

Monitoring text coherence • Recognizing text types and discourse organization

1. The texts on pages 110-113 have been cut into several sections, and the author's order has been changed. Read through all the sections in each text and decide which order makes the best sense to you. Compare and discuss your opinions in groups.

TEXT 1

ENGLISH HOBBIES

A

Sometimes people join a club so as to share their particular passion with others: the Photographic Club, the Archaeological, or whatever it may be.

B

The English love hobbies. Almost every Englishman with any spare time at all has a hobby, and it is almost impossible to guess from his profession or appearance what that hobby is likely to be.

C

But there are plenty of happy solitaires, busily building a model sailing-ship out of matches or rearranging their collection of foreign railway-tickets, who feel no need of company or encouragement. The hobby is enough in itself.

D

You can hear them talking 'shop' in trains and over garden fences, and at all the innumerable flower shows of the spring and summer, from the famous one at Chelsea to the small local affairs which cause such deadly rivalry among all kind of gardeners.

GLOSSARY

talk shop (section D) = (informal) talk about topics connected with one's job; in this case, a hobby is considered as a 'job'

dig up (section F) = remove something from the ground

knack (section F) = the skill or ability to do something which others may find difficult



E

A hobby may seem a trivial matter, but to an Englishman it is often of more absorbing interest than his profession or trade. He may have had his job in life forced upon him; his hobby he has chosen for himself, and it sometimes reveals a good deal about his character.

F

It may be stamp-collecting or carpentry or digging up Roman pottery, or simply digging up his own potatoes. Gardening is no doubt the most usual hobby at all, and there are men and women everywhere, both in town and country, who have that happy knack of making things grow which is summed up in the vivid phrase 'green fingers'.

Monica Redlich, *Everyday England*



TEXT 2

THE WORK OF THE SEA

A

During a severe storm however, erosion can be much more rapid. The giant waves caused by the 'Great Gale' of 31 January 1953 cut some areas of coastline back by over ten metres in a single night, causing tremendous damage.

B

The coastline of Britain has been an important place for settlement since earliest times. The first prehistoric peoples arrived in Britain by sea and settled first on the coast. Later, they were followed by invaders such as the Romans, the Saxons and the Vikings.

C

An important agent of change in the landscape is the sea. Like running water, the sea can carry out both erosion and deposition, although its work is obviously limited to the coast.

D

Even less severe gales may cause considerable damage however. Scenes like the one in Fig. 2 are still common as buildings are undermined by the waves and collapse on to the beach below the cliffs. As Fig. 1 shows, over thirty villages are known to have disappeared into the sea along this coastline since Roman times.

E

Fig. 1 shows part of the east coast of Yorkshire. Here erosion is rapidly removing the soft clays and sands which make up the coastline. In some parts the coastline has been retreating at an average rate of 2.5 metres per year.

F

Today, many large cities and seaports, as well as numerous small settlements, are found along the coast. There are many ways in which these settlements can be affected by natural changes due to erosion or deposition.

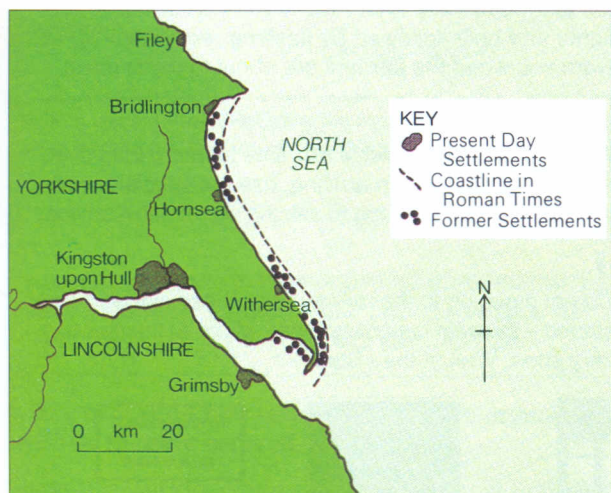


Fig. 1 Erosion along the Yorkshire coast.

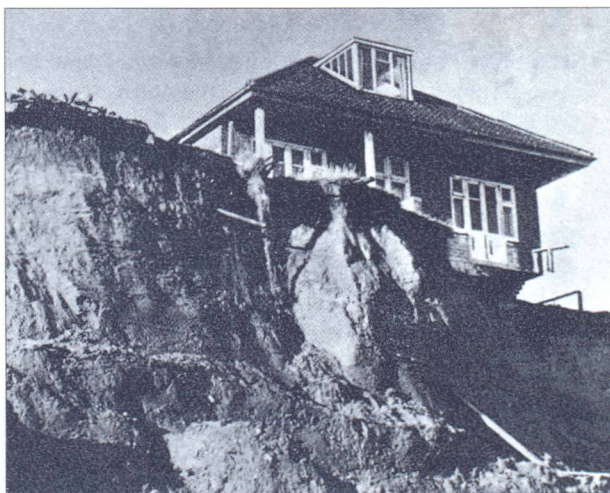


Fig. 2 Houses are undermined.

