The Wizard of Oz*) and biographies (*U2*).

◼ **The Unknown** *(mystery, thrillers, horror and crime)* • A peculiar element of Anglophone literature is mystery, which has attracted many great authors, such as C. Marlowe, M. Shelley, E.A. Poe, C. Dickens, B. Stoker, R.L. Stevenson and H.P. Lovecraft just to mention a few.

◼ **Shakespeare** • The immortal plays by William Shakespeare are rendered in narrative form with some authentic inserts and a few passages adapted to dramatisation.

LEVELS OF ACCREDITED EXAMINATION BOARDS

A1 (*Breakthrough*) • BEGINNER

	400 headwords
– Cambridge English:	Flyers / Key
– Trinity:	Grade 1, 2
– City & Guilds (Pitman):	Basic
– ESB:	Foundation 1, 2
– Edexcel:	Quickmarch

A2 (*Waystage*) • ELEMENTARY

	700 headwords
– Cambridge English:	Flyers / Key
– Trinity:	Grade 3, 4
– City & Guilds (Pitman):	Elementary
– ESB:	Foundation 3
– Edexcel:	Basic

B1 (*Threshold*) • PRE-INTERMEDIATE

	1000 headwords
– Cambridge English:	Preliminary
– Trinity:	Grade 5, 6 / ISE I
– City & Guilds (Pitman):	Intermediate
– ESB:	Intermediate 1, 2
– Edexcel:	Elementary

B2 (*Vantage*) • INTERMEDIATE

	1500 headwords
– Cambridge English:	First
– Trinity:	Grade 7, 8 / ISE II
– City & Guilds (Pitman):	Intermediate
– ESB:	Intermediate 2, 3
– Edexcel:	Intermediate

C1 (*Effectiveness*) • POST-INTERMEDIATE

	2000 headwords
– Cambridge English:	Advanced
– Trinity:	Grades 9, 10 / ISE III
– City & Guilds (Pitman):	Higher Intermediate
– ESB:	Advanced 1, 2
– Edexcel:	Advanced

CATALOGUE

	STORIES	HISTORY	MYTHISTORY	ENTERTAINMENT	THE UNKNOWN	SHAKESPEARE
A1 TALES FROM THE BRITISH ISLES			■			
THE WIZARD OF OZ				■		
THE SECRET	■					
THE SECRET GARDEN	■					
THE CELTS		■				
THE TEMPEST						■
THE CANTERVILLE GHOST					■	
THE HAPPY PRINCE	■					
A2 KING ARTHUR			■			
ROBINSON CRUSOE	■					
A CHRISTMAS CAROL	■					
OLIVER TWIST	■					
YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN				■		
THE ANGLO-SAXONS		■				
THE GOLD BUG (A2+)					■	
ROMEO AND JULIET						■
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM						■
OTHELLO						■
DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE					■	
GULLIVER'S TRAVELS	■					
B1 BEOWULF			■			
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (B1+)	■					
THE INVINCIBLE QUEEN (B1+)		■				
JANE EYRE	■					
THE CANTERBURY TALES	■					
ROBIN HOOD AND MEDIEVAL LIFE			■			
THE SCARLET LETTER	■					
THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW AND...					■	
WEIRD STORIES (B1+)					■	
DOCTOR FAUSTUS (B1+)			■		■	
ANIMAL FARM	■					
THE BLACK CAT AND OTHER STORIES					■	
THE SWAN ON THE AVON		■				■
MACBETH						■
ROMEO AND JULIET						■
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE						■
TREASURE ISLAND	■					
DRACULA					■	
THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU (B1+)					■	
THE TIME MACHINE (B1+)					■	
TALES FROM OUTER SPACE					■	
THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY					■	
B2 WUTHERING HEIGHTS	■					
U2				■		
THE BRITISH EMPIRE						
THE TURN OF THE SCREW	■					
DUBLINERS	■					
1984	■					
THE OVAL PORTRAIT AND OTHER STORIES					■	
TALES OF THE SUPERNATURAL					■	
HAMLET						■
FRANKENSTEIN					■	
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST	■					
C1 ELIZABETH REGINA		■				
GREAT GHOST STORIES					■	

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– https://www.howtolearn.com/2013/02/skimming-and-scanning-two-important-strategies-for-speeding-up-your-reading/

– https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-graded-readers

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If you want to know something more about the benefits deriving from *skimming*, read the fairy tale below.

The Three Knights

"Once upon a time there were three knights: the Blue Knight, the Black Knight and the Brown Knight. They left their country to get to a far-off castle where three beautiful sisters lived: Grasp, Grip and Ken. But when they reached the destination, they found an unexpected forest between them and the castle. The forest was so thick that it was impossible to even see through it.

The Knights got off their horses and slowly entered the forest advancing step by step; but almost immediately, they had to stop because they found unknown, insurmountable obstacles. They drew their swords and after many efforts they succeeded in cutting their way through the brambly vegetation. But immediately after, to their great disappointment, they met a few other strange obstructions never seen before. They took out their swords again and opened a passage. They realized that it had taken them a lot of time just to cover a very short distance. In front of them, there still appeared to be miles of forest. They tried to proceed, but after a while, they no longer knew where they were, got discouraged and, exhausted and bleeding, returned to the starting point.

After a short rest, they told one another that a true knight never loses heart and started the not easy task of reaching their beloved ladies again.

But suddenly a strange person appeared. He (or she? they couldn't tell) was a wizard named Limner, who offered them a pair of magic wings to fly over the forest for a limited short time – one minute not more; after that very brief lapse of time, the knights were to give the wings back.

The three knights thanked Limner but refused the offer saying that it was just a waste of time. They entered the forest again, but after a short time, the Blue Knight came out even more discouraged. The wizard was still there. The Blue Knight asked for the magic wings this time. With the wizard's help, he put the wings on and flew over the forest for one minute. He saw what it was like, its paths, its size and its main features – he had a global vision of the nature of the forest. He got back, returned the wings to the wizard and, feeling more self-confident, entered the forest. The walk was difficult and full of traps and dangers but he knew what the place was like, what he would find, what he had to avoid, what he could skip and what he would face. He knew the direction now.

He was the only knight who embraced his beloved, fair damsel, Lady Grasp. They lived happily ever after.

Ah, what about the other two? The Brown Knight, bleeding and disheartened, mounted his horse and slowly rode back to his own castle. The Black Knight is still there in the forest trying to hack his way through the brambly vegetation."
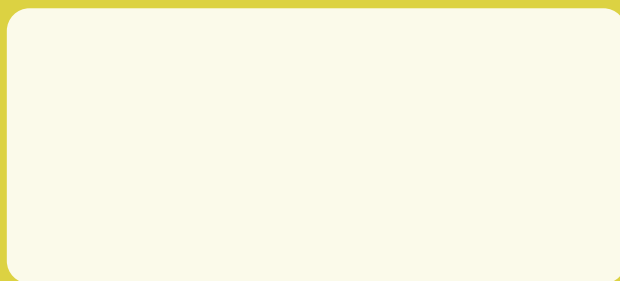
NB = *Skimming* is like the wings of the story; *Limner* is the teacher.