

unfortunate Bellman and his crew on that expedition.

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JESSICA CORBYN. *Proficiency Use of English*. London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1981. 80pp. Price in U.K. £1.25.

Whatever one may feel about the modern tendency to prepare students for examinations rather than to educate in the broadest sense, one must acknowledge the usefulness of this book to students who have to pass Paper 3 of the Cambridge Proficiency Examination. The author, experienced in preparing students for this examination, found that they felt very anxious at the prospect and, being aware that 'the element of alarm is detrimental to any learning process', she set out to develop their confidence by providing practice in the type of questions which regularly recur. She has systematically analysed past papers to discover the underlying pattern of question types. The Cambridge Proficiency Examination consists of three sections: Section A (Language), Section B (Comprehension), and Section C (Composition).

The book begins with a comprehensive Introduction to individual questions in the Language Section, giving the necessary background knowledge required to answer them. This is followed by a Practice Section, where numerous examples of the different question types are given, and finally, the author has compiled seven complete Test Papers which follow the actual examination format closely in length and content.

In the Introduction and Practice Sections, the author devotes all her attention to Section A (Language), justifying her exclusion of Sections B and C (Comprehension and Composition) by saying that the type of practice required for these - extensive reading and writing - is a lengthy business requiring much time to be spent with the student and teacher working together. Herein lies my only criticism. While I agree that very little can be done to 'teach' Comprehension, so much depending on the individual's insight, I do think the author could have supplied some practical pointers as to how to go about writing a Report, Letter, or Talk, tested in Section C. True, she does provide sample questions and answers in the Test Papers, but, while these are helpful, I feel that some definite instructions should also have been provided. Not all students have the advantage of working with a teacher and would appreciate this aid.

However, she more than makes up for her neglect of Section C by her detailed study of Section A, the Language Section. Question I, for instance, is always a 'blank-filling' exercise, and the writer identifies the types of words which are required to be filled in. She differentiates between the 'Closed System' of words for which there is very little choice as the answer is dictated by the grammatical requirements of the sentence, and the 'Open Class System' of words which necessitates a wider choice, although these are still limited by the sense of the passage. The author goes through sample exercises in detail, explaining at each choice how to find the most suitable missing word by examining the sense and the surrounding structure. Other questions testing, *inter alia*, knowledge of sentence structures and idiomatic expressions, the author found to be too 'open ended' for close analysis, but she does give many examples to provide practice.

The seven Test Papers provide practice in all three sections of the examination, Language, Comprehension and Composition. Model answers for these as well as all other exercises in the book are to be found at the back. The comprehension passages chosen are interesting and sometimes amusing. This helps to make the exercises enjoyable.

The book is small, soft-covered and light. This makes it easy to carry and handle, and affects the price favourably too, an important consideration for a student. The print, however, is small.

I am in no doubt that a prospective examinee would find this book invaluable. Working through the introduction and the exercises would enable him to face the examination with added confidence and competence. The author proves that the examination is not nearly as unpredictable as it may at first appear to a nervous novice. Although the demands made on the student's knowledge of the English Language are extensive, armed with Jessica Corbyn's *Proficiency Use of English*, his task of preparation need no longer be insurmountable.

At the outset I stated that the book was specifically designed for candidates of the Cambridge Proficiency Examination. However, this does not preclude it from being useful to all other students of English, whatever their mother-tongue, educational background or ability in English. The Cambridge Proficiency Examination is a probing test of the major aspects of language ability, and preparation for this examination would give any student a good grounding in correct and effective English usage. Practical English students at this University in particular should find this book helpful.

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