GLOSSARY

gale (section D) = a very strong wind
clay (section E) = (cf. *argilla*)

TEXT 3

In defence of English Cooking

A

Next there are the various ways of cooking potatoes that are peculiar to our own country. Where else do you see potatoes roasted under the joint, which is far and away the best way of cooking them? Or the delicious potato cakes that you get in the north of England? And it is far better to cook new potatoes in the English way – that is, boiled with mint and then served with a little melted butter or margarine – than to fry them as is done in most countries.

B

No doubt some of the things I have named above could be obtained in continental Europe, just as it is possible in London to obtain vodka or bird's nest soup. But they are all native to our country, and over huge areas they are literally unheard of.

C

Now that is simply not true. As anyone who has lived long abroad will know, there is a whole lot of delicacies which it is quite impossible to obtain outside the English-speaking countries. No doubt the list could be added to, but here are some of the things that I myself have looked for in foreign countries and failed to find.

GLOSSARY

joint (section A) = a large piece of meat for roasting

D

It is commonly said, even by the English themselves, that English cooking is the worst in the world. It is supposed to be not merely incompetent, but also imitative, and I even read quite recently, in a book by a French writer, the remark: 'The best English cooking is, of course, simply French cooking.'

E

What else? Outside these islands I have never seen a haggis, except one that came out of a tin, nor Dublin prawns, nor Oxford marmalade, nor several kinds of jam (marrow jam and bramble jelly, for instance), nor sausages of quite the same kind as ours.

F

First of all, kippers, Yorkshire pudding, Devonshire cream, muffins and crumpets. Then a list of puddings that would be interminable if I gave it in full: I will pick out for special mention Christmas pudding, treacle tart and apple dumplings. Then an almost equally long list of cakes: for instance, dark plum cake, shortbread and saffron buns. Also innumerable kinds of biscuit, which exist, of course, elsewhere, but are generally admitted to be better and crisper in England.

George Orwell, «Evening Standard», December 15, 1946

TEXT 4

Automatic half-barrier level crossing

A

If you have telephoned the signalman before crossing, telephone him again to tell him you are over.

B

If one train has gone by, but the barriers stay down and the red lights continue to flash, you must wait. A sign under the traffic light signal on your right saying 'Another train coming' will flash and another train will soon arrive.

C

Similarly, if you are driving a large or slow-moving vehicle you must first telephone the signalman, as instructed by the sign before the crossing, to get his permission to cross.

D

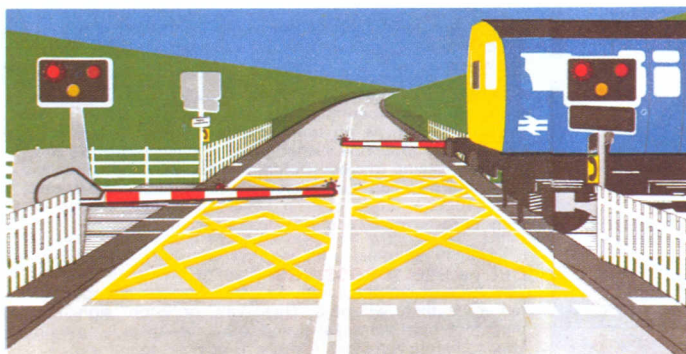
Automatic level crossings have barriers across the left side of the road. The trains activate the barriers, which fall just before the train reaches the crossing. Amber lights and bells followed by flashing red «Stop» lights warn you when the barriers are about to come down.

E

If the barriers stay down at any time for more than three minutes without a train arriving, use the special railway telephone at the crossing to ask the signalman's advice.

F

Do not move on to the railway once these signals have started – the train cannot stop and will be at the crossing very soon. Wait at the «Stop».



TEXT 5 Trafalgar Square Incident, 23 September 1950

A

They were still having a wonderful time – and so the passers-by – when the Law descended.

B

He helped the boy to adjust his braces, and then fastened the buttons of the girl's dress. 'Got children of his own, I dare say,' said a bystander.

C

Last Sunday afternoon two small seven-year-olds, a boy and a girl, decided, very sensibly, to bathe in the fountains of Trafalgar Square. Happily and uninhibited, they undressed near a bench occupied by three grown-ups, whose faces expressed: 'This is nothing to do with us.'

D

It was a smiling young policeman who came ambling round the Square and walked across to the children.

