

## Overview

The Links coursebook series accompanies the xreading digital library ([xreading.com](http://xreading.com)). Although it is used in conjunction with graded readers on xreading, it is not a reading textbook. Rather, it is a four skills book to be used alongside xreading, and will be bundled with a subscription to xreading. The three-level series provides thematically arranged units which are linked to specific books available for students to read on the site. The main focus of the course book is as follows.

### 1 An Extensive Reading Integrated Course.

Rather than extensive reading done entirely out of class as an independent activity, graded readers from the site are linked to activities in the course book. Students start by learning about a topic and related vocabulary. Then, they read a graded reader on xreading linked to the same theme, using some of the vocabulary they have just learned. Finally, they engage in various tasks directly building on what they read about.

### 2 Task-based language teaching (TBLT).

All content in the books is developed within a TBLT framework. Essentially, this means that tasks are designed to allow learners to use their existing language to complete them first, and then teachers can provide language support where necessary. This gives students chances to experience success, builds motivation, and allows the teacher or learner to use the extra language support available at the back of the book if required.

### 3 Reality-based fiction and non-fiction.

Each unit focusses on a central graded reader, which is an example of 'reality-based fiction' (i.e. a fictional story which is typically reality-based – many of the places, people, and situations are real). This allows each book to be tied to subsequent tasks that are related to the real world and deal with issues that will be of interest to high school and university students. Finally, learners read a non-fiction book on the same theme, providing them with factual information about the world around them and consolidating what they have learned in the unit. Themes include study abroad, technology, science, and history.

### 4 English as a lingua franca.

Listening activities in each unit are also designed with a TBLT approach in mind, providing examples of people successfully completing tasks. This presents an ideal model for subsequent tasks (or task repetition). These models are non-native speakers, providing a realistic, and attainable example, which again helps to motivate learners.





## Unit Breakdown

Each unit follows the structure outlined below. It is important to note that we have designed the units with teacher flexibility in mind. The order within and between units can be changed, and whole units can be skipped or done out of order if preferred. We have designed each unit to take approximately four to five hours of classroom time, but by skipping or extending certain parts, this could easily become shorter or longer.

### Pre-reading activities

This section is made up of various tasks and activities that learners complete before reading the main graded reader for the unit. The main parts are as follows.

#### 1. Speaking

A simple conversation warm-up with questions based on the main unit theme. Learners are encouraged to ask follow-up questions and give extra information. If required, a more structured speaking task is provided at the back of the book.

#### 2. Split reading

Short split readings on the theme of the unit provide learners with interesting input. They then try to remember the main points to tell their partner. These readings feature lower frequency vocabulary from the main graded reader, so learners will meet this language several times in a unit, providing repetition. Exercises at the back of the book also give learners the opportunity for deliberate focus on vocabulary if required.

#### 3. Mini-task

A short speaking task on the theme of the split readings provides students the chance for interaction and language production. It is also serves as an introduction to the theme of the main graded reader that they will read.

#### 4. Pre-reading questions

Some questions which allow a small warm-up prior to reading the main graded reader. Learners are also told at this point that they will need to read the main book for the unit before the next class.



## Post-reading activities

This section follows on after students have read the main graded reader for the unit.

### 1. Comprehension check

Students work together to answer questions related to the content of the book that they read. This section also includes a writing task in which students produce a short summary of the book, or a prediction of what might happen to the characters afterwards. They then swap textbooks with a partner to compare their ideas. This is designed to help learners to remember what they read, and to prepare them to talk about it. If the teacher or learners want to extend this writing task, there is a space at the back of the coursebook for each unit to write a review of the main graded reader.

### 2. Speaking

A group task in which learners ask and answer questions related to details about the main graded reader, and some more open questions about the central theme of the book. This facilitates a scaffolded discussion of the main graded reader.

### 3. Listening

Learners listen to audio\* of two non-native speaking peers discussing the main graded reader. This provides a model for some of the questions and answers in the previous section and an opportunity for task repetition if the teacher or learners deem it useful. This part also includes a short discussion task using a question prompt from the listening.

*\*The audio for this will be available through QR codes within the book which will allow both teachers and students to easily access it.*

### 4. Communication task

This is the main task of the unit, designed to tie in with the main reader, in which students complete a speaking task, which includes a pre-task and a post task. This gives students another chance to interact and discuss issues concerning the main theme of the unit.

## Extended reading activities

This section continues the main topic of the unit, and provides more output activities (which teachers might like to make into larger projects for some units) such as presentations. Students also have an opportunity to discuss the second book that they have read for the unit.

### 1. Pre-reading questions

Learners discuss questions relating to a follow-up book that they will read next. At this point, learners are given a choice of three books that they can choose from. The books are related to the unit theme.

### 2. Writing

As with the previous section, this is a short summary writing task. Learners then compare their writing with their partner's.

### Discussion

Learners may have read different books, but the questions in this part are designed to work regardless of which one they've read. This means that learners can talk about the books they have read and find similarities and differences between them.

### 3. Presentation

This part provides cues for learners to design a presentation on a topic related to the main unit theme. It could be done within the one class as a short and simple group presentation, or teachers may wish to extend this to become a large-scale presentation in the next class.

### 4. Review

The final part provides some simple review questions about the entire unit as a way of reflecting on what has been learned.