

# RISKING literature

Past into Present Roger Gower  
Longman 1990 £8.50 Cassette £13

**P**ast into Present is a beautifully produced and illustrated paperback anthology of British and American literature. Anyone who enjoys literature would be proud to own it, whether or not they need the glossaries and exercises.

**Julia Hubert**

Inevitably there are some odd exclusions, such as Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and Craig Raine, and odd inclusions such as the Old English *Battle of Maldon*, the novel *The Color Purple* and in fact the American sections altogether, but this is as sound and scholarly an anthology as could encompass such a vast body of literature, with analyses, in under 500 pages.

The cassette is above average for EFL material, but often the bland "elocuted" voices make global questions such as: "Does the speaker sound sad/happy, angry/pleased etc?" impossible to answer. And my initial doubts about the American extracts were confirmed when I heard RP Home Counties voices declaiming them. In any case a few chunks of US literature sit uneasily in a diachronic selection of the home-grown crop, and deserve to be taught as a course in their own right.

As to pedagogy, Roger Gower treads a very traditional path, compared with the "stylistic" approach of the Carter/Brumfit/Widdowson school and the "total language learning resource, not simply (as) a device for promoting reading" of such exponents as

Maley, Tomlinson and Greenwood. He states that the book is intended for "intermediate or advanced" students, and somewhat optimistically imagines that the glossed texts may be used with "readers of a slightly lower level" and continues "...users will not only be learning about British and American literature but will be expected to understand and enjoy actual texts".

The useful Prologue outlines the types of activities used in further sections; warm-up; reading and text; understanding and interpretation; appreciation, and so on, and there are historical and biographical notes. The author stresses that all literary and lan-

guage exercises are optional.

Unit 1, "Old English", is uncompromising in its comprehension demands (on cassette *The Battle of Maldon* is impenetrable to me). The six middle units carry the historical progression forward in a coherent, well-structured manner. Unit 8, "Modern Times", starts appropriately with Yeats' "The Second Coming", and "things fall apart" somewhat. Two pages from *The Color Purple* represent "Feminism", and little material appears to show foreign learners what UK writers consider to be important cultural and political issues now.

I recommend the book, with the caveat that to meet the inter-



ests, needs and learning styles of all students, it is vital to use books using different approaches and different material. As Brian Tomlinson wrote in the *Gazette* of March 1985: "Using literature is not a safe option and it involves risks." *Julia Hubert, a former ESOL teacher, is now a freelance writer.*

## Lightening the load

Passport to Cambridge First Certificate Peter Dainty £7.50  
Personal Passport to Cambridge First Certificate Peter Dainty £3.25  
Passport to Cambridge First Certificate Practice Tests £4.50  
Jeremy Wallen Macmillan 1990

**P**assport to Cambridge First Certificate is one of the latest attempts to lighten the load of the FC class teacher. And it seems to go a long way towards achieving that aim. The Students' Book provides an entertaining and reasonably thorough grounding in FC level language work, without getting lost in the toils of exam-specific preparation. A self-study book, and a book of tests (written by an FC examiner),

aim to do that part of the job, in the learner's own time.

**Bryan Robinson**

As far as the materials are concerned, the Student's Book is attractively illustrated, with imaginative use of coloured pages, and some of the key language items are presented in shaded boxes, which make them very learner-friendly. Each unit has a colourfully drawn episode from a cartoon story featuring Frederick Carruthers. His story is further developed in text form in later units, and serves as a vehicle for teaching and revising phrasal verbs.

The results are sometimes a little forced, but nevertheless it is a largely successful attempt to get

to grips with the problem. All the photographs are visually both stimulating and challenging. The listening activities are well-prepared. They are based on authentic materials and offer students demanding tasks which will stretch them as far as, if not beyond, FC.

While the strengths of the Student's Book lie in its presentation and in the listening tasks, its weakness lies in the grammar work offered. The activities are short and simple, and rather lack imagination. *Personal Passport* provides interesting vocabulary work, but it too fails to enliven the essential structure-based preparation for FC.

*Bryan Robinson is a freelance EFL teacher and teacher trainer in Granada, Spain.*

The Top Twenty is compiled by The Bournemouth English Book Centre from its retail sales for the month. Figures in brackets refer to last month's position.

1. Headway Intermediate OUP (2)
2. Headway Upper Intermediate OUP (1)
3. Headway Advanced OUP (4)
4. English Grammar in Use CUP (3)
5. Cambridge English Course 2 CUP (-)
6. OK 2 OUP (13)
7. Cambridge English Course 1 CUP (-)
8. OK 3 OUP (-)
9. Essential Grammar in Use CUP (5)
10. Cambridge English Course 3 CUP (-)
11. OK 1 OUP (-)
12. Meanings into Words Upper Intermediate CUP (15)
13. Nexus Heinemann (17)
14. Focus on Proficiency Collins ELT (-)
15. Compact Intermediate Collins ELT (-)
16. Fast Forward 1 OUP (-)
17. Meanings into Words Intermediate CUP (10)
18. Fast Forward Advanced OUP (-)
19. Fast Forward 2 OUP (-)
20. Streamline Departures Longman (6)

The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the reviews editor.



INSIDE