E

The children walked away, rather crestfallen, towards the main road. Turning suddenly, they saw the policeman following them. Instead of running away, they came back towards him, and he, taking a hand in each of his, guided them safely across the traffic.

F

Once undressed, the children dashed joyously to the fountains, bathed in the spray with shrieks of delight, jumped on to the side of the basin and dangled their toes in the blue water; then, still laughing, they rushed back to the bench, dried themselves with their underclothes, and then dashed back again to the water.

Kingsley Martin

GLOSSARY

braces (section B) = a pair of elastic bands you can wear instead of a belt to hold up trousers

amble (section D) = walk in a slow, relaxed way

crestfallen (section E) = sad and disappointed

shriek (section F) = a wild loud cry

2. Discuss what helped you to rearrange the texts. Consider

- a) the *organization* of ideas, e.g. the *time sequence* or the presentation of an *opinion* and of *arguments* for and against it;
- b) the *words* and *expressions* which signal the *development of ideas* and the *logical relationships* between them, e.g. pronouns and demonstratives like *it* or *these*, «linkers» like *but* or *similarly*, or synonyms like *seven-year-olds* and *children*.

3. Which of the five texts mainly provides

- the *description* of somebody or something?
- the *narration* of an event?
- *reasons* for or against something to *persuade* the reader?
- the *explanation* and *clarification* of facts?
- *rules* and *advice* which the reader is expected to follow?

Quote evidence from the texts to support your choices.

4. Try to explain how texts 1, 2 and 3 are organized by describing the *roles* that the *sections* play in each text and how they are ordered.

To do this, consider that a portion of a text may, for example, provide one or more of the following:

- general *statements*, either to *introduce* the topic, *reinforce* or *summarize* it;
- *examples*, *illustrations* or *expansions* to *support* statements or arguments;
- more detailed *analysis* of (aspects of) the topic;
- a *thesis* which the author wants to *prove* right or wrong;
- *arguments* to support the author's viewpoint;
- *background information* about (aspects of) the topic.

e.g. Text 1 starts with a general *statement* (*The English love hobbies*), followed by Then it analyzes the topic by distinguishing between and, and by giving *examples* of both. The text ends with

5. Refer back to text 5. Which sections

- set the *context* of the story (time, place, ...)?
- describe the *background* events, i.e. what happens *before* the story reaches its climax?
- tell the central *event* which marks the *turning point* of the story?
- describe the *consequences* of this event?
- bring the story to a *conclusion*?

6. Refer back to text 3.

A. What words and phrases are used by the author

- to *list* what he considers to be *English delicacies*?
- to *compare* English and foreign food (consider comparatives and superlatives, use of «positive» adjectives ...)?

B. What do the words in *italics* from the text refer to?

- a) Now *that* is simply not true. (section C)
- b) ... if I gave *it* in full ... (section G)
- c) ... *that* are peculiar to *our* own country. (section A)
- d) ... *which* is far and away the best way ... (section A)
- e) Outside *these islands* ... (section E)
- f) But *they* are all native to our country ... (section B)

7. Refer back to text 4.

A. Which verb forms are used to give *rules* and *advice*?

B. Which kind of sentence is used to illustrate the different situations in which you may find yourself at a level crossing?

8. Refer back to text 1. What do the words in *italics* from the text refer to?

- a) ... *who* have that happy knack ... (section F)
- b) ... *which* is summed up ... (section F)
- c) You can hear *them* talking «shop» ... (section D)
- d) ... the famous *one* at Chelsea ... (section D)
- e) ... *who* feel no need ... (section C)

9. Choose one of the following tasks. Refer back to Texts 1-5 to consider how their authors have dealt with similar tasks.

A. Write an article describing what you consider to be typical Italian hobbies and pastimes. Make some general statements and provide sufficient examples and illustrations.



B. Write an entry for a children's encyclopaedia explaining the effects of a natural phenomenon or human activity in an Italian area you know well (e.g. sea or wind erosion, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, pollution, urbanization, ...). Provide examples and, if possible, describe one or two pictures to go with your text.

C. Write an article «In Defence of» an aspect of Italian life (e.g. public transport, national health service, schools, etc.). Think of the points you wish to *demonstrate* and provide sufficient *arguments* and *examples* to support them.

D. Write a leaflet for English tourists in Italy, summarizing the *rules* to be followed

- *either* by a driver or cyclist reaching a crossroads
- *or* by a pedestrian wishing to cross a road.

Describe the *situations* in detail and explain the *reasons* for the rules you give.

E. Write a report of an interesting or amusing incident that has happened to you or to somebody you know. Remember to set the *context* and the *background*, tell the central *events* and describe the *consequences*.