

ENGLISH

as a Foreign Language

NIVEL C2 · MAESTRÍA / MASTERY

Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCER)

Recursos de preparación para el examen de inglés como lengua extranjera, Nivel C2

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Introduction.....	5
CEFR Structure for Level C2.....	6
Course Overview – Ten Units.....	7
UNIT 1.....	9
Reading: The Architecture of Doubt.....	9
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	11
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	12
Key Vocabulary.....	13
Vocabulary Practice.....	13
Grammar Focus: Complex Subordination and Nested Clauses.....	15
Figure 1.....	15
Reference Table: Layers of Subordination.....	16
Examples.....	16
English Usage.....	17
Sample Dialogue.....	17
Practice.....	18
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	18
UNIT 2.....	23
Reading: The Turning of the Tide.....	23
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	25
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	25
Key Vocabulary.....	26
Vocabulary Practice.....	27
Grammar Focus: Literary Inversion for Rhetorical Effect.....	28
Figure 2.....	29
Reference Table: Literary Inversion Patterns.....	29
Examples.....	30
English Usage.....	30
Sample Dialogue.....	30
Practice.....	31
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	32
UNIT 3.....	36
Reading: What the Silence Carried.....	36
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	38
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	39
Key Vocabulary.....	39
Vocabulary Practice.....	40
Grammar Focus: Advanced Ellipsis and Implicature.....	41
Figure 3.....	42

Reference Table: Advanced Ellipsis Patterns.....	43
Examples.....	43
English Usage.....	43
Sample Dialogue.....	44
Practice.....	44
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	45
UNIT 4.....	49
Reading: The Architecture of Ambiguity.....	49
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	52
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	52
Key Vocabulary.....	53
Vocabulary Practice.....	53
Grammar Focus: Nuanced Modality and Epistemic Stance.....	55
Figure 4.....	55
Reference Table: Degrees of Epistemic Modality.....	56
Examples.....	56
English Usage.....	57
Sample Dialogue.....	57
Practice.....	57
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	58
UNIT 5.....	63
Reading: It Was the Silence That Spoke.....	63
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	65
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	66
Key Vocabulary.....	66
Vocabulary Practice.....	67
Grammar Focus: Cleft and Pseudo-Cleft Sentences for Emphasis.....	68
Figure 5.....	69
Reference Table: Advanced Cleft Constructions.....	69
Examples.....	70
English Usage.....	70
Sample Dialogue.....	71
Practice.....	71
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	72
UNIT 6.....	76
Reading: The Alchemist's Trade.....	76
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	78
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	78
Key Vocabulary.....	79
Vocabulary Practice.....	80
Grammar Focus: Idiomatic and Figurative Mastery.....	81
Figure 6.....	82
Reference Table: Idiomatic and Figurative Devices.....	82

Examples.....	83
English Usage.....	83
Sample Dialogue.....	84
Practice.....	84
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	85
UNIT 7.....	90
Reading: The Untranslatable Remainder.....	90
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	92
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	93
Key Vocabulary.....	94
Vocabulary Practice.....	94
Grammar Focus: Advanced Connectors for Academic Cohesion.....	96
Figure 7.....	96
Reference Table: Advanced Cohesive Devices.....	97
Examples.....	97
English Usage.....	98
Sample Dialogue.....	98
Practice.....	99
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	99
UNIT 8.....	104
Reading: The Art of Almost.....	104
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	106
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	107
Key Vocabulary.....	107
Vocabulary Practice.....	108
Grammar Focus: Subtle Aspect for Characterization.....	109
Figure 8.....	110
Reference Table: Subtle Aspectual Distinctions.....	111
Examples.....	111
English Usage.....	112
Sample Dialogue.....	112
Practice.....	113
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	113
UNIT 9.....	118
Reading: The Reading of the Codicil.....	118
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	121
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	121
Key Vocabulary.....	122
Vocabulary Practice.....	122
Grammar Focus: Formal and Legal Register.....	124
Figure 9.....	124
Reference Table: Formal and Legal Register Markers.....	125
Examples.....	125

English Usage.....	126
Sample Dialogue.....	126
Practice.....	127
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	127
UNIT 10.....	132
Reading: In Praise of Second Thoughts.....	132
Reading Comprehension – True or False.....	135
Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice.....	135
Key Vocabulary.....	136
Vocabulary Practice.....	136
Grammar Focus: Rhetorical Devices for Persuasive Argument.....	138
Figure 10.....	138
Reference Table: Rhetorical and Persuasive Structures.....	139
Examples.....	139
English Usage.....	140
Sample Dialogue.....	140
Practice.....	141
Practice Quiz (25 Questions).....	141
Answer Key.....	146
Unit 1: The Question Remains.....	146
Unit 2: Never Before Had.....	146
Unit 3: What Remains Unsaid.....	146
Unit 4: Between the Lines.....	146
Unit 5: It Was Not Until.....	147
Unit 6: A Turn of Phrase.....	147
Unit 7: That Said.....	147
Unit 8: As It Were.....	147
Unit 9: Pursuant to the Foregoing.....	148
Unit 10: The Case For and Against.....	148
Dictionary.....	149
Unit 1: The Question Remains.....	149
Unit 2: Never Before Had.....	150
Unit 3: What Remains Unsaid.....	150
Unit 4: Between the Lines.....	151
Unit 5: It Was Not Until.....	152
Unit 6: A Turn of Phrase.....	153
Unit 7: That Said.....	154
Unit 8: As It Were.....	155
Unit 9: Pursuant to the Foregoing.....	156
Unit 10: The Case For and Against.....	157
Bibliography.....	159
Credits.....	160

Introduction

This text is part of a series of six English-as-a-Foreign-Language teaching materials, developed by UIIX (Universidad de Investigación e Innovación de México) for levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This volume corresponds to level C2 (Mastery / Proficiency) and serves as a preparation resource for UIIX's English-as-a-Foreign-Language competency exam, available in the virtual classrooms of its online courses.

The text is designed for adult students who have completed level C1 or have equivalent advanced knowledge of English. Each of the ten units combines a long-form, literary or discursively sophisticated reading, practice with highly idiomatic and register-sensitive vocabulary, an English Usage section with practical communication expressions and its own practice exercise, an explanation of grammar and discourse structures with examples and figures, and a multiple-choice practice quiz in the style of international exams, designed to prepare students for UIIX's competency exams.

This book was developed with structural reference to well-established English-as-a-Foreign-Language publishers as well as the official Council of Europe descriptors ("can-do statements") for level C2. The vocabulary in each unit (40 words and expressions) was selected from validated linguistic frequency lists (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by thematic relevance and level appropriateness; word meanings are provided, in Spanish, in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

CEFR Structure for Level C2

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) describes level C2 as "Mastery", the sixth and highest level of the communicative-competence scale and the second of the "proficient user" levels. Below are the official Council of Europe descriptors that this book aims to develop, organized by skill, quoted verbatim from the CEFR Self-Assessment Grid, Table 3 (qualitative aspects of spoken language use) and the CEFR Companion Volume illustrative scales.

Listening

"I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent."

Reading

"I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works."

Vocabulary

"Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning." (Vocabulary range, CEFR Companion Volume)

Speaking

"I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely... I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure."

Range: "Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and eliminate ambiguity."

Accuracy: "Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions)."

Fluency: "Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it."

Interaction: "Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave contribution into joint discourse."

Coherence: "Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors."

Writing

"I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points."

Grammar

"Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions)." (Grammatical accuracy, CEFR Companion Volume)

Course Overview – Ten Units

Each unit develops, in an integrated way, vocabulary, practical language use (English Usage), reading comprehension and grammar.

#	Topic	Vocabulary	English Usage	Reading	Grammar
1	The Question Remains...	idiomatic collocations on expertise, judgment, and doubt	formal phrases for hedging, qualifying, and asserting professional judgment	The Architecture of Doubt	multiple layers of relative, adverbial, and noun clauses nested within a single sentence
2	Never Before Had...	sailing, peril, courage and fear in extreme circumstances	formal phrases for recounting a harrowing, unprecedented experience	The Turning of the Tide	literary inversion (Never before had I..., Only then did..., So violent was...)
3	What Remains Unsaid	sophisticated lexis for unspoken tension, subtext, and interpersonal friction	functional phrases for reading between the lines and naming what is left unsaid	What the Silence Carried	advanced ellipsis (gapping, comparative and verb-phrase ellipsis) and its implicature
4	Between the Lines	sophisticated diplomatic and hedging vocabulary for calibrated commitment	functional phrases for hedging, qualifying, and diplomatically softening claims	The Architecture of Ambiguity	epistemic scale of modal verbs from certainty ("must") to remote possibility ("could conceivably"), and distinguishing epistemic from deontic modality
5	It Was Not Until...	idioms and expressions for secrets, family revelations and delayed realization	sophisticated phrases for expressing a delayed or sudden realization of a hidden truth	It Was the Silence That Spoke	it-clefts, wh-clefts and "It was not until X that Y" temporal-causal clefts for emphasis
6	A Turn of Phrase	storytelling, wit, charisma and figurative flair	formal phrases for praising a witty, charismatic storyteller	The Alchemist's Trade	sustained metaphor, register-shifting and connotation vs denotation
7	That Said...	sophisticated lexis for translation, meaning, and cultural nuance	functional phrases for building and qualifying an academic argument	The Untranslatable Remainder	advanced concessive and logical connectors (notwithstanding, insofar as, be that as it may)
8	As It Were	sophisticated vocabulary for	functional phrases for	The Art of Almost	nuanced perfect vs continuous aspect,

		portraying eccentric personalities and idiosyncratic habits	affectionately reminiscing about a memorable or eccentric relative's habits		"used to" vs habitual "would", and the hedge "as it were" to convey emotional coloring
9	Pursuant to the Foregoing	legal and testamentary vocabulary for wills, inheritance, and family disputes	formal phrases for discussing legal proceedings, contested wills, and disputed claims	The Reading of the Codicil	formal/legal register — Latinate connectors (pursuant to, notwithstanding, hereinafter), nominalization, and passive constructions in legal prose
10	The Case For and Against	idioms and terms for persuasion, conceding points, obstinacy and changing one's mind	sophisticated phrases for conceding a point gracefully before pivoting to rebut it	In Praise of Second Thoughts	antithesis, tricolon, rhetorical questions, concession-and-rebuttal and periodic sentences for persuasive effect

UNIT 1

The Question Remains...

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to reflecting on expertise, judgment, and doubt among professionals, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: The Architecture of Doubt

For as long as I have observed those whom the public is pleased to call experts — the surgeons who are consulted only after other surgeons have despaired, the field linguists who can coax a dying language into one last confession before its final speaker dies, the appellate judges whose opinions are still cited decades after the litigants who occasioned them have been forgotten — I have noticed that the quality which distinguishes the genuine article from the merely credentialed is not the fluency with which they answer questions but the discomfort with which they receive them. It is a curious inversion, and one that anyone who has spent time among true masters of a discipline will recognize instantly: that the further a person advances into a field, the more circumspect he becomes about pronouncements which, had he made them a decade earlier, he would have delivered with the peremptory confidence of the novice.

I first understood this while shadowing a diagnostician named Alietti, a woman whose reputation, though it had been built on cases that other physicians had abandoned as hopeless, rested less on any particular gift for pattern recognition than on a habit that I initially mistook for hesitancy. When a resident, eager to demonstrate that he had absorbed the morning's lecture, proposed a diagnosis that fit the visible symptoms neatly, Alietti would not contradict him outright; instead, she would ask what else, among the innumerable conditions that might present in the same fashion, he had considered and discarded, and why. What she was teaching, though none of the residents recognized it as instruction, was that the confidence a symptom seems to warrant is often inversely proportional to how much one actually knows about the range of things that symptom could mean. The novice, having encountered only a handful of possibilities, is sanguine because his ignorance has not yet been attenuated by exposure to the countless recalcitrant cases that refuse to conform to any textbook description; the master, having seen how often the obvious explanation turns out to be a decoy planted by an entirely different disease, withholds judgment not because she knows less but because she has been inured, through decades of being wrong in instructive ways, to the seduction of an answer that arrives too easily.

This same pattern, once noticed in medicine, becomes impossible to unsee elsewhere. Historians who have spent a professional lifetime with a single archive are frequently the ones who insist most assiduously that the archive cannot tell us what actually happened, only what someone, writing for a purpose we can no longer fully reconstruct, wanted a later reader to believe had happened; it is the amateur, dazzled by the mere existence of a document, who mistakes its survival for its reliability. A colleague of mine, a specialist in the correspondence of a minor eighteenth-century court, once told me that the deeper she read into the letters that a foreign ambassador had sent home describing a scandal that convulsed the palace for the

better part of a year, the less certain she became not only of who had actually done what, but of whether the ambassador himself had believed the account he was so carefully composing, or had instead been engaged in a kind of diplomatic equivocation whose purpose was to protect himself against whichever version of events eventually prevailed. What looks, to the outsider, like scholarly diffidence is in fact the opposite of ignorance: it is what knowledge does to a mind that has taken the trouble to acquire enough of it to glimpse how much more there is.

None of this should be mistaken for an argument that expertise is illusory, or that one opinion is therefore as defensible as another, a conclusion that the intellectually lazy are always eager to draw the moment complexity is admitted into a conversation. The diagnostician who withholds judgment until she has ruled out the alternatives is not saying that all diagnoses are equally likely; she is saying that the discipline required to arrive at the right one is inseparable from the discomfort of living, for a while, without one. What distinguishes her from a layperson is not that she is less certain in some vague, humble way, but that her uncertainty is structured — that she knows, with considerable precision, what would have to be true for each of the explanations she has not yet discarded to be the correct one, and she is prepared to say so. There is, in other words, a world of difference between the paralysis of someone who has never learned enough to have an opinion and the deliberate suspension of judgment practiced by someone who has learned so much that she recognizes how many roads a single set of facts can be made to travel.

It is tempting, and I have certainly been tempted, to conclude from all this that the ideal posture toward any difficult question is simply to multiply doubts until the question itself dissolves, but this too is a misreading of what the masters I have described actually do. Alietti did not refuse to treat her patients while she pondered every conceivable illness that might explain their symptoms; she treated the one that the evidence, examined as rigorously as the circumstances allowed, made most probable, while remaining alert to the vestige of a possibility that she might be wrong, and while building into her plan the means of discovering quickly if she were. The historian did not refuse to publish her findings about the scandal merely because she could not be certain the ambassador had told the truth; she published an account that specified, with unusual candor, exactly which of her claims rested on solid ground and which were inferences that a different reading of the same letters might overturn. What both women had achieved, through years of assiduous practice, was not the elimination of doubt but its domestication: they had learned to build structures — diagnoses, arguments, historical narratives — that could stand upright even though every beam and joist in them was known, by the person who had erected it, to be less than perfectly secure.

The judges I mentioned at the outset furnish perhaps the starkest illustration of this same discipline, because the profession that trains them is one in which the temptation to speak with peremptory finality is built into the very form of the pronouncements they are asked to issue. An opinion, once handed down, is meant to read as though the outcome had been inevitable from the first line, as though the judge who wrote it had merely uncovered a conclusion that the law itself had been waiting, all along, to disclose; and yet any lawyer who has clerked for such a judge will tell you that the version the public reads is invariably the last of a dozen drafts, each of which arrived at a different resolution before being abandoned as the judge discovered some recalcitrant fact, or some precedent that a first reading had overlooked, which the earlier draft could not accommodate. What is most instructive is not that the judge changed her mind — anyone can do that — but

that she continued, deep into the process of writing what would become an authoritative and binding statement of the law, to treat her own reasoning as something that could still be shown to be wrong, and to search, with the same assiduous suspicion she would have brought to an adversary's brief, for the flaw in it. A colleague who studies the drafting history of well-known judicial opinions once remarked to me that the surest sign a judge had stopped thinking seriously about a case was the point at which the drafts stopped changing; a text that arrives instantly at its final form, she said, is far more likely a vestige of a conclusion the judge reached before the reasoning was ever written than the product of reasoning that led somewhere the judge had not anticipated.

It would be a mistake, though, to romanticize this endless revision as though doubt for its own sake were a virtue, since a judge who could never bring herself to sign an opinion because some further equivocation always seemed possible would be failing at her office as surely as one who signed the first draft without a second thought. The parties before her are entitled to a decision, delivered within a term that does not stretch out indefinitely while she perfects an argument that could, in principle, always be perfected further; what she owes them is not certainty she does not possess but a resolution reached through a process rigorous enough that she can stand behind it even while remaining, in her own mind, aware of where a future court might reasonably find it wanting. It is this same balance — between an alertness to error that never quite curdles into paralysis and a willingness to act that never hardens into false certainty — that I have come to regard as the true, if largely ineffable, mark of mastery in any field where the questions worth asking are, by their nature, never permanently closed.

I have come to think that this is what genuine mastery actually consists of, in whatever field one finds it: not the ineffable confidence that laypeople imagine experts to possess, nor the false modesty that experts sometimes perform for an audience they suspect of resenting their authority, but an acquired tolerance for holding a structure together while knowing precisely where its weaknesses lie. The question, whatever it was that first brought the expert to the problem, is very rarely answered in the sense that a beginner imagines answers to work, as a door that, once opened, need never be opened again. It remains open, revisited every time new evidence arrives that might require the whole structure to be rebuilt, and it is precisely this willingness to keep the question alive, long after a less careful mind would have declared it settled, that makes the difference between someone who merely knows a great many facts and someone who has learned, in the fullest sense, how to think.

What I find hardest to explain, to students who ask me how one acquires this kind of judgment, is that it cannot be taught directly, only modeled and absorbed, the way a child learns the cadences of a language before anyone has explained a single rule of its grammar to her. You cannot instruct someone to be circumspect; you can only place her, again and again, in situations where confidence is punished and patience rewarded, until the habit that Alietti embodied becomes, for her too, simply how a difficult question is met.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The essay claims that true experts answer questions with more confidence than novices do. ____ (T / F)
2. Alietti taught by asking residents what other conditions they had ruled out and why. ____ (T / F)
3. The historian described in the essay concluded that the ambassador's letters could be trusted completely. ____ (T / F)
4. According to the essay, structured uncertainty differs from the paralysis of someone who lacks knowledge altogether. ____ (T / F)
5. The essay argues that judges should keep revising an opinion indefinitely until absolute certainty is reached. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. According to the opening paragraph, what quality does the author say distinguishes genuine experts from those who are merely credentialed?

- A) the speed with which they reach a diagnosis or verdict
- B) the discomfort with which they receive questions, rather than the fluency with which they answer them
- C) their willingness to defer entirely to more senior colleagues
- D) the number of qualifications and credentials they have accumulated

2. Why, according to the author, was the novice resident more sanguine about his diagnosis than Alietti was?

- A) because he had memorized more textbook material than she had
- B) because he secretly disagreed with the lecture he had just attended
- C) because his limited exposure to recalcitrant cases had not yet attenuated his confidence
- D) because Alietti had specifically instructed him to be more assertive

3. What did the historian come to doubt about the ambassador's letters?

- A) whether the ambassador himself believed the very account he was composing
- B) whether the letters had survived in the archive at all
- C) whether the letters had been written in the correct historical period
- D) whether the scandal they described had actually taken place

4. What is the author's main point about judicial opinions, based on their drafting history?

- A) that judges rarely revise their opinions once a first draft is written
- B) that opinions are always written in a single, final draft from the outset
- C) that judges should avoid consulting precedent when writing an opinion
- D) that an opinion which never changes through revision is often a sign that reasoning came after the conclusion, not before it

5. What balance does the author ultimately identify as the true mark of mastery?

- A) balancing confidence in public with private indifference to being wrong
- B) balancing alertness to possible error with a willingness to act despite incomplete certainty
- C) balancing the number of years of experience against natural talent
- D) balancing academic credentials against practical, hands-on experience

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. to have a keen eye for	11. a discerning eye	21. to call into question	31. to be steeped in nuance
2. to be steeped in a discipline	12. to be beyond reproach	22. a leap of faith	32. an intuitive grasp of
3. unimpeachable credibility	13. to take something with a grain of salt	23. to be at the mercy of one's own biases	33. to draw on years of experience
4. to hedge one's bets	14. an inveterate skeptic	24. a seasoned practitioner	34. a fallible judgment
5. a modicum of doubt	15. to lend credence to	25. to lend weight to an argument	35. to be second nature
6. to defer to someone's judgment	16. a rule of thumb	26. an unassailable case	36. an air of certainty
7. tacit knowledge	17. to err on the side of caution	27. to be swayed by	37. to muddy the waters
8. to second-guess	18. intellectual rigor	28. a nagging doubt	38. a well-founded suspicion
9. an air of authority	19. to be well-versed in	29. to exercise due diligence	39. to stand the test of scrutiny
10. to split hairs	20. an unerring instinct	30. hard-won expertise	40. an eye for detail

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. In the passage, "peremptory" (confidence) most nearly means:

- A) allowing no contradiction or delay; imperious
- B) admirably cautious and reserved
- C) quietly uncertain and hesitant
- D) based on careful, extensive research

2. "Circumspect" most nearly means:

- A) careful to consider all circumstances before acting or judging
- B) openly arrogant and dismissive
- C) unwilling to change one's opinion under any circumstances
- D) inclined to act on impulse without reflection

3. As used in the text, "sanguine" means:

- A) deeply pessimistic about an outcome
- B) confidently optimistic, often without full justification
- C) indifferent to the outcome of a situation
- D) suspicious of other people's motives

4. "Attenuated" (as in confidence attenuated by exposure to cases) most nearly means:

- A) strengthened and reinforced
- B) documented in written form
- C) weakened or reduced in force
- D) publicly announced or declared

5. "Recalcitrant" cases are those that:

- A) are easily and quickly resolved
- B) are especially rare and seldom encountered
- C) have already been solved by other experts
- D) stubbornly resist explanation or classification

6. "Inured" (through decades of being wrong) most nearly means:

- A) accustomed to something unpleasant through repeated exposure
- B) made emotionally distressed by repeated failure
- C) rewarded financially for persistence
- D) completely unaware of a problem's existence

7. "Assiduously," as used to describe the historian's insistence, means:

- A) carelessly and without much thought
- B) with persistent, diligent care and attention
- C) reluctantly and under pressure
- D) briefly and only in passing

8. "Equivocation" most nearly means:

- A) a clear, unambiguous statement of fact
- B) a formal legal accusation
- C) the use of ambiguous language to avoid committing to a definite position
- D) an expression of strong emotion

9. A "vestige" of a possibility is:

- A) a complete and thorough exploration of it
- B) an entirely new and unconsidered idea
- C) an official rejection of it
- D) a small remaining trace or hint of it

10. "Ineffable" confidence is confidence that is:

- A) easily explained in simple words
- B) too great or profound to be expressed in words

- C) entirely absent from a situation
- D) shared publicly and loudly

Grammar Focus: Complex Subordination and Nested Clauses

At the mastery level, subordination is rarely a matter of attaching a single dependent clause to a main clause; rather, it involves nesting clauses of different kinds — relative, adverbial, and noun clauses — inside one another so that a single sentence can carry several layers of qualification, condition, and reported thought without losing its structural spine. A relative clause may modify a noun that itself sits inside a noun clause functioning as the object of a verb, while an adverbial clause of concession or time frames the whole construction, as in a sentence such as "Although the surgeon who had been consulted only after her colleagues had despaired insisted that the diagnosis her predecessors had reached could not be sustained, no one dared to contradict her." Here a concessive adverbial clause contains a relative clause, which itself contains an adverbial clause of time, and the whole is resolved by a noun clause reporting what was insisted; unpicking such a sentence reveals not decoration but economy, since a writer who mastered this technique can compress into one sentence what a less skilled writer would need three or four separate sentences to convey, and can do so while signalling, through the very architecture of subordination, which information is central and which is merely supporting detail.

This is precisely the rhetorical value of embedding: subordination lets a writer rank ideas rather than simply listing them, relegating background, qualification, and concession to dependent clauses while reserving the main clause for the point that matters most, so that a reader's attention is guided, almost without her noticing, toward what the writer considers primary. Even accomplished writers, however, court two related dangers when they nest clauses this deeply. The first is ambiguity of reference, which arises when a relative pronoun could plausibly attach to more than one preceding noun, leaving a reader uncertain which antecedent is intended; the second is simple overload, in which so many clauses are embedded within one another — clause within clause within clause — that a reader loses track of which subject governs which verb before the sentence has resolved itself. The remedy is not to abandon complex subordination, which remains one of the chief instruments of sophisticated academic and literary prose, but to deploy it with discipline: to keep antecedents unambiguous, to vary the depth of embedding across a paragraph so that not every sentence strains under the same architectural weight, and to ensure that however many clauses a sentence accumulates, a reader can still recover, without rereading, exactly which clause depends on which.

Figure 1

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples

Relative inside adverbial The report, which she had drafted, was rejected once the board met.	Noun clause as object He insisted that the figures her team had checked were accurate.	Discipline needed keep antecedents unambiguous; vary depth per sentence
--	---	--

Reference Table: Layers of Subordination

Clause type	Function	Example
Relative clause	Modifies a noun, often nested inside another clause	the diagnosis that her predecessors had reached
Adverbial clause (concession/time)	Frames the main clause with a condition, contrast, or time relation	Although the surgeon insisted that...
Noun clause (reported thought)	Functions as subject, object, or complement, often reporting speech or belief	...insisted that the diagnosis could not be sustained
Nested noun clause within a relative clause	A noun clause embedded inside a relative clause modifying a preceding noun	the case that no one believed she could solve
Multiple embedding	Two or more clause types nested within a single sentence, ranking main point above supporting detail	Whoever has watched an expert work will notice that the certainty she projects conceals a doubt she has learned to hold in reserve

Examples

1. The diagnostician, who had learned that confidence which arrives too easily is rarely confidence that has been earned, waited until every alternative that the symptoms might suggest had been considered before she would commit herself.
2. Because the historian understood that a document's survival says nothing about whether what it claims actually happened, she refused to accept, however persuasive it appeared, any account that could not be corroborated by evidence which had been gathered independently.
3. What the judge eventually realized, after drafting and discarding an opinion that had seemed, when she first wrote it, entirely sound, was that reasoning which arrives at its conclusion too quickly is reasoning that has not yet been tested.

4. Although the resident who proposed the diagnosis believed that the case was straightforward, Alietti knew that a symptom which fits one explanation neatly can just as easily be masking a condition that no one in the room has yet considered.
5. It is the amateur, dazzled by a document whose very existence seems to guarantee its reliability, who mistakes what an archive preserves for what actually occurred, whereas the scholar who has spent years with the same sources knows how much the truth that a letter claims to report can diverge from the truth itself.
6. Whoever has watched a true expert work will notice that the certainty she projects when a decision must finally be made conceals a doubt that she has not abandoned but merely learned, through long practice, how to hold in reserve until the evidence that would resolve it arrives.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- I stand to be corrected, but...
hedging an assertion while openly acknowledging one's own fallibility
- Far be it from me to second-guess...
prefacing a respectful yet pointed challenge to someone's authority or judgment
- By all accounts, ...
introducing a claim based on consensus or reputation rather than firsthand verification
- It would be remiss of me not to mention...
flagging an important caveat, exception, or piece of context before proceeding
- One could be forgiven for assuming...
acknowledging that an inference is plausible even though it turns out to be mistaken
- If my instincts serve me right, ...
expressing a judgment grounded in experience and intuition rather than certainty
- I wouldn't stake my reputation on it
qualifying a claim to signal limited, though not negligible, confidence
- There's more to this than meets the eye
signaling that surface appearances are deceptive and closer scrutiny is warranted

Sample Dialogue

A: I hear the board is bringing in an external auditor to review Dr. Alvarez's diagnosis before the surgery goes ahead.

B: Far be it from me to second-guess a surgeon with thirty years under her belt, but the case does raise some rather unusual questions.

A: By all accounts, she's never been wrong on a call like this before.

B: True, and I stand to be corrected, but something about the scan simply doesn't add up.

A: It would be remiss of me not to mention that the radiologist flagged the very same anomaly last week.

B: One could be forgiven for assuming it's nothing more than a shadow artifact, but I'm not entirely convinced.

A: If my instincts serve me right, this warrants a second opinion before anyone commits to a course of action.

B: Agreed. That said, I wouldn't stake my reputation on either interpretation just yet.

A: There's more to this than meets the eye, if you ask me.

B: Precisely why we ought to let the specialists deliberate rather than rush to judgment.

A: Fair enough. I'll draft a memo requesting the peer review this afternoon.

B: Good thinking. Better a brief delay now than an irreversible mistake later.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase would best be used to introduce a piece of information that is widely believed but not personally verified?

- A) I stand to be corrected
- B) By all accounts
- C) I wouldn't stake my reputation on it
- D) There's more to this than meets the eye

2. If a colleague says, "Far be it from me to second-guess the committee's decision," what are they most likely signaling?

- A) Full and enthusiastic agreement with the decision
- B) Reluctant but respectful disagreement or challenge
- C) Complete indifference to the outcome
- D) A request for further clarification

3. Which expression is most appropriate when acknowledging that one might be mistaken?

- A) It would be remiss of me not to mention
- B) I stand to be corrected
- C) One could be forgiven for assuming
- D) There's more to this than meets the eye

4. The phrase "One could be forgiven for assuming X" is typically followed by:

- A) A confirmation that X is entirely correct
- B) A clarification that X is a reasonable but ultimately mistaken inference
- C) A formal apology for a factual error
- D) A literal request for forgiveness

5. Which phrase suggests that a situation is more complex than it initially appears?

- A) By all accounts
- B) If my instincts serve me right
- C) There's more to this than meets the eye
- D) It would be remiss of me not to mention

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Which sentence correctly nests a relative clause inside a noun clause?

- A) She believed that the theory which few had tested was flawed.
- B) She believed the theory, which few had tested, was flawed.
- C) She believed the theory which was flawed, and few had tested it.
- D) She believed, the theory which few had tested, was flawed.

2. Choose the sentence with a correctly placed adverbial clause of concession framing an embedded noun clause.

- A) He knew, although the evidence was incomplete, that he published his findings.
- B) Although he knew that the evidence was incomplete, he published his findings.
- C) He published his findings, that the evidence although incomplete was known.
- D) Although the evidence, he published his findings, was incomplete he knew.

3. Identify the sentence in which the relative pronoun's antecedent is ambiguous.

- A) The judge who wrote the opinion that the lawyers criticized later retired.
- B) The report that the committee, which had met twice, finally approved was long.
- C) She read the letter the ambassador had written, which surprised no one.
- D) The doctor treated the patient whose symptoms had puzzled everyone.

4. Which sentence best demonstrates a noun clause functioning as the subject of the main verb?

- A) The diagnosis that was wrong became evident within a week.
- B) The diagnosis, which had been wrong, became evident within a week.
- C) Because the diagnosis was wrong, it became evident within a week.
- D) That the diagnosis had been wrong became evident within a week.

5. Select the sentence that nests an adverbial clause inside a relative clause.

- A) The scholar who, because he doubted the source, delayed publication was cautious.
- B) The scholar who doubted the source, and because of this delayed publication, was cautious.
- C) Because he doubted the source, the scholar who delayed publication was cautious.
- D) The scholar delayed publication because he doubted the cautious source who wrote it.

6. Which sentence contains three levels of embedding: a noun clause containing a relative clause containing an adverbial clause?

- A) He said the case was closed, which baffled everyone, until new evidence emerged.
- B) He said that the case, which had baffled everyone until new evidence emerged, was finally closed.
- C) The case which he said was closed baffled everyone until new evidence emerged.
- D) Until new evidence emerged, he said the case which baffled everyone was closed.

7. Choose the most stylistically economical sentence, using nested subordination rather than a string of coordinated clauses.

- A) The judge drafted an opinion, and she revised it many times, and she finally signed it.
- B) The judge drafted an opinion; she revised it many times; then she signed it.

- C) The judge, who revised her opinion many times before she finally signed it, drafted it carefully.
- D) The judge drafted, revised, and then she signed the opinion many times.

8. Which sentence avoids the "overload" pitfall described in the grammar explanation?

- A) The doctor who treated the patient whom the specialist who had examined him first referred believed the diagnosis that everyone who reviewed the case doubted was correct.
- B) The doctor, whom the specialist referred the patient whom he examined to, believed the diagnosis.
- C) The doctor who the specialist who examined the patient whom he treated referred believed the diagnosis.
- D) The doctor believed the diagnosis was correct, although the specialist who had first examined the patient doubted it.

9. Identify the correctly formed sentence with a noun clause as the object of "insisted."

- A) She insisted that the letter which had been lost be found immediately.
- B) She insisted the letter, that had been lost, be found immediately.
- C) She insisted, that the letter had been lost, be found immediately.
- D) She insisted the letter had been lost that be found immediately.

10. Which sentence best illustrates subordination used to rank a main point above supporting detail?

- A) The essay makes an argument, and it also gives examples, and it also draws a conclusion.
- B) Although it offers several examples along the way, the essay's main point remains that mastery requires structured doubt.
- C) The essay's main point is mastery requires structured doubt, and there are also examples.
- D) Examples are offered by the essay, and doubt is discussed, and mastery is the topic.

11. "Peremptory" most nearly means:

- A) tentative and easily revised
- B) thoroughly researched
- C) admitting no refusal or delay
- D) publicly disputed

12. Choose the correctly punctuated sentence with an embedded non-restrictive relative clause.

- A) The historian who I mentioned earlier, published her findings last year.
- B) The historian I mentioned, earlier published her findings, last year.
- C) The historian whom, I mentioned earlier published her findings last year.
- D) The historian, whom I mentioned earlier, published her findings last year.

13. Which sentence contains a restrictive relative clause (no commas needed)?

- A) The letters that the ambassador wrote revealed a scandal.
- B) The letters, which the ambassador wrote, revealed a scandal.
- C) The letters the ambassador, wrote, revealed a scandal.
- D) The letters which, the ambassador wrote revealed, a scandal.

14. "Recalcitrant" is closest in meaning to:

- A) obedient and compliant

- B) stubbornly resistant to control or explanation
- C) freshly discovered
- D) widely accepted as true

15. Select the sentence that correctly embeds a conditional adverbial clause within a main clause containing a noun clause object.

- A) If the evidence changed she admitted, that her conclusion might need revision.
- B) She admitted her conclusion, if the evidence changed, that might need revision.
- C) She admitted that, if the evidence changed, her conclusion might need revision.
- D) She admitted that her conclusion, that if changed the evidence, might need revision.

16. Which of the following best demonstrates a whom-clause embedded correctly as object of a preposition within a relative clause?

- A) The colleague to who she confided her doubts later published the same theory.
- B) The colleague whom to she confided her doubts later published the same theory.
- C) The colleague she confided to whom her doubts later published the same theory.
- D) The colleague to whom she confided her doubts later published the same theory.

17. "Inured to something" means:

- A) made used to something unpleasant through repeated experience
- B) newly exposed to and shocked by something
- C) formally warned about something
- D) completely protected from something

18. Which sentence most clearly signals, through subordination, that the concession is less important than the main claim?

- A) The theory was flawed, but it was still influential, and many scholars cited it.
- B) Though flawed, the theory remained so influential that scholars continued citing it for decades.
- C) The theory, flawed and influential, was cited by scholars for decades and remained so.
- D) Influential and flawed, the theory scholars cited it for decades.

19. Choose the sentence in which the embedded clause creates unintended ambiguity.

- A) The report submitted by the analyst who reviewed the data was rejected.
- B) The analyst reviewed the data and then submitted the report, which was rejected.
- C) The report that the analyst who reviewed the data submitted was rejected.
- D) The analyst, who reviewed the data, submitted a report that was rejected.

20. "Assiduous" most nearly means:

- A) careless and inattentive
- B) openly hostile
- C) occurring only occasionally
- D) marked by great care, effort, and persistence

21. Which sentence correctly nests a relative clause within an adverbial clause of time?

- A) When the judge, who had drafted twelve versions, finally signed the opinion, the lawyers exhaled.
- B) The judge signed the opinion when, who had drafted twelve versions, the lawyers exhaled.
- C) When the lawyers exhaled the judge who had drafted twelve versions finally signed.
- D) The judge who, when had drafted twelve versions, signed the opinion, and lawyers exhaled.

22. "Equivocation" most nearly means:

- A) a firm and unambiguous commitment
- B) deliberately vague language meant to avoid a clear position
- C) a mathematical calculation
- D) an emotional outburst

23. Which sentence best shows a noun clause nested within a relative clause modifying "the claim"?

- A) The claim, which she believed that was true, turned out to be false.
- B) The claim she made, that was believed true, turned out false.
- C) The claim that she believed was true turned out to be false.
- D) She made the claim; it was believed true; it turned out false.

24. "Sanguine" most nearly means:

- A) reluctant to speak
- B) deeply anxious and fearful
- C) coldly analytical
- D) confidently hopeful, sometimes excessively so

25. Which sentence demonstrates the most sophisticated, well-controlled multiple embedding without ambiguity?

- A) The surgeon who had been told that the diagnosis her colleagues had reached could not be trusted nevertheless proceeded, because she believed that the evidence which had just arrived changed everything.
- B) The surgeon proceeded because the diagnosis, her colleagues, could not be trusted, and evidence changed everything which just arrived.
- C) Because evidence had arrived that changed everything, believed the surgeon, the diagnosis could not be trusted which her colleagues had reached.
- D) The surgeon who proceeded, her colleagues could not be trusted, believed evidence just arrived changing everything.

UNIT 2

Never Before Had...

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to narrating dramatic and unprecedented experiences, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: The Turning of the Tide

I had crossed open water alone before, in seas that forgave inexperience and currents that, however contrary, never conspired to kill, and I had allowed myself to believe, with the complacency peculiar to sailors who have never been properly frightened, that solitude at sea held no terror I had not already priced into my courage. Never before had I attempted the passage south of the cape that older sailors mentioned only in lowered voices, as though naming it aloud might summon the weather it was famous for; and never before had I grasped how quickly the ocean's temperament could turn capricious, indifferent one hour to whether I lived or died and murderous the next, without so much as a change in the color of the sky to warn me which mood I was sailing into. I had provisioned the boat, a thirty-two-foot sloop I had named Providence with more hope than irony, for six weeks of self-sufficiency, and for the first three of those weeks the sea had been, if not gentle, at least honest about its intentions, so that by the time the barometer began its slow, unbidden slide on the twenty-second day, I mistook the falling needle for an instrument malfunction rather than a warning worth heeding.

Not until the glass had dropped a full ten millibars in under two hours did I finally abandon the log entry I had been writing and climb into the cockpit to look, properly look, at a horizon that had been swallowed whole by a wall of cloud the color of a healing bruise. Only then did I understand that the swell beneath the hull, which twenty minutes earlier had seemed merely restless, was in fact the advance guard of something considerably larger and more purposeful working its way toward me from the southwest, and only then did the small, incipient unease I had been suppressing since dawn crystallize into something closer to dread. I reefed the mainsail with hands that had grown suddenly and infuriatingly clumsy, lashed everything that could move, and radioed a position report to no one in particular, since I already suspected, correctly, that no vessel would be near enough to hear it.

So swiftly did the wind rise once the front arrived that I had barely secured the companionway hatch before the first gust laid the boat over onto her beam ends, and so absolute was the darkness that followed that I lost, for several disorienting seconds, any sense of which way was up. What followed I have tried, many times since, to describe to people who have never been inside a storm at sea, and I have concluded that the failure is not mine but the language's, since English was not built by people who needed words for a cacophony that arrived simultaneously from above, below, and every direction the compass could name. No sooner had I fought the boat upright than a second wave, larger than the first, struck her broadside and drove her under so completely that I remember, with a clarity that still unsettles me, the strange green calm of being submerged, harnessed to a boat that had, for one atavistic and interminable moment, become simply another object drowning in the same water I was.

So violent was the knockdown that the mast, when the boat finally righted herself, no longer stood at the angle a mast is meant to stand, and so total was my disorientation that it took me a full minute, clinging to a stanchion with fingers I could not feel, to understand that I was still, against every reasonable expectation, alive. It was in the trough that followed, in the brief, treacherous lull between one towering wave and the next, that I experienced what I can only call the most visceral thought of my life, a thought unmediated by any of the reassuring stories I had told myself about competence and preparation: that the sea, indifferent and inexorable, would take this boat and everything in it whenever it chose to, regardless of what I wanted, regardless of what I had trained for, regardless even of whether I fought or surrendered.

Only then, stripped of every illusion that skill could negotiate with weather, did I feel something shift inside me that I still find difficult to name — not resignation, exactly, and not the manufactured courage of adventure stories, but a strange, obdurate clarity that had no room left in it for anything but the next necessary action. I did not pray, and I did not weep, though I suspect either would have been forgivable; I simply reached for the storm jib I had lashed to the foredeck and began, with movements that felt as though they belonged to someone considerably calmer than I was, to do the one thing that might keep the boat's bow pointed into the waves rather than broadside to them.

Not once, in the hours that followed, did I allow myself the luxury of imagining rescue, since I knew with an immutable certainty that no vessel and no aircraft could reach me before the storm either passed or finished what it had started, and it was precisely the abandonment of that hope that freed me, paradoxically, to work rather than to wait. I bailed until my shoulders screamed and then bailed further, lashed a second line to the broken stay to keep what remained of the mast from working itself entirely free, and steered by feel through a darkness so total that the only evidence I had of the boat's position relative to the waves was the pattern, learned rather than seen, of how she pitched beneath me. So exhausted did I become, somewhere in the small hours, that I began to hallucinate, briefly and vividly, the voices of people I had left on shore, calling instructions across water that carried no such voices; and it was only the boat's sudden, violent lurch, throwing me hard against the cockpit coaming, that returned me, gasping, to a night that had the temerity to still be getting worse.

Dawn, when it finally came, arrived not as a sunrise but as a gradual and grudging lightening of gray upon gray, so imperceptible in its beginnings that I did not trust it until the wave crests, which I had spent the night judging only by sound, resolved themselves at last into shapes I could see and therefore anticipate. Only later, once the wind had dropped enough to let me lash the tiller and collapse, still harnessed, into the cockpit, did I allow myself to survey what the night had actually cost: a mast that would need to be jury-rigged for the remaining passage, a hull scarred along one rail where a fitting had torn free, and a body that had been, in ways I would not fully catalogue for days, thoroughly and comprehensively battered. Not until I had slept, in fragments, for the better part of an afternoon did I trust myself to stand at the chart table and calculate, with hands that had finally stopped shaking, how many days remained between where the storm had left me and the nearest harbor that could receive a boat as wrecked as mine had become.

For three days afterward I sailed a wounded boat toward a coastline I could not yet see, rationing water I had not thought to conserve before the storm and eating, when I ate at all, straight from cans I did not bother to warm. So depleted was I by the second of those days that simple tasks — coiling a line, checking a compass

bearing — took four times as long as they should have, and so disinclined was I to trust my own judgment that I checked and rechecked every calculation twice before acting on it, a caution that would have struck the sailor I had been three weeks earlier as almost comically excessive. Not once during those three days did the wind rise again to anything resembling the storm's fury, and yet not once, either, did I permit myself to relax the vigilance the storm had taught me, since I now understood, in a way no instructor could have conveyed to me on land, how little warning the sea troubles itself to give before it changes its mind. On the third evening, with the mast holding and the water calm enough to reflect a sunset I watched with an attention I had never before given a sunset, I sighted, low on the horizon, a smudge of land that the chart confirmed, after some anxious cross-referencing, was exactly where it ought to be.

People have asked me, in the years since, what I learned from a night I have no wish to repeat, and I have never managed an answer that fully satisfies them, because what I learned was not a lesson in the tidy sense they are hoping for but a redrawing of some interior boundary I had not known was movable. Never before had I understood, in any way that mattered, the difference between the confidence I had carried aboard, which was really only untested optimism wearing confidence's clothes, and the entirely different thing that had replaced it by the time I sailed, weeks later and under a jury-rigged mast, into a harbor whose lights I had genuinely doubted I would live to see. So thoroughly had the storm dismantled every assumption I had carried about my own competence that what remained afterward was smaller, plainer, and considerably more durable: not the obdurate belief that I could survive anything, which would have been merely another comforting fiction, but the knowledge, earned rather than assumed, of exactly what I would do with the little I actually had left once the sea, as it eventually does to everyone who trusts it, stopped being generous. It is that knowledge, and not any pride in having endured, that I still carry, unbidden, into every ordinary storm that life has sent my way since.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The narrator had sailed south of the cape once before, so the storm did not entirely surprise her. ____ (T / F)
2. The narrator initially mistook the falling barometer for a broken instrument rather than a genuine warning. ____ (T / F)
3. The boat was knocked down only once during the entire storm. ____ (T / F)
4. During the worst of the storm, the narrator decided that imagining rescue would only waste energy she needed for work. ____ (T / F)
5. By the time she reached harbor, the narrator felt that her survival had proven she could withstand absolutely anything. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. What does the narrator say about her attitude toward solo sailing before this voyage?

- A) she believed her prior experience meant solitude at sea held no terror she had not already accounted for
- B) she had always dreaded sailing alone and avoided it whenever possible

- C) she considered the cape south of her route to be entirely safe and unremarkable
- D) she had never sailed alone before this particular passage

2. What finally made the narrator look properly at the deteriorating conditions?

- A) the sudden appearance of the storm jib
- B) the barometer dropping ten millibars in under two hours
- C) a scheduled check of the ship's log
- D) a radio warning from another vessel

3. What realization came to the narrator in the trough between waves after the knockdown?

- A) that she had misjudged the boat's provisions
- B) that she should abandon the boat immediately
- C) that the sea was indifferent and inexorable regardless of her skill or effort
- D) that the storm was about to end

4. Why did the narrator stop hoping for rescue during the storm?

- A) she believed rescue would arrive regardless of her actions
- B) she had lost consciousness and could not call for help
- C) her radio had been destroyed by the first wave
- D) she calculated that help was too far away and abandoning hope freed her to work instead

5. What does the narrator conclude, in retrospect, about what the night actually taught her?

- A) that competence gained through the ordeal was smaller and plainer, but far more durable than her earlier untested confidence
- B) that the storm had been less dangerous than it seemed at the time
- C) that she could now survive absolutely any danger without fear
- D) that sailing alone is never worth the risk

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. to weather (a storm)	11. to be swept overboard	21. dauntless	31. to defy the odds
2. harrowing	12. harbinger (of doom)	22. to be gripped by fear	32. foreboding
3. foolhardy	13. to grapple with	23. precarious	33. indomitable
4. unprecedented	14. trepidation	24. to hurtle	34. to be wracked with doubt
5. to founder	15. to falter	25. bracing	35. peril

6. mettle	16. sheer audacity	26. to falter at the helm	36. to brave (the elements)
7. to be at the mercy of	17. to capsize	27. resolute	37. visceral
8. squall	18. maelstrom	28. tempestuous	38. harrowing ordeal
9. to careen	19. unfathomable	29. to eke out (survival)	39. steely resolve
10. gale-force	20. to lash (oneself) to	30. white-knuckle	40. to skirt disaster

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. In the passage, "capricious" (the ocean's temperament) most nearly means:

- A) unpredictable and given to sudden changes of mood
- B) reliably calm and gentle
- C) slow-moving and sluggish
- D) scientifically measurable and precise

2. "Unbidden" (the barometer's unbidden slide) most nearly means:

- A) requested in advance
- B) occurring without being invited or asked for
- C) accompanied by a warning
- D) reversible at will

3. As used in the text, "incipient" (unease) means:

- A) imaginary and without basis
- B) fully developed and overwhelming
- C) beginning to develop; in an early stage
- D) completely resolved

4. "Cacophony," as used to describe the storm's noise, means:

- A) a single, pure musical note
- B) a moment of complete silence
- C) a rhythmic, pleasant pattern of sound
- D) a harsh, discordant mixture of sounds

5. "Atavistic" (moment) most nearly means:

- A) relating to a return to a primitive or ancestral state
- B) relating to advanced technology
- C) occurring only in the future
- D) entirely imaginary or fictional

6. "Visceral" (thought) most nearly means:

- A) coldly rational and detached
- B) felt as a deep, instinctive, bodily sensation rather than as abstract reasoning

- C) borrowed from someone else's experience
- D) expressed only in writing, never felt

7. "Inexorable," describing the sea, means:

- A) visible only at a distance
- B) easily persuaded or diverted from a course
- C) impossible to stop or change; relentless
- D) generous and forgiving

8. "Obdurate" (clarity) most nearly means:

- A) fleeting and quickly forgotten
- B) confused and uncertain
- C) borrowed from another person's advice
- D) stubbornly fixed and unyielding

9. "Immutable" (certainty) most nearly means:

- A) unable to be changed; permanent
- B) based on guesswork
- C) shared by everyone equally
- D) constantly changing and unstable

10. The narrator says the night had the "temerity" to still be getting worse. "Temerity" most nearly means:

- A) complete exhaustion
- B) reckless boldness or audacity
- C) quiet humility
- D) careful planning

Grammar Focus: Literary Inversion for Rhetorical Effect

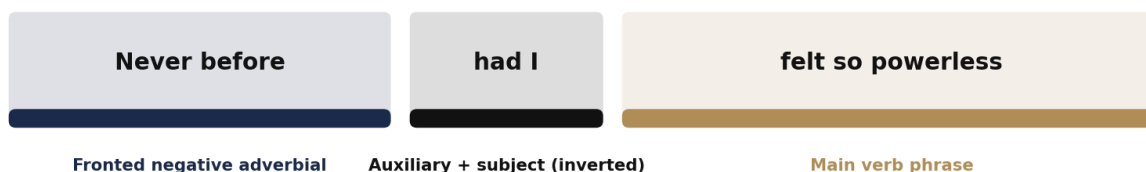
Beyond the negative-adverbial inversions typically introduced at B2 — Never, Rarely, No sooner ... than — mastery-level English draws on a further family of inversions whose primary purpose is not grammatical economy but rhetorical staging. "Never before had I felt so powerless" inverts the subject and the auxiliary "had" after a fronted time expression that intensifies the perfect aspect, presenting an experience as absolutely unprecedented rather than merely new. "Only then did I understand" and "Only later did she admit" employ do-support inversion after a restrictive adverbial of time ("only then," "only later," "only when"), and their chief effect is to delay the verb — and therefore the reader's understanding of what happened — until the precise dramatic instant the writer wishes to spotlight; the inversion itself becomes a hinge on which the narrative pivots from uncertainty to realization. "So + adjective + that" clauses (So violent was the storm that the mast gave way) invert the predicative adjective and the subject after fronting the adjective for intensity, so that the reader registers the extremity of the quality before learning what it caused, reversing the natural cause-then-consequence order of ordinary prose. "Not until + clause + did..." fronts an entire subordinate clause of time or condition before inverting the main clause, deliberately

withholding the main action until the reader has absorbed exactly how long, or under what circumstance, it was delayed.

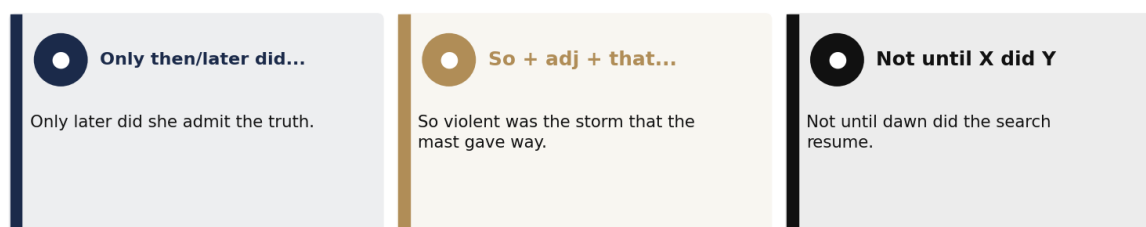
These constructions share a common rhetorical logic that distinguishes them from their more mechanical B2 counterparts: each one manipulates the order in which information reaches the reader in order to produce suspense, gravity, or climactic emphasis, effects that are largely unavailable to a writer who insists on canonical subject-verb word order. A narrative that reports "I had never felt so powerless before" states a fact; one that inverts it — "Never before had I felt so powerless" — performs the fact, granting it the weight of a formal, almost oratorical declaration appropriate to a turning point in the story. Because this weight is considerable, such inversions are self-rationing: a paragraph in which every sentence begins with a fronted negative or restrictive adverbial quickly reads as overwrought rather than dramatic, so skilled writers reserve the device for genuine hinge-points — the moment danger becomes undeniable, the instant understanding finally arrives, the point at which a character's assumptions collapse — and allow ordinary word order to carry the surrounding narrative. Recognizing where a writer has chosen to invert, then, is itself a form of literary analysis: it tells a reader exactly which moments the writer considered too important to present in the plain, unmarked syntax of everyday report.

Figure 2

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples



Reference Table: Literary Inversion Patterns

Pattern	Function	Example
Never before + had + subject + past participle	Marks an experience as wholly unprecedented, heightening its dramatic novelty	Never before had I felt so powerless against the sea.
Only then/Only later + did + subject + base verb	Delays the verb until a precise dramatic instant, building suspense before the realization is revealed	Only then did I understand what the silence meant.

So + adjective + was/did + subject + that-clause	Fronts an intensified quality before its consequence, reversing ordinary cause-then-effect order for emphasis	So violent was the storm that the mast gave way.
Not until + clause + did + subject + base verb	Withholds the main clause's action until the reader has absorbed how long it was delayed	Not until dawn broke did the wind finally ease.
Little/Rarely + auxiliary + subject + base verb	A related B2-adjacent pattern often paired with the above for stylistic contrast within the same passage	Little did I know how much that night would change me.

Examples

1. Never before had the sailor felt so entirely at the mercy of a force indifferent to her survival.
2. Not until the mast cracked did she abandon any hope that skill alone would see her through the night.
3. So violent was the knockdown that the boat lay, for several terrifying seconds, entirely on her side.
4. Only then did she understand that competence and control were not, after all, the same thing.
5. Only later, once the storm had passed, did she allow herself to grieve for the boat's shattered rigging.
6. So thoroughly had the night dismantled her confidence that what remained afterward was smaller, plainer, and far more durable.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- Nothing could have prepared me for
signalling that an experience utterly exceeded prior expectation or readiness
- It was only afterwards that I realised
marking a delayed recognition of danger or significance, once the ordeal had passed
- There was a moment when I truly believed
introducing a peak instant of genuine dread or despair within a narrative
- I shall never forget the sheer
emphasising an indelible, visceral impression left by an extraordinary event
- Little did I know that
foreshadowing an ironic or ominous turn the narrator could not yet perceive
- Against all odds
underscoring an outcome that defied reasonable expectation of survival or success
- What haunts me most is
highlighting the single most persistent or troubling recollection from the ordeal
- To this day, I cannot explain
conveying lingering bewilderment or awe that defies rational account

Sample Dialogue

A: I still find it extraordinary that you sailed that stretch alone. Nothing could have prepared me for conditions like that, surely?

B: Honestly, nothing could have prepared me for it either, no matter how many charts I'd studied beforehand.

A: Was there a specific moment when you feared the worst?

B: There was a moment when I truly believed the boat would go under. The mast was groaning, and I was lashed to the wheel with water pouring over the deck.

A: That's harrowing. Did you sense the danger building beforehand, or did it strike suddenly?

B: Little did I know that the calm before it was simply the eye of a far larger system gathering strength offshore.

A: And once you'd made it through, how did you feel?

B: It was only afterwards that I realised how close I'd come to capsizing. In the moment, instinct simply took over.

A: Against all odds, you brought her home in one piece.

B: I still marvel at that myself. What haunts me most is the sound the rigging made — a shriek I can still hear now.

A: I shall never forget the sheer terror in your voice on the radio call that night.

B: To this day, I cannot explain how I kept my nerve, but something in me simply refused to let go of the helm.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase best conveys that an experience went far beyond anything the speaker had anticipated?

- A) It was only afterwards that I realised
- B) Nothing could have prepared me for
- C) What haunts me most is
- D) Against all odds

2. "Little did I know that" is typically used to introduce which kind of information?

- A) A statistic verified after the event
- B) An ironic or ominous detail unknown to the narrator at the time
- C) A formal apology to the listener
- D) A neutral summary of the weather

3. Which phrase specifically highlights a single, most persistent memory from a dramatic ordeal?

- A) There was a moment when I truly believed
- B) To this day, I cannot explain
- C) What haunts me most is
- D) I shall never forget the sheer

4. Complete the sentence appropriately: "_____, we managed to reach the harbour before the second storm front arrived."

- A) It was only afterwards that I realised
- B) Against all odds
- C) Little did I know that

D) What haunts me most is

5. Which phrase most naturally introduces a delayed realisation, occurring only after the danger had passed?

- A) There was a moment when I truly believed
- B) Nothing could have prepared me for
- C) It was only afterwards that I realised
- D) I shall never forget the sheer

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Which sentence correctly uses "Never before had" inversion?

- A) Never before had I felt such fear.
- B) Never I had before felt such fear.
- C) Never before did I had felt such fear.
- D) Never before I had felt such fear.

2. Choose the sentence that correctly inverts "Only then."

- A) Only then I did realize the danger.
- B) Only then did I realize the danger.
- C) Only then I realized did the danger.
- D) Only then realized I the danger.

3. Which sentence correctly forms a "So + adjective + that" inversion?

- A) So was violent the storm that the mast broke.
- B) So violent the storm was that the mast broke.
- C) So violent was the storm that the mast broke.
- D) The storm so violent was that the mast broke.

4. Select the correctly inverted "Not until" sentence.

- A) Not until did dawn break the wind ease.
- B) Not until the wind eased did dawn broke.
- C) Not until dawn broke the wind did ease.
- D) Not until dawn broke did the wind ease.

5. Which sentence uses "Only later" inversion correctly?

- A) Only later did she understand the risk she had taken.
- B) Only later she did understand the risk she had taken.
- C) Only later understood she did the risk she had taken.
- D) Only later she understood did the risk she had taken.

6. Identify the sentence that correctly combines "Not until" with a perfect auxiliary.

- A) Not until she slept had for hours did she trust herself to stand.
- B) Not until she had slept for hours did she trust herself to stand.
- C) Not until she had slept for hours she did trust herself to stand.
- D) Not until had she slept for hours did she trust herself to stand.

7. Which sentence correctly inverts "So exhausted"?

- A) So exhausted she became that she began to hallucinate.
- B) So exhausted did she become that she began to hallucinate.
- C) So exhausted was she that she began to hallucinate.
- D) So she was exhausted that she began to hallucinate.

8. Choose the sentence that correctly uses "Never before had ... than" is NOT required; select the properly formed inversion instead.

- A) Never before the crew had faced a storm of such ferocity.
- B) Never had before the crew faced a storm of such ferocity.
- C) Never before did the crew had faced a storm of such ferocity.
- D) Never before had the crew faced a storm of such ferocity.

9. Which sentence correctly uses "Only then" with a modal auxiliary?

- A) Only then could she understand the full extent of the damage.
- B) Only then understood she could the full extent of the damage.
- C) Only then she understood could the full extent of the damage.
- D) Only then she could understand the full extent of the damage.

10. Select the sentence with the correctly ordered "So + adjective" inversion.

- A) So was total the darkness that she lost all sense of direction.
- B) So total was the darkness that she lost all sense of direction.
- C) So the darkness was total that she lost all sense of direction.
- D) So total the darkness was that she lost all sense of direction.

11. "Capricious" most nearly means:

- A) slow and deliberate
- B) mathematically precise
- C) unpredictable and prone to sudden change
- D) dependable and consistent

12. Which sentence correctly uses "Not until" fronting a full subordinate clause?

- A) Not until the storm had passed completely they did dare to leave the shelter.
- B) Not until did the storm pass completely, they dared to leave the shelter.
- C) Not until the storm passing completely did they dare to leave the shelter.
- D) Not until the storm had passed completely did they dare to leave the shelter.

13. Choose the sentence demonstrating correct inversion after "Rarely."

- A) Rarely have I witnessed such courage.

- B) Rarely witnessed I have such courage.
- C) Rarely did I have witnessed such courage.
- D) Rarely I have witnessed such courage.

14. "Incipient" most nearly means:

- A) fully matured and complete
- B) just beginning to appear or develop
- C) permanently ended
- D) widely publicized

15. Which sentence best illustrates the rhetorical function of "Only then did" as described in the grammar explanation — delaying the verb to build suspense?

- A) Understanding came only then to the danger being real.
- B) I understood only then that the danger was real.
- C) Only then did I understand that the danger was real.
- D) I did understand only then, the danger was real.

16. Select the correct inversion for "So thoroughly."

- A) So thoroughly the storm had changed him that his friends barely recognized him.
- B) So had thoroughly the storm changed him that his friends barely recognized him.
- C) So thoroughly did the storm changed him that his friends barely recognized him.
- D) So thoroughly had the storm changed him that his friends barely recognized him.

17. "Cacophony" is closest in meaning to:

- A) a harsh, jarring mixture of sounds
- B) a moment of total silence
- C) a whispered conversation
- D) a harmonious melody

18. Which sentence correctly avoids double marking of inversion (using both an inverted auxiliary and an extra subject-verb order)?

- A) So violent was the storm was that the mast broke.
- B) So violent was the storm that the mast broke.
- C) So violent the storm was was that the mast broke.
- D) So violent did the storm was that the mast broke.

19. "Obdurate" most nearly means:

- A) deeply confused
- B) easily swayed and flexible
- C) stubbornly unyielding
- D) newly formed

20. Choose the sentence that correctly inverts after "Little."

- A) Little knew I did how much that night would change me.

- B) Little I did know how much that night would change me.
- C) Little I knew how much that night would change me.
- D) Little did I know how much that night would change me.

21. "Immutable" most nearly means:

- A) fixed and unchangeable
- B) recently discovered
- C) open to negotiation
- D) constantly shifting

22. Which sentence correctly combines "Not only... but also" (a B2 pattern) alongside a mastery-level "Never before had" clause, without grammatical error?

- A) Not only violent was the storm, but the crew never before had faced such fear.
- B) Not only was the storm violent, but never before had the crew faced such fear.
- C) Not only the storm was violent, but never before the crew had faced such fear.
- D) Not only was the storm violent, but never before did the crew had faced such fear.

23. "Temerity" most nearly means:

- A) quiet patience
- B) careful caution
- C) reckless boldness
- D) deep sorrow

24. Select the sentence in which "Only then" is followed by the correct inverted auxiliary for a passive construction.

- A) Only then the true extent of the damage was revealed.
- B) Only then revealed was the true extent of the damage.
- C) Only then did the true extent of the damage was revealed.
- D) Only then was the true extent of the damage revealed.

25. Which sentence best demonstrates the mastery-level use of "So + adjective + that" to reverse the normal cause-then-effect order of a narrative, as explained in the grammar section?

- A) So quickly did the wind rise that the sailor had no time to react.
- B) The wind so quickly rose that the sailor had no time, to react.
- C) So the wind rose quickly that no time the sailor had to react.
- D) The wind rose so quickly that the sailor had no time to react, which was very sudden.

UNIT 3

What Remains Unsaid

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to interpreting unspoken tension and communication, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: What the Silence Carried

There is a particular kind of silence that settles over a restaurant table somewhere between the entrée and the coffee, and anyone who has waited tables for more than a season learns to read it the way sailors read weather. It is not the comfortable silence of a couple who have run out of things to say because they have already said everything worth saying; it is the other kind, the laconic, watchful kind, in which two people sitting three feet apart appear to be reviewing, each in private, an argument that neither has had the nerve to begin aloud. I watched one such couple for the better part of an hour once, in a restaurant in a city I no longer remember clearly, and what struck me was not what they said — they said almost nothing — but what they left conspicuously, deliberately unsaid. She ordered the sole; he, after a pause just a beat too long, the same. It was not agreement. It was surrender, and everyone at the surrounding tables, whether or not they had noticed the pause, understood the meal that followed as an argument continued by other means, its terms perfectly legible to anyone fluent in the grammar two people invent when they have been married long enough to stop finishing their sentences.

Sundays, for years, my grandmother telephoned her daughter at exactly eleven, and the calls, recorded nowhere but remembered everywhere in our family, followed a script so fixed that both women could have recited the other's lines without prompting. My grandmother would ask whether she had eaten; my mother would say that she had, though she often hadn't, and both knew it, and neither corrected the record, because the question was never really about food. What passed between them was not the information the words appeared to carry but a kind of ledger, updated weekly, of who was still worried about whom, and how much, and what could be forgiven this week that could not have been forgiven the last. My mother could have told her mother what was actually wrong — the marriage that was ending, the job that had ended already — and didn't. Her mother could have asked, directly, whether anything was wrong, and, out of a delicacy I did not understand until I was much older, chose not to. Both of them, I now think, understood exactly how much was being withheld, understood that the other understood it too, and understood further that naming what was withheld would have cost more than either woman was prepared, that year, to pay.

Writers who have thought hardest about this tend to arrive, eventually, at some version of the same principle. Hemingway, describing what he called his theory of omission, insisted that a writer who knows his subject well enough can leave out almost anything and the reader will still feel it, the way one feels the seven-eighths of an iceberg that never breaks the surface; a story about a couple deciding, without ever using the word, whether to end a pregnancy can be told entirely in the dialogue of two people ordering drinks at a train station, because what matters is not stated but implied, gathered by the reader from what the characters pointedly avoid discussing. Detective fiction arrived at the same principle from the opposite

direction: Sherlock Holmes's famous observation about the dog that did nothing in the night-time is, at bottom, an argument that an absence, properly noticed, can carry more evidential weight than a presence — that the guard dog's silence tells us the intruder was no stranger, precisely because a stranger would have provoked the bark that never came. In both cases, what the text omits is not a gap the reader fills in by accident; it is a space the writer has measured with some precision, calculated to be exactly large enough for the reader to complete the thought herself, and to feel, having done so, that she has understood something the writer never quite stated outright.

I think of this every time I visit my friend Teresa, whose husband died two winters ago and who has developed, since then, a whole vocabulary of avoidance so fluent that a stranger sitting with us for an afternoon might not notice it operating at all. She will mention what "we" used to do on a particular date, and then stop, and neither of us will supply the tense the sentence so obviously requires, because we both already know it, and saying it aloud would only confirm a fact that confirmation cannot make any less true and can only make, for an afternoon, unbearable in a fresh way. Other friends, in the first months, wanted her to say his name, to talk it through, believing, not unreasonably, that grief unspoken festers where grief spoken heals; Teresa wanted the opposite, or perhaps wanted both at once — wanted to be understood without having to perform the understanding aloud, the way her husband, in thirty years of marriage, had usually understood her without being asked. He would ask if she was tired; she would say she was fine, and he would bring her a blanket anyway, and this, too, was a kind of sentence with half its clauses missing, one that both of them could finish without either ever having to say the second half.

There is something almost grammatical in the shape of all this, though none of the people I have described would think to put it that way. A sentence, after all, need not repeat what it has already established in order to be understood; a reader, given the first half of a comparison, will supply the second half's missing verb without any sense of loss, filling in "she prefers the mountains, and he, the sea" as effortlessly as she would supply a melody's expected final note. What is true of grammar is true, on a larger scale, of the sentences two people build out of an entire shared life: couples who have spent decades together stop finishing thoughts not because the thoughts have grown simpler but because the shared context has grown so dense that finishing them aloud would be redundant, even faintly insulting — the conversational equivalent of explaining a joke to the very person who told it to you first. The trouble, of course, is that this same economy, which functions beautifully as long as both parties are tracking the same missing information, turns treacherous the moment they are not: when one partner believes a question has been settled and the other has merely stopped asking it, when a silence one person reads as intimacy is read by the other as retreat, and no one can say afterward exactly when the misunderstanding began, because nothing was ever stated plainly enough to be misunderstood in a way that could later be pointed to and corrected.

The telephone, at least, forced a kind of honesty that the screen has since made avoidable: a voice, however guarded, still had to answer or visibly decline to. A text message can simply be left, its silence ambiguous in a way earlier silences rarely were — read, evidently, since the small mark confirms it, and yet unanswered, so that the recipient is left to supply, unaided, whichever of a dozen possible sentences the sender declined to finish: too busy, still angry, thinking it over, or simply indifferent. We have, without quite noticing, elevated the unfinished reply to a genuine rhetorical instrument, a way of declining to commit to a position while still,

technically, having responded to the question, and the person on the receiving end becomes, whether she likes the role or not, the sentence's unwilling co-author, forced to complete a thought someone else began and then abandoned in the exact middle of its meaning. Older correspondence at least arrived complete, however painful its contents; the modern exchange, by contrast, can be broken off at any point and left there indefinitely, a sentence with no full stop and no promise of one, so that the silence itself becomes a kind of ongoing, low-grade suspense that earlier generations, waiting on a letter that would eventually arrive one way or the other, were largely spared.

The professional world has its own dialect of omission, one that anyone who has written or received a letter of recommendation learns to read with something like practiced suspicion. A letter that commends a candidate's punctuality and says nothing whatsoever about her judgment is not, whatever its author intended, a neutral document; the reader infers, correctly, that judgment is precisely the quality the writer could not honestly praise, and that punctuality was offered only because it was the truest thing available to say. Corporate emails perform the same trick in miniature: a manager who writes "let's discuss this further offline" has not scheduled a meeting so much as ended a conversation in front of witnesses, and everyone copied on the message understands exactly what has just been declined to be discussed, and why, even though the email itself contains not one word of refusal. We are all, it turns out, far more fluent in this second, unwritten language than we generally admit, reading silences and omissions with a confidence we rarely extend to the words actually printed on the page.

I think, in the end, of that couple again — the sole ordered twice, the argument no one began. What they left unsaid was not a failure of communication but, in its own bleak way, a triumph of it: two people so fluent in each other's grammar that neither needed the missing clause spelled out to feel its whole weight settle over the table. We tend to praise plain speech, and there are certainly enough cruelties committed in the name of tact that the praise is not undeserved. But there exists another eloquence, older than any rule of style, that consists precisely in knowing what may be left out — what the listener already carries, what saying aloud would only diminish — and trusting the silence to carry it instead. The couple left, eventually, without dessert. Neither had asked for the check. Neither, in the end, had needed to.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The essay opens with a couple whose silence at dinner is described as comfortable and untroubled. ____ (T / F)
2. The grandmother and her daughter both understood that the weekly phone calls were really about more than food. ____ (T / F)
3. The essay claims that Hemingway's theory of omission requires a writer to state a story's central meaning directly. ____ (T / F)
4. Teresa's friends disagreed among themselves about whether she should talk openly about her husband's death. ____ (T / F)
5. According to the essay, a "seen" but unanswered text message is described as producing an unambiguous, easily interpreted silence. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. What does the opening restaurant scene primarily illustrate?

- A) that a shared, unstated understanding can make silence more communicative than speech
- B) that couples who love each other never argue in public
- C) that waiters are trained to ignore the conversations of their customers
- D) that ordering the same dish always signals agreement between two people

2. Why did the narrator's mother tell her own mother that she had eaten, even when she hadn't?

- A) because she genuinely believed the question was only about food
- B) because the ritual exchange functioned as something other than a literal request for information
- C) because the phone line made it difficult to explain her situation clearly
- D) because her mother had explicitly forbidden her from discussing anything else

3. How does the essay use Sherlock Holmes's observation about the dog in the night-time?

- A) to argue that detective fiction is less sophisticated than literary fiction
- B) to prove that guard dogs are unreliable witnesses
- C) to show that an absence can carry as much meaning as a stated fact
- D) to demonstrate that Holmes preferred silence to speech in general

4. What does Teresa's habit of stopping mid-sentence when mentioning "we" reveal, according to the essay?

- A) that she has forgotten how to speak about her husband entirely
- B) that she disapproves of anyone mentioning her late husband
- C) that she is no longer able to complete grammatically correct sentences
- D) that she and the narrator share an understanding that makes finishing the sentence unnecessary and painful

5. According to the essay's closing paragraphs, what is the relationship between plain speech and the "other eloquence" it describes?

- A) plain speech is always superior and the other eloquence is merely a failure to communicate
- B) plain speech has its virtues, but deliberately leaving things unsaid can be its own form of skill
- C) the two are identical and the essay treats them as interchangeable
- D) both are described as equally cruel and therefore equally undesirable

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. unspoken tension	11. an undercurrent of resentment	21. to stonewall	31. to simmer

2. loaded silence	12. to withhold	22. an awkward lull	32. a pointed comment
3. to leave something unsaid	13. stony silence	23. guarded	33. to feign indifference
4. subtext	14. to bite one's tongue	24. to bottle up	34. brooding silence
5. to read between the lines	15. a veiled accusation	25. a chill in the air	35. to circle the issue
6. a pregnant pause	16. to skirt around a topic	26. to needle someone	36. a curt reply
7. to bristle	17. tacit understanding	27. an icy glance	37. to harbor resentment
8. clipped tone	18. palpable discomfort	28. strained conversation	38. unresolved friction
9. a barbed remark	19. to fester	29. to gloss over	39. to defuse a situation
10. to seethe	20. a clipped exchange	30. insinuation	40. a telling silence

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. In the passage, "laconic" most nearly means:

- A) using very few words; terse
- B) unusually loud and talkative
- C) filled with excessive emotion
- D) written rather than spoken

2. "Conspicuously" (left conspicuously unsaid) most nearly means:

- A) accidentally and without notice
- B) in a way that is easily noticed; obviously
- C) privately and in secret
- D) briefly and only in passing

3. As used in the text, "delicacy" (out of a delicacy) refers to:

- A) a fragile physical object
- B) a fine or expensive food
- C) a tactful sensitivity to another person's feelings
- D) a weakness of physical health

4. "Fluent" (fluent in the grammar two people invent) most nearly means:

- A) confused and hesitant
- B) recently learned and still unfamiliar
- C) formally certified by an institution
- D) able to use something easily and naturally

5. "Festers" (grief unspoken festers) most nearly means:

- A) worsens or grows more painful over time when left untreated
- B) heals cleanly and quickly

- C) disappears without a trace
- D) is expressed openly and immediately

6. "Redundant" (finishing them aloud would be redundant) most nearly means:

- A) legally required
- B) unnecessary because already understood or expressed
- C) grammatically incorrect
- D) emotionally moving

7. "Treacherous" (this same economy... turns treacherous) most nearly means:

- A) completely safe and reliable
- B) financially costly
- C) dangerously unreliable or deceptive despite appearances
- D) publicly celebrated

8. "Commends" (a letter that commends a candidate's punctuality) most nearly means:

- A) criticizes or condemns
- B) questions or doubts
- C) ignores entirely
- D) praises or speaks favorably of

9. "Diminish" (saying aloud would only diminish) most nearly means:

- A) reduce in value, force, or importance
- B) make greater or more impressive
- C) clarify and make more precise
- D) preserve exactly as it was

10. "Eloquence" (another eloquence, older than any rule of style) most nearly means:

- A) complete silence and refusal to communicate
- B) fluent, persuasive, and effective expression
- C) grammatical error
- D) loud and aggressive speech

Grammar Focus: Advanced Ellipsis and Implicature

At the mastery level, ellipsis is no longer the simple contraction drilled at lower levels — the dropped subject of an imperative, the omitted "that" before a reported clause — but a resource skilled writers deploy deliberately, trusting a reader to reconstruct exactly what has been left out from context, parallel structure, or shared knowledge. Gapping is perhaps the most elegant instance: in a coordinate or comparative structure, a repeated verb (and sometimes its auxiliary) is simply deleted from the second clause once the parallelism has been established, leaving only the material that changes — "She prefers tea; he, coffee" omits "prefers" entirely, and "One brother stayed for the funeral; the other, only for the reception" omits

"stayed" from the second clause without any loss of clarity, because the reader supplies the missing verb automatically from the first clause. Comparative ellipsis works on the same principle across "than" and "as" clauses: "She remembers the argument more vividly than he does the reconciliation" leaves the main verb of the second clause unstated (or reduced to a bare "does"), because restating "remembers" would add length without adding information. Verb-phrase ellipsis, meanwhile, allows an entire predicate to be replaced by a bare auxiliary once it has already appeared — "He said he would call. He didn't," or "She could have explained herself. She chose not to" — and this compression is not merely economical; it is rhetorically pointed, since the auxiliary that survives ("didn't," "couldn't," "wouldn't") is precisely the word that carries the sentence's emotional weight, isolated and thrown into relief by everything around it that has been cut away.

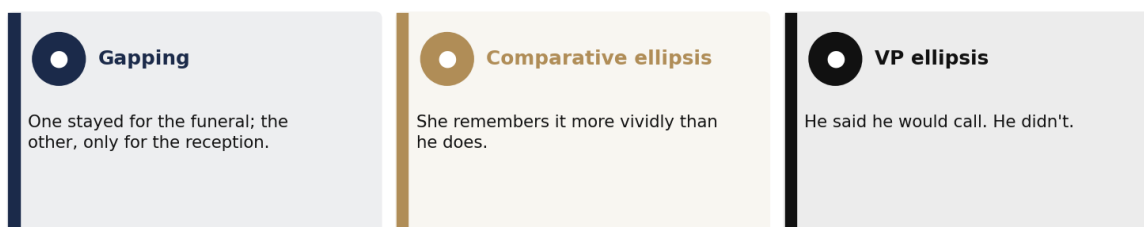
What makes this more than a stylistic trick is the relationship ellipsis bears to implicature — the meaning a competent reader infers even though the text never states it. A writer who omits the second half of a comparison, or lets a verb phrase collapse into its bare auxiliary, is not being careless; she is calculating, with some precision, exactly how much a reader already knows and therefore does not need restated, and she is using the very shape of what remains to direct attention toward what matters — usually the point of contrast or the emotional pivot of the sentence — while relegating the redundant, recoverable material to silence. This is why ellipsis, handled skillfully, so often produces sentences that feel more, not less, expressive than their fully spelled-out equivalents: by refusing to state what both writer and reader already share, the sentence enacts, in its very grammar, the intimacy or economy it is describing, and the gap itself becomes part of the meaning rather than an accidental hole in it. The risk, as with any economy, is overreach — an ellipsis so aggressive, or a context so thin, that the reader cannot in fact recover what has been cut, at which point compression collapses into simple obscurity rather than eloquence.

Figure 3

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples



Reference Table: Advanced Ellipsis Patterns

Pattern	Function	Example
Gapping in coordinate structures	Deletes a repeated verb from the second of two parallel clauses, leaving only contrasting elements	She prefers tea; he, coffee.
Gapping in comparative structures	Omits a repeated verb (or reduces it to a bare auxiliary) across a than-/as-clause	He remembers the argument more vividly than she does the apology.
Verb-phrase ellipsis with auxiliaries	Replaces an entire predicate with a bare auxiliary once the full verb phrase has already appeared	He said he would call. He didn't.
Stripping	Reduces a clause to a single contrasting constituent plus a negator or adverb like "too" or "not"	She apologized. He, not at all.
Sluicing	Leaves an embedded question reduced to its wh-word alone when the rest is recoverable from context	Something had changed between them, though neither could say what.

Examples

1. She ordered the sole; he, after a pause too long to be accidental, the same.
2. My mother could have told her mother what was wrong, and didn't.
3. Teresa's husband would ask if she was tired; she, that she was fine.
4. One friend wanted her to speak of it constantly; the other, never at all.
5. He read the message and understood everything it declined to say; she, only half of it.
6. The narrator remembers the silence of that dinner more clearly than he does the meal itself.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- there's more to this than meets the eye
signalling that a hidden layer of meaning lies beneath the surface of an exchange
- you could cut the tension with a knife
vividly describing an atmosphere thick with unspoken conflict
- he left a lot unsaid
pointing out that meaning was withheld deliberately rather than absent
- I sensed an undercurrent of something
naming a subtle, half-perceived emotional tone beneath the words
- it's not what she said, it's how she said it
drawing attention to tone and delivery as the true carriers of meaning
- that silence spoke volumes
asserting that a pause conveyed more than any statement could

- reading between the lines, I'd say...
introducing an interpretation of implied rather than stated meaning
- they were talking past each other
describing a conversation in which neither party truly engages with the other's point

Sample Dialogue

A: How was dinner with your parents? You've been oddly quiet about it.

B: Fine, on the surface. But honestly, there's more to this than meets the eye.

A: What do you mean?

B: Well, when Dad mentioned my brother's promotion, you could cut the tension with a knife. Nobody said a word about my own job search.

A: That does sound loaded. Did anyone actually bring it up directly?

B: No, that's the thing — he left a lot unsaid. He just kept refilling his glass and changing the subject.

A: And your mother?

B: She barely spoke, but I sensed an undercurrent of something. Worry, maybe. Or disappointment.

A: Sometimes it's not what she said, it's how she said it, though. Tone can betray far more than words.

B: Exactly. When I mentioned moving back to the city, that silence spoke volumes. Nobody objected out loud, but nobody smiled either.

A: Reading between the lines, I'd say they're anxious but don't want to pressure you.

B: Possibly. Or they simply couldn't find the words. Either way, by the end we were talking past each other, circling the real issue without ever naming it.

A: You should tell them directly how you felt. Silence like that only breeds more of the same.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase best describes a situation where meaning is conveyed through delivery rather than words themselves?

- A) there's more to this than meets the eye
- B) it's not what she said, it's how she said it
- C) they were talking past each other
- D) that silence spoke volumes

2. "He left a lot unsaid" implies that:

- A) he had nothing to communicate
- B) he forgot key information
- C) meaning was deliberately withheld
- D) he spoke at great length

3. Which expression conveys an atmosphere so tense it feels almost physical?

- A) you could cut the tension with a knife
- B) reading between the lines, I'd say
- C) I sensed an undercurrent of something
- D) they were talking past each other

4. "They were talking past each other" best describes a conversation in which:

- A) both speakers agree completely
- B) neither party truly engages with the other's point
- C) one person dominates the exchange
- D) the conversation ends abruptly

5. Which phrase is most appropriate for introducing your own interpretation of an implied meaning?

- A) that silence spoke volumes
- B) you could cut the tension with a knife
- C) reading between the lines, I'd say...
- D) there's more to this than meets the eye

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Which sentence correctly uses gapping in a coordinate structure?

- A) She likes jazz; he, classical music.
- B) She likes jazz; he likes classical music instead.
- C) She likes jazz, and he does too, classical music.
- D) She likes jazz; he classical music likes.

2. Choose the sentence that correctly applies comparative gapping.

- A) He earns more than she does earn.
- B) He earns more than she does.
- C) He earns more money than she is earning more.
- D) He earns more, than does she earn more.

3. Identify the sentence with correct verb-phrase ellipsis.

- A) He promised to help, and he did helped.
- B) He promised to help, and he did it help.
- C) He promised to help, and he did.
- D) He promised to help, and helped he did it.

4. Which sentence best demonstrates "stripping" (reducing a clause to one contrasting element plus a negator)?

- A) She trusted him completely, but he did not trust her completely either.
- B) She trusted him, and he trusted her not at all in return.

- C) Trusting him, she was; he was not trusting her.
- D) She trusted him; he, not at all.

5. Select the sentence that correctly uses sluicing.

- A) Something was wrong, though no one could say what.
- B) Something was wrong, but nobody would say what was wrong with it.
- C) Something being wrong, no one said what it was that was wrong.
- D) What was wrong, something, no one could say.

6. Which sentence contains an ellipsis that would be genuinely ambiguous, not recoverable from context?

- A) Tom can play the piano, and Sue, the violin.
- B) John said he saw someone leave, and so did Mary.
- C) The report praised the analyst but not the manager.
- D) Mary prefers coffee; James, tea.

7. Choose the sentence that most naturally continues: "Some diplomats speak plainly; others, ____."

- A) speak plainly is what others do not do
- B) never
- C) not
- D) do not speak plainly, others

8. Which sentence uses verb-phrase ellipsis to emphasize a contrast, in keeping with the reading's theme?

- A) He forgave her, but he did not forgive her completely.
- B) He said forgiveness, and forgiveness he gave to her.
- C) Forgiving her, he claimed, though not forgiving in fact he was.
- D) He said he had forgiven her. He hadn't.

9. Identify the sentence with correctly formed comparative ellipsis.

- A) She trusts her instincts more than her training.
- B) She trusts her instincts more than she trusts her training.
- C) She trusts more her instincts than her training trusts.
- D) More than her training, trusting her instincts she does.

10. Which sentence best illustrates gapping across three parallel clauses?

- A) Anna chose silence, and Ben chose sarcasm, and Clara chose tears too.
- B) Anna chose silence; Ben, sarcasm; Clara, tears.
- C) Silence was chosen by Anna, sarcasm by Ben happening, and tears for Clara.
- D) Anna, Ben, and Clara chose silence, sarcasm, and tears respectively they did.

11. "Implicature" most nearly refers to:

- A) a grammatical error in a sentence
- B) a formal legal accusation
- C) meaning that is suggested or implied rather than directly stated
- D) the literal, dictionary definition of a word

12. Which sentence relies on implicature rather than explicit statement to suggest disapproval?

- A) I disapprove of your plan entirely.
- B) Your plan is a bad one, and I reject it.
- C) I strongly and explicitly oppose this plan.
- D) Well, it's certainly one way to do it.

13. Choose the correctly punctuated example of gapping.

- A) He ordered steak; she, fish; and I, pasta.
- B) He ordered steak, she, fish, and I, pasta.
- C) He, ordered steak she fish and I pasta.
- D) He ordered steak she fish I pasta.

14. "Laconic" most nearly means:

- A) talkative and expressive
- B) using very few words
- C) emotionally unstable
- D) written in formal legal language

15. Which sentence demonstrates verb-phrase ellipsis after a modal auxiliary?

- A) She could have apologized, but she would not apologize did she.
- B) She could apologizing, but wouldn't she.
- C) She could have apologized, but she wouldn't.
- D) Apologizing she could have, but not would she.

16. Select the sentence in which an ellipsis creates a pointed, ironic contrast.

- A) He claimed to love honesty, and his record showed honesty too.
- B) Honesty was claimed by him, and his record was honest.
- C) He loved honesty and his record loved honesty as well.
- D) He claimed to love honesty; his record, somewhat less.

17. "Redundant," as used in the reading, most nearly means:

- A) unnecessary because already understood
- B) essential and irreplaceable
- C) grammatically incorrect
- D) emotionally charged

18. Which sentence correctly gaps the auxiliary "has" across two coordinate clauses?

- A) She has finished the report; he has, the presentation.
- B) She has finished the report; he, the presentation.
- C) She finished has the report; he the presentation.
- D) She has the report finished; he presentation the.

19. Identify the sentence that most likely produces an unrecoverable, overly aggressive ellipsis.

- A) Mark left early; Julia, later.
- B) He resigned; she, promoted.
- C) Considering everything, given that, and so, she.
- D) The company hired ten; the rival firm, three.

20. "Diminish," as used in the reading, most nearly means:

- A) to enlarge or amplify
- B) to clarify completely
- C) to celebrate publicly
- D) to lessen or reduce

21. Which sentence best shows ellipsis used to imply, without stating, that a comparison is unflattering?

- A) He worked hard; she, harder still, though he never noticed.
- B) He worked hard, and she also worked hard.
- C) Both of them worked equally hard on the project.
- D) He and she worked hard together on the same project.

22. "Treacherous," as used in the reading, most nearly means:

- A) entirely trustworthy
- B) unexpectedly dangerous or unreliable
- C) financially expensive
- D) publicly admired

23. Choose the sentence that correctly uses ellipsis in an "as" comparative clause.

- A) She works as hard as he is working hard.
- B) As hard she works as he.
- C) She works as hard as he does.
- D) She, as hard works, as he does work.

24. Which sentence demonstrates that an omitted verb phrase can carry the emotional weight of a paragraph?

- A) He promised that he would stay with her.
- B) A promise to stay was made by him.
- C) Staying was promised by him to her.
- D) He promised he would stay. He didn't.

25. "Commend," as used in the reading, most nearly means:

- A) to praise or speak well of
- B) to criticize sharply
- C) to ignore completely
- D) to question the truth of

UNIT 4

Between the Lines

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to calibrating diplomatic and cautious language, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: The Architecture of Ambiguity

Diplomacy, for all its pageantry, is at bottom a discipline of modality. Ambassadors are trained less in the vocabulary of statecraft than in the fine calibration of how confidently, and under what authority, a claim may be advanced. A single auxiliary verb, chosen with sufficient care, can commit a government to nothing at all while appearing to commit it to everything; another, chosen carelessly, can trigger a diplomatic incident before the ink on the communiqué has dried. Diplomats are often accused of indulging in circumlocution, of talking around a refusal rather than issuing one outright, but the accusation misunderstands the craft: a lengthy, roundabout way of saying no is frequently more precise, not less, than a blunt monosyllable would be, because it specifies exactly which door remains open and which has quietly closed. Reading a diplomatic text well, then, is less a matter of decoding hidden meanings than of noticing what the grammar has already told you, quite openly, if you know where to look.

Consider the difference between saying that a ceasefire must hold, that it should hold, that it could hold, that it may well hold, and that it is bound to hold. Each of these formulations describes the same hoped-for outcome, yet each stakes out a distinct position on the scale of epistemic confidence. "Must" here signals a conclusion the speaker regards as all but forced by the available evidence — not a certainty in the strict logical sense, but a deduction they are prepared to defend. "Should" is markedly weaker: it expresses an expectation grounded in how things normally proceed, freighted with the tacit admission that normal proceedings sometimes fail to materialise. "Could" retreats further still, conceding mere possibility without troubling to estimate its likelihood. "May well" is a curious hybrid, more confident than a bare "may" yet stopping short of commitment, useful precisely because it lets a speaker lean toward an outcome without being pinned to it. "Is bound to," by contrast, edges back toward near-certainty, implying that the outcome follows so inevitably from present circumstances that its failure to occur would itself require explanation. A diplomat who confuses these registers, even by a single notch, risks being heard to promise what she only meant to hope. It is worth adding that this scale is not symmetrical: moving carelessly from "should" to "must" tends to sound like overreach, a claim to knowledge the speaker does not quite possess, whereas moving from "must" down to "should" tends to read as a retreat, an admission that the earlier confidence was not entirely earned. Skilled speakers therefore choose their starting point on the scale with an eye to where they may later need to move, holding something in reserve rather than beginning at the most assertive expression available.

Hedging is the art of building an escape route into a sentence before anyone realises one is needed. Phrases such as "it could be argued that," "there is some reason to believe," "one might reasonably suppose," and "to some extent" all perform the same underlying function: they attribute a claim to reasoning or evidence

rather than to the speaker's naked assertion, so that if the claim later proves false, the speaker was never quite the one who made it. This is not, whatever cynics assume, mere cowardice dressed up in syntax. In a negotiation where a single overcommitted phrase can be quoted back for a decade, calibrated vagueness is a form of professional discipline, and it is worth insisting on a distinction that is often missed: a hedge is meant to soften a claim, not to obfuscate it beyond recovery. A trade representative who says a proposal "might conceivably prove difficult to ratify" has left every door open — to further negotiation, to graceful retreat, to eventual acceptance — while a colleague who bluntly declares the proposal "unacceptable" has closed most of them. The hedge, properly understood, is not an absence of meaning but a very exact kind of meaning: it tells the listener precisely how much weight the speaker is prepared to have the sentence carry, and invites them to supply the rest through inference rather than demanding it through decree.

Boosting operates by the same logic in reverse. Expressions like "there can be no doubt that," "it is beyond dispute," "unquestionably," and "manifestly" exist to close down alternative readings rather than to open them, and diplomats reach for them only when ambiguity itself would be interpreted as weakness. A government that has just suffered an act of aggression rarely says the act "may well have been" carried out by its neighbour; it says the responsibility is "unequivocal," precisely because any hedge at that moment would be read, correctly, as an invitation to further testing. Boosting language, in other words, is not simply the emotional opposite of hedging; it is a calculated instrument deployed when the cost of appearing uncertain exceeds the cost of appearing wrong. The two registers coexist within a single statesman's repertoire, often within the same paragraph, because the same speaker may need, in one breath, to leave room for a face-saving retreat on a minor point while, in the next, foreclosing any retreat whatsoever on a point of principle.

What makes the system genuinely treacherous for the unwary reader is that the very same modal auxiliary routinely serves both an epistemic and a deontic function, and only context distinguishes them. "All delegations must submit their credentials by noon" imposes an obligation; nobody is drawing a conclusion about anything, merely laying down a rule. "She must already know the outcome — she has stopped taking questions" draws a conclusion from evidence; no one is under any obligation whatsoever. "Should" is equally double-natured: "You should consult the joint committee before releasing a statement" offers advice, tacitly backed by an expectation of compliance, while "The statement should have reached Geneva by now, given when it was dispatched" merely predicts, without prescribing anything to anyone. A careless translator, or a hurried journalist, who renders a deontic "must" as though it carried epistemic force — or vice versa — can turn a routine administrative requirement into an alarming assertion of fact, or flatten a confident prediction into a toothless instruction. Trained readers of diplomatic prose learn to ask, almost reflexively, whether a given modal is telling them what somebody is required to do or what the speaker believes to be true, because the surface form offers no reliable clue on its own.

The stakes of this distinction are rarely abstract. A communiqué issued after a fraught summit once stated that both sides "should" refrain from further military exercises near a disputed border — a formulation that one delegation later insisted had been merely descriptive, an optimistic forecast rather than a binding pledge, while the other delegation, and much of the watching press, had read it as a veiled commitment dressed in the euphemism of routine scheduling. Whole diplomatic careers have turned on precisely this

kind of equivocation, deliberate or otherwise. Seasoned negotiators know to specify, in the small hours before a text is finalised, whether a modal verb is meant to bind or merely to describe, and the horse-trading over a single "must" versus "should" versus "is expected to" can consume more drafting time than the substantive clause it modifies. This is brinkmanship conducted not with troops or tariffs but with auxiliary verbs, and it rewards exactly the kind of close, patient reading that casual speakers of English rarely think to apply to their own language, let alone to someone else's diplomatic prose in translation.

Intelligence analysts, financial regulators, and seasoned journalists all cultivate a comparable literacy, learning to weigh a source's modal choices as carefully as its factual content. An official who says a merger "could conceivably" fall through is signalling something quite different from one who says it "is unlikely to proceed," even though both sentences, taken out of context, might be summarised in a headline as expressing doubt. The insinuation carried by a single downtoner, or the innuendo smuggled into a strategically placed "allegedly," can move markets, reshape coverage, or reassure — or unsettle — an anxious public, entirely independent of whatever "hard" information the statement also contains. Reading between the lines, then, is not a mystical talent reserved for the initiated; it is a teachable, almost mechanical competence, built on noticing which rung of the certainty ladder a speaker has chosen to stand on, and asking, with genuine curiosity rather than suspicion, why that rung and not one of its neighbours.

Translators face a particular hazard here, because languages do not carve up this territory identically. A modal that reads as comfortably hedged in one language may translate, almost inevitably, into an English equivalent that sounds either far more tentative or far more assertive than intended, simply because the two systems slice the same continuum of certainty at different points. A phrase that a source language treats as a mild, largely automatic politeness marker can, rendered too literally, register in English as genuine uncertainty about the underlying fact, with consequences that are anything but linguistic once the mistranslated sentence reaches a treaty draft or a press briefing. The most reliable interpreters, accordingly, translate not the individual modal verb but the entire epistemic stance the original speaker meant to occupy, reconstructing it from context, tone, and diplomatic convention rather than reaching for the nearest dictionary equivalent. It is exacting, unglamorous work, and it is also, arguably, one of the few genuinely load-bearing jobs that grammar performs in the machinery of international affairs. A mistranslated hedge has, on more than one occasion, been read as a threat; a mistranslated boost has, just as often, been read as a concession never actually offered. Neither error tends to announce itself at the time it is made — both surface later, in the recriminations of a summit gone wrong, by which point the original nuance is all but impossible to recover.

None of this makes modality a code to be cracked once and then forgotten; it is closer to a live instrument that must be tuned afresh for every audience, every stake, and every relationship a text is meant to preserve or unsettle. The diplomat who masters it does not thereby become evasive so much as unusually honest about the one thing plain declarative sentences routinely conceal: how confident the speaker actually is, and under what obligation, if any, the listener actually stands. To read between the lines, in the end, is simply to read the lines themselves a little more attentively than most of us are in the habit of doing.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The passage compares the diplomat's use of modality to a "live instrument that must be tuned afresh for every audience." ____ (T / F)
2. According to the passage, "may well" expresses more confidence than a bare "may" but stops short of firm commitment. ____ (T / F)
3. The passage argues that hedging language is fundamentally an act of cowardice with no professional value. ____ (T / F)
4. The passage states that the same modal verb, such as "must" or "should," can carry either a deontic or an epistemic meaning depending on context. ____ (T / F)
5. The passage claims that translators can safely translate modal verbs word-for-word because all languages divide the scale of certainty identically. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. According to the passage, what is the primary difference between "must," "should," "could," "may well," and "is bound to" when describing a hoped-for ceasefire?
 - A) They are used only in formal written English, never in speech
 - B) They are stylistic synonyms with no real difference in meaning
 - C) They mark distinct degrees of epistemic confidence about the same outcome
 - D) They indicate different tenses of the same verb
2. Why does the passage say hedging language is a "form of professional discipline" rather than cowardice?
 - A) Because it lets speakers commit only as much as the evidence and situation warrant, while preserving room to manoeuvre
 - B) Because it guarantees that a negotiation will succeed
 - C) Because it is required by international law
 - D) Because it allows negotiators to avoid speaking at all
3. In the passage, what determines whether a government reaches for boosting language such as "unequivocal" rather than a hedge?
 - A) The personal preference of the speech-writer
 - B) The length of the sentence
 - C) Whether the statement is delivered in writing or aloud
 - D) Whether hedging would be interpreted as weakness at that particular moment
4. What problem does the passage identify with translating modal verbs?
 - A) Some languages lack modal verbs entirely
 - B) Different languages divide the same continuum of certainty at different points, so literal translation can distort the intended stance
 - C) Translators are legally required to boost every hedge
 - D) Modal verbs are always translated more literally than other words

5. According to the passage, what is the ultimate purpose of learning to read modal language closely, as intelligence analysts and journalists do?

- A) To catch grammatical errors in official statements
- B) To translate diplomatic texts into other languages
- C) To notice which degree of certainty and obligation a speaker has chosen, and to ask why
- D) To identify which language a statement was originally written in

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. to hedge	11. to gloss over	21. to stonewall	31. an overture
2. to broach a subject	12. a tacit understanding	22. back-channel negotiations	32. to be at pains to stress
3. to temper a statement	13. to overstate	23. to float a proposal	33. guarded optimism
4. studied ambiguity	14. to understate	24. to table a motion	34. to distance oneself from
5. plausible deniability	15. to prevaricate	25. a sticking point	35. to stop short of
6. to walk back a comment	16. circumlocution	26. brinkmanship	36. a nuanced position
7. a veiled threat	17. to equivocate	27. an olive branch	37. to reserve judgment
8. to couch in diplomatic terms	18. to be economical with the truth	28. to sound out	38. an implicit commitment
9. to leave wiggle room	19. a face-saving formula	29. a caveat	39. to underscore without overcommitting
10. noncommittal	20. to soften the blow	30. to qualify a claim	40. protocol-driven restraint

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. As used in the passage, "circumlocution" most nearly means:

- A) an outright refusal
- B) the use of many words where fewer, more direct ones would do
- C) a formal written agreement
- D) a diplomatic apology

2. As used in the passage, "equivocation" most nearly means:

- A) a firm and final decision
- B) a public celebration

- C) a legal contract
- D) the use of ambiguous language to avoid committing oneself

3. As used in the passage, "brinkmanship" most nearly means:

- A) the practice of pushing a dangerous situation to the limit before backing off
- B) a policy of complete transparency
- C) a formal introduction ceremony
- D) a written retraction

4. As used in the passage, "insinuation" most nearly means:

- A) a formal invitation
- B) a direct accusation stated plainly
- C) an indirect suggestion, often of something negative, hinted at rather than stated
- D) a signed agreement

5. As used in the passage, "obfuscate" most nearly means:

- A) to clarify thoroughly
- B) to deliberately make something unclear or confusing
- C) to translate accurately
- D) to publicly announce

6. As used in the passage, "tacit" most nearly means:

- A) loudly and explicitly announced
- B) written into law
- C) completely unknown
- D) understood or implied without being directly stated

7. As used in the passage, "veiled" most nearly means:

- A) partially hidden or disguised, not stated openly
- B) fully explained in detail
- C) officially confirmed
- D) translated into another language

8. As used in the passage, "euphemism" most nearly means:

- A) a technical legal term
- B) a direct insult
- C) a mild or indirect expression substituted for a harsher or blunter one
- D) a formal apology

9. As used in the passage, "innuendo" most nearly means:

- A) a clear factual statement
- B) an indirect or subtle remark, often implying something disparaging
- C) an official press release
- D) a signed treaty

10. As used in the passage, "unequivocal" most nearly means:

- A) vague and open to multiple interpretations
- B) spoken in a foreign language
- C) kept secret from the public
- D) leaving no doubt; completely clear

Grammar Focus: Nuanced Modality and Epistemic Stance

At the C2 level, modal verbs are best understood not as a fixed inventory of meanings but as points along a continuous scale of epistemic commitment, one that speakers move along with remarkable precision. "Must" marks a conclusion the speaker treats as all but forced by the evidence at hand — a confident deduction, not an absolute certainty. "Is bound to" sits close beside it, expressing near-inevitability grounded in present circumstances rather than in direct evidence already observed. "May well" occupies a middle register: distinctly more confident than a bare "may," yet still short of outright commitment, which makes it a favourite of speakers who wish to lean toward a conclusion without being held to it. "Could conceivably" retreats further, flagging a possibility the speaker regards as real but unlikely, useful chiefly for acknowledging an outcome without endorsing it. "Should," finally, expresses an expectation based on how things normally unfold, tacitly admitting that normal patterns sometimes fail. Learning to rank these expressions correctly — and to hear the difference between neighbouring ones — is central to reading sophisticated English with precision rather than approximation.

This gradation of certainty interacts with a second, independent axis: the choice between hedging and boosting. Hedges — "it could be argued that," "there is some reason to think," "to some extent" — soften a claim, attributing it to inference or partial evidence so the speaker is not fully exposed if it later proves wrong; boosters — "unquestionably," "there can be no doubt that," "it is beyond dispute" — do the opposite, foreclosing alternative readings when appearing uncertain would itself carry a cost. A further complication, and one that trips up even advanced learners, is that a single modal verb can shift between epistemic and deontic meaning depending entirely on context: "must" and "should" can impose an obligation (deontic: "Delegates must register by noon"; "You should apologise") or express a degree of certainty about a state of affairs (epistemic: "She must already know"; "The report should have arrived by now"). No formal marker distinguishes the two uses — only the surrounding context, and the reader's attentiveness to it, resolves the ambiguity.

Figure 4

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples

 Scale of certainty must > is bound to > may well > could conceivably	 Hedging vs boosting it could be argued that... / there can be no doubt that...	 Epistemic vs deontic She must already know (epistemic) vs. Delegates must register (deontic)
--	--	--

Reference Table: Degrees of Epistemic Modality

Could / Might	Weak possibility; genuine, unresolved uncertainty	"The talks could stall over a single clause, but nobody is predicting it yet."
Could conceivably	Low-to-moderate; possible in theory, considered unlikely	"The summit could conceivably be postponed if the storm intensifies."
May well	Fairly confident; leaning toward likely without full commitment	"The delegation may well accept the compromise clause."
Should	Expected outcome, barring disruption to the normal course of events	"The final communiqué should be released by six o'clock."
Is bound to / Must	Near-certainty; a strong deduction from present evidence or circumstance	"Given the leaked cable, the story is bound to dominate tomorrow's coverage."

Examples

1. The negotiator must have anticipated the objection; her rebuttal was prepared before anyone raised it. (epistemic deduction)
2. Under the new protocol, every attaché must register their itinerary with the host mission at least forty-eight hours in advance. (deontic obligation)
3. Given the pace of the talks, an agreement is bound to be reached before the summit closes, barring some wholly unforeseen collapse. (near-certainty)
4. The finance minister may well already suspect the source of the leak, though she has said nothing publicly. (confident but non-committal)
5. It could conceivably take another round of shuttle diplomacy to close the remaining gaps, though most delegates doubt it will come to that. (low-to-moderate possibility, hedged)
6. The revised communiqué should reach Brussels by nightfall, though delegates should of course clear any public comment with their ministries first. (the first "should" is epistemic prediction; the second is deontic advice)

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- I'd be reluctant to go so far as to say
signals hedged disagreement while acknowledging partial validity
- It's not inconceivable that
introduces a remote possibility without endorsing it
- Without wishing to prejudge the outcome
distances the speaker from a premature conclusion
- I'll refrain from speculating on
politely declines to commit to an unverified claim
- That said, one cannot rule out
qualifies a prior statement by admitting an alternative possibility
- It would be premature to suggest that
cautions against drawing conclusions too early
- Suffice it to say that
implies more is known than is being stated, diplomatically
- I'm not at liberty to confirm, but
signals restricted disclosure without denying the substance

Sample Dialogue

A: So, can you confirm that the two delegations have reached an agreement on the border provisions?

B: I'm not at liberty to confirm, but I can say the talks have been constructive.

A: Constructive enough to suggest a breakthrough is imminent?

B: It would be premature to suggest that. There are still several clauses under review.

A: Off the record, though—do you think the opposition will accept the revised terms?

B: It's not inconceivable that they will, given the concessions already on the table.

A: But you're not ruling out further resistance?

B: That said, one cannot rule out a last-minute reversal; these things rarely proceed smoothly.

A: Some analysts are calling this a historic accord already.

B: I'd be reluctant to go so far as to say historic—significant, perhaps, but the ink isn't dry yet.

A: Without wishing to prejudge the outcome, how would you characterize the mood in the room?

B: Suffice it to say that both sides left the table more optimistic than when they arrived.

A: And the timeline for ratification?

B: I'll refrain from speculating on dates until the legal teams have finished their review.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase would a spokesperson most likely use to avoid confirming classified information while still implying progress?

- A) It would be premature to suggest that
- B) I'm not at liberty to confirm, but
- C) It's not inconceivable that
- D) Suffice it to say that

2. "That said, one cannot rule out a last-minute reversal" primarily functions to:

- A) firmly predict a negative outcome
- B) reverse the speaker's previous statement entirely
- C) admit a possible exception after a more optimistic claim
- D) demand clarification from the listener

3. Which expression signals that the speaker knows more than they are willing to disclose, in a diplomatically vague way?

- A) I'll refrain from speculating on
- B) Suffice it to say that
- C) Without wishing to prejudge the outcome
- D) It's not inconceivable that

4. A diplomat says, "I'd be reluctant to go so far as to say historic." This best conveys:

- A) complete agreement with the label "historic"
- B) outright rejection of the label "historic"
- C) partial acknowledgment while resisting an overstated claim
- D) confusion about what "historic" means

5. Which phrase is most appropriate for cautioning listeners against drawing conclusions before a process is complete?

- A) It would be premature to suggest that
- B) I'm not at liberty to confirm, but
- C) That said, one cannot rule out
- D) Suffice it to say that

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. "The minutes should have been circulated by now." Here "should" expresses:

- A) permission
- B) an expectation based on normal timing
- C) prohibition
- D) obligation

2. Which of the following expresses the LOWEST degree of certainty?

- A) is bound to
- B) must
- C) may well
- D) could conceivably

3. "All observers must remain seated during the vote." The modal here is:

- A) deontic (a rule)
- B) epistemic (a deduction)
- C) dynamic (an ability)
- D) volitional (a willingness)

4. Choose the sentence in which "must" is used epistemically, to draw a conclusion, rather than to state a rule.

- A) "Members must wear their badges at all times."
- B) "You must submit the form in triplicate."
- C) "He must already know; he hasn't asked a single question."
- D) "Delegates must arrive before the doors close."

5. Which phrase is an example of hedging language?

- A) it is beyond dispute
- B) it could be argued that
- C) there is no doubt whatsoever
- D) it goes without saying

6. Which phrase is an example of boosting language?

- A) to some extent
- B) one might suppose
- C) it seems fair to say
- D) it is beyond dispute

7. "The proposal may well be revised before the vote." The speaker is:

- A) leaning toward a likely outcome without fully committing to it
- B) stating a firm rule
- C) expressing total certainty
- D) giving direct advice

8. A diplomat wants to leave room to retreat gracefully from a minor position while sounding cooperative. Which is the BEST choice of wording?

- A) "This is completely unacceptable."
- B) "This will never be approved."
- C) "This could conceivably prove difficult to ratify."
- D) "This is bound to fail."

9. Choose the word that means "to deliberately make something unclear."

- A) clarify
- B) obfuscate
- C) announce
- D) ratify

10. "The statement should have reached Geneva by now, given when it was dispatched." Here "should" is:

- A) deontic advice
- B) a request for permission
- C) a prohibition
- D) an epistemic prediction

11. Which word means "understood without being openly stated"?

- A) tacit
- B) explicit
- C) unequivocal
- D) blatant

12. "You should consult the joint committee before releasing a statement." Here "should" expresses:

- A) an epistemic prediction
- B) pure, unresolved possibility
- C) deontic advice
- D) certainty

13. Which sentence expresses the HIGHEST degree of certainty about a past event?

- A) "It could have happened."
- B) "It must have happened; there's no other explanation."
- C) "It may have happened."
- D) "It might conceivably have happened."

14. Choose the word closest in meaning to "an indirect, often negative suggestion."

- A) declaration
- B) euphemism
- C) contract
- D) insinuation

15. Which sentence best conveys a hedge rather than a firm, boosted claim?

- A) "The evidence would seem to suggest a delay, though it's too early to be sure."
- B) "The evidence proves a delay beyond question."
- C) "The delay is an established fact."
- D) "There is absolutely no doubt about the delay."

16. Which modal phrase suggests near-inevitability, stronger than "may well" but without using "must"?

- A) might
- B) could

- C) is bound to
- D) may

17. "Ministers must submit their expense reports monthly." This use of "must" is:

- A) epistemic
- B) deontic
- C) dynamic
- D) hypothetical

18. Choose the correct meaning of "equivocation" as used in the passage.

- A) a firm and final decision
- B) a public celebration
- C) a signed treaty
- D) the use of ambiguous language to avoid committing oneself

19. Which of these best replaces "there can be no doubt that" while preserving a similarly strong, boosting tone?

- A) unquestionably
- B) it might be that
- C) perhaps
- D) to some extent

20. "The talks could stall over a single clause." This modal expresses:

- A) obligation
- B) near-certainty
- C) a genuine, unresolved possibility
- D) prohibition

21. A journalist reports that a merger "is unlikely to proceed." Compared with "could conceivably fall through," this wording expresses:

- A) exactly the same degree of doubt
- B) a stronger, more confident judgment that it will not happen
- C) an obligation on the companies involved
- D) permission to proceed

22. Choose the word that means "leaving no doubt; completely clear."

- A) veiled
- B) ambiguous
- C) tentative
- D) unequivocal

23. Which sentence illustrates a DEONTIC use of "should"?

- A) "You should register your delegation before Friday."
- B) "The results should be in by Friday, judging by the schedule."

- C) "It should be sunny by Friday, according to the forecast."
- D) "He should already have heard, given the timing."

24. Which sentence illustrates an EPISTEMIC use of "should"?

- A) "You should apologize for the delay."
- B) "Delegates should wear their credentials visibly."
- C) "The report should have arrived by now, given the courier's schedule."
- D) "You should always consult the manual first."

25. Which best describes the overall function of nuanced modality in diplomatic language, as discussed in the passage?

- A) It removes all ambiguity from official statements
- B) It lets speakers calibrate precisely how much certainty or obligation a statement carries
- C) It has no effect on how statements are interpreted
- D) It is used only in written treaties, never in speech

UNIT 5

It Was Not Until...

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to uncovering hidden truths about the past, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: It Was the Silence That Spoke

For eleven years after my father's funeral, I kept a single box of his belongings sealed in the back of a closet, and it was not until the lease on my mother's apartment finally expired that I was forced to open it. What I found inside was not the trove of sentimental keepsakes I had braced myself for. It was, instead, a stack of unsent letters, a passport stamped with cities he had never once mentioned, and a photograph of a woman who was decidedly not my mother. It was this photograph, more than anything else, that undid the tidy narrative I had constructed of him.

The man I remembered was taciturn to the point of opacity. He answered questions with monosyllables, retreated into the garage for hours at a time, and regarded any display of emotion as a kind of indulgence he could not afford. What I had always assumed was indifference, I now understand, was something closer to vigilance. It was not apathy that kept him silent; it was the sheer effort of containing a life he had chosen, for reasons I would only later grasp, never to disclose.

My mother, when I finally showed her the photograph, did not flinch. "That's Elena," she said, as though I had asked about the weather. "We knew her before you were born." It was at that moment that I realized how much of my father's life had been rendered invisible not through deceit but through a kind of protective omission, an editing of the past performed, I came to believe, out of something closer to love than to guile. What she told me over the following weeks reshaped everything I thought I knew about the man who had raised me, and what emerged was a portrait far more complicated, and far more forgivable, than the caricature of coldness I had carried into adulthood.

He had, it turned out, spent two years before my birth working in a research station in the far north, a posting he had taken not out of ambition but out of desperation, fleeing a mistake he had made as a young man that had nearly cost him everything. Elena was a colleague there, a physicist with whom he had fallen into an entanglement that he ended, abruptly and, by my mother's account, at considerable personal cost, the moment he understood what he wanted his life to become. It was not the affair itself that mattered to my mother, curiously; what mattered to her was that he had told her the truth before she agreed to marry him, and that he had never again, in three decades of marriage, given her reason to doubt him. A late confession is what saved that marriage, not its absence.

What I had misread as coldness was, I now think, the residue of that period: a man who had learned, through a costly error, the danger of saying too much, too soon, to the wrong person, at the wrong time. It was not until I was well into my forties myself, and had made a few costly errors of my own, that I understood how a person might mistake caution for character, how a defensive habit formed in one's

twenties could calcify into something indistinguishable from temperament by the time one's children were old enough to notice it and resent it.

There is a particular kind of grief reserved for realizations that arrive too late to be spoken aloud to the person they concern. What I felt, standing in that closet with the photograph in my hand, was not betrayal but a belated and complicated tenderness. It was tenderness, in fact, that surprised me most, given how many years I had spent quietly rehearsing my grievances against him: his absences, his reticence, the birthdays he forgot and the arguments he refused to have. What those grievances amounted to, I saw now, was a child's ledger kept against a man who had been fighting a war I never knew existed, on a front I had never been shown.

I do not mean to suggest that understanding erases resentment entirely; it does not. What understanding does is more modest and, I think, more useful: it recontextualizes the evidence without deleting it. My father remains, in my memory, an inscrutable and often frustrating man. But it is no longer his inscrutability that defines him for me. What defines him now is the letter, near the bottom of the box, that he apparently drafted and never sent, addressed to me, dated the year I turned twenty-one, in which he attempted, haltingly and in a hand grown shaky, to explain himself. He never gave it to me. Perhaps he thought better of it; perhaps he simply ran out of courage. Whatever the reason, it was that unsent letter, more than the photograph or the passport or my mother's account, that finally rewrote him for me, not as an absence to be resented but as a man who had tried, however belatedly and however imperfectly, to be known.

Reading it, I found myself doing something I had never expected to do: forgiving a dead man for a fault he had already spent his whole life quietly correcting. It was not forgiveness he needed from me, I realized; it was only my attention, which I had withheld from him as thoroughly as he had withheld his history from me. We had, without ever discussing it, arrived independently at the same defensive posture, and it was that shared inheritance, rather than any specific betrayal, that had kept us at such a careful distance from one another for so long.

My mother filled in the details slowly, over several evenings, as though she had been waiting decades for someone to finally ask the right question. What she described was a station so remote that supply flights arrived twice a month, weather permitting, and a community of researchers thrown together by isolation into intimacies that would never have formed under ordinary circumstances. It was boredom, at first, that drew my father and Elena together, or so my mother insisted, refusing to romanticize a chapter she had clearly long since made peace with. What began as boredom, however, did not remain boredom for long, and by the time my father recognized what he had allowed to develop, it was already, in her words, "a small catastrophe fully assembled and waiting to detonate."

It was a letter from his own father, arriving months late by the same erratic supply route, that apparently precipitated the end of it. My grandfather, a man I never met and know only through a handful of stern photographs, had written to ask, with characteristic bluntness, what exactly his son intended to do with his one life. That question, more than any pang of conscience, is what my mother believes finally moved him. It was not guilt that ended things with Elena; it was, rather, the sudden and vertiginous clarity of imagining the wrong future in specific, irreversible detail. What he wanted, once he allowed himself to picture it honestly,

was the quieter, more ordinary life he eventually built with my mother, children and mortgage and all, and wanting it that plainly seems to have been enough to make the harder conversation with Elena possible.

None of this, I want to be clear, excuses the years of clipped answers and closed doors that followed. A man can make the right choice at twenty-eight and still fail, repeatedly, to explain that choice to the people who most needed to hear it. What my father lacked was not conviction but vocabulary; he seems never to have found, or perhaps never to have trusted himself with, the words that would have let his children understand the cost of the steadiness he was offering them. It was steadiness, in the end, that he gave us, purchased at a price none of us were shown the receipt for, and it took his death, and a box left sealed for over a decade, to make the transaction visible at all.

I think often now about my own son, who is seventeen and regards me, not unreasonably, as a closed and occasionally exasperating book. What frightens me is not that I might be misunderstood by him; every parent expects a measure of that. What frightens me is the possibility that I am, at this very moment, manufacturing my own sealed box for him to discover decades from now, assembling a silence I mistake for strength and that he will one day have to excavate, letter by letter, in order to forgive. It was that fear, more than any abstract commitment to honesty, that finally sent me to my desk one evening to begin the letter my father never managed to send.

What strikes me now, years after the box was finally emptied and its contents catalogued and mostly discarded, is how little the facts themselves mattered in the end. Knowing about Elena, about the research station, about the mistake that sent him fleeing north, changed remarkably little in the practical sense; he was still gone, and no revision of the past could restore the conversations we never had. It was not the facts that changed me. What changed me was the shift in posture the facts required: the recognition that silence, in my father's case, had not been the absence of feeling but its most heavily fortified expression. A man protecting the people he loved from a history he was ashamed of is, in the end, what my father turned out to be, however inadequate that protection sometimes felt from the receiving end.

It was not until that box was empty, its contents spread across my kitchen table like the pieces of an unfinished argument, that I finally understood the shape of the man I had spent a lifetime trying, and largely failing, to read. What I do with that understanding now, whether I pass it forward to my own children in the form of an unsent letter of my own, or whether I finally learn to say the difficult things while there is still time to say them, is the only question that still feels genuinely open. Everything else, it seems, has already been decided by a version of my father I never fully knew was there.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The narrator opened his father's box immediately after the funeral. ____ (T / F)
2. Elena was a physicist the father worked with at a remote research station. ____ (T / F)
3. The narrator's mother reacted with shock and anger when shown the photograph. ____ (T / F)
4. The father ended the relationship with Elena before marrying the narrator's mother. ____ (T / F)
5. The father successfully sent the letter he wrote to the narrator. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. What prompted the narrator to finally open his father's sealed box?

- A) A sudden desire to sell the family home
- B) The expiration of his mother's apartment lease
- C) A direct request from his mother
- D) The discovery of Elena's address

2. According to the narrator's mother, what actually ended the relationship between the father and Elena?

- A) Elena's decision to leave the research station
- B) The mother's discovery of the affair
- C) A dispute between the two colleagues
- D) A letter from the father's own father questioning his intentions

3. What does the narrator conclude his father's silence actually represented?

- A) A heavily fortified expression of protective feeling
- B) A lack of genuine affection for his family
- C) Simple indifference toward his children
- D) A deliberate strategy to punish his wife

4. Why does the narrator begin writing his own letter to his son?

- A) He wants to document the family's history for future generations
- B) His son has explicitly demanded an explanation
- C) He fears repeating his father's pattern of unexplained silence
- D) A therapist recommended the exercise

5. What was contained in the letter found near the bottom of the box?

- A) Financial records from the research station
- B) A confession addressed to the narrator, drafted but never sent
- C) A formal apology addressed to Elena
- D) Instructions for dividing the family's inheritance

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. to unearth	11. a bombshell revelation	21. a startling discovery	31. a smoking gun

2. a skeleton in the closet	12. to be in the dark about something	22. to gloss over	32. to be shrouded in mystery
3. to come to light	13. a paper trail	23. a cover-up	33. an ulterior motive
4. a well-kept secret	14. to bring something to the surface	24. to feign ignorance	34. to rake up old memories
5. to stumble upon	15. an inconvenient truth	25. a long-buried truth	35. a telltale sign
6. a hidden agenda	16. to unmask	26. to have an inkling	36. to sweep something under the rug
7. to unravel a mystery	17. a clandestine affair	27. subterfuge	37. disingenuous
8. duplicity	18. to dig up the past	28. to lay bare	38. to be taken aback
9. a shroud of secrecy	19. a family secret	29. a chequered past	39. a facade
10. to piece together	20. to be none the wiser	30. to come clean	40. to reckon with one's past

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. "Taciturn" (as used to describe the father) most nearly means:

- A) prone to sudden anger
- B) habitually silent or reluctant to speak
- C) exceptionally generous
- D) easily persuaded

2. "Inscrutable" most nearly means:

- A) transparently honest
- B) financially reckless
- C) chronically forgetful
- D) impossible to interpret or understand fully

3. "Vigilance" most nearly means:

- A) careful and sustained watchfulness
- B) casual indifference
- C) reckless spontaneity
- D) formal politeness

4. "Guile" most nearly means:

- A) profound sadness
- B) physical exhaustion
- C) cunning or crafty deception
- D) unwarranted pride

5. "Reticence" most nearly means:

- A) an eagerness to share personal details
- B) a disposition to remain silent or reserved
- C) a tendency toward exaggeration
- D) a habit of interrupting others

6. **"Vertiginous" (used to describe the clarity of imagining a future) most nearly means:**

- A) pleasantly reassuring
- B) financially profitable
- C) grammatically complex
- D) causing a dizzying, disorienting sensation

7. **"Precipitated" (as in "precipitated the end of it") most nearly means:**

- A) caused to happen suddenly or sooner than expected
- B) delayed indefinitely
- C) quietly forgotten
- D) formally recorded

8. **"Caricature" (as in "the caricature of coldness") most nearly means:**

- A) an accurate and balanced portrait
- B) a legal document
- C) an exaggerated, distorted representation
- D) a private confession

9. **"Belatedly" most nearly means:**

- A) occurring exactly on schedule
- B) occurring later than expected or desired
- C) occurring without any explanation
- D) occurring in secret

10. **"Fortified" (as in "its most heavily fortified expression") most nearly means:**

- A) diluted or weakened
- B) publicly announced
- C) financially subsidized
- D) strengthened or reinforced, especially defensively

Grammar Focus: Cleft and Pseudo-Cleft Sentences for Emphasis

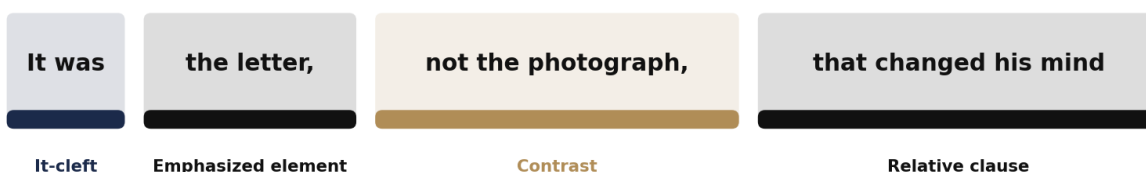
Cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions are among the most powerful tools available to a highly proficient speaker for controlling information structure — that is, for signalling precisely which element of a sentence carries new or contrastive information and which is presupposed as shared ground. An it-cleft divides a single proposition into two clauses joined by a form of "be," foregrounding one constituent immediately after "it was/is" while relegating the remainder to a relative-like clause introduced by "that," "who," or

occasionally "which": "It was the letter, not the photograph, that finally changed his mind" isolates the letter for contrastive emphasis in a way that no amount of stress or intonation could achieve as economically in writing. Wh-clefts, or pseudo-clefts, achieve a related but distinct effect by fronting a nominalized clause introduced by "what" (or, less commonly, "how," "where," or "why"), which then functions as the subject of "be," with the emphasized information placed in final position, the position of greatest natural prominence in English: "What surprised me most was his silence." The reverse pseudo-cleft simply inverts this order, placing the emphasized element first and the "what"-clause second — "His silence was what surprised me most" — a structure favoured when the writer wishes the emphasized noun phrase to open the sentence for rhythmic or thematic reasons, often to maintain continuity with the preceding sentence's topic.

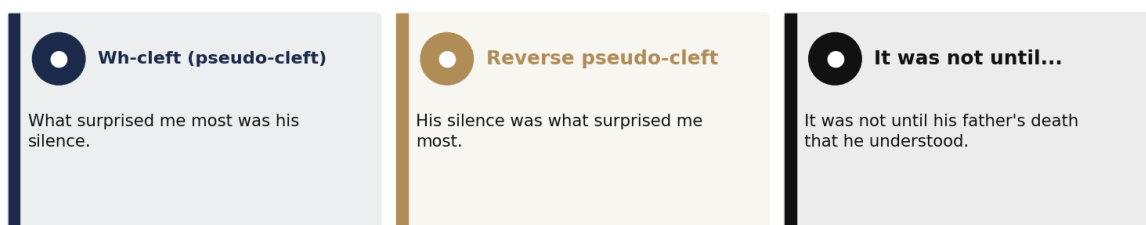
A further refinement available to the advanced writer is the temporal-causal cleft built on the pattern "It was not until X that Y," which does far more than state a chronology; it asserts, often with considerable rhetorical force, that Y was in some sense withheld, delayed, or dependent upon X, and that the interval between an expected moment and X constitutes a fact worth marking. Compare the flat "He understood after his father's death" with "It was not until his father's death that he understood," where the cleft foregrounds the delay itself as significant, implying frustration, irony, or poignancy that the uncleft version cannot carry. Mastery of these structures requires sensitivity to several constraints: the clause following "that" in an it-cleft must be recoverable as background information; the "what"-clause in a pseudo-cleft functions as a definite, presupposed entity ("what surprised me" presupposes that something did surprise the speaker); and negative or restrictive adverbials such as "not until," "only when," or "not since" trigger this cleft pattern with particular naturalness in formal, literary, and argumentative registers, where precise emphasis and controlled pacing are prized above conversational economy.

Figure 5

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples



Reference Table: Advanced Cleft Constructions

Pattern	Function	Example
It-cleft (It + be + focus + that/who)	Isolates one constituent for contrastive or emphatic focus	It was Elena, not a stranger, who appeared in the photograph.
Wh-cleft / pseudo-cleft (What + clause + be + focus)	Presents a presupposed proposition, then delivers the new information in final position	What surprised him most was his father's vulnerability.
Reverse pseudo-cleft (Focus + be + what-clause)	Fronts the emphasized element for thematic continuity with prior discourse	Silence was what he had always mistaken for strength.
"It was not until X that Y"	Marks a delayed realization or event, implying the gap itself is significant	It was not until the box was empty that he understood his father.
All-cleft ("All + clause + be + focus")	Restricts emphasis to a single, minimal element, often implying sufficiency	All he wanted was a plausible explanation, nothing more.

Examples

1. It was the unsent letter, not the photograph, that finally revealed his motives.
2. What the narrator misread as coldness was, in fact, a form of vigilance.
3. A belated tenderness was what he felt, standing there with the photograph in his hand.
4. It was not until he read his father's letter that he understood the silence.
5. What changed him was not the facts themselves but the shift in posture they demanded.
6. It was steadiness, purchased at a hidden cost, that his father ultimately gave the family.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- It suddenly dawned on me that...
expressing the moment a realization hits, often belatedly
- It wasn't until much later that I realised...
signalling a delayed understanding, emphasising the gap between event and awareness
- Looking back, I can see that...
framing hindsight and retrospective reassessment
- The penny finally dropped when...
idiomatic way of describing a sudden click of understanding
- What I hadn't bargained for was...
introducing an unexpected complication or discovery
- Little did I know that...
a literary device foreshadowing an ironic or hidden truth the speaker was unaware of
- It gradually became apparent that...
describing a slow, cumulative realization rather than a sudden one
- In hindsight, it all makes sense now

*summarising retrospective clarity after a revelation***Sample Dialogue**

A: You look rather pensive today. Is everything all right?

B: Honestly, I've had quite a shock. I was clearing out my mother's attic and stumbled upon a box of old letters.

A: Letters from whom?

B: That's the thing — little did I know that she'd had an entire life before my father, one she never once mentioned.

A: Goodness. How did you piece that together?

B: It wasn't until much later that I realised the letters were addressed to a man named Julian, not my father at all.

A: That must have been disorienting.

B: It suddenly dawned on me that half the stories she'd told us growing up were, at best, embellished.

A: Did anything in particular tip you off, looking back?

B: Looking back, I can see that there were telltale signs all along — a locked drawer, a photograph she'd never explain.

A: So the penny finally dropped when you found the letters?

B: Precisely. The penny finally dropped when I found a photograph of her and Julian tucked inside one envelope.

A: What I hadn't bargained for was how it would make you question everything else she'd told you.

B: Exactly that. It gradually became apparent that she'd been guarding this secret her entire life.

A: In hindsight, it all makes sense now — the sadness she sometimes carried without explanation.

B: Yes. I only wish she'd come clean while she was still alive.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase best expresses a sudden, almost involuntary realization?

- A) Looking back, I can see that...
- B) It suddenly dawned on me that...
- C) In hindsight, it all makes sense now
- D) It gradually became apparent that...

2. "The penny finally dropped when..." is closest in meaning to which of the following?

- A) I forgot about it entirely
- B) I decided to ignore the evidence
- C) I finally understood something after a period of confusion
- D) I was told the truth directly by someone else

3. Which phrase is most appropriate for describing a slow, cumulative process of understanding rather than a single sudden moment?

- A) The penny finally dropped when...
- B) It gradually became apparent that...
- C) Little did I know that...
- D) It suddenly dawned on me that...

4. "Little did I know that..." typically functions in a narrative to:

- A) summarise the ending of a story
- B) foreshadow an ironic or hidden truth the narrator was unaware of at the time
- C) ask a direct question of the listener
- D) apologise for a mistake

5. Which phrase specifically emphasises a considerable delay between an event and the moment of understanding?

- A) In hindsight, it all makes sense now
- B) What I hadn't bargained for was...
- C) It wasn't until much later that I realised...
- D) Looking back, I can see that...

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Which sentence correctly uses an it-cleft to emphasize "the letter"?

- A) It was the letter that finally revealed the truth.
- B) It was the letter what finally revealed the truth.
- C) The letter it was that finally revealed the truth.
- D) It the letter was that finally revealed the truth.

2. Choose the correctly formed wh-cleft (pseudo-cleft).

- A) What surprised he was her silence.
- B) What surprised him was her silence.
- C) That surprised him was her silence.
- D) What did surprise him was her silence.

3. "___ not until she spoke that he recognized her voice."

- A) There was
- B) This was
- C) It was
- D) He was

4. Identify the reverse pseudo-cleft among the following.

- A) It was honesty that mattered most to her.
- B) What mattered most to her was honesty.

- C) She mattered most because of honesty.
- D) Honesty was what mattered most to her.

5. Which sentence best expresses that a realization was significantly delayed?

- A) It was not until the meeting ended that he realized it.
- B) He realized it after the meeting.
- C) He realized it, and the meeting ended.
- D) The meeting ending made him realize it later.

6. Complete the it-cleft: "It was Elena ____ he had known at the research station."

- A) what
- B) who
- C) which
- D) whom that

7. Which option correctly completes: " ____ he lacked was not conviction but vocabulary."

- A) It
- B) That
- C) What
- D) There

8. Select the sentence with correct cleft grammar.

- A) It was his silence what protected them, not his wealth.
- B) It was that his silence protected them, not his wealth.
- C) His silence it was that protected them, not his wealth.
- D) It was his silence that protected them, not his wealth.

9. "It was not until 1987 ____ the letters were finally read."

- A) that
- B) when
- C) since
- D) while

10. Which sentence is a correctly formed all-cleft?

- A) All that he wanted it was an honest explanation.
- B) All he wanted was an honest explanation.
- C) All was he wanted an honest explanation.
- D) He wanted all was an honest explanation.

11. Choose the sentence that emphasizes "the box," not the discovery itself.

- A) It was what was inside the box that changed the box.
- B) The box was changed by everything that it was.
- C) It was the box that changed everything, not what was inside it.
- D) Everything the box was changed by it.

12. Which sentence correctly uses "what" as subject of a pseudo-cleft?

- A) What he needed it was time, not answers.
- B) What did he need was time, not answers.
- C) What he needed was, time, not answers.
- D) What he needed was time, not answers.

13. "It was not until ____ that I understood his silence."

- A) years later
- B) years later that
- C) after years later
- D) since years later

14. Identify the grammatically correct it-cleft with a plural focus.

- A) It was his parents that who raised him alone.
- B) It was his parents who raised him alone.
- C) It were his parents who raised him alone.
- D) It was his parents whom raised him alone.

15. Which word best fits: "Her explanation was utterly ____; no one could quite decipher her intentions."

- A) transparent
- B) redundant
- C) inscrutable
- D) affectionate

16. Choose the sentence with a correctly placed reverse pseudo-cleft.

- A) What he felt was, a quiet unexpected tenderness was.
- B) Was what he felt a quiet unexpected tenderness.
- C) He felt what a quiet unexpected tenderness was.
- D) A quiet, unexpected tenderness was what he felt.

17. Which sentence correctly negates an it-cleft?

- A) It was not the photograph that upset her, but the silence.
- B) It was not that the photograph upset her, but the silence.
- C) Not it was the photograph that upset her, but the silence.
- D) It the photograph was not that upset her, but the silence.

18. "____ struck me most was how calm she remained."

- A) It
- B) What
- C) There
- D) This

19. Choose the best synonym for "taciturn" in context.

- A) cheerfully talkative
- B) easily frightened
- C) reserved and sparing with words
- D) financially cautious

20. Select the correctly formed cleft emphasizing time.

- A) It was only after his death which we found the letters.
- B) Only it was after his death that we found the letters.
- C) After his death it was only that we found the letters.
- D) It was only after his death that we found the letters.

21. Which sentence uses "who" correctly in an it-cleft?

- A) It was Elena who worked at the station, not another colleague.
- B) It was Elena which worked at the station, not another colleague.
- C) It was Elena that who worked at the station, not another colleague.
- D) It was Elena whom worked at the station, not another colleague.

22. Choose the sentence that best fits: "The unsent letter was ____ finally rewrote him in my memory."

- A) that
- B) what
- C) which
- D) it

23. Which best defines "vigilance" as used in the reading?

- A) careless neglect
- B) sudden anger
- C) careful, sustained attentiveness
- D) quiet resignation

24. Identify the correct pseudo-cleft focusing on an action.

- A) What did he was apologize, quietly and without excuse.
- B) What he did it was apologize, quietly and without excuse.
- C) That he did was apologize, quietly and without excuse.
- D) What he did was apologize, quietly and without excuse.

25. "It was not until the box was emptied ____ the shape of the man became clear."

- A) that
- B) than
- C) when
- D) then

UNIT 6

A Turn of Phrase

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to using figurative language and wit in storytelling, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: The Alchemist's Trade

There is a particular kind of person, found in every office, every family gathering, every faculty meeting, who can say the same thing everyone else has just said and somehow leave the room in stitches, or in tears, or newly resolved to hand in their notice on Monday morning. The words themselves, transcribed and laid flat on a page, would look unremarkable — a plain observation, a familiar complaint, a truth everybody in the room already half-suspected. And yet something happens to that truth on its way out of this person's mouth that does not happen when the rest of us say it, something that turns a commonplace into a small detonation. I have spent an embarrassing number of years trying to work out what that something is, and I have come to believe it is not wit in the narrow sense — not cleverness, not a gift for the one-liner — but a kind of alchemy performed on language itself, a willingness to treat words not as vessels that merely carry meaning from one head to another but as instruments that can be tuned, bent, and struck at an angle until they ring with an overtone the literal sense never contained.

Take my aunt Rosalind, who could reduce an entire family Christmas to helpless laughter by describing my uncle's business ventures — three restaurants, a vineyard, and, memorably, an ostrich farm, each of which had gone under within eighteen months — as him having "a Midas touch in reverse." It is not, on the face of it, an especially ingenious phrase. Everyone at that table knew the myth of Midas; everyone had heard the touch inverted a hundred times before in a hundred other contexts. What made it land, what made three generations of a notoriously hard-to-please family actually choke on their turkey, was that she did not stop there. Having planted the metaphor, she then proceeded to farm it, mercilessly, for the rest of the meal: the ostrich farm had been "struck by the reverse Midas at both ends, feathers and fortune both plucked bare"; the vineyard's wine, she said, "turned to vinegar before it even had the decency to become wine first," which she noted was "a new low even for reverse alchemy, skipping a stage on the way down." By the time the pudding arrived, the whole family had a shared vocabulary for my uncle's misfortunes, a private mythology built out of a single classical allusion that she had refused to let die after one use. That refusal, that insistence on returning to the well and drawing something new from the same source, is the first thing the amateur gets wrong. We are taught, somewhere along the way, that a good metaphor is a single flourish, deployed once and then abandoned before it wears out its welcome. The masters of the turn of phrase know the opposite: an image, once introduced, becomes a thread that can be woven back through everything that follows, so that a listener feels not merely amused by one clever remark but drawn into a small, coherent universe where reverse Midas touches genuinely explain the world.

The second thing amateurs get wrong, and this is where most attempts at wit go to die a quiet, cringing death, is the failure to control register — to know, instant by instant, which key a sentence is being played in

and when to modulate. My aunt's genius, such as it was, lay largely in the collision she engineered between the exalted and the domestic. "A Midas touch in reverse" borrows the register of Greek myth, all gold and hubris and divine punishment, and then crashes it, without warning, into an ostrich farm in a paragraph about my uncle's overdraft. The joke lives entirely in that seam, in the gap between the loftiness of the allusion and the bathos of what it is being asked to describe. A sentence that stayed in one register throughout — either all myth or all overdraft — would have been merely informative or merely grand; it is the swerve between them, executed at exactly the moment the listener expects continuity, that produces the jolt we experience as wit. The same trick, inverted, works just as well: begin in the plainest, most demotic vernacular and then, without any throat-clearing to announce the shift, ascend into something almost oratorical, so that the sentence ends up somewhere far grander than its opening syllable promised. A colleague of mine, describing a disastrous quarterly report to the board, put it this way: "Frankly, the numbers were a dog's breakfast — and I say that with the full weight of having devoted the better part of a decade to the proposition that our balance sheet was, in the fullness of time, redeemable." The register lurches from "dog's breakfast," about as unbuttoned as English gets, to "the fullness of time" and "redeemable," which belong in a sermon, and the lurch is the entire point: it performs, in miniature, the very collapse of dignity the sentence is describing.

None of this works, however, without a third ingredient that is harder to name because it operates beneath the level of individual images or registers: a native speaker's feel for connotation, for the fact that no two words meaning "roughly the same thing" ever actually mean the same thing once you listen for the freight each one carries. "Frugal" and "stingy" point at the identical behaviour — a reluctance to spend — and yet one is a compliment you might put in a eulogy and the other an insult you would not say to a person's face. "Assertive" and "pushy" describe the same conversational habit from two entirely different moral universes; so do "eccentric" and "unstable," "confident" and "arrogant," "vintage" and "old." A person with a genuine command of the language does not merely know the denotation of a word, the dictionary fact it is pointing toward; she knows, instinctively and without having to pause and calculate, the entire emotional weather system that surrounds it — whether it flatters or wounds, whether it belongs in a courtroom or a kitchen, whether deploying it will make her sound generous or cutting, and she chooses accordingly, often making the choice do quiet, deniable work that a literal paraphrase could never accomplish. When my aunt called the ostrich farm venture "ambitious," rather than "reckless" or "doomed," she was not being kind exactly; she was being lethal in a register that let everyone at the table hear the word "reckless" anyway, ringing just beneath the surface of the one she had actually chosen to say aloud. This is connotation weaponised, connotation as a scalpel rather than a blunt instrument, and it is precisely the sort of move that a phrasebook, however comprehensive, cannot teach directly, because it depends on knowing not what a word means but what a word is for.

It would be a mistake, of course, to conclude from all this that fluency in figurative language is merely decorative, a set of party tricks for dinner tables and boardrooms with no bearing on anything that matters. The truth is closer to the opposite: the sustained metaphor, the register shift, the connotative nudge are not ornaments bolted onto plain meaning after the fact but the very mechanism by which complicated, resistant truths get made bearable, or memorable, or persuasive enough to change a mind. Nobody at that Christmas table would have sat still for a lecture on my uncle's poor judgment in capital allocation, however accurate

such a lecture might have been; but everyone remembers the reverse Midas touch two decades later, and remembers, along with it, something true about risk and hubris that no direct statement could have lodged so firmly. A eulogy that calls a difficult man "frugal" is not lying so much as choosing, deliberately, which of several true things to foreground, and doing so with a delicacy that outright praise or outright criticism could not achieve. Politicians, preachers, and advertising copywriters have understood this for as long as any of those professions have existed, which is precisely why the ability to recognise the trick — to hear a euphemism as a euphemism, a loaded metaphor as loaded, a register shift as a rhetorical lever being pulled rather than an accident of style — is not a luxury reserved for literature seminars but a form of self-defence available to anyone who has learned to listen for it.

What, then, actually separates the amateur from the alchemist? Not vocabulary size, certainly; I have met exhaustively well-read people who could define every word in a sentence and still produce prose as flat as a form letter, because knowing what a word denotes and knowing what it is for turn out to be two different educations entirely. Not even natural wit, if by that we mean some innate spark that either exists in a person or does not; my aunt, by her own cheerful admission, worked at her set pieces the way a musician works at scales, returning to the same handful of tricks — the extended conceit, the sudden lurch in register, the word chosen for what it implies rather than what it states — until deploying them became as unconscious as breathing. What separates the two, I have come to think, is simply the recognition that language is not a neutral conduit for facts but a medium with its own texture, its own weight, its own capacity to be shaped, and that a sentence can be crafted, sentence by sentence, the way a smith shapes metal: heated by an image, folded by a shift in register, tempered by the precise connotation of a single well-chosen word, until what began as ordinary speech comes out the other side with an edge nothing else could have given it. The words on the page remain, as I said at the outset, unremarkable; it is what a skilled hand does with them, on the way from the mind to the room, that turns the base metal of plain statement into something closer to gold — or, on a bad day for my uncle, into something considerably worse.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The author argues that wit primarily depends on cleverness and quick one-liners rather than on how language is shaped. ____ (T / F)
2. Aunt Rosalind sustained the "reverse Midas" metaphor across several remarks rather than using it only once. ____ (T / F)
3. According to the essay, effective register-shifting works best when a sentence stays in one consistent tone throughout. ____ (T / F)
4. The essay claims that "frugal" and "stingy" carry different connotations despite describing similar behaviour. ____ (T / F)
5. The author concludes that figurative language is merely decorative and has no real persuasive power. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. What does the author identify as the "alchemy" performed by naturally witty speakers?

- A) treating words as instruments that can be tuned and struck to produce meaning beyond the literal
- B) memorizing a large stock of pre-written jokes
- C) speaking faster than everyone else in the conversation
- D) avoiding figurative language in favor of plain, literal statements

2. Why does the author say Aunt Rosalind's family found the "reverse Midas touch" so effective, beyond the first use of the phrase?

- A) because she explained the myth of Midas in careful detail
- B) because she returned to and extended the same image throughout the meal, building a shared private vocabulary
- C) because she never repeated the image and moved quickly to a new topic
- D) because she used the phrase only once, at the very end of the meal

3. According to the essay, where does the "jolt" of wit in a register-shifting sentence actually occur?

- A) in the length of the sentence overall
- B) in the use of technical, specialized vocabulary
- C) in the seam or gap between two contrasting registers
- D) in the repetition of the exact same word several times

4. What point does the author make about "frugal" versus "stingy"?

- A) that they are used interchangeably in formal writing
- B) that they describe different behaviours entirely
- C) that "frugal" is considered ruder than "stingy"
- D) that they describe the same behaviour but carry opposite emotional connotations

5. What does the author ultimately claim separates the "amateur" from the "alchemist" with language?

- A) the recognition that language can be deliberately shaped, plus practiced skill in doing so
- B) an innate talent that cannot be developed through practice
- C) the sheer size of a person's vocabulary
- D) formal academic training in literature

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. raconteur	11. tour de force	21. euphemism	31. whimsical
2. to spin a yarn	12. to regale (an audience)	22. to land (a joke)	32. to elicit laughter

3. extended metaphor	13. deadpan	23. comic timing	33. larger-than-life
4. to hold (someone) spellbound	14. droll	24. allusion	34. self-deprecating humour
5. wit	15. to riff on	25. to farm a metaphor	35. to embellish (a story)
6. to captivate	16. mordant wit	26. verve	36. loquacious
7. register shift	17. to hold court	27. inflection	37. anecdote
8. bathos	18. sardonic	28. to hold the floor	38. cadence
9. connotation	19. to weave a narrative thread	29. raillery	39. to keep (listeners) on tenterhooks
10. denotation	20. punchline	30. repartee	40. turn of phrase

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. "In stitches" (as in "leave the room in stitches") most nearly means:

- A) laughing uncontrollably
- B) severely injured
- C) sewing quickly
- D) arguing loudly

2. "Hand in their notice" most nearly means:

- A) write a formal complaint
- B) resign from a job
- C) request a promotion
- D) take a short holiday

3. As used in the text, "bathos" most nearly means:

- A) a deep, dignified sadness
- B) excessive praise for a minor achievement
- C) an abrupt, often comic descent from the elevated to the trivial or ordinary
- D) a sudden increase in tension or suspense

4. "Demotic" (register) most nearly means:

- A) belonging to formal, academic writing
- B) associated with ancient or archaic vocabulary
- C) restricted to legal or technical contexts
- D) relating to ordinary, everyday speech rather than elevated language

5. "Going under" (as in the business ventures) most nearly means:

- A) failing or collapsing financially
- B) becoming extremely profitable
- C) being sold to a new owner

D) expanding into a new market

6. "A dog's breakfast" most nearly means:

- A) a nutritious, well-balanced start to the day
- B) a chaotic, badly organized mess
- C) a small, insignificant detail
- D) a generous and thoughtful gift

7. "Lodged" (as in "no direct statement could have lodged so firmly") most nearly means:

- A) rented temporarily
- B) formally reported to an authority
- C) firmly and lastingly implanted in the mind
- D) quickly forgotten

8. "Weaponised" (connotation weaponised) most nearly means:

- A) rendered completely harmless
- B) translated into another language
- C) simplified for a general audience
- D) turned into a deliberate, damaging tool

9. "Deniable" (in a deniable register) most nearly means:

- A) able to be plausibly disowned or claimed as unintended
- B) certain to be believed by everyone
- C) written down as formal, binding proof
- D) impossible to misinterpret

10. "Freight" (the freight a word carries) most nearly means:

- A) the literal, dictionary definition of a word
- B) the accumulated connotative and emotional weight a word carries
- C) the physical length of a word
- D) the grammatical category a word belongs to

Grammar Focus: Idiomatic and Figurative Mastery

Idiomatic mastery at the C2 level rests on the capacity to sustain a figurative frame across an entire passage rather than deploying a single image and discarding it. An extended metaphor works by establishing a source domain — myth, alchemy, cookery, warfare, whatever the writer chooses — and then returning to it repeatedly, drawing fresh, internally consistent implications from it each time, so that the image accumulates meaning rather than merely decorating a single sentence. This requires a writer to track the logic of the vehicle as carefully as the logic of the argument itself: once a family's misfortunes have been cast as a "reverse Midas touch," every subsequent detail — feathers, fortune, wine turning to vinegar before it becomes wine — must remain plausible within that borrowed mythology, or the frame collapses and the

figurative language reads as ornamental rather than structural. Sustaining a conceit in this way is one of the clearest markers separating native-like fluency from merely correct English, because it demands that a speaker hold two systems of meaning in mind simultaneously — the literal situation and the figurative frame draped over it — and move fluidly between them without ever losing the thread of either.

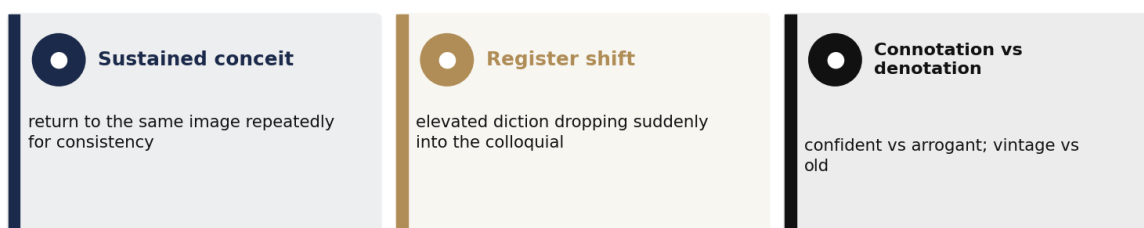
Equally central to mastery is the deliberate, controlled shift of register for rhetorical effect: the collision of the elevated and the demotic, or the reverse, timed precisely at the point where the listener expects continuity. A sentence that begins in formal, even oratorical diction and abruptly drops into colloquial bluntness — or vice versa — produces a jolt that mere information never could, because the surprise lives not in what is said but in the unexpected key in which it is suddenly said. This effect depends entirely on connotation, the associative and emotional freight that accumulates around a word quite apart from its dictionary definition; near-synonyms such as "confident" and "arrogant," or "vintage" and "old," point at similar realities while carrying opposed evaluative charges, and a speaker with genuine command of the language selects between them not for accuracy of denotation but for the precise emotional coloring the moment requires. Recognizing these devices — as a listener as much as a speaker — is itself a form of critical literacy, since euphemism, register-shifting, and loaded connotation are the standard instruments of persuasion in politics, advertising, and everyday diplomacy alike, and a mastery-level user of English is expected to both wield them and see through them.

Figure 6

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples



Reference Table: Idiomatic and Figurative Devices

Device	Function	Example
Extended/sustained metaphor	Returns to and develops a single figurative frame across a passage rather than using it once	"a Midas touch in reverse... struck at both ends, feathers and fortune both plucked bare"

Register-shifting	Moves abruptly between formal and colloquial diction to create rhetorical jolt or emphasis	"a dog's breakfast... in the fullness of time, redeemable"
Connotative substitution	Chooses a near-synonym for its emotional charge rather than its literal accuracy	"ambitious" chosen to imply, but not state, "reckless"
Idiomatic collocation	Uses a fixed, native-like phrase whose figurative sense exceeds its literal wording	"going under," "hand in their notice," "choke on their turkey"
Euphemism as rhetorical lever	Softens or reframes an unwelcome truth through a milder, connotatively lighter term	calling a difficult man "frugal" rather than "stingy" in a eulogy

Examples

1. Having cast her brother's finances as "a Midas touch in reverse," she kept farming the metaphor for the rest of the evening, noting that even his silver linings seemed to tarnish before anyone could admire them.
2. The report was, frankly, a dog's breakfast — though I say that with the full solemnity of a decade spent defending the proposition that our figures were, in the fullness of time, redeemable.
3. Nobody called him reckless to his face; they called him "ambitious," a word chosen precisely because it let the harsher truth ring just beneath the surface without ever being spoken aloud.
4. The vineyard's wine, she said, had managed to turn to vinegar before it had the decency to become wine in the first place — a new low, she added, even for reverse alchemy.
5. What began as a plain complaint about the budget ended, three sentences later, somewhere closer to a sermon, the register climbing steadily until "shortfall" had somehow become "a reckoning we can no longer defer."
6. Calling a notoriously difficult man "frugal" rather than "stingy" in his eulogy was not dishonest so much as surgical, a connotative choice that let the mourners hear both words at once.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- There is nobody quite like him for
introducing an admiring claim about someone's distinctive, unmatched talent
- He has a real gift for
praising a natural, effortless aptitude, often for storytelling or wit
- What struck me most was the way
highlighting a particular manner or technique that made an impression
- She has a knack for turning the mundane into
crediting someone with elevating ordinary material through skill
- He never lets a good line go to waste
noting someone's habit of extending or reusing a witty remark rather than abandoning it
- Her timing is impeccable
praising precise, well-judged delivery, especially comic or dramatic
- He can talk his way into (or out of) anything

admiring persuasive, fluent verbal charm and quick wit

- There's a real art to the way she

introducing praise for a subtle, skilled technique underlying an apparently effortless performance

Sample Dialogue

A: I finally met your uncle at the wedding. There is nobody quite like him for holding an entire table hostage with a single anecdote.

B: That's Uncle Ray for you. He has a real gift for spinning the smallest incident into something practically mythic.

A: What struck me most was the way he kept circling back to the same joke about the family dog, each time adding a new twist.

B: Right, he never lets a good line go to waste. He'll plant a metaphor early in the evening and then farm it relentlessly until dessert.

A: And her timing is impeccable too, isn't it? Your aunt, I mean, the one who told the story about the cruise.

B: Impeccable is the word. She has a knack for turning the mundane into something that leaves the whole room in stitches.

A: I noticed she'd drop into this wonderfully solemn, almost biblical tone and then undercut it instantly with something completely deadpan.

B: There's a real art to the way she shifts registers like that. It catches you off guard every single time, no matter how many times you've heard her do it.

A: He can talk his way into anything, honestly. By the end of the night he'd convinced the waiter to bring out a cake that wasn't even on the menu.

B: That doesn't surprise me in the slightest. What struck me most was how effortless it all seemed, as though he weren't performing at all.

A: I suppose the best storytellers make the craft invisible.

B: Exactly. There's a real art to making artifice look like nothing more than idle conversation.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase would you use to praise someone's natural, effortless talent for storytelling?

- A) He never lets a good line go to waste
- B) He has a real gift for
- C) Her timing is impeccable
- D) There's a real art to the way she

2. "He never lets a good line go to waste" most likely describes someone who:

- A) avoids humour altogether in conversation
- B) returns to and extends a witty remark rather than using it only once
- C) forgets jokes almost immediately after telling them
- D) only tells stories that are completely true

3. Which phrase specifically praises precise, well-judged comic or dramatic delivery?

- A) There is nobody quite like him for
- B) Her timing is impeccable
- C) She has a knack for turning the mundane into
- D) What struck me most was the way

4. Complete the sentence appropriately: "_____ he wove three completely unrelated anecdotes into a single, devastating punchline."

- A) What struck me most was the way
- B) He can talk his way into anything
- C) Her timing is impeccable
- D) There's a real art to the way she

5. Which phrase best praises someone's persuasive, fluent verbal charm?

- A) She has a knack for turning the mundane into
- B) He can talk his way into anything
- C) He never lets a good line go to waste
- D) There is nobody quite like him for

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Which technique involves developing a single figurative image across several sentences or an entire passage?

- A) sustained/extended metaphor
- B) simple denotation
- C) direct literal statement
- D) subject-verb inversion

2. "She was on cloud nine after the results came in" means she was:

- A) extremely worried
- B) extremely happy
- C) completely indifferent
- D) mildly annoyed

3. Choosing "assertive" instead of "pushy" to describe the same behaviour is an example of:

- A) literal translation
- B) grammatical inversion
- C) connotative substitution
- D) passive voice

4. "He really put his foot in it at the meeting" means he:

- A) arrived precisely on time
- B) gave an outstanding presentation
- C) injured his foot accidentally
- D) made an embarrassing mistake or said something tactless

5. A sentence that shifts abruptly from formal, elevated diction to blunt colloquial language is using:

- A) register-shifting
- B) a euphemism only
- C) a strictly literal register throughout
- D) a rhetorical question

6. "Don't beat around the bush" is advice to:

- A) speak indirectly and cautiously
- B) get straight to the point
- C) avoid the topic entirely
- D) speak more quietly

7. Calling a difficult, tight-fisted relative "frugal" instead of "stingy" in a eulogy is best described as:

- A) an outright factual error
- B) a grammatical mistake
- C) a euphemistic, connotatively softer word choice
- D) an example of literal, neutral vocabulary

8. "The company is on its last legs" most nearly means the company is:

- A) thriving and expanding rapidly
- B) newly founded
- C) legally protected from bankruptcy
- D) close to failing or collapsing

9. Which pair of words describes essentially the same behaviour but with opposite connotations?

- A) "confident" and "arrogant"
- B) "table" and "chair"
- C) "quickly" and "slowly"
- D) "run" and "walk"

10. "It cost me an arm and a leg" means something was:

- A) very cheap
- B) very expensive
- C) physically painful to obtain
- D) given away for free

11. In an extended metaphor comparing a failing business to alchemy, describing profits as turning into "vinegar before it even became wine" mainly serves to:

- A) provide a literal, technical description of the wine-making process

- B) introduce an entirely unrelated new topic
- C) extend the established figurative frame with a fresh, consistent detail
- D) correct an earlier factual error in the passage

12. "He's got a chip on his shoulder" describes someone who is:

- A) carrying food carelessly
- B) extremely relaxed and carefree
- C) skilled at woodworking
- D) resentful or holding a grudge, often over a perceived slight

13. The rhetorical effect of a sudden shift from "a dog's breakfast" to "in the fullness of time, redeemable" within one sentence depends primarily on:

- A) the contrast between colloquial and formal register
- B) the use of technical jargon
- C) repeating the same word for emphasis
- D) a strictly chronological narrative structure

14. "She let the cat out of the bag" means she:

- A) kept a secret perfectly
- B) revealed a secret, often accidentally
- C) adopted a new pet
- D) escaped from a difficult situation

15. A euphemism is best defined as:

- A) a harsh, deliberately offensive term
- B) a strictly technical, scientific term
- C) a milder or vaguer expression substituted for one considered too blunt or unpleasant
- D) an entirely meaningless filler word

16. "That argument doesn't hold water" means the argument:

- A) is completely convincing
- B) concerns a legal dispute
- C) was delivered too quietly
- D) is not logically sound

17. When a listener recognizes a politician's word choice as a deliberate euphemism rather than a neutral description, they are exercising:

- A) critical awareness of connotation and rhetorical strategy
- B) literal comprehension only
- C) grammatical analysis of verb tense
- D) phonetic transcription skills

18. "He was thrown under the bus by his own team" means he was:

- A) praised publicly by his colleagues

- B) blamed or sacrificed to protect others, often unfairly
- C) given a promotion unexpectedly
- D) invited to join a new project

19. Which best describes the function of an idiomatic collocation such as "hand in their notice"?

- A) a purely literal description with no figurative element
- B) a grammatical structure unique to formal legal writing
- C) a fixed native-like phrase whose figurative meaning exceeds its literal wording
- D) a phrase used only in negative sentences

20. "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" warns against:

- A) spending too much money on food
- B) raising animals irresponsibly
- C) speaking too loudly in public
- D) assuming success before it is certain

21. Sustaining a single figurative frame across a paragraph, rather than using one image and abandoning it, primarily demonstrates:

- A) native-like idiomatic and rhetorical mastery
- B) a limited vocabulary
- C) an inability to write literally
- D) grammatical incorrectness

22. "She's a fish out of water in that new job" means she feels:

- A) completely comfortable and at ease
- B) out of place or awkward in an unfamiliar situation
- C) physically unwell
- D) eager to leave immediately

23. The word "vintage" carries a more positive connotation than "old" chiefly because:

- A) it refers to a different time period entirely
- B) it is grammatically more complex
- C) connotation adds evaluative or emotional coloring beyond shared denotation
- D) it is only used in legal documents

24. "He's burning the candle at both ends" describes someone who:

- A) is being extremely cautious and careful
- B) is celebrating a special occasion
- C) has given up on a difficult task
- D) is overworking to the point of exhaustion

25. What ultimately distinguishes a native-like "turn of phrase" from a merely grammatically correct sentence, according to mastery-level usage?

- A) the deliberate, controlled use of sustained metaphor, register-shifting, and connotation

- B) the presence of technical vocabulary alone
- C) strict adherence to short, simple sentence structures
- D) the complete avoidance of any figurative language

UNIT 7

That Said...

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to discussing translation and untranslatable concepts, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: The Untranslatable Remainder

Every translator arrives, sooner or later, at the same uncomfortable admission: that certain words, however painstakingly rendered, leave behind a residue that no amount of paraphrase can fully recover. The Portuguese *saudade*, the German *Sehnsucht*, the Japanese *mono no aware* — each names an emotional shading so entangled with the history, climate, and social texture of the language that produced it that any English equivalent feels less like a translation than a diminishment, a pale outline traced around a shape whose true contours have been left behind. Notwithstanding the extraordinary advances of neural machine translation over the past decade — systems that now render technical manuals, news dispatches, and even conversational exchanges with a fluency that would have seemed miraculous a generation ago — professional translators continue to insist, almost unanimously, that something persists which resists conversion: not merely a word, but a whole architecture of association that a target language may simply lack the scaffolding to hold. This insistence is easy to dismiss as guild nostalgia, the natural reluctance of a profession to concede that a machine might soon perform its most demanding task as capably as it does. That said, the persistence of the intuition across languages, eras, and theoretical traditions — from the German Romantics who first theorized untranslatability to contemporary corpus linguists who measure it empirically — suggests that something more than professional self-interest is at stake, and that the phenomenon deserves to be examined on its own terms rather than dismissed as a rearguard defense of a dying craft.

The naive view of translation, the one most laypeople carry without ever examining it, treats a language as a kind of code: each word in the source corresponds, in principle, to some word or phrase in the target, and the translator's task is simply to locate the correct match, rather as a cryptographer might substitute one alphabet for another according to a fixed key. Insofar as this view treats meaning as something that inheres in words independently of the systems of thought and reference in which those words are embedded, it misconstrues the nature of the problem from the outset. A word does not carry a fixed parcel of meaning that can be lifted out of one language and set down, unaltered, in another; it occupies a position within a lattice of related terms, connotations, and habitual usages that the target language may organize along entirely different lines. The Russian *toska*, glossed limply in dictionaries as "anguish" or "yearning," in fact denotes a spiritual condition so culturally specific — inflected by a particular history of exile, winter, and unfulfilled longing — that Nabokov himself, no stranger to either language, confessed that no English word captured it fully. To translate, on this view, is not to substitute but to renegotiate an entire conceptual arrangement, word by word, sentence by sentence, until something approximating the original effect has been reconstructed in wholly different materials.

Proponents of machine translation will rightly point out that such romantic pronouncements have not aged well; each generation of translators has declared some fresh technological advance incapable of handling the subtleties that only a human sensibility could grasp, and each generation has watched the machines close the gap faster than anticipated. Modern neural systems, trained on billions of aligned sentence pairs, no longer produce the stilted, word-salad output of earlier statistical models; they generate prose that is often grammatical, idiomatic, and contextually plausible enough to pass, in casual use, for the work of a competent bilingual speaker. That said, fluency and fidelity are not the same achievement, and a sentence can be perfectly well-formed in the target language while nonetheless betraying the sense, tone, or implication of the original. A machine translating a diplomatic cable or a piece of investigative journalism may render every clause grammatically while flattening an irony, softening an accusation, or missing an allusion that a human reader steeped in the source culture would catch instantly. The danger is not that the output reads badly — increasingly, it does not — but that its very smoothness disguises the gaps, producing a text that feels authoritative precisely where it has quietly abandoned the original's meaning.

This is not a problem confined to connotation or cultural allusion; it extends to the grammatical architecture of a sentence, which shapes, however subtly, what a speaker finds it natural to notice and report. Languages that grammatically mark evidentiality — requiring a speaker to specify whether a claim rests on direct observation, hearsay, or inference — train their speakers to attend habitually to the provenance of their own knowledge in a way that English, which carries no such obligation, does not. By the same token, languages with elaborate systems of grammatical gender or classifier nouns encourage speakers to categorize the physical world along lines that a genderless, classifier-free language simply does not require its speakers to draw. None of this amounts to the strong Whorfian claim that speakers of different languages inhabit incommensurable cognitive universes, a position that decades of psycholinguistic research have largely discredited; it is, rather, the far more modest and well-supported observation that grammar creates habits of attention, and that translating a sentence often means translating, however imperfectly, the pattern of attention that its original grammar had trained a native speaker to sustain.

Critics of the untranslatability thesis have a further objection, and it is not a frivolous one: the practice of collecting supposedly untranslatable words — assembling lists of exotic terms from languages the compiler does not speak, each accompanied by a wistful gloss — often shades into a kind of linguistic tourism that exoticizes other cultures rather than illuminating them, treating a language's vocabulary as a cabinet of curiosities rather than a functioning system that its speakers use to complain about the weather and argue over dinner just as fluently as anyone else. There is something faintly patronizing, these critics argue, in insisting that a Danish or a Yoruba word names an emotion so alien that English speakers cannot possibly access it, as though the feelings themselves, rather than merely their lexical packaging, differed categorically across cultures. Be that as it may, the objection, however salutary as a corrective to romantic overstatement, does not dispose of the underlying phenomenon; it merely insists, correctly, that untranslatability is a matter of degree and of labor rather than of absolute impossibility. A concept without a single-word equivalent can still be conveyed, given enough sentences and enough patience, and it is precisely this asymmetry — easy in one language, laborious in another — that the thesis was always meant to describe, not some metaphysical wall between minds.

Nowhere is this labor more visible than in the translation of poetry, where meaning, sound, rhythm, and connotation are so tightly fused that preserving one nearly always requires sacrificing another. A translator confronting a pun, an internal rhyme, or a line whose meter depends on the particular syllable count of the source language must choose, sentence by sentence, which quality to rescue and which to let go, and different translators, confronted with the identical original, will make defensible but incompatible choices. This is why a single poem — Dante's *Commedia*, say, or the classical Chinese lyric — can generate dozens of English translations across a century, none of them wrong exactly, each foregrounding a different facet of an original that no single version could exhaust. The theorist Lawrence Venuti has usefully distinguished between translations that domesticate a foreign text, smoothing its strangeness into fluent, familiar-sounding prose, and those that foreignize it, retaining syntactic and lexical traces of the original that remind the reader, at every turn, that she is reading a translation at all. Insofar as either strategy involves loss — the domesticating translation losing the texture of foreignness, the foreignizing translation losing easy readability — the translator's task is less a matter of achieving perfect equivalence than of choosing, deliberately and with full awareness of the trade-off, which imperfection to commit to.

None of this is to suggest that machine translation has no place in this landscape, or that its steady improvement should be resisted rather than welcomed; for a vast range of utilitarian texts — product manuals, weather reports, routine correspondence — where connotation and cultural texture matter little and speed matters a great deal, an imperfect but instant translation is manifestly preferable to no translation at all, and it would be perverse to withhold from millions of users a tool that has already transformed access to information across linguistic boundaries. That having been said, the domains in which fidelity to nuance, irony, and cultural allusion genuinely matters — diplomacy, literature, law, and any context in which a misjudged tone can cause real harm — remain domains in which a human translator's cultivated sensitivity to what a machine cannot yet detect continues to earn its cost. Notwithstanding the pace of improvement in large language models, which have narrowed this gap further than most translators would have predicted even five years ago, the fundamental asymmetry between statistical pattern-matching and lived cultural fluency has not disappeared; it has merely become harder to see, buried beneath an ever more convincing surface of fluency that can lull an unwary reader into mistaking smoothness for depth.

What emerges from all this is not a case for linguistic despair, still less a brief for abandoning the extraordinary tools that now let a monolingual reader glimpse, however imperfectly, a text written in a language she will never learn. It is, rather, an argument for humility about what any translation — machine-made or painstakingly handcrafted over a decade, as some literary translations are — can actually deliver: not the original, restored intact in different words, but a new object, related to the original by labor and intention rather than by identity, doing its best to gesture toward a meaning that always exceeds whatever sentence is finally set down on the page. The untranslatable remainder, in the end, is not a flaw in the enterprise of translation but its very reason for being: were meaning perfectly portable across languages, translation would be a mechanical exercise rather than the interpretive art that every serious practitioner, human or otherwise, is still in the process of learning to practice.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The essay claims that neural machine translation has entirely eliminated the intuition that some words resist translation. ____ (T / F)
2. Nabokov himself acknowledged that no English word fully captured the Russian *toska*. ____ (T / F)
3. The essay endorses the strong Whorfian claim that speakers of different languages inhabit entirely incommensurable cognitive universes. ____ (T / F)
4. Lawrence Venuti's distinction between domesticating and foreignizing translation is discussed in the essay. ____ (T / F)
5. The essay concludes that machine translation should be resisted and avoided in all contexts. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. According to the opening paragraphs, what does the author argue is the significance of words like *saudade* or *mono no aware*?

- A) They illustrate how a word's meaning can be entangled with a language's specific cultural and historical context.
- B) They prove that all human emotions are entirely universal across languages.
- C) They demonstrate that translation is a purely mechanical process.
- D) They show that only Romance languages contain untranslatable words.

2. According to the essay, what is the main flaw in the "naive view" of translation as substitution?

- A) It assumes translators are not fluent enough in the source language.
- B) It ignores the existence of machine translation entirely.
- C) It treats meaning as detachable from words rather than embedded in a wider system of thought and reference.
- D) It focuses too heavily on poetry rather than prose.

3. Regarding grammatical evidentiality, what does the essay claim?

- A) All languages require speakers to mark the source of their information.
- B) Languages that grammatically mark evidentiality train speakers to habitually attend to the source of their knowledge.
- C) Evidentiality has no effect whatsoever on speakers' habits of thought.
- D) English marks evidentiality more rigorously than most other languages.

4. What is the essay's response to critics who call the untranslatability thesis a form of "linguistic tourism"?

- A) The essay fully agrees and abandons the untranslatability thesis.
- B) The essay claims the critics have never studied a foreign language.
- C) The essay concedes the criticism's value but maintains that untranslatability, as a matter of degree, still holds.
- D) The essay argues that all criticism of the thesis is motivated by professional jealousy.

5. What is the essay's overall conclusion about machine translation and human translation?

- A) Machine translation should be abandoned in favor of exclusively human translators.

- B) Human translators are no longer necessary in any professional context.
- C) Machine translation is equally reliable as human translation in all contexts, including literature and diplomacy.
- D) Machine translation is valuable for utilitarian texts, but human sensitivity to nuance remains essential in domains like diplomacy and literature.

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. untranslatability	11. nuance	21. to coin a neologism	31. target language
2. to defy translation	12. to convey a shade of meaning	22. idiomaticity	32. linguistic relativity
3. a semantic gap	13. cultural specificity	23. a false friend	33. to be embedded in a worldview
4. a lexical lacuna	14. an untranslatable	24. equivalence	34. untranslatable residue
5. to fall short of capturing	15. the ineffable	25. dynamic equivalence	35. an evocative term
6. connotative weight	16. to gloss a word	26. formal equivalence	36. to lose something in translation
7. a loanword	17. paraphrase	27. to domesticate a text	37. a portmanteau
8. to render a term	18. a periphrastic rendering	28. to foreignize a text	38. resonance
9. approximation	19. semantic field	29. fidelity to the source	39. a culturally bound expression
10. a calque	20. polysemy	30. a source-language construct	40. to hinge on context

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. As used in the reading, "rearguard" (a rearguard defense) most nearly means:

- A) a defensive stance taken by a group whose position is already weakening
- B) an aggressive push toward new territory
- C) a neutral, uninvolved observation
- D) a formal legal accusation

2. In the passage, "lattice" (a lattice of related terms) most nearly means:

- A) a single, isolated fact
- B) an interconnected framework or network of related parts

- C) a strict chronological sequence
- D) a formal written agreement

3. "Inflected" (inflected by a particular history) most nearly means:

- A) completely unaffected by outside influence
- B) written down for the first time
- C) shaped or given a particular quality by some influence
- D) translated word for word

4. "Salutary" (however salutary as a corrective) most nearly means:

- A) causing considerable harm
- B) statistically negligible
- C) purely coincidental
- D) producing a beneficial effect, especially one that corrects a fault

5. "Incommensurable" (incommensurable cognitive universes) most nearly means:

- A) not able to be measured or compared using a shared standard
- B) exactly identical in scale
- C) easily converted into a common unit
- D) mutually agreed upon in advance

6. As used in the text, "asymmetry" most nearly means:

- A) perfect balance between two elements
- B) a lack of balance, equality, or correspondence between things
- C) a shared history between two cultures
- D) a formal treaty between two parties

7. "Perverse" (it would be perverse to withhold) most nearly means:

- A) entirely predictable and expected
- B) financially motivated
- C) contrary to what is reasonable, sensible, or expected
- D) legally mandated

8. "Unwary" (an unwary reader) most nearly means:

- A) highly suspicious and cautious
- B) professionally certified
- C) openly hostile
- D) not alert to possible danger, trickery, or difficulty

9. "Stilted" (the stilted, word-salad output) most nearly means:

- A) stiff and artificial in style, lacking natural ease
- B) remarkably fluent and natural
- C) extremely brief
- D) written in verse

10. As used in the passage, "scaffolding" (the scaffolding to hold it) most nearly means:

- A) a finished, permanent structure
- B) a temporary supporting framework used while something is being built or developed
- C) a decorative but functionless addition
- D) a formal legal document

Grammar Focus: Advanced Connectors for Academic Cohesion

At the mastery level, the connectors that hold an argument together do far more work than simple conjunctions like "but" or "and"; they signal, with considerable precision, exactly what logical move a writer is making from one sentence to the next, and a reader trained to notice them can follow the architecture of an argument almost as though it were labeled. Concessive connectors such as "be that as it may" and "notwithstanding" acknowledge the force of a preceding point without allowing it to derail the writer's main line of reasoning: "be that as it may" typically closes off further debate on the conceded point and pivots the argument forward, often toward a decision or a conclusion that stands despite the objection just granted, while "notwithstanding" — usable both as a preposition placed before its object ("notwithstanding the criticism") and, more formally, after it ("the criticism notwithstanding") — signals that a fact, however real, does not prevent the main claim from holding. "That said" and its more formal cousin "that having been said" perform a related but distinct function: rather than dismissing the prior point, they use it as a launching pad for a qualification or a contrasting observation that the writer wants to introduce without contradicting what has just been conceded.

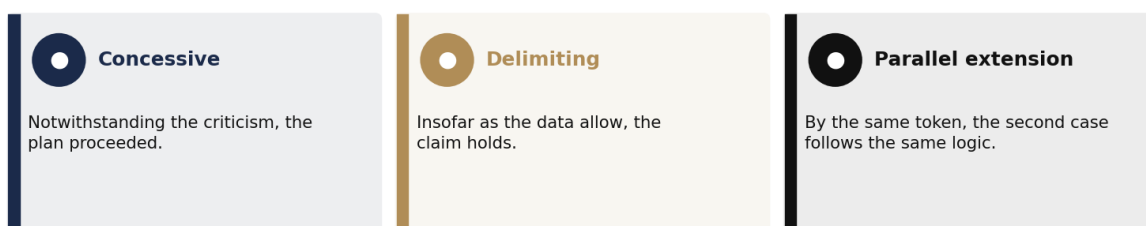
Two further devices refine an argument's logic rather than merely conceding ground. "Insofar as" is a device of careful delimitation: it specifies the precise extent to which a claim is true, implicitly marking the boundary beyond which the claim no longer applies, and mastery-level writers use it to avoid the overstatement that a less careful writer might commit by asserting something as though it held universally. "By the same token," by contrast, is a device of parallel extension: it signals that a pattern of reasoning just established in one case applies, by analogous logic, to a second, related case, allowing a writer to build a cumulative argument out of structurally similar observations without having to restate the underlying logic each time. Deployed together across a paragraph, these devices let a writer concede objections without losing the thread, delimit claims without weakening them, and extend reasoning by analogy without repetition — producing prose that reads, to an attentive reader, as though every sentence had been placed exactly where the logic of the argument required it.

Figure 7

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples



Reference Table: Advanced Cohesive Devices

Device	Function	Example
That said	Introduces a qualifying or contrasting observation after conceding a prior point, without rejecting it	Machine translation has improved; that said, it still misses irony.
Be that as it may	Concedes a point but dismisses its power to change the writer's conclusion or course of action	Critics call the thesis sentimental. Be that as it may, the pattern persists.
Insofar as	Limits or delimits the extent to which a following claim is true	The argument holds insofar as it accounts for the evidence already gathered.
By the same token	Extends a line of reasoning to a second, structurally parallel case	Poets sacrifice accuracy for rhythm; by the same token, translators sacrifice elegance for precision.
Notwithstanding	Introduces a fact or objection that does not prevent the main claim from holding	Notwithstanding the criticism, the recommendations were adopted.

Examples

- Machine translation has undeniably improved; that said, it still stumbles over irony and cultural allusion that a human translator would catch immediately.
- Critics dismiss the untranslatability thesis as sentimental. Be that as it may, the phenomenon it describes has been observed across too many unrelated languages to be dismissed as mere nostalgia.
- A translation succeeds insofar as it preserves the effect the original had on its first readers; beyond that narrow measure, fidelity to individual words matters far less than critics assume.
- Poets sacrifice literal accuracy to preserve rhythm; by the same token, legal translators sometimes sacrifice elegance to preserve precision.

5. Notwithstanding the remarkable fluency of modern translation software, a human sensitivity to tone remains indispensable in diplomacy and literature.
6. The reviewers praised the translator's ingenuity. That having been said, they noted several passages where the original's ambiguity had been resolved too decisively.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- **be that as it may**
conceding a preceding point while signalling that it does not undermine one's overall argument
- **notwithstanding**
introducing a factor that does not prevent or negate what has just been stated
- **that said**
pivoting from a prior statement to a qualifying or contrasting observation
- **insofar as**
limiting the scope of a claim to the precise extent to which it holds true
- **by the same token**
extending a line of reasoning to a parallel case on comparable grounds
- **it stands to reason that**
asserting that a conclusion follows logically and self-evidently from what precedes it
- **far from it**
forcefully rejecting an inference the listener might otherwise draw
- **if anything**
correcting or sharpening a prior claim by suggesting the opposite is closer to the truth

Sample Dialogue

A: I've always found the whole notion of "untranslatable words" a bit overstated, honestly.

B: Far from it. Take "saudade" — no single English word captures that blend of longing and bittersweet nostalgia.

A: Granted, there's no one-word equivalent. Be that as it may, a skilled translator can still render the sentiment through a phrase or a well-chosen paraphrase.

B: True, notwithstanding the loss of connotative weight that inevitably comes with unpacking a single word into several.

A: That said, isn't that loss present in all translation, not just these supposedly special cases?

B: To some extent, yes. But insofar as "saudade" is bound to a specific cultural and historical experience, the gap feels wider than usual.

A: It stands to reason that any deeply culture-bound term will resist neat equivalence — that's not unique to Portuguese.

B: Exactly, and by the same token, English "privacy" or "serendipity" pose similar problems when translated into languages that carve up experience differently.

A: So you'd say the difficulty isn't the word itself, but the worldview embedded in it?

B: If anything, that's the whole point — translation exposes how differently languages segment reality, not merely that some words lack tidy counterparts.

A: Fair enough. I suppose I was underestimating just how much cultural freight a single term can carry.

B: Precisely. And that's exactly why translators still argue over whether fidelity to form or to feeling should win out.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase is used to concede a point without letting it weaken the speaker's main argument?

- A) if anything
- B) be that as it may
- C) far from it
- D) by the same token

2. "Notwithstanding the loss of connotative weight" most nearly means:

- A) because of the loss of connotative weight
- B) despite the loss of connotative weight
- C) in order to lose connotative weight
- D) instead of losing connotative weight

3. Which phrase would you use to strongly reject an inference someone else has drawn?

- A) that said
- B) insofar as
- C) far from it
- D) it stands to reason that

4. "Insofar as 'saudade' is bound to a specific cultural experience..." is used to:

- A) deny that the word has any cultural basis
- B) limit the claim to the precise extent it applies
- C) generalize the claim to all languages
- D) introduce an unrelated example

5. Which phrase extends an argument to a comparable case on similar grounds?

- A) that said
- B) by the same token
- C) if anything
- D) notwithstanding

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Critics argued that the plan was flawed from the outset. ____, the committee decided to proceed with only minor revisions.

- A) Be that as it may
- B) Insofar as
- C) By the same token
- D) Provided that

2. The proposal succeeds ____ it addresses the committee's central objection; beyond that, its other merits are largely irrelevant to the vote.

- A) notwithstanding
- B) insofar as
- C) that said
- D) be that as it may

3. Literary translators must sacrifice rhyme to preserve meaning. ____, translators of technical manuals routinely sacrifice elegance to preserve precision.

- A) Notwithstanding
- B) Insofar as
- C) By the same token
- D) That said

4. ____ the sharp criticism the report received, its central recommendations were adopted almost unchanged.

- A) Insofar as
- B) By the same token
- C) Provided that
- D) Notwithstanding

5. The new software is remarkably fast. ____, it still lacks several features that experienced users will miss.

- A) That said
- B) By the same token
- C) Insofar as
- D) Be that as it may

6. Which word or phrase is closest in meaning to "notwithstanding" as used in formal academic prose?

- A) because of
- B) despite
- C) provided that
- D) in addition to

7. "Insofar as" is best paraphrased as:

- A) even though
- B) in addition to the fact that

- C) to the extent that
- D) regardless of whether

8. "By the same token" signals that the writer is about to:

- A) contradict the previous statement
- B) qualify the previous statement's scope
- C) concede a point before dismissing it
- D) extend the previous reasoning to a parallel case

9. "Be that as it may" is used to:

- A) acknowledge a point without letting it change the writer's course of action
- B) introduce the extent to which a claim holds
- C) draw a parallel between two unrelated cases
- D) flatly reject the previous statement as false

10. The committee praised the intern's diligence. _____, they declined to renew her contract, citing budget constraints unrelated to her performance.

- A) By the same token
- B) That having been said
- C) Insofar as
- D) Provided that

11. Which sentence correctly uses "notwithstanding" as a postpositive preposition?

- A) Notwithstanding, the delay, they arrived on time.
- B) The delay notwithstanding they, arrived on time.
- C) The delay notwithstanding, they arrived on time.
- D) They arrived, the delay, notwithstanding on time.

12. Which sentence uses "insofar as" correctly?

- A) Insofar as, the theory is popular, it is rarely tested.
- B) The theory is popular insofar it is rarely tested.
- C) Insofar the theory is popular as, it is rarely tested.
- D) The theory holds insofar as it can be independently verified.

13. Which sentence correctly uses "by the same token"?

- A) Human translators must interpret tone; by the same token, they must interpret intention.
- B) Human translators must interpret tone, by the same token machines cannot.
- C) By the same token machines, human translators interpret tone.
- D) Human translators, by the same token must interpret, tone.

14. Which sentence correctly uses "be that as it may"?

- A) Be that as it may is a strong argument against the proposal.
- B) The argument is persuasive; be that as it may, the board rejected it.
- C) The board rejected be that as it may the argument.

D) Be that as, it may, the argument persuasive.

15. As used in the reading, "salutary" (a salutary corrective) most nearly means:

- A) harshly critical
- B) statistically insignificant
- C) beneficial, producing a good effect
- D) completely irrelevant

16. "Incommensurable cognitive universes" suggests worlds that are:

- A) identical in every respect
- B) easily compared using a common measure
- C) linked by a shared history
- D) not able to be measured or compared by a common standard

17. The "asymmetry" the essay describes between languages refers to:

- A) an imbalance in the ease or difficulty of conveying a concept
- B) a perfect balance between two languages
- C) a historical rivalry between two nations
- D) a grammatical rule shared by two languages

18. The evidence for the new policy is mixed. _____, the government has chosen to implement it nationwide.

- A) Insofar as
- B) Be that as it may
- C) By the same token
- D) In that

19. Which of the following best distinguishes "that said" from "notwithstanding"?

- A) They are used only in spoken English, never in writing
- B) "Notwithstanding" is used only with numbers and statistics
- C) "That said" typically opens a new sentence as a pivot, while "notwithstanding" often functions within a single clause or precedes/follows a noun phrase
- D) They are interchangeable in every context with no stylistic difference

20. Poets must often abandon literal accuracy to preserve rhythm. _____, translators of legal contracts must sometimes abandon elegance to preserve precision.

- A) Notwithstanding
- B) Insofar as
- C) That said
- D) By the same token

21. It would be "perverse" to withhold a useful tool most nearly means it would be:

- A) contrary to reason or good sense
- B) financially costly
- C) legally forbidden

D) widely expected

22. Which sentence uses "notwithstanding" correctly as a preposition before its object?

- A) The criticism, notwithstanding was ignored by the board.
- B) Notwithstanding the criticism, the board ignored it.
- C) The board ignored, notwithstanding the criticism it.
- D) Notwithstanding, the criticism the board ignored it.

23. The argument is convincing _____ it accounts for the data already collected; it says nothing, however, about data yet to be gathered.

- A) notwithstanding
- B) that having been said
- C) insofar as
- D) be that as it may

24. An "unwary" reader is one who is:

- A) highly skeptical and critical
- B) professionally trained
- C) actively hostile to the text
- D) not alert to a hidden difficulty or trap

25. Which sentence best combines a concession with a parallel, reinforcing point, in that order?

- A) Machine translation has improved remarkably; that said, it still misses irony, and by the same token, it often misses sarcasm.
- B) Machine translation improved, insofar as sarcasm, and irony too.
- C) By the same token, machine translation, that said, improved irony.
- D) Sarcasm and irony, machine translation, notwithstanding improved.

UNIT 8

As It Were

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to describing eccentric characters and habitual past behavior, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: The Art of Almost

I have been trying, on and off, for years now, to explain my aunt Vivian to people who never had the fortune — or perhaps the exquisite bad luck — of meeting her, and I have concluded that no single anecdote will do the job, because Vivian herself was never quite finished with being explained; she was, as it were, a work permanently in rehearsal, understudying not merely roles on a stage but a version of her own life that she had convinced herself was standing in the wings, waiting for its cue.

For thirty-one years, by her own scrupulous count, my aunt was the understudy to a series of leading actresses whose names, had you grown up in a theatrical household as I did, would mean a great deal more to you than they will to most readers; she had learned every part she had ever covered so completely that she could, at a moment's notice and without a script in hand, have stepped into a performance already in progress and finished it without the audience suspecting that anything unusual had occurred. What she had not done, in all that time, was actually step into one — not because she lacked the talent, everyone conceded that she had talent to spare, but because the leading actresses she understudied had an inconvenient habit of never falling sufficiently ill, and Vivian, who would have made a formidable Lady Macbeth or a devastating Hedda Gabler, spent three decades instead becoming the world's foremost expert on a career she was never permitted to have.

She would arrive at the theatre absurdly early, two hours before the call time that no one else observed, not because the role demanded any such diligence but because arriving early was, I have come to think, the only form of authorship she still exercised over a career that had otherwise been handed to her, unopened, by other people's good health. She would run her lines in an empty dressing room while the actress she was covering was still having her hair done down the corridor, and she would do this every single night of a run, regardless of how many times she had already played the part in her own head, as though the discipline itself, rather than any prospect of actually performing, had become the point of the exercise. It was a habit I found faintly heartbreaking to watch, though she herself would have bridled at the word; she preferred to call it professionalism, and would say so, unprompted, to anyone who so much as glanced at her sideways.

By the time I was old enough to understand what an understudy actually did, she had already been not-quite-famous, in this peculiar, backstage sense, for the better part of two decades, and the not-quite-ness of it had settled into her like a permanent weather system rather than a passing front. She had, as it were, made a career out of almost: she had almost gone on for the second act of a celebrated revival when the leading lady twisted an ankle during a matinee, only for the ankle to be pronounced, at the eleventh hour, merely sprained rather than broken and granted a swift reprieve; she had almost been given a

small part of her own, in a production that closed in previews before rehearsals for it were even finished. Each near-miss she recounted with the same wry, unhurried relish, as though she had long since made peace with a life that specialised in bringing her within a hair's breadth of a thing without ever quite delivering it, though anyone who watched her closely enough could see that the peace was, itself, a kind of performance, and not always a convincing one.

There had been, for a few seasons in the middle of her career, another understudy at the same theatre, a woman named Dorothea who was, by universal agreement, considerably less disciplined than my aunt and who nevertheless got her break within eighteen months, when the actress she had been covering left abruptly for a film role and never returned; Vivian, to her enormous credit, had been nothing but generous about it in public, though she would, for years afterward, drop Dorothea's name into conversation with a carefully engineered casualness that convinced no one, least of all herself, that the subject had stopped mattering to her. She had been, I have since come to think, waiting for her own version of that abrupt departure for the better part of a decade by the time it happened to someone else, and the fact that it had happened to Dorothea rather than to her was a piece of luck's arithmetic that she never once, in my hearing, complained about directly, though she would occasionally observe, with a lightness that fooled absolutely no one, that some people were simply standing nearer the door when it happened to open.

What she was doing during those two hours of solitary rehearsal, I eventually realised, was not preparing for a role she expected to play but keeping faith with one she had already, in every meaningful sense, played a thousand times over in the privacy of an empty room; she had been playing Hedda Gabler, on and off, for the better part of fifteen years by the time I was old enough to ask her about it, and would go on playing her, in rehearsal rooms no one else ever entered, for a decade more. There is something in that persistence that I have never managed to describe without sounding either more sentimental or more clinical than I mean to, and so I generally fall back, when pressed, on saying that she had, as it were, built an entire career out of a door that never quite opened, which is not exactly a metaphor and not exactly the literal truth either, but sits, I find, somewhere honestly between the two.

She used to tell the story of the night she very nearly went on — the ankle, the sprain, the eleventh-hour reprieve — at every family Christmas for as long as I can remember, and it is worth distinguishing, I think, between that habitual "used to," which merely records a fact about the years in question, and the "would" I reach for when I want you to feel what it was actually like to sit through the telling of it for the ninth or tenth time: she would pause, always at precisely the same syllable, to let the suspense build, as though we had not all memorised the ending along with her, and she would look, just for a second, faintly wounded when the story failed to produce the gasp it had once reliably produced in strangers. It was not the disappointment of the missed part she was reliving, I came to understand; it was the disappointment of an audience that had grown, through sheer repetition, immune to a performance she still, against all evidence, believed to be riveting.

In the last years before she retired, something in her seemed to loosen, and the change showed up, if you were listening for it, less in what she said than in how she said it. She stopped saying that she had understudied a particular actress, in the flat, factual past tense that implies a job now finished, and began saying instead that she had been understudying her for years, a small shift in aspect that let the sentence

hang open at one end, unresolved, as though the arrangement, though it had in fact ended, refused in her telling to be closed off so neatly. I noticed, too, that she had started using the perfect where she would once have used the simple past — not "I understudied Hedda for fifteen years" but "I have understudied Hedda for fifteen years" — a grammatical choice she would certainly have denied making on purpose, and yet it did precisely what she needed it to do, which was to keep the fifteen years connected to the present moment in which she was, finally, no longer employed to live inside them.

She has never once, in all the years since she retired, gone to see a production she was not in some way connected to, and she still turns up, uninvited but never quite unwelcome, to opening nights of plays she understudied decades ago, greeting actresses half her age with an encomium so warm and so precisely observed that no one has ever suspected, I think, how much it costs her to deliver it. When I asked her once, gently, whether she had any regrets, she considered the question for a long moment — longer, I noticed, than the question strictly warranted — the door to her expression neither fully shut nor quite ajar, and said that she supposed she had spent her whole career waiting in the wings, and that this had, as it were, become its own sort of role, one she had come, eventually, to play rather well.

I think of her now, more often than I once did, whenever I catch myself describing some long stretch of my own life using the tense that keeps it open rather than the one that closes it off — saying that I have been meaning to do something, rather than that I meant to, or that I had been hoping for an outcome that never, in the event, arrived. There is a kind of honesty in that grammar, I have come to believe, that the simple past does not quite permit: it admits that a thing was never finished, only abandoned, or postponed, or handed over at last to someone else's better luck, and it lets the door, as it were, stay very slightly ajar, long after everyone else in the room has agreed that it ought to have been closed.

I do not think Vivian would have put it in quite those terms herself, since she was, whatever else she was, no grammarian, and would have laughed, in that particular register reserved for people who found academics faintly absurd, at the suggestion that a verb tense had ever consoled anyone for a career spent in the wings. And yet I have come to suspect that she understood the distinction better than most of the linguists I have since studied under, precisely because she had lived inside it for thirty-one years rather than merely described it from the outside: she had grasped, long before I had the vocabulary to say so, that the way we choose to speak of an unfinished thing is very often the last, and sometimes the only, form of authorship left to us over it.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. Vivian worked as a theatre understudy for more than thirty years. ____ (T / F)
2. Vivian eventually had the chance to perform the leading role of Hedda Gabler on stage. ____ (T / F)
3. Vivian arrived at the theatre early because the production specifically required it of her. ____ (T / F)
4. As she grew older, Vivian began using the present perfect rather than the simple past to describe her years understudying. ____ (T / F)
5. After retiring, Vivian continued to attend theatre productions connected to her career. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. According to the narrator, what did Vivian's habit of arriving two hours early ultimately give her?

- A) a sense of control over a career otherwise dependent on other people's good health
- B) a promotion to leading roles
- C) additional pay for overtime hours
- D) the approval of the leading actresses she understudied

2. Why, according to the passage, did Vivian never actually perform a leading role despite her evident talent?

- A) she refused every opportunity that was offered to her
- B) the actresses she understudied never became sufficiently ill or injured
- C) the theatre company did not believe she was talented enough
- D) she preferred rehearsing alone to performing in front of an audience

3. What shift in her way of speaking does the narrator notice in Vivian during her later years?

- A) she stopped talking about her career entirely
- B) she began speaking only in the future tense
- C) she began using the present perfect rather than the simple past to describe her years understudying
- D) she started exaggerating the roles she had played

4. How does the narrator ultimately interpret Vivian's habit of retelling the story of her near miss every Christmas?

- A) as evidence that she had genuinely forgotten the details over time
- B) as an attempt to entertain the children in the family specifically
- C) as a deliberate strategy to win sympathy from her relatives
- D) as a small performance that revealed her continuing hope for a reaction the story no longer produced

5. What does the narrator ultimately suggest about tenses that "keep a matter open," such as the present perfect continuous?

- A) that they allow a sense of something never fully closed, unlike the simple past
- B) that they are grammatically incorrect and best avoided
- C) that they are appropriate only in formal academic writing
- D) that they always signal regret rather than quiet acceptance

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. inveterate	11. a maverick	21. peculiar	31. singular (in manner)

2. idiosyncrasy	12. to hold court	22. a stickler for	32. to hark back to
3. to be a law unto oneself	13. unfazed	23. endearing	33. an old soul
4. eccentricity	14. capricious	24. mercurial	34. wry
5. a creature of habit	15. a raconteur	25. unconventional	35. to be prone to (doing something)
6. quirk	16. flamboyant	26. to be given to (doing something)	36. inscrutable
7. to have a penchant for	17. to be set in one's ways	27. a fixture (of a place)	37. a soft spot for
8. curmudgeonly	18. incorrigible	28. bohemian	38. to potter about
9. inimitable	19. whimsical	29. to indulge a whim	39. eccentric in the best possible sense
10. larger than life	20. to march to the beat of one's own drum	30. affectation	40. quite a character

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. "Scrupulous" (as in "by her own scrupulous count") most nearly means:

- A) extremely careful and precise about details
- B) careless and approximate
- C) exaggerated for effect
- D) kept secret from others

2. "Bridled" (as in "she herself would have bridled at the word") most nearly means:

- A) agreed with enthusiastically
- B) reacted with irritation or resentment
- C) laughed with genuine amusement
- D) remained completely indifferent

3. "Wry," describing the relish with which Vivian told her stories, most nearly means:

- A) openly furious
- B) naively cheerful
- C) dryly and slightly ironic in humor
- D) deeply sorrowful

4. "Relish," as used in the passage, most nearly means:

- A) reluctant tolerance
- B) a formal apology
- C) confused hesitation
- D) keen enjoyment or satisfaction

5. "Riveting," describing the performance Vivian believed she still gave, most nearly means:

- A) intensely engaging and captivating
- B) utterly boring
- C) mildly confusing
- D) quietly forgettable

6. An "encomium" is:

- A) a formal complaint
- B) a warm, formal expression of praise
- C) a brief theatrical rehearsal
- D) a legal contract

7. "Ajar," as in "neither fully shut nor quite ajar," describes a door that is:

- A) completely shut and locked
- B) removed from its hinges
- C) partly open
- D) painted a different color

8. "Formidable," describing the Lady Macbeth Vivian might have played, most nearly means:

- A) weak and unconvincing
- B) comically exaggerated
- C) rarely performed on stage
- D) inspiring fear, awe, or respect through great ability

9. A "reprieve," in the context of the sprained ankle, is:

- A) a temporary delay or postponement of a negative outcome
- B) a permanent cancellation
- C) a formal medical diagnosis
- D) an official award or prize

10. To have "grown immune" to something, as the audience did to Vivian's story, means to have become:

- A) newly vulnerable to its effects
- B) no longer affected or moved by it
- C) legally protected from it
- D) publicly celebrated for it

Grammar Focus: Subtle Aspect for Characterization

At the mastery level, the choice between perfect and continuous aspect is rarely a matter of simply obeying a rule about "finished" versus "unfinished" actions; it is a stylistic and pragmatic decision that shapes how open, how emotionally weighted, or how narratively connected to the present a stretch of past experience is made to feel. The present perfect ("I have understudied that role for fifteen years") keeps a span of time

tethered to the moment of speaking, implying that it remains, in some sense, current or unresolved, whereas the simple past ("I understudied that role") seals it off as a closed chapter with no claim on the present. The present perfect continuous goes further still, foregrounding not merely duration but effort, persistence, or emotional coloring that a bare perfect would leave flat: "she has been rehearsing the same monologue for fifteen years" invites the listener to feel the sheer, faintly exhausting persistence of the habit, in a way that "she has rehearsed" or "she rehearsed" simply does not. The past perfect continuous performs an analogous function retrospectively within narrative, stretching a state backward toward a reference point in the story and often lending it an ironic or poignant undertone, as when a state that "had been building" toward an expectation is then, in the next clause, quietly disappointed. Layered onto these aspectual choices, the hedge "as it were" allows a writer to reach for a vivid, metaphorical, or unusually compressed way of putting something — "she had, as it were, made a career out of almost" — while signalling, through the very insertion of the phrase, an awareness that the wording is figurative or approximate rather than literally precise; it protects a striking formulation from the charge of overstatement without weakening its force, and is characteristic of the self-aware, reflective register found in literary and essayistic prose.

A closely related resource for characterizing habitual past behavior is the contrast between "used to" and habitual "would." Both report an action or state that was once regularly true and is true no longer, but they are not stylistically interchangeable: "used to" is aspectually neutral and can describe states as freely as actions ("there used to be a theatre on this street"; "she used to live above it"), simply establishing a fact about a discontinued past without inviting any particular emotional response. Habitual "would," by contrast, is restricted to dynamic actions and, especially when it recurs across a passage or is paired with adverbs like "always," "forever," or "invariably," tends to import the narrator's attitude toward the behavior being described — fond exasperation, quiet admiration, or gentle criticism — without that attitude ever being stated directly. A writer who notes that a character "would arrive two hours early, just to prove a point to no one in particular" is not merely reporting a fact, as "used to arrive early" would; she is inviting the reader to smile, faintly, at a habit she has already decided is both admirable and a little sad. This is precisely how much of literary characterization is accomplished at the mastery level: not through explicit judgment, but through the accumulated, almost imperceptible evaluative weight that repeated "would" clauses quietly deposit onto a portrait built otherwise from plain narration.

Figure 8

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples

Present perfect vs simple past
 I have understudied that role (open) vs. I understudied it (closed)

used to vs habitual would
 There used to be a theatre here. / She would arrive two hours early.

as it were (hedge)
 She had, as it were, made a career out of almost.

Reference Table: Subtle Aspectual Distinctions

Structure	Nuance/function	Example
Present Perfect Continuous	Emphasizes duration, ongoing effort, or emotional coloring (often quiet exasperation or poignancy) rather than a neutral fact	She has been rehearsing the same monologue for a decade.
Past Perfect Continuous	Frames a state stretching toward a past reference point, deepening narrative irony or pathos	She had been waiting in the wings for two hours before the call ever came.
"Would" + bare infinitive (habitual)	Signals a repeated past action with an evaluative, often affectionate or faintly critical, undertone	She would arrive two hours early, just to prove a point to no one in particular.
"Used to"	States a discontinued past habit or state neutrally, applicable to actions and states alike, without evaluative coloring	She used to live above the theatre and cover three roles a season.
"As it were"	Hedges a metaphorical, approximate, or unusually vivid expression, signalling awareness that the wording is not strictly literal	She had, as it were, built a career out of a door that never opened.

Examples

1. She has been rehearsing that monologue for fifteen years — a present perfect continuous that lets us feel the sheer duration and quiet futility of it, rather than simply recording an isolated fact.
2. By the time the curtain rose, she had already been waiting in the wings for two hours, the past perfect continuous stretching her patience back before the scene we are shown even begins.
3. She would arrive absurdly early every single night, an evaluative "would" that invites us to smile, faintly, at a habit the narrator finds both admirable and a little sad.

4. She used to understudy three different actresses in a single season, a neutral "used to" that simply states a discontinued fact about her working life, without inviting judgment.
5. She had, as it were, made a career out of almost — the hedge softening a claim too vivid to be taken quite literally, while still letting it land with its full force.
6. I have been meaning to ask her about regret for years, and the present perfect continuous, rather than the flatter "I meant to," keeps the intention alive and unresolved, exactly as she would have wanted it.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- if memory serves
hedges a recollection while signalling reasonable confidence in its accuracy
- as was her wont
a formal, slightly archaic tag marking a well-established habitual action
- she had a way of (doing something)
introduces a characteristic, idiosyncratic mannerism affectionately
- more often than not
softens a generalization about habitual behavior without overstating it
- bless her heart
signals fond, indulgent affection toward someone's foibles
- as it were
hedges a figurative or approximate turn of phrase, distancing the speaker slightly from literal precision
- I can still picture her ...ing
uses continuous aspect for vivid, emotionally immediate recollection
- there was no telling what she'd get up to
conveys fond amusement at someone's endearing unpredictability

Sample Dialogue

- A: Do you remember Aunt Vivien's Sunday ritual with the teapot?
- B: Oh, vividly. If memory serves, she'd insist on brewing the tea for a full seven minutes—never six, never eight.
- A: As was her wont, she'd stand over the kettle the entire time, muttering at it as if it might misbehave.
- B: She had a way of turning the most mundane chores into little ceremonies, bless her heart.
- A: I can still picture her hovering by the stove, wooden spoon in hand, utterly absorbed in the ritual.
- B: More often than not, she'd forget the tea leaves altogether and only remember once the water had boiled twice over.
- A: There was no telling what she'd get up to once she started "organizing" the pantry, as it were.
- B: I recall she alphabetized the spice rack one summer and then, the following week, rearranged it by color instead.
- A: Nobody dared question her system—she'd simply declare it "self-evident" and carry blithely on.
- B: If memory serves, she once spent an entire afternoon teaching the parrot to say "preposterous."

A: That bird still says it, actually, bless her heart—it's the last surviving trace of her particular brand of chaos.

B: She had a way of making even her eccentricities feel like an inheritance worth treasuring.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase would best introduce a formal description of someone's well-established habitual action?

- A) bless her heart
- B) as it were
- C) as was her wont
- D) more often than not

2. "If memory serves" is best used to:

- A) firmly assert an undisputed fact
- B) hedge a recollection while suggesting reasonable confidence in it
- C) express irritation at having forgotten something
- D) introduce a purely hypothetical situation

3. Which phrase conveys fond, indulgent affection toward someone's foibles?

- A) there was no telling what she'd get up to
- B) bless her heart
- C) as it were
- D) she had a way of

4. "I can still picture her humming to herself for hours" relies primarily on which effect?

- A) continuous aspect creating vivid, emotionally immediate recollection
- B) a warning about likely future behavior
- C) a formal legal qualification of a claim
- D) a flat factual report with no emotional coloring

5. Which phrase would best hedge a figurative or approximate description, distancing the speaker slightly from literal precision?

- A) more often than not
- B) as it were
- C) if memory serves
- D) there was no telling what she'd get up to

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Which sentence best uses the present perfect continuous to emphasize ongoing duration and effort rather than a simple completed fact?

- A) She has been rehearsing the monologue for fifteen years.
- B) She rehearsed the monologue for fifteen years.
- C) She had rehearsed the monologue for fifteen years.
- D) She will rehearse the monologue for fifteen years.

2. Choose the sentence in which "would" is used with an evaluative, faintly critical undertone about repeated past behavior.

- A) She went to the theatre every night that season.
- B) She would go to the theatre every night that season, just to remind everyone how devoted she was.
- C) She has gone to the theatre every night this season.
- D) She is going to the theatre every night this season.

3. Which sentence uses "used to" to state a discontinued past habit neutrally, without evaluative coloring?

- A) She would always insist on doing it her own way, to everyone's mild exasperation.
- B) She has been covering three roles this season.
- C) She used to cover three roles in a single season.
- D) She is always covering three roles, which drives the director to distraction.

4. Identify the sentence that correctly uses "as it were" to hedge a metaphorical expression.

- A) She had built, as it were a career, out of a door that never opened.
- B) As it were, she had built a career out of, a door that never opened.
- C) She had built a career, out of a door as it were, that never opened.
- D) She had, as it were, built a career out of a door that never opened.

5. Which sentence uses the past perfect continuous to frame a state stretching toward a past reference point?

- A) She had been waiting in the wings for two hours before the call finally came.
- B) She waited in the wings for two hours before the call came.
- C) She has been waiting in the wings for two hours.
- D) She will have been waiting in the wings for two hours.

6. Which sentence most clearly signals mild irritation through the present continuous combined with "always"?

- A) She always rehearses before a show.
- B) She is always rehearsing at the most inconvenient moments.
- C) She rehearsed before every show.
- D) She has rehearsed before every show.

7. "Encomium" most nearly means:

- A) a written complaint
- B) a legal summons
- C) a warm, formal tribute of praise
- D) a brief theatrical pause

8. Choose the sentence in which the simple past, rather than the present perfect, correctly signals that a matter is fully closed and disconnected from the present.

- A) She has understudied that role for fifteen years.
- B) She has been understudying that role for fifteen years.
- C) She had been understudying that role for fifteen years and continues to do so.
- D) She understudied that role for fifteen years, before retiring for good.

9. Which sentence best demonstrates "as it were" softening an unusually vivid or figurative claim?

- A) She was, as it were, married to her craft long before she married anyone else.
- B) She was married, as it were to her craft, long before anyone else.
- C) As it were, married to her craft, she was long before anyone else.
- D) She was married to her craft, as it, were long before anyone else.

10. Identify the sentence in which "would" cannot correctly replace "used to," because it describes a past state rather than a repeated action.

- A) She would arrive early every night.
- B) She used to live above the theatre.
- C) She would run her lines alone each evening.
- D) She would pause at exactly the same syllable each time.

11. Which sentence uses the present perfect to keep a past experience connected to, and relevant in, the present moment?

- A) She played that part once, years ago.
- B) She was playing that part when the accident happened.
- C) She has played that part several times over the years, and audiences still remember it.
- D) She had played that part before anyone else was cast.

12. "Formidable," as applied to a stage performance, most nearly suggests:

- A) unremarkable and easily forgotten
- B) comically inadequate
- C) rarely attempted by professionals
- D) inspiring awe or respect through impressive skill

13. Choose the sentence in which the continuous aspect is chosen for stylistic vividness rather than strict temporal accuracy.

- A) She was forever rehearsing lines that were not, technically, hers to rehearse.
- B) She rehearsed lines that were not hers to rehearse.
- C) She has rehearsed lines that were not hers to rehearse.
- D) She will rehearse lines that are not hers to rehearse.

14. Which sentence expresses genuine fondness beneath a surface of mild exasperation through the choice of "would"?

- A) She told that story every Christmas.
- B) She would tell that same story every Christmas, and we would all pretend to be surprised by the ending.
- C) She has told that story every Christmas for years.
- D) She is telling that story right now.

15. "Reprieve," in the context of a postponed misfortune, most nearly means:

- A) a permanent cancellation of an event
- B) a public celebration
- C) a temporary escape from, or delay of, a negative outcome
- D) a formal legal charge

16. Select the sentence that correctly uses the future perfect continuous to project a duration forward from a future reference point.

- A) By next season, she understudies that role for twenty years.
- B) By next season, she had understudied that role for twenty years.
- C) By next season, she is understudying that role for twenty years.
- D) By next season, she will have been understudying that role for twenty years.

17. Which sentence best illustrates "as it were" used to acknowledge that a comparison is approximate rather than literal?

- A) The understudy was, as it were, a shadow that occasionally hoped to become the substance it followed.
- B) The understudy was a shadow, as it were, that hoped occasionally, to become the substance it followed.
- C) As it were the understudy, a shadow, hoped to become the substance it followed.
- D) The understudy, a shadow occasionally hoping, as it were to become the substance, it followed.

18. Choose the sentence in which "used to" would sound distinctly odd if replaced with habitual "would."

- A) She used to arrive two hours early.
- B) There used to be a small theatre on this street.
- C) She used to rehearse alone every evening.
- D) She used to tell that story at every gathering.

19. "Immune," as in "grown immune to a performance," most nearly means:

- A) newly sensitive and responsive to something
- B) legally exempt from an obligation
- C) no longer affected or moved by something
- D) publicly praised for an achievement

20. Which sentence best conveys narrative irony through the past perfect continuous?

- A) She believed her chance would come.
- B) She has believed her chance will come.
- C) She believes her chance is coming.
- D) She had been believing, for years, that her chance would eventually come, right up until the season it clearly never would.

21. Identify the sentence in which the present perfect continuous adds an emotional or evaluative coloring beyond a neutral report of duration.

- A) She has been waiting for her chance for thirty years, and the waiting itself has become the role she plays best.
- B) She waited for her chance for thirty years.
- C) She had waited for her chance for thirty years.

D) She will wait for her chance for thirty years.

22. "Wry," describing a kind of humor or expression, most nearly means:

- A) openly hostile
- B) dryly and somewhat ironically amused
- C) uncontrollably emotional
- D) entirely without feeling

23. Which sentence uses "would" to characterize a habitual past action with a clearly judgmental undertone?

- A) He interrupted every rehearsal with a correction.
- B) He has interrupted every rehearsal with a correction.
- C) He would interrupt every rehearsal with some unsolicited correction, certain he alone knew better.
- D) He is interrupting every rehearsal with a correction.

24. Select the sentence in which the present perfect (not the simple past) is required because the time period explicitly continues into the present.

- A) She worked at that theatre for a decade, until it closed.
- B) She was working at that theatre when it closed.
- C) She had worked at that theatre before it closed.
- D) She has worked at that theatre for over a decade, and still does.

25. Choose the sentence that most naturally combines "as it were" with the present perfect continuous to characterize an ongoing, unresolved situation.

- A) She has, as it were, been waiting in the wings her entire career.
- B) She has been, as it were waiting in the wings, her entire career.
- C) As it were, she has been waiting, in the wings her entire career.
- D) She has been waiting in the wings, as it, were her entire career.

UNIT 9

Pursuant to the Foregoing

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to interpreting formal and legal documents, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: The Reading of the Codicil

My aunt Miriam had died, as she had lived, on her own exacting terms: no hospital, no fuss, and a will drafted with such punctilious attention to contingency that the family solicitor, a dry and unshakeable man named Mr. Ferrand, confessed he had never in thirty years of practice seen a testamentary instrument so thoroughly proofed against argument. That it nonetheless produced one, within a fortnight of her funeral, says less about Mr. Ferrand's draftsmanship than about the appetite of my cousin Julian for finding a grievance wherever a document could plausibly be made to yield one.

Miriam had never married, had outlived two siblings and most of her contemporaries, and had raised, in effect, whichever nephews and nieces happened to need raising in a given decade. Julian and I had spent the better part of our childhoods in the back room of her shop, doing homework among the ledgers while she dealt with customers out front, and it had never once occurred to either of us, in those years, that the arrangement might one day require the intervention of a tribunal to sort out. She was, by every account but her own, an easy woman to love and an impossible one to argue with, which perhaps explains why so much of what mattered to her ended up committed to paper rather than said aloud: paper, unlike a niece or a nephew, could not interrupt, could not sulk, and could not later claim to have misheard.

The estate itself was modest: a narrow house on Cardigan Street, a modest portfolio of shares, and — the item over which the dispute would eventually turn — a bookshop she had run for forty years, its lease, its stock, and, more contentiously, the flat above it, which she had let to Julian at a nominal rent for the better part of a decade. The will, executed some six years before her death, left the bookshop and its associated premises to me, hereinafter referred to in what follows, with a wink at the register the lawyers were about to inflict on us, as "the primary beneficiary." A codicil, added eighteen months later in Miriam's own unmistakable hand and duly witnessed, purported to vary that arrangement with respect to the flat, granting Julian a right of occupation "for so long as he shall wish, rent notwithstanding, and without prejudice to the interests of the primary beneficiary in the remainder of the aforementioned premises."

It was that codicil, and in particular the phrase "rent notwithstanding," that Mr. Ferrand's letter to both of us addressed with a formality that felt, at the time, faintly absurd applied to a dispute between two people who had shared birthday cakes as children.

"Dear Mr. and Ms. Holloway," it began. "I write further to our telephone conversation of the 14th instant and pursuant to my duties as executor under the will and codicil of the late Miriam Holloway (hereinafter 'the deceased'), to set out, for the avoidance of doubt, my present understanding of the respective interests of the parties in the property known as 14 Cardigan Street.

"With respect to the ground-floor premises and the goodwill of the business conducted thereon, the deceased's intention, as expressed in clause 4 of the will, is in my view unambiguous, and I do not understand either party to dispute it. With respect to the first-floor flat, however, the codicil dated 3 March introduces a degree of interpretive difficulty which I am obliged to bring to your joint attention before this matter proceeds any further.

"It is Mr. Halloway's contention that the codicil confers upon him an indefeasible right of occupation, unencumbered by any obligation to pay rent, for the whole of his natural life, and that this right subsists notwithstanding the disposal of the ground-floor premises to Ms. Halloway. It is Ms. Halloway's contention, by contrast, that the phrase 'rent notwithstanding' refers only to arrears accrued as at the date of the codicil, and was never intended to vitiate her right, as owner of the freehold, to determine the tenancy on reasonable notice should she require the flat for the purposes of the business.

"I regret that I am unable, in my capacity as executor, to adjudicate between these two constructions, since to do so would place me in an evident conflict as between beneficiaries whose interests I am equally bound to protect. I would therefore counsel both parties, before matters harden into a position from which neither can readily withdraw, to obtain independent advice as to the proper construction of the codicil, and I remain, in the interim, entirely at your disposal."

Julian, predictably, read into this letter every vindication he had been hoping for and none of the caution Mr. Ferrand had so carefully built into it. He took "indefeasible" — a word he had plainly looked up between the phone call and the letter arriving — and wielded it at every family gathering for the better part of a year, as though a single Latinate adjective, however impressive, could settle a question that four lawyers, in the end, could not. I, for my part, was equally guilty of over-reading a document drafted expressly to avoid being over-read; I took Mr. Ferrand's evident sympathy for the commercial argument as a tacit endorsement of my position, which was not, on reflection, an inference the letter actually supported.

There is something about formal, hedged prose of this kind — the sundry qualifications, the studied refusal to say more than the evidence permits, the peremptory-sounding phrases that on closer inspection commit their author to almost nothing — that seems to invite precisely the misreading it was designed to prevent. A friend of mine who practises conveyancing once told me that half of her working life is spent not drafting documents but explaining to clients, patiently and repeatedly, that a clause worded to avoid a dispute is not the same thing as a clause that resolves one in the client's favour; and I have since come to think that Julian and I, sitting at our respective kitchen tables with the same letter in front of us, were each guilty of exactly the misreading she describes, each convinced that Mr. Ferrand's studied neutrality was secretly, tacitly, on our own side.

What neither of us anticipated was that the matter would end up, eighteen months and a regrettable sum in costs later, before a tribunal at all — a small property tribunal, convened not because either of us particularly wanted a public ruling on our aunt's choice of preposition, but because neither of us could bring ourselves to be the one who simply gave way. The tribunal's determination, when it came, ran to eleven pages, and I have kept a copy, less out of legal necessity than because it remains, to my mind, the single most elegant piece of English prose either of us has ever been party to producing.

"The Tribunal has considered the codicil of 3 March in the context of the will as a whole, and in accordance with the established principle that a testator's later, more specific provision is to be read, wherever the language reasonably permits, as varying rather than as wholly displacing an earlier, more general one. On that footing, the Tribunal finds that the phrase 'rent notwithstanding' was intended, and would have been understood by the deceased, to obviate any suggestion that the occupant's continued residence was conditional upon payment, present or future, and not — as the respondent contends — merely to forgive arrears accrued prior to the date of execution.

"It follows, and the Tribunal so finds, that the applicant's right of occupation, being unimpeachable on the wording actually employed, is not subject to termination on notice by the freeholder for so long as the applicant continues to reside at the premises as his principal home. The Tribunal wishes to make clear, however, that this finding is confined strictly to the question of occupation, and carries no implication with respect to any ancillary matter, including the applicant's putative entitlement to any part of the goodwill or stock of the business, a question which does not arise on the present application and upon which the Tribunal expresses no view whatsoever.

"Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Tribunal would observe, obiter and entirely outside its formal jurisdiction on this application, that a dispute of this character, between parties who by their own evidence remained on cordial terms throughout, is precisely the sort of matter better resolved by agreement between the parties than by recourse to a tribunal, and it is to be hoped that the present determination, rather than entrenching a division, will instead furnish both parties with the certainty required to move forward amicably."

We read that last paragraph, Julian and I, sitting on either side of Mr. Ferrand's conference table, and something in its slightly weary, almost parental formality dissolved a tension that eighteen months of solicitors' letters had only sharpened. There was, I think, a particular comedy in being scolded, however obliquely and however far outside its formal jurisdiction, by a tribunal that had no business scolding us at all; and yet the obiter remark landed exactly where a document confined strictly to the question of occupation could never have reached. He kept the flat, rent notwithstanding, exactly as our aunt had written it; I kept the shop and, in time, his help running it on Saturdays, which was worth considerably more than the rent we had spent a small fortune arguing over.

Mr. Ferrand, closing the file some weeks later, remarked — in a letter that finally abandoned the register he had maintained throughout the whole proceeding — that he had rarely seen a dispute resolved so completely by a paragraph the tribunal had gone out of its way to describe as non-binding. I have wondered since whether Aunt Miriam intended the ambiguity at all, or whether "rent notwithstanding" was simply the sort of phrase a woman of her generation reached for instinctively, the way she reached for a particular shelf without needing to look. Either way, she would have found the whole episode entirely predictable and only mildly regrettable — she had, after all, chosen her words with evident care, and it was hardly her fault that her heirs had spent a year and a half discovering just how much weight three ordinary words, arranged in a particular order, could be made to carry. The shop is still there on Cardigan Street, the flat above it still occupied on the terms she set down, and neither of us, these days, so much as mentions the word "indefeasible" without the two of us laughing before the sentence is finished.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. Aunt Miriam's original will left the bookshop and its premises to the narrator. ____ (T / F)
2. Julian believed that Mr. Ferrand's letter secretly supported the narrator's position. ____ (T / F)
3. Mr. Ferrand refused to interpret the disputed codicil himself because doing so would create a conflict of interest. ____ (T / F)
4. The tribunal ruled that Julian was entitled to a share of the bookshop's goodwill and stock. ____ (T / F)
5. The tribunal's final, non-binding remark helped ease the tension between the two cousins. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. What was Mr. Ferrand's professional assessment of Miriam's will before the dispute arose?

- A) It was the most thoroughly proofed against argument he'd seen in thirty years
- B) It was poorly drafted and vague
- C) It contained no codicils whatsoever
- D) It disinherited both nephew and niece

2. According to the codicil, what right did Julian receive regarding the flat?

- A) Full ownership of the flat
- B) A right of occupation "rent notwithstanding"
- C) A right to sell the flat
- D) No rights at all

3. Why did Mr. Ferrand decline to interpret the disputed phrase himself?

- A) He lacked legal expertise in property law
- B) He believed Julian's interpretation was obviously correct
- C) Doing so would place him in a conflict of interest between beneficiaries
- D) He had already retired from practice

4. What did the tribunal ultimately conclude regarding the phrase "rent notwithstanding"?

- A) It excused only arrears accrued prior to the codicil
- B) It had no legal force at all
- C) It applied only to the ground-floor premises
- D) It meant occupation was unconditional on payment, present or future

5. What effect did the tribunal's final, non-binding paragraph have on the cousins?

- A) It helped dissolve the tension between them
- B) It had no effect on their relationship
- C) It reopened the dispute
- D) It led to a further legal appeal

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. testator	11. to bequeath	21. to litigate	31. a no-contest clause
2. bequest	12. legatee	22. litigious	32. to settle out of court
3. codicil	13. heir apparent	23. an acrimonious dispute	33. executor
4. probate	14. per stirpes	24. to allege impropriety	34. intestate succession
5. to disinherit	15. of sound mind and memory	25. forgery	35. next of kin
6. undue influence	16. duress	26. to forge a signature	36. probate court
7. testamentary capacity	17. fiduciary duty	27. to notarize	37. to adjudicate
8. to contest a will	18. to renounce a claim	28. witness attestation	38. a claimant
9. estate	19. estranged relative	29. to revoke a will	39. to have an axe to grind
10. residuary estate	20. a falling-out	30. holographic will	40. blood is thicker than water

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. In the reading, Miriam's will is described as drafted with "punctilious attention to contingency." What does "punctilious" mean here?

- A) extremely attentive to detail and formality
- B) careless and negligent
- C) generous and open-handed
- D) difficult to read or decipher

2. The word "testamentary," used to describe the legal "instrument" in question, relates most closely to

- A) finance and taxation
- B) a will or the disposition of an estate
- C) medicine and health
- D) architecture and construction

3. A "codicil," as it appears in the reading, is best defined as

- A) a document that cancels a will entirely
- B) a court summons requiring attendance

- C) a formal amendment or addition to an existing will
- D) a type of property deed

4. To "vitiate" a legal right, as feared in the dispute over the flat, means to

- A) strengthen or reinforce it
- B) transfer it to another party
- C) formally record it in writing
- D) undermine or invalidate it

5. An "indefeasible" right, as Julian believed his to be, is one that

- A) cannot be annulled or made void
- B) expires automatically after a fixed term
- C) applies only to minors
- D) can be transferred but not inherited

6. "Adjudicate," as used of Mr. Ferrand's role, most nearly means to

- A) postpone a decision indefinitely
- B) formally judge or decide a disputed matter
- C) draft a legal document
- D) collect evidence informally

7. A "tacit" endorsement, as the narrator mistakenly assumed, is one that is

- A) written and formally signed
- B) loudly and publicly announced
- C) implied without being directly stated
- D) legally binding on all parties

8. To "obviate" a suggestion, as the tribunal held the codicil intended, means to

- A) emphasize it strongly
- B) postpone addressing it
- C) formally deny it in court
- D) remove or eliminate it in advance

9. If a right is described as "unimpeachable," as the tribunal found Julian's to be, it is

- A) unquestionable and beyond doubt
- B) temporary and provisional
- C) subject to appeal
- D) informally granted

10. A "peremptory-sounding" phrase, as the narrator describes formal legal wording, is one that

- A) sounds tentative and uncertain
- B) sounds final and admits no argument or contradiction
- C) sounds hesitant and apologetic
- D) is deliberately vague and unclear

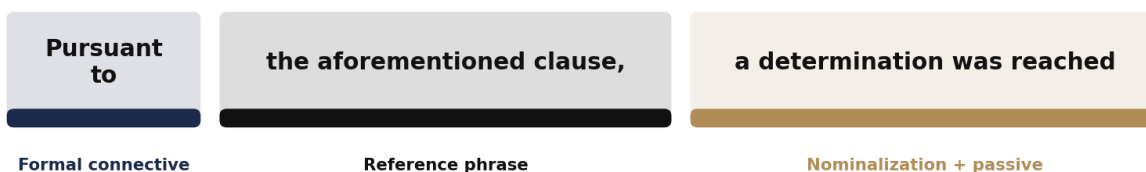
Grammar Focus: Formal and Legal Register

Formal, legal, and academic writing relies on a distinct repertoire of connective and referential phrases that everyday spoken English largely dispenses with. Expressions such as pursuant to, with respect to, in accordance with, notwithstanding the foregoing, the aforementioned, and hereinafter function as precise signposts: they specify exactly which provision, clause, or entity a sentence concerns, and they do so with a stability of meaning that colloquial equivalents (because of, about, following, but anyway, that thing, from now on) cannot guarantee. This precision matters most where ambiguity carries real consequences — a contested will, a regulatory filing, a peer-reviewed argument — since a reader (or a tribunal) may later need to determine exactly what was meant, months or years after the words were written and the writer is no longer available to clarify. The formality of the register is not decoration; it is a mechanism for reducing the interpretive latitude that ordinary prose leaves open.

A second, equally characteristic feature of this register is its preference for nominalization and the passive voice over the direct, agent-fronted verbs of conversational English. Where everyday speech says "we decided" or "the tribunal ruled," formal and legal prose more often produces "a determination was reached" or "the ruling of the Tribunal was that..." — converting verbs into abstract nouns (decide → determination, rule → ruling, apply → application) and frequently omitting the human agent altogether. This nominal, passive-heavy style creates an impression of objectivity and institutional authority, foregrounding the finding or provision itself rather than the individual who produced it, and it allows for the dense pre-modification (a right of occupation "unencumbered by any obligation to pay rent") that packs qualification after qualification into a single noun phrase. The cost, familiar to every reader of a contract or a judgment, is a prose that moves more slowly and demands closer attention than its conversational counterpart — a trade the register accepts deliberately, in exchange for precision it is not willing to sacrifice.

Figure 9

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples



Reference Table: Formal and Legal Register Markers

Pursuant to	In accordance with; as required or authorised by	Pursuant to the executor's instructions, the letter was sent without delay.
With respect to	Concerning; regarding a specific point	With respect to the disputed clause, the Tribunal reached a clear finding.
In accordance with	In a manner consistent with; following	The ruling was issued in accordance with established legal principle.
The aforementioned	Previously mentioned or referred to earlier in the same text	The aforementioned premises remain subject to the original lease.
Hereinafter	From this point onward (introducing a defined short name or term)	The deceased, hereinafter "the testator," left detailed instructions.

Examples

- Pursuant to clause 4 of the will, the ground-floor premises and the goodwill of the business passed to the niece.
- With respect to the first-floor flat, the codicil introduced an ambiguity that neither party had anticipated.
- In accordance with the principle that a later, more specific provision varies rather than displaces an earlier one, the Tribunal favoured Julian's reading of the codicil.
- The deceased, hereinafter referred to as "the testator," had executed the codicil some eighteen months after the original will.
- The aforementioned flat remained occupied by the applicant throughout the period in dispute.
- Notwithstanding the foregoing findings, which are confined strictly to the question of occupation, the Tribunal expresses no view on any ancillary matter.

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- Pursuant to the terms set out in
formally indicates an action taken in compliance with a specified provision
- With respect to the matter at hand
formally introduces the specific issue under discussion
- In accordance with the provisions herein
signals that an action conforms to stipulated rules
- Notwithstanding the foregoing
introduces an exception or qualification despite what was previously stated
- It is hereby stipulated that
formally establishes a binding condition or agreement
- Without prejudice to
preserves existing rights while making a concession or statement
- For the avoidance of doubt
clarifies intent to preclude any ambiguous interpretation
- Should the aforementioned clause be deemed invalid
formally introduces a hypothetical contingency regarding a prior provision

Sample Dialogue

A: I've reviewed the documents you sent, and pursuant to the terms set out in the original will, your brother was named sole executor.

B: That's precisely what troubles me. With respect to the matter at hand, we believe he exerted undue influence over our mother in her final months.

A: I understand the concern, but in accordance with the provisions herein, the burden of proof for undue influence falls squarely on you.

B: We're prepared for that. Notwithstanding the foregoing, we still intend to challenge the codicil that was added just weeks before she passed.

A: Very well. It is hereby stipulated that any challenge must be filed within the statutory period, which expires in thirty days.

B: Understood. Without prejudice to our right to pursue further claims, we'd like to explore mediation first.

A: That's a sensible approach. For the avoidance of doubt, mediation won't waive your right to litigate should it fail.

B: Good. And should the aforementioned clause be deemed invalid, what happens to the residuary estate?

A: It would revert to intestate succession rules, distributed among the surviving heirs.

B: That's a considerably different outcome than what the codicil intended.

A: Indeed. Which is precisely why the court will scrutinize the testator's capacity so closely.

B: Let's proceed with the mediation request, then, and keep litigation as our fallback.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase would most appropriately introduce a formal exception to a rule stated earlier in a contract?

- A) Pursuant to the terms set out in
- B) Notwithstanding the foregoing
- C) With respect to the matter at hand
- D) For the avoidance of doubt

2. "Without prejudice to our right to pursue further claims" is used to:

- A) waive all future legal claims
- B) preserve existing rights while making a current concession
- C) formally accuse the other party of wrongdoing
- D) request an extension of a legal deadline

3. Which phrase is used to eliminate any possible ambiguous interpretation of a clause?

- A) It is hereby stipulated that
- B) In accordance with the provisions herein
- C) For the avoidance of doubt
- D) Should the aforementioned clause be deemed invalid

4. A lawyer says, "Pursuant to the terms set out in the agreement, payment is due within 30 days." This phrase signals that:

- A) the payment terms are being renegotiated
- B) an action is required in compliance with a specified provision
- C) the agreement is being formally revoked
- D) the deadline is merely a suggestion

5. Which phrase introduces a hypothetical contingency about what happens if an earlier provision turns out to be unenforceable?

- A) With respect to the matter at hand
- B) In accordance with the provisions herein
- C) Should the aforementioned clause be deemed invalid
- D) It is hereby stipulated that

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Choose the option that correctly completes the sentence in formal register: "_____ clause 4 of the will, the bookshop passed to the niece."

- A) Pursuant to
- B) Regarding
- C) Because of

D) Due to

2. Which sentence uses "with respect to" correctly in formal register?

- A) With respect to the shop, she was happy about it.
- B) With respect to the disputed clause, the Tribunal reached no firm conclusion.
- C) With respect to, the flat was occupied.
- D) She was, with respect to the flat, pleased.

3. "The aforementioned" is best used to refer to

- A) a person or item not yet mentioned
- B) a future, hypothetical event
- C) something already mentioned earlier in the same document
- D) a purely imaginary situation

4. Select the most formal rewording of: "The tribunal decided that Julian could stay."

- A) Julian got to stay, the tribunal said.
- B) The tribunal said Julian could stay put.
- C) Julian's staying was okayed by the tribunal.
- D) It was determined by the Tribunal that the applicant was entitled to remain in occupation.

5. "Hereinafter" is typically used to

- A) introduce a shortened name or label used from that point forward in a document
- B) formally conclude a legal document
- C) express regret for an earlier statement
- D) introduce a footnote or citation

6. Which of the following best exemplifies the nominal (noun-heavy) style typical of legal writing?

- A) The tribunal decided quickly.
- B) The Tribunal's determination of the matter was reached following due consideration.
- C) They decided fast.
- D) The judges made up their minds.

7. "Notwithstanding the foregoing" signals that the statement which follows

- A) restates the previous point exactly
- B) introduces a completely unrelated topic
- C) qualifies or partly contradicts what has just been said
- D) is a direct quotation from another source

8. Choose the correct meaning of "in accordance with."

- A) in spite of
- B) instead of
- C) regardless of
- D) in a manner consistent with

9. Which sentence demonstrates the passive, agentless construction typical of formal/legal register?

- A) It has been determined that the codicil is valid.
- B) We determined that the codicil is valid.
- C) I think the codicil is valid.
- D) The codicil, I believe, is valid.

10. A "codicil" is

- A) a court order compelling testimony
- B) a formal addition or amendment to a will
- C) an executor's fee
- D) a type of property lease

11. Choose the sentence that correctly uses "pursuant to."

- A) Pursuant to, the letter arrived late.
- B) The letter, pursuant to, arrived late.
- C) Pursuant to the executor's instructions, the letter was sent without delay.
- D) The letter was sent pursuant.

12. Which register would the phrase "rent notwithstanding" most likely appear in?

- A) casual conversation between friends
- B) a text message
- C) an advertising slogan
- D) a formal legal document

13. "Testamentary" relates specifically to

- A) wills and the disposition of an estate after death
- B) taxation law
- C) criminal proceedings
- D) marriage contracts

14. Which sentence best reflects everyday, informal register rather than formal/legal register?

- A) The applicant's right of occupation is unimpeachable on the wording employed.
- B) He gets to stay in the flat, no matter what.
- C) It was determined by the Tribunal that occupation should continue.
- D) The aforementioned premises remain subject to the original lease.

15. "Vitiate" most nearly means

- A) to formally approve
- B) to extend indefinitely
- C) to undermine or invalidate
- D) to transfer ownership

16. Which is the most formal way to introduce a defined term in a legal document?

- A) which we'll just call "the flat" from now on

- B) let's call it the flat
- C) known as the flat, sort of
- D) hereinafter referred to as "the premises"

17. "Adjudicate" means to

- A) formally judge or settle a disputed matter
- B) postpone a decision
- C) draft a will
- D) collect rent

18. Choose the sentence that correctly demonstrates formal, passive legal style.

- A) We think the will is fine.
- B) The will is deemed to be valid and enforceable in its present form.
- C) I guess the will works.
- D) The will's okay, probably.

19. An "indefeasible" right is one that

- A) can be revoked at any time
- B) applies only temporarily
- C) cannot be made void or annulled
- D) exists only in theory

20. Which phrase would be least appropriate in a casual email to a friend?

- A) Let me know what you think!
- B) Catch up soon?
- C) Thanks so much for your help.
- D) Pursuant to our prior correspondence, please find enclosed the aforementioned documents.

21. "Obviate" means to

- A) remove or eliminate the need for something in advance
- B) create a new obligation
- C) formally record something in writing
- D) delay a matter indefinitely

22. Choose the correctly formal sentence.

- A) The tribunal's not gonna decide till next week.
- B) A determination by the Tribunal is expected to be issued within the coming weeks.
- C) They'll tell us soon, probably.
- D) Decision's coming, they say.

23. "Unimpeachable," as applied to a right or claim, means

- A) temporary and revocable
- B) legally void
- C) beyond question or doubt

D) informally granted

24. Which best describes the overall stylistic tendency of legal and official writing compared with everyday speech?

- A) shorter sentences and simpler vocabulary
- B) frequent use of contractions and slang
- C) heavy reliance on personal pronouns and active verbs
- D) greater use of nominalization, passive constructions, and precise formal connectors

25. "Peremptory," as used to describe a tone or phrase, suggests that it

- A) admits no argument or contradiction
- B) is hesitant and apologetic
- C) is deliberately ambiguous
- D) is purely decorative

UNIT 10

The Case For and Against

Objective (CEFR C2): to understand and use expressions related to constructing persuasive rhetorical arguments and valuing intellectual flexibility, and to express ideas with complete fluency and precision, conveying finer shades of meaning, and using language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, professional, and literary purposes.

Reading: In Praise of Second Thoughts

That the mind which never wavers, never revises, and never confesses itself mistaken has long been prized as the mind of greatest strength—stalwart in its convictions, unmoved by contradiction, admired by the credulous as a fortress of character built to withstand any siege of argument—is, I want to suggest, one of the more expensive misapprehensions a civilisation has ever indulged.

We admire the compass and distrust the weathervane, and rightly so; yet a mind that refuses to turn, whatever the wind, is not a compass but a stone—inert, unerring only by accident, and incapable of finding true north because it gave up looking for it years ago. To change one's mind, properly and deliberately done, is not weakness but vigilance; not treachery but honesty; not the betrayal of a conviction but its completion. The weathervane, after all, does not lack direction—it has more integrity than the stone, for it tells the truth about which way the wind is actually blowing, instead of insisting, out of vanity, that the wind has not changed.

What, in the end, is consistency worth, if it is consistency in error? It might be argued—indeed, it is argued, in every election cycle and every boardroom and every family dispute—that a person who alters a position under the pressure of a good argument is not principled but pliable, a reed bending to whichever breeze happens to blow hardest, and that such a person forfeits the trust on which public and private life alike depend. There is something to this; a weathercock spun by every passing gust is no more use than a stone that will not move at all. Yet the objection mistakes the caricature for the case. Nobody of sense is praising the politician who discovers a new conviction each Tuesday to match the morning's opinion poll. What is being praised is something rarer and considerably more difficult: the willingness to hold a position firmly enough to defend it, honestly enough to test it, and loosely enough to let it go when the evidence no longer supports it.

It was Keynes, famously and rather wearily, who is supposed to have answered a charge of inconsistency by asking what, precisely, his accuser did when the facts changed. Whether or not he ever said it in quite those words hardly matters; the retort has survived because it names something true, which is that the facts do change, that the world does not hold still merely to preserve the dignity of our earlier opinions, and that a policy, a diagnosis, or a verdict formed in good faith on Monday's evidence has no special claim to survive the arrival of Tuesday's. To insist otherwise is not fidelity to truth but fidelity to a moment, mistaken for fidelity to a principle.

History does not remember the stubborn kindly for their stubbornness alone. It remembers, instead, the scientist who abandoned a cherished hypothesis rather than force the data to fit it; the judge who reversed a ruling on appeal because a fact had been overlooked; the general who, having spent a lifetime preparing for the last war, had the humility to notice that the next one would be fought differently. Each of these people changed their mind, and each was, for exactly that reason, more right at the end of their career than at its beginning. I do not exaggerate by much—perhaps not at all—when I say that the capacity to be persuaded is very close to being the entire definition of intelligence, and that a mind sealed against persuasion is, for all practical purposes, no mind at all, merely a very elaborate filing cabinet.

Granted, there exists a kind of changing-of-mind that deserves every syllable of contempt heaped upon it: the calculated reversal, timed to the shifting of an audience rather than the discovery of a fact, performed not because the evidence has moved but because the crowd has. This is not intellectual honesty; it is theatre wearing honesty's coat. But that a counterfeit exists is no argument against the currency it imitates, and to refuse ever to change one's mind for fear of being mistaken for a hypocrite is rather like refusing ever to speak for fear of being mistaken for a liar.

Why, then, does changing one's mind carry such a stigma, when the evidence for its virtue is so plainly in front of us? Partly, no doubt, because reversing a public position costs something real: a loss of face, a headline, an opponent's gleeful quotation of one's own earlier words read back with malicious emphasis. Partly, too, because the human ego is a possessive creature, and having once called a belief its own, resents being asked to hand it back. But the deeper reason, I suspect, is simpler and less flattering still: it is far easier to score a point off someone's reversal than to engage with the argument that produced it, and mockery requires no thought whatsoever, whereas genuine persuasion requires a great deal. We have built, in other words, an incentive structure that rewards the appearance of certainty over the substance of accuracy, and then we express bewilderment when our public figures, and occasionally ourselves, choose the reward on offer rather than the harder, quieter, less applauded virtue.

Consider, too, what we actually ask of one another when we demand unwavering consistency. Do we want our doctors to keep prescribing yesterday's remedy after better evidence arrives? Do we want our engineers to keep trusting a bridge design because changing the design might look like an admission of error? Do we, in our more honest moments, even trust the friend who has held precisely the same opinions, unaltered and unexamined, since the age of nineteen? We do not. We suspect, and we suspect rightly, that such a person has stopped thinking rather than started believing more deeply, and that beneath the appearance of firmness lies not conviction but neglect.

The real distinction, then, is not between the person who changes their mind and the person who does not, but between the mind that changes because it has been reasoned with and the mind that changes because it has been merely pressured—between revision earned through argument and reversal purchased through convenience. One is a mark of character; the other, its counterfeit. And it is worth admitting, in the interest of the very honesty this essay recommends, that telling the two apart from the outside is not always straightforward: a modest difficulty, compared with everything else at stake, but a real one nonetheless, since sincerity and expedience can wear disconcertingly similar faces, and only time, and the pattern of a person's reasoning, will reliably tell them apart.

There is a useful test, moreover, for telling principled revision from mere expedience, and it is this: ask not what the person now believes, but why, and when, they came to believe it. The politician who abandons a policy the week after the polling data turns against it has changed an answer without changing an argument; nothing new has been discovered, only something old has become inconvenient. The scientist who abandons a hypothesis after a rival's experiment fails to replicate it, the negotiator who concedes a point after hearing a fact she had genuinely not considered, the reader who closes a book having been quietly out-argued by it—these people have done the opposite. They have let a reason do the work that pressure, in the first case, merely pretended to do. It is not the direction of the change that reveals its character, still less its timing, but the presence or absence, somewhere upstream, of an actual argument earning its keep.

There is, too, a private version of this public argument, and it is in some ways the harder one to make, because it asks not for tolerance of other people's reversals but for tolerance of our own. Nothing is more quietly humiliating than realising that a belief one held with real conviction, defended at dinner tables and repeated to one's children, turns out on closer inspection to have been simply wrong. The temptation, at that moment, is enormous: to double down, to find some way of squaring the new evidence with the old belief, to treat the discomfort of being wrong as a problem to be managed rather than information to be used. Resist that temptation a few dozen times over a lifetime, and something like wisdom accumulates. Give in to it every time, and what accumulates instead is merely age.

So the next time a public figure is mocked for a "flip-flop," or a colleague is quietly distrusted for having "changed their tune," or you yourself feel the small, private discomfort of realising that what you believed last year no longer survives this year's evidence, it may be worth pausing—before joining the chorus of disapproval, before reaching for the comfortable insult, before assuming that constancy is always a virtue and reconsideration always a fault—to ask whether the more admirable trait, the rarer one, and very possibly the more difficult one, is not the mind that never moves but the mind that moves only when it has good reason to.

One might object, at this point, that all of this is easy enough to say and considerably harder to practise, and one would be entirely right. Knowing that a belief ought to yield to a better argument is a wholly different matter from actually feeling, in the moment, the small and specific humiliation of yielding it; theory offers no anaesthetic for that particular sting. Practice, however, does help. The habit of asking oneself, before defending a position, what evidence would be sufficient to overturn it, does more for the health of a mind than any number of resolutions to "keep an open mind" ever manage on their own, precisely because it converts a vague virtue into a concrete, answerable question.

None of which is to say that steadfastness has no claim on our respect at all, or that this is the last word on the matter. There are convictions—about the dignity of persons, say, or the wrongness of cruelty—that ought to survive any number of clever arguments marshalled against them, and a world composed entirely of infinitely flexible minds would be little better than a world composed entirely of infinitely rigid ones. Thoughtful people continue to disagree about where, precisely, the line between principled constancy and mere obstinacy should be drawn, and about how much weight tradition and continuity ought to carry against the claims of new evidence. The case for changing one's mind, in other words, is not a case against ever holding one.

Reading Comprehension – True or False

Read the text again and decide if each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. The author argues that changing one's mind under the pressure of a good argument is a sign of honesty rather than weakness. ____ (T / F)
2. The essay praises the politician who adopts a new conviction each week to match the latest opinion poll. ____ (T / F)
3. According to the author, history remembers stubborn people fondly simply because of their stubbornness. ____ (T / F)
4. The essay suggests that the capacity to be persuaded by good arguments is closely linked to intelligence. ____ (T / F)
5. The author concludes that certain convictions, such as the wrongness of cruelty, ought to withstand clever arguments against them. ____ (T / F)

Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Read each question and choose the correct answer.

1. **According to the author, why does an unchanging mind resemble a stone rather than a compass?**
 - A) It is inert and incapable of finding direction
 - B) It is admired universally for its reliability
 - C) It changes too frequently to be trusted
 - D) It is more colourful and interesting
2. **What criticism does the author concede has "something to it" regarding people who frequently change their positions?**
 - A) That they lack basic good manners
 - B) That they may be pliable and forfeit others' trust
 - C) That they are too intelligent for public life
 - D) That they never held genuine convictions at all
3. **Which historical figure is credited, perhaps apocryphally, with the retort about changing his mind when the facts changed?**
 - A) Charles Darwin
 - B) A famous judge
 - C) John Maynard Keynes
 - D) A wartime general
4. **According to the essay, what ultimately distinguishes principled revision from mere expedience?**
 - A) The direction in which the opinion changes
 - B) How quickly the change is made public
 - C) How the public reacts to the change
 - D) Whether an actual argument lies behind the change

5. In the essay's conclusion, what does the author say about convictions concerning the dignity of persons?

- A) They ought to survive clever arguments marshalled against them
- B) They should be revised as readily as any other belief
- C) They are simply examples of obstinacy
- D) They are irrelevant to the essay's central argument

Key Vocabulary

High-frequency and advanced words and expressions (Oxford 3000/5000, New General Service List, Academic Word List and Brown Corpus), filtered by topic relevance and C2 level. Meanings are in the Dictionary at the end of the book.

1–10	11–20	21–30	31–40
1. to marshal one's arguments	11. to backpedal	21. to see the error of one's ways	31. to be set in one's ways
2. a cogent argument	12. dogmatism	22. a straw man	32. recalcitrance
3. to play devil's advocate	13. to hold one's ground	23. to capitulate	33. to yield ground
4. an untenable position	14. a specious argument	24. steadfastness	34. an unassailable case
5. to concede a point	15. to be won over	25. to poke holes in an argument	35. to eat one's words
6. a rebuttal	16. open-mindedness	26. a change of heart	36. pigheadedness
7. to be swayed by an argument	17. to dig in one's heels	27. to stand one's ground	37. to bolster an argument
8. intellectual humility	18. a compelling case	28. equivocation	38. obduracy
9. to entrench oneself in a view	19. to hedge one's bets	29. to reconsider one's stance	39. to have the courage of one's convictions
10. a volte-face	20. intransigence	30. a fallacious argument	40. a tacit admission

Vocabulary Practice

Choose the correct option to complete each sentence.

1. "Misapprehension" (as used in the reading) most nearly means:

- A) a mistaken belief or understanding
- B) a firm agreement
- C) a sudden fear
- D) a formal apology

2. "Credulous" most nearly means:

- A) deeply suspicious of everything
- B) too willing to believe without sufficient evidence
- C) highly educated
- D) unable to speak clearly

3. "Pliable" most nearly means:

- A) rigid and unbending
- B) extremely intelligent
- C) easily bent, influenced, or persuaded
- D) financially generous

4. "Caricature" (as used in the reading) most nearly means:

- A) an exact, faithful description
- B) a legal document
- C) a private conversation
- D) an exaggerated and distorted representation

5. "Vigilance" most nearly means:

- A) alert and watchful attentiveness
- B) careless indifference
- C) sudden anger
- D) quiet resignation

6. "Stigma" (as used in the reading) most nearly means:

- A) a badge of honour
- B) a mark of social disapproval or shame
- C) a financial reward
- D) a legal requirement

7. "Expedience" most nearly means:

- A) moral principle above all else
- B) careful, slow deliberation
- C) action taken for convenience rather than principle
- D) a formal apology

8. "Obstinacy" most nearly means:

- A) generosity of spirit
- B) rapid change of opinion
- C) deep uncertainty
- D) stubborn refusal to change one's mind

9. "Marshaled" (as used in the reading) most nearly means:

- A) organised and assembled in support of an argument
- B) completely ignored
- C) financially compensated
- D) quietly abandoned

10. "Bewilderment" most nearly means:

- A) calm confidence
- B) a state of confusion or puzzlement
- C) intense joy
- D) mild boredom

Grammar Focus: Rhetorical Devices for Persuasive Argument

Persuasive prose at the highest level relies less on new information than on the architecture in which familiar information is arranged, and the devices examined in this unit are, in essence, structural: antithesis balances two contrasting ideas within a single, symmetrical frame ("not weakness but vigilance"), so that each half sharpens the other by contrast and the resulting formulation becomes far more memorable than either half stated alone. Tricolon, the arrangement of ideas or clauses in a set of three, exploits a deep-seated cognitive preference for triads—two items feel incomplete, four feel cluttered, but three feel both patterned and conclusive—and speakers from classical orators to modern politicians have used it to lend a claim the ring of comprehensiveness and inevitability. Rhetorical questions, meanwhile, do not seek information but concede a point so obvious that the audience is invited to supply the answer itself, which has the effect of making the audience complicit in the argument's conclusion rather than merely its recipient.

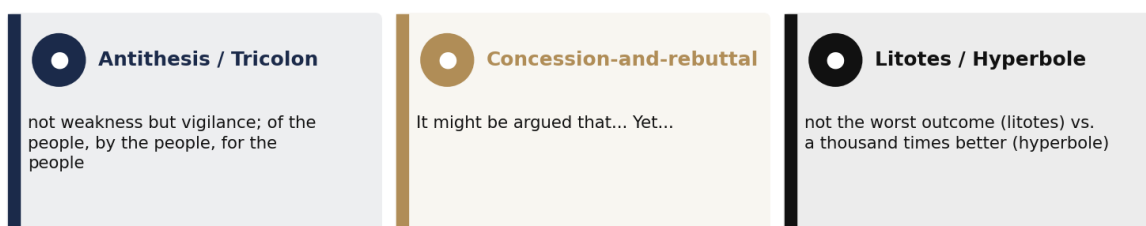
Concession-and-rebuttal structures ("It might be argued that... Yet...") serve a subtler purpose: by voicing the opposing case fairly, even generously, before dismantling it, the writer signals confidence and intellectual honesty, forestalls the reader's own objection before it can harden into resistance, and earns the credibility that a one-sided argument never quite achieves. The periodic sentence, which withholds its main clause until the very end, builds suspense and momentum across a string of subordinate elements so that the sentence's meaning—and its rhetorical force—lands all at once, in a single climactic release, rather than trickling out clause by clause as a loose sentence does. Calculated understatement (litotes, ironic minimisation) and calculated overstatement (hyperbole) work as opposite instruments tuned to the same end: control of emphasis. Understatement lends a claim an air of restraint and quiet authority that can be more persuasive than open assertion, while deliberate overstatement, used sparingly and knowingly, jolts an audience past complacency—provided the writer signals, through tone or context, that the exaggeration is a rhetorical choice rather than a lapse in judgement.

Figure 10

1. Sentence structure



2. Forms and examples



Reference Table: Rhetorical and Persuasive Structures

Device	Function	Example
Antithesis	Balances two contrasting ideas in parallel form to sharpen each by contrast	"Not treachery but honesty, not weakness but vigilance."
Tricolon	Groups three parallel elements to create rhythm, emphasis, and a sense of completeness	"Firmly, honestly, and loosely held — that is the mark of a sound conviction."
Concession-and-rebuttal	Acknowledges an opposing view before dismantling it, building credibility and forestalling objection	"It might be argued that consistency is a virtue. Yet consistency in error is no virtue at all."
Periodic sentence	Delays the main clause until the end of the sentence, building tension toward a climactic release	"That the willingness to be persuaded, rather than the refusal to yield, is the true mark of intelligence is, I contend, undeniable."
Calculated understatement/overstatement	Uses deliberate minimisation or exaggeration to control emphasis and signal rhetorical intent	"I do not exaggerate by much when I call it the entire definition of intelligence."

Examples

1. It is not treachery but honesty, not weakness but vigilance, that leads a reasonable mind to change course. (antithesis)
2. To defend a position firmly, to test it honestly, and to abandon it gracefully when the evidence demands it — this, and nothing less, is intellectual integrity. (tricolon)
3. What, after all, is consistency worth, if it is merely consistency in error? (rhetorical question)
4. It might be argued that reversing one's opinion under pressure signals weakness; yet the truly weak mind is the one that cannot be moved by any argument at all. (concession-and-rebuttal)

5. That the capacity to admit error, to weigh new evidence fairly, and to revise a cherished belief accordingly is not a flaw in reasoning but its highest expression is, I would argue, beyond serious dispute. (periodic sentence)
6. I do not exaggerate by much — perhaps not at all — when I call an unexamined conviction the single most dangerous habit a thinking person can acquire. (calculated understatement/overstatement)

English Usage

Learn and practice these useful expressions.

- I take your point, but...
conceding the validity of an argument before introducing a counterpoint
- Granted, ... ; nevertheless, ...
formally acknowledging an opponent's claim before pivoting to rebuttal
- There's something to be said for..., yet...
softly conceding merit while preparing to qualify or contest it
- Far be it from me to..., but...
disclaiming an intention before making the very move disclaimed, often ironically
- While I concede that..., it does not follow that...
separating an accepted premise from a rejected conclusion
- On reflection, I'm inclined to think...
signalling a considered, provisional shift in one's own position
- It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge...
formally flagging a counter-argument one is obliged to address
- That said, the crux of the matter remains...
pivoting back to one's central claim after a concession

Sample Dialogue

A: I still maintain that remote work has been an unambiguous boon for productivity.

B: I take your point, but surely the erosion of spontaneous collaboration counts against it?

A: Granted, watercooler conversations have dwindled; nevertheless, the data on deep-work output tells a different story.

B: There's something to be said for uninterrupted focus, yet isolation takes a toll that no spreadsheet captures.

A: Far be it from me to dismiss the human cost, but you're conflating correlation with causation there.

B: Fair enough. While I concede that some teams thrive remotely, it does not follow that all of them do.

A: That's a reasonable distinction. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that our own team's morale has slipped a little.

B: Exactly my worry. On reflection, I'm inclined to think the answer is hybrid arrangements rather than either extreme.

A: That said, the crux of the matter remains: which model best serves the work itself, not merely our comfort?

B: Put like that, I have to admit my position has softened considerably over this conversation.

A: Mine too, if I'm honest. I came in ready to defend remote work to the hilt.

B: And I came in ready to bury it. Perhaps that's the surest sign a good argument has done its job.

Practice

Choose the best expression for each situation.

1. Which phrase is used to acknowledge an opponent's point before introducing a counterargument?

- A) That said, the crux of the matter remains...
- B) I take your point, but...
- C) On reflection, I'm inclined to think...
- D) It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge...

2. "Far be it from me to..., but..." typically signals which rhetorical move?

- A) A sincere refusal to comment on a topic
- B) A disclaimed intention immediately followed by the very act disclaimed
- C) A direct insult to the listener
- D) An unconditional agreement with the other speaker

3. Which phrase most clearly signals a speaker's own shift in position after due consideration?

- A) Granted, ...; nevertheless, ...
- B) There's something to be said for..., yet...
- C) On reflection, I'm inclined to think...
- D) It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge...

4. "That said, the crux of the matter remains..." functions to:

- A) end the discussion without resolution
- B) pivot back to the speaker's central claim after a concession
- C) introduce a completely unrelated topic
- D) apologise for a factual error

5. Which structure best fits: separating an accepted premise from a conclusion the speaker still rejects?

- A) While I concede that..., it does not follow that...
- B) Far be it from me to..., but...
- C) I take your point, but...
- D) There's something to be said for..., yet...

Practice Quiz (25 Questions)

Choose the only correct answer for each question, based on international exams. Answers are in the Answer Key at the end of the book.

1. Which rhetorical device balances two contrasting ideas in a parallel grammatical structure?

- A) Antithesis
- B) Tricolon

- C) Litotes
- D) Anaphora

2. "Not weakness but vigilance, not treachery but honesty" is an example of:

- A) hyperbole
- B) antithesis
- C) a rhetorical question
- D) a periodic sentence

3. A tricolon is best defined as:

- A) a question asked for effect rather than information
- B) a sentence that withholds its main clause until the end
- C) a series of three parallel words, phrases, or clauses
- D) an understatement used for ironic effect

4. Which sentence best illustrates a tricolon?

- A) He came and then he saw everything.
- B) Coming, he then also saw much.
- C) It might be argued that he came.
- D) He came, he saw, he conquered.

5. A rhetorical question differs from a genuine question chiefly because:

- A) it is asked to make a point, not to seek information
- B) it requires a written rather than spoken answer
- C) it must always begin with "why"
- D) it cannot appear in persuasive writing

6. "What is consistency worth, if it is consistency in error?" functions in the reading primarily to:

- A) request factual information from the reader
- B) prompt the reader to supply an implied, obvious answer
- C) introduce a new statistic
- D) apologise for an earlier claim

7. A concession-and-rebuttal structure typically begins by:

- A) dismissing the opposing view without comment
- B) presenting only one's own argument
- C) acknowledging the opposing view before countering it
- D) asking a rhetorical question

8. Which phrase most clearly signals a concession before a rebuttal?

- A) "Furthermore, it follows that..."
- B) "In conclusion, therefore..."
- C) "For example, consider..."
- D) "It might be argued that... Yet..."

9. The primary rhetorical benefit of concession-and-rebuttal is that it:

- A) builds credibility by engaging fairly with objections
- B) shortens the overall argument
- C) avoids the need for evidence
- D) eliminates the need for a conclusion

10. A periodic sentence is structured so that:

- A) the main clause appears first, followed by supporting details
- B) the main clause is withheld until the end, building toward it
- C) every clause is of equal grammatical importance
- D) it always takes the form of a question

11. What is the primary rhetorical effect of a periodic sentence?

- A) It makes the sentence easier to skim quickly
- B) It avoids the use of subordinate clauses entirely
- C) It creates suspense that resolves in a climactic final clause
- D) It shortens the sentence for clarity

12. Which of the following is a periodic sentence?

- A) The mind that refuses to change is not admirable; it is merely rigid.
- B) He was persuaded, and he changed his mind, and he moved on.
- C) Is it wise to hold a belief no evidence can shake?
- D) That the willingness to be persuaded is the truest mark of intelligence is, I would argue, beyond dispute.

13. A "loose sentence" differs from a periodic sentence chiefly in that a loose sentence:

- A) states its main idea early and adds details afterward
- B) delays its main clause until the very end
- C) contains no subordinate clauses at all
- D) is always shorter than a periodic sentence

14. Calculated understatement (litotes) is used in persuasive writing chiefly to:

- A) exaggerate a claim beyond what is credible
- B) create an impression of restraint and quiet authority
- C) confuse the reader deliberately
- D) avoid taking any position at all

15. "I do not exaggerate by much — perhaps not at all" is best described as:

- A) a tricolon
- B) an unqualified rhetorical question
- C) calculated understatement
- D) a simple antithesis

16. Deliberate overstatement (hyperbole), when used skilfully in argumentation, is meant to:

- A) mislead the audience about the facts
- B) replace the need for supporting evidence
- C) weaken the writer's credibility
- D) jolt an audience past complacency while signalling it is a rhetorical device

17. Which of these best distinguishes hyperbole from a simple factual error?

- A) Hyperbole signals, through tone or context, that it is a deliberate exaggeration
- B) Hyperbole is always shorter than a factual claim
- C) A factual error is always intentional
- D) There is no meaningful distinction

18. In persuasive writing, antithesis is particularly effective because it:

- A) hides the writer's true opinion
- B) sharpens each idea through direct contrast with its opposite
- C) avoids parallel grammatical structure
- D) is only used in casual speech

19. "To defend a position firmly, to test it honestly, and to abandon it when necessary" demonstrates:

- A) a periodic sentence
- B) litotes
- C) tricolon
- D) a rhetorical question

20. The main purpose of voicing an opposing argument before refuting it (concession-and-rebuttal) is to:

- A) confuse the reader with irrelevant detail
- B) avoid stating one's own position clearly
- C) lengthen the essay unnecessarily
- D) demonstrate fairness and pre-empt the reader's objections

21. "Pliable," as used to describe a person's opinions, most nearly means:

- A) easily influenced or bent
- B) firmly fixed and unchangeable
- C) highly respected
- D) financially independent

22. "Obstinacy" is best defined as:

- A) a willingness to reconsider one's views
- B) stubborn adherence to a position despite good reasons to change it
- C) a form of persuasive rhetoric
- D) a synonym for generosity

23. "Credulous" most nearly means:

- A) inclined to doubt everything
- B) skilled in public speaking

- C) inclined to believe too readily, without sufficient evidence
- D) reluctant to speak at all

24. "Marshaled," in the context of arguments "marshalled against" a position, most nearly means:

- A) quietly withdrawn
- B) financially rewarded
- C) permanently forgotten
- D) organised and brought to bear

25. Which combination of devices would most effectively build toward a climactic, memorable conclusion in a persuasive speech?

- A) A periodic sentence culminating in a tricolon
- B) A simple declarative sentence followed by a genuine question
- C) A list of unrelated statistics
- D) A series of short, unconnected loose sentences

Answer Key

Below are the correct answers to all reading comprehension, vocabulary, English Usage and practice-quiz exercises in each unit.

Unit 1: The Question Remains...

True/False: 1. F 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. B 2. C 3. A 4. D 5. B

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. A 3. B 4. C 5. D 6. A 7. B 8. C 9. D 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. B 3. B 4. B 5. C

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 2: Never Before Had...

True/False: 1. F 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. B 3. C 4. B 5. C

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 3: What Remains Unsaid

True/False: 1. F 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. B

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. C 3. A 4. B 5. C

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 4: Between the Lines

True/False: 1. T 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. C 2. A 3. D 4. B 5. C

Vocabulary: 1. B 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. B 6. D 7. A 8. C 9. B 10. D

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. C 3. B 4. C 5. A

Practice Quiz: 1. B 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. B 6. D 7. A 8. C 9. B 10. D 11. A 12. C 13. B

14. D 15. A 16. C 17. B 18. D 19. A 20. C 21. B 22. D 23. A 24. C 25. B

Unit 5: It Was Not Until...

True/False: 1. F 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. B 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. B

Vocabulary: 1. B 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. B 6. D 7. A 8. C 9. B 10. D

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. C 3. B 4. B 5. C

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 6: A Turn of Phrase

True/False: 1. F 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. B 3. B 4. A 5. B

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 7: That Said...

True/False: 1. F 2. T 3. F 4. T 5. F

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. A 2. C 3. B 4. C 5. D

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. B 3. C 4. B 5. B

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 8: As It Were

True/False: 1. T 2. F 3. F 4. T 5. T

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. C 2. B 3. B 4. A 5. B

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 9: Pursuant to the Foregoing

True/False: 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. F 5. T

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. B 3. C 4. B 5. C

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Unit 10: The Case For and Against

True/False: 1. T 2. F 3. F 4. T 5. T

Reading Comprehension (multiple choice): 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A

Vocabulary: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B

English Usage – Practice: 1. B 2. B 3. C 4. B 5. A

Practice Quiz: 1. A 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. A 6. B 7. C 8. D 9. A 10. B 11. C 12. D 13. A

14. B 15. C 16. D 17. A 18. B 19. C 20. D 21. A 22. B 23. C 24. D 25. A

Dictionary

Meaning of all key words and expressions in the book, organized by unit. (Meanings are given in Spanish.)

Unit 1: The Question Remains...

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a discerning eye	un ojo perspicaz	to be second nature	ser algo instintivo o natural
a fallible judgment	un juicio falible	to be steeped in a discipline	estar imbuido/empapado en una disciplina
a leap of faith	un acto de fe	to be steeped in nuance	estar impregnado de matices
a modicum of doubt	un ápice de duda	to be swayed by	dejarse influir por
a nagging doubt	una duda persistente	to be well-versed in	estar versado en
a rule of thumb	una regla general o empírica	to call into question	poner en tela de juicio
a seasoned practitioner	un profesional experimentado	to defer to someone's judgment	remitirse al criterio de alguien
a well-founded suspicion	una sospecha bien fundada	to draw on years of experience	recurrir a años de experiencia
an air of authority	un aire de autoridad	to err on the side of caution	pecar de cauteloso
an air of certainty	un aire de certeza	to exercise due diligence	ejercer la debida diligencia
an eye for detail	un ojo para el detalle	to have a keen eye for	tener un ojo agudo para
an intuitive grasp of	una comprensión intuitiva de	to hedge one's bets	cubrirse las espaldas, no comprometerse del todo
an inveterate skeptic	un escéptico empedernido	to lend credence to	dar credibilidad a
an unassailable case	un caso irrefutable	to lend weight to an argument	dar peso a un argumento
an unerring instinct	un instinto infalible	to muddy the waters	enturbiar las aguas, confundir el asunto
hard-won expertise	experiencia ganada con esfuerzo	to second-guess	cuestionar a posteriori, dudar retrospectivamente
intellectual rigor	rigor intelectual	to split hairs	ser quisquilloso, discutir por nimiedades
tacit knowledge	conocimiento tácito	to stand the test of scrutiny	resistir el escrutinio
to be at the mercy of one's own biases	estar a merced de los propios sesgos	to take something with a grain of salt	tomar algo con cautela o reservas

to be beyond reproach	estar libre de toda sospecha	unimpeachable credibility	credibilidad intachable
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Unit 2: Never Before Had...

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
bracing	vigorizante, tonificante	to be swept overboard	ser arrastrado por la borda
dauntless	intrépido, impávido	to be wracked with doubt	estar atormentado por la duda
foolhardy	temerario, insensato	to brave (the elements)	desafiar (los elementos)
foreboding	premonición aciaga, presagio funesto	to capsize	volcar, zozobrar
gale-force	de fuerza de vendaval	to careen	escorar peligrosamente, dar bandazos
harbinger (of doom)	presagio (de desastre)	to defy the odds	desafiar las probabilidades
harrowing	angustioso, desgarrador	to eke out (survival)	conseguir a duras penas (sobrevivir)
harrowing ordeal	trance angustioso, calvario	to falter	flaquear, titubear
indomitable	indomable	to falter at the helm	flaquear al timón
maelstrom	vorágine, remolino	to founder	naufregar, irse a pique
mettle	temple, coraje	to grapple with	forcejear con, lidiar arduamente con
peril	peligro, riesgo grave	to hurtle	precipitarse, lanzarse velozmente
precarious	precario, inestable	to lash (oneself) to	atarse firmemente a
resolute	resuelto, firme	to skirt disaster	rozar el desastre, esquivar la catástrofe por poco
sheer audacity	pura audacia	to weather (a storm)	capear (una tormenta)
squall	chubasco, ráfaga repentina	trepidation	inquietud, aprensión
steely resolve	determinación de acero	unfathomable	insondable
tempestuous	tempestuoso, borrascoso	unprecedented	sin precedentes
to be at the mercy of	estar a merced de	visceral	visceral
to be gripped by fear	ser presa del miedo	white-knuckle	de nudillos blancos, de tensión extrema

Unit 3: What Remains Unsaid

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a barbed remark	un comentario mordaz	tacit understanding	entendimiento tácito
a chill in the air	una frialdad perceptible en el ambiente	to bite one's tongue	morderse la lengua
a clipped exchange	un intercambio seco y breve	to bottle up	reprimir (emociones)
a curt reply	una respuesta seca	to bristle	erizarse, molestarse visiblemente
a pointed comment	un comentario intencionado	to circle the issue	dar vueltas al asunto sin abordarlo
a pregnant pause	una pausa significativa	to defuse a situation	distender una situación
a telling silence	un silencio revelador	to feign indifference	fingir indiferencia
a veiled accusation	una acusación velada	to fester	enconarse (un resentimiento)
an awkward lull	un silencio incómodo	to gloss over	pasar por alto superficialmente
an icy glance	una mirada glacial	to harbor resentment	albergar resentimiento
an undercurrent of resentment	un trasfondo de resentimiento	to leave something unsaid	dejar algo sin decir
brooding silence	silencio taciturno	to needle someone	provocar a alguien sutilmente
clipped tone	tono cortante	to read between the lines	leer entre líneas
guarded	reservado, cauteloso	to seethe	hervir de rabia contenida
insinuation	insinuación	to simmer	hervir a fuego lento (metafórico, contener enojo)
loaded silence	silencio cargado de significado	to skirt around a topic	evitar un tema indirectamente
palpable discomfort	incomodidad palpable	to stonewall	negarse a comunicarse, evadir
stony silence	silencio glacial	to withhold	reservarse, no expresar
strained conversation	conversación tensa	unresolved friction	fricción sin resolver
subtext	subtexto	unspoken tension	tensión no expresada

Unit 4: Between the Lines

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a caveat	una salvedad / advertencia	to couch in diplomatic terms	expresar en términos diplomáticos
a face-saving formula	una fórmula para salvar las apariencias	to distance oneself from	desmarcarse de

a nuanced position	una postura matizada	to equivocate	ser evasivo / hablar con doble sentido
a sticking point	un punto de fricción	to float a proposal	plantear una propuesta tentativamente
a tacit understanding	un entendimiento tácito	to gloss over	pasar por alto / minimizar
a veiled threat	una amenaza velada	to hedge	matizar / cubrirse las espaldas
an implicit commitment	un compromiso implícito	to leave wiggle room	dejar margen de maniobra
an olive branch	un gesto de paz	to overstate	exagerar
an overture	una propuesta inicial / acercamiento	to prevaricate	evadir / andarse con rodeos
back-channel negotiations	negociaciones extraoficiales	to qualify a claim	matizar una afirmación
brinkmanship	política de riesgo calculado	to reserve judgment	reservarse el juicio
circumlocution	circunloquio / rodeo verbal	to soften the blow	suavizar el golpe
guarded optimism	optimismo cauteloso	to sound out	tantear / sondear opiniones
noncommittal	evasivo / que no se compromete	to stonewall	obstruir / negarse a responder
plausible deniability	negación plausible	to stop short of	no llegar a / abstenerse de
protocol-driven restraint	contención impuesta por el protocolo	to table a motion	presentar una moción formalmente
studied ambiguity	ambigüedad calculada	to temper a statement	suavizar una declaración
to be at pains to stress	esforzarse en subrayar	to underscore without overcommitting	recalcar sin comprometerse en exceso
to be economical with the truth	ser poco transparente con la verdad	to understate	quedarse corto / minimizar
to broach a subject	abordar un tema delicado	to walk back a comment	retractarse de un comentario

Unit 5: It Was Not Until...

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a bombshell revelation	una revelación bomba, una noticia demoledora	to be in the dark about something	estar a oscuras sobre algo, ignorar algo
a chequered past	un pasado turbio, un historial cuestionable	to be none the wiser	seguir sin enterarse, no salir de dudas
a clandestine affair	una relación clandestina	to be shrouded in mystery	estar envuelto en misterio

a cover-up	un encubrimiento	to be taken aback	quedarse atónito, pillado por sorpresa
a facade	una fachada, una apariencia engañosa	to bring something to the surface	sacar algo a flote
a family secret	un secreto de familia	to come clean	confesar la verdad, sincerarse
a hidden agenda	una intención oculta	to come to light	salir a la luz, revelarse
a long-buried truth	una verdad enterrada desde hace tiempo	to dig up the past	desenterrar el pasado
a paper trail	un rastro documental	to feign ignorance	fingir ignorancia
a shroud of secrecy	un velo de secretismo	to gloss over	pasar por alto, disimular
a skeleton in the closet	un secreto vergonzoso, un trapo sucio	to have an inkling	tener una sospecha, sospechar vagamente
a smoking gun	una prueba irrefutable, la prueba definitiva	to lay bare	dejar al descubierto, desnudar (una verdad)
a startling discovery	un descubrimiento asombroso	to piece together	reconstruir, atar cabos
a telltale sign	una señal reveladora, un indicio delator	to rake up old memories	remover recuerdos antiguos
a well-kept secret	un secreto bien guardado	to reckon with one's past	enfrentarse al propio pasado
an inconvenient truth	una verdad incómoda	to stumble upon	dar con algo por casualidad, topar con
an ulterior motive	un motivo oculto	to sweep something under the rug	ocultar algo, echar tierra sobre un asunto
disingenuous	poco sincero, engañoso	to unearth	desenterrar, sacar a la luz
duplicity	duplicidad, doblez	to unmask	desenmascarar
subterfuge	subterfugio, artimaña	to unravel a mystery	desentrañar un misterio

Unit 6: A Turn of Phrase

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
allusion	alusión	sardonic	sardónico, burlón con acritud
anecdote	anécdota	self-deprecating humour	humor autocrítico
bathos	anticlímax, caída bruscamente cómica de lo elevado a lo trivial	to captivate	cautivar, embelesar
cadence	cadencia (del habla)	to elicit laughter	provocar/arrancar risas
comic timing	sentido del tiempo cómico, oportunidad cómica	to embellish (a story)	adornar, embellecer (una historia)

connotation	connotación	to farm a metaphor	explotar/prolongar una metáfora
deadpan	con cara de póquer, dicho con seriedad fingida	to hold (someone) spellbound	tener a alguien hechizado, cautivado
denotation	denotación	to hold court	acaparar la atención, ser el centro de la conversación
droll	jocoso, socarrón	to hold the floor	acaparar la palabra, no ceder el turno de palabra
euphemism	eufemismo	to keep (listeners) on tenterhooks	mantener (a los oyentes) en vilo
extended metaphor	metáfora sostenida, metáfora extendida	to land (a joke)	tener éxito (un chiste), hacer efecto
inflection	inflexión (de la voz)	to regale (an audience)	agasajar, deleitar (a un público) con relatos
larger-than-life	desmesurado, de personalidad arrolladora	to riff on	improvisar variaciones sobre, elaborar libremente sobre
loquacious	locuaz, verboso	to spin a yarn	contar una historia larga y fantástica
mordant wit	ingenio mordaz	to weave a narrative thread	tejer un hilo narrativo
punchline	remate, desenlace cómico de un chiste	tour de force	proeza, alarde de virtuosismo
raconteur	narrador ameno, cuentista con gracia	turn of phrase	giro expresivo, forma ingeniosa de decir algo
raillery	burla amistosa, chanza	verve	brío, garra
register shift	cambio de registro	whimsical	caprichoso, fantasioso con gracia
repartee	réplica ingeniosa, esgrima verbal	wit	ingenio, agudeza

Unit 7: That Said...

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a calque	un calco lingüístico	nuance	matiz
a culturally bound expression	una expresión culturalmente marcada	paraphrase	paráfrasis
a false friend	un falso amigo	polysemy	polisemia
a lexical lacuna	una laguna léxica	resonance	resonancia
a loanword	un préstamo lingüístico	semantic field	campo semántico
a periphrastic rendering	una traducción perifrástica	target language	lengua meta

a portmanteau	una palabra compuesta (baúl)	the ineffable	lo inefable
a semantic gap	un vacío semántico	to be embedded in a worldview	estar arraigado en una cosmovisión
a source-language construct	una construcción de la lengua de origen	to coin a neologism	acuñar un neologismo
an evocative term	un término evocador	to convey a shade of meaning	transmitir un matiz de significado
an untranslatable	un intraducible (palabra sin equivalente)	to defy translation	resistirse a la traducción
approximation	aproximación	to domesticate a text	domesticar un texto (en traducción)
connotative weight	carga connotativa	to fall short of capturing	no lograr captar plenamente
cultural specificity	especificidad cultural	to foreignize a text	extranjerizar un texto
dynamic equivalence	equivalencia dinámica	to gloss a word	glosar una palabra (explicarla brevemente)
equivalence	equivalencia	to hinge on context	depender del contexto
fidelity to the source	fidelidad al texto original	to lose something in translation	perderse algo en la traducción
formal equivalence	equivalencia formal	to render a term	traducir/verter un término
idiomaticity	idomaticidad	untranslatability	intraducibilidad
linguistic relativity	relatividad lingüística	untranslatable residue	residuo intraducible

Unit 8: As It Were

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a creature of habit	una persona de costumbres arraigadas	larger than life	desmesurado / de personalidad arrolladora
a fixture (of a place)	un elemento fijo / habitual de un lugar	mercurial	mercurial / voluble
a maverick	un inconformista / espíritu libre	peculiar	peculiar
a raconteur	un narrador ameno / contador de anécdotas	quirk	manía / rareza
a soft spot for	debilidad / cariño especial por	quite a character	todo un personaje / alguien muy peculiar
a stickler for	un/a rigurosista con / muy exigente con	singular (in manner)	singular / peculiar
affectation	afectación	to be a law unto oneself	ser un caso aparte / no seguir reglas ajenas

an old soul	un alma vieja	to be given to (doing something)	tener tendencia / propensión a
bohemian	bohemio	to be prone to (doing something)	ser propenso a
capricious	caprichoso	to be set in one's ways	tener costumbres muy arraigadas
curmudgeonly	arisco / cascarrabias	to hark back to	remontarse a / evocar
eccentric in the best possible sense	excéntrico en el mejor sentido posible	to have a penchant for	tener predilección por
eccentricity	excentricidad	to hold court	acaparar la conversación / ser el centro de atención
endearing	entrañable	to indulge a whim	consentirse un capricho
flamboyant	extravagante / vistoso	to march to the beat of one's own drum	ir a su propio ritmo / hacer lo que le da la gana
idiosyncrasy	idiosincrasia	to potter about	entretenerse haciendo cositas sin prisa
incurable	incurable	unconventional	poco convencional
inimitable	inimitable	unfazed	impertérrito / imperturbable
inscrutable	inescrutable	whimsical	caprichoso / fantasioso
inveterate	inveterado / empedernido	wry	irónico / socarrón

Unit 9: Pursuant to the Foregoing

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a claimant	un reclamante	per stirpes	por stirpe
a falling-out	una ruptura familiar	probate	trámite sucesorio / homologación testamentaria
a no-contest clause	cláusula de no impugnación	probate court	tribunal sucesorio
an acrimonious dispute	una disputa enconada	residuary estate	patrimonio residual
bequest	legado	testamentary capacity	capacidad testamentaria
blood is thicker than water	la sangre tira / los lazos de sangre pesan más	testator	testador
codicil	codicilo	to adjudicate	dictaminar / fallar judicialmente
duress	coacción	to allege impropriety	alegar una irregularidad
estate	patrimonio hereditario	to bequeath	legar
estranged relative	pariente distanciado	to contest a will	impugnar un testamento

executor	albacea	to disinherit	desheredar
fiduciary duty	deber fiduciario	to forge a signature	falsificar una firma
forgery	falsificación	to have an axe to grind	tener un interés o resentimiento oculto
heir apparent	heredero forzoso	to litigate	litigar
holographic will	testamento ológrafo	to notarize	notariar
intestate succession	sucesión intestada	to renounce a claim	renunciar a un derecho
legatee	legatario	to revoke a will	revocar un testamento
litigious	litigioso	to settle out of court	llegar a un acuerdo extrajudicial
next of kin	pariente más cercano	undue influence	influencia indebida
of sound mind and memory	en pleno uso de sus facultades mentales	witness attestation	atestación de testigos

Unit 10: The Case For and Against

Word / expression	Meaning	Word / expression	Meaning
a change of heart	un cambio de parecer	to backpedal	dar marcha atrás, retractarse
a cogent argument	un argumento convincente, sólido	to be set in one's ways	ser inflexible, tener costumbres arraigadas
a compelling case	un caso convincente, un argumento de peso	to be swayed by an argument	dejarse convencer por un argumento
a fallacious argument	un argumento falaz	to be won over	dejarse convencer, ser persuadido
a rebuttal	una refutación	to bolster an argument	reforzar un argumento
a specious argument	un argumento especioso, engañosamente plausible	to capitulate	capitular, ceder
a straw man	un argumento de hombre de paja (falacia)	to concede a point	conceder un punto (en un debate)
a tacit admission	una admisión tácita	to dig in one's heels	ponerse terco, negarse a ceder
a volte-face	un giro de ciento ochenta grados, un cambio radical de postura	to eat one's words	tragarse las palabras, retractarse
an unassailable case	un caso irrefutable, inatacable	to entrench oneself in a view	atrincherarse en una opinión
an untenable position	una postura insostenible	to have the courage of one's convictions	tener el valor de sus propias convicciones
dogmatism	dogmatismo	to hedge one's bets	cubrirse las espaldas, no comprometerse del todo

equivocation	ambigüedad deliberada, evasiva	to hold one's ground	mantenerse firme, no ceder
intellectual humility	humildad intelectual	to marshal one's arguments	ordenar/organizar los propios argumentos
intransigence	intransigencia	to play devil's advocate	hacer de abogado del diablo
obduracy	obstinación, terquedad	to poke holes in an argument	encontrar fallos en un argumento
open-mindedness	apertura de mente	to reconsider one's stance	reconsiderar la propia postura
pigheadedness	testarudez, terquedad	to see the error of one's ways	reconocer el propio error
recalcitrance	terquedad, resistencia obstinada	to stand one's ground	mantenerse firme
steadfastness	firmeza, constancia	to yield ground	ceder terreno